



Exhibition «Paris and the Surrealists»
18/02 2005 – 22/05/2005

The major setting

How can we explain the fact that a small group of people, with limited resources, who gathered in a few bars, restaurants, galleries and private houses, managed to associate their artistic movement with the idea of the avant-garde and turn it into a benchmark for posterity? The explanation can probably be found in Paris. This is the viewpoint of the exhibition *Paris and the Surrealists*. This is the viewpoint from which we can trace the history of an artistic trend, which, to a large extent, determined the concept of the avant-garde and has, therefore, conditioned the interpretation of 20th-century art until the present day. Of course, there were people with cultural power, such as André Breton, without whom the success of the group as a historic movement would have been more difficult. However, would this have been possible in a city other than Paris? Paris has always had an extraordinary capacity to manufacture cultural products until it has converted them into labels of universal value. And Surrealism is, in this sense, one of its stellar moments.

Surrealist iconography is inscribed in contemporary cultural imagery. A great many exhibitions have been staged, some of them exhaustive, about the work of these artists. This is because Surrealism, although it is the result of group relationships, is also the work of individuals, in which each character plays a prominent and unique role, far removed from any discourse about the disappearance of the subject. The CCCB's contribution consists of an exercise in altering the gaze, in order to understand the crossover between the imagery of the city and the imagery of a number of artists, as well as to garner a better reading of the impact of Surrealism on contemporary art. The Surrealists touched on decisive aspects of the ideas of the avant-gardes: reflection about form, the attitude to the work of art, the relationship between art and life, their impact on changes in behaviours. Paradoxically, their answers acquired a certain canonical character. And they marked the way for creativity and reading in contemporary art.

The exhibition traces a route through the different themes that Surrealism addressed and, sometimes, opened up. It takes a sidelong glance at the movement, which reiterates –and underlines– the variety of means of expression the Surrealists used. Certainly, in today's language, we would say that Surrealism was a multimedia artistic trend. It had as its backdrop the years of turmoil –and often unawareness– of Europe between the wars that gave Surrealism its impetus, in a process that was broad in scope, beginning in 1919 and bearing its final fruit in the mid-sixties. Paris was the major setting for Surrealism and, at the same time, Surrealism has been like a changing decor that will always accompany the city.