# Digital Surrealism …

# … Does not exist

# Digital art… Does not exist (1)

Whatever the medium and the tools, **there is Art or there is not**, that's all

Do people speak of turpentine art, acrylic art, or airbrush art ?

References to materials and tools used by artists are obsolete residues from a period when Art was still mired in **craftsmanship**.

As early as the Italian Renaissance, artists were no longer craftsmen

- Giotto (Artist, Architect)
- Brunelleschi (Architect, Artist, Engineer)
- Vinci  (Architect, Artist, Scientist, Engineer)
- Michel-Angelo (Architect, Artist, Urban planner, Poet)
- Piero Della Francesca (Mathematician, Artist)
- [...]

# Digital art… Does not exist (2)

An artist, especially if he is a surrealist as well, uses whatever means he wants

Between the artist and the tools with which he creates, some kind of **symbiosis** or at a minimum a **dialogue** develops

And just as we have the right to dialogue and associate with whoever we want, rules regarding techniques and tools are not pertinent, either in Art, or in life.

Some major figures of surrealism, such as for instance Marcel Duchamp, Man Ray or Alexander Calder, etc. used everything they felt like using to make their works. Why what was admitted in the 1920's and 1930's should now be forbidden ?

# Digital art… Does not exist (3)

**Dada** and **Surrealism** – and most especially Duchamp – have put a definitive end to these divisions between artistic disciplines… **And all the rest**.

Artist or poet is one and the same, they speak to the mind, although some aspects in personal approaches may differ here and there. **"Cosa mentale"** says Vinci

Surrealism is about **"expressing the true functioning of thought"** (First Manifesto)

**In *all* human activities** not specifically in art or poetry

# Historical Notes (1)

Very few surrealists and, even a few artists – with the exception of illustrators – seized on computer tools as they appeared in the beginnings of the WWW.

The first Internet links between international surrealists were initiated by **Stuart Inman** (London) around 1995 (email lists)

In the 1999 International Surrealist Exhibition in Prague, two of us distributed 3 texts on the theme of Surrealism and Machines – in a general indifference…

… With the important exception of **Martin Stejskal** who said "***I co-sign !***".

Martin Stejskal was introduced to software tools by **Andrew Lass** (USA & Czech)

# Historical Notes (2)

**Surrealist artists experimenting with new tools at that moment were** :

**Martin Stejskal** (Czech Republic)

**Zazie** (Germany, Austria, France) who started as a photographer

**Bernard Dumaine** (France) who worked in illustration and cartoons

**J.K. Bogartte** (USA) who started first to play with photocopiers

**Samuel Ribitch Martin** (USA) his children worked in the cinema industry

**Istvan Horkay** (Hungary)  (Visual Arts and mainly video)

**Pinina Podesta** (Italy) (Visual arts and Video)

And more… **Collaborations**…

# Technophobia and Surrealism

"Conservatism" of many surrealists *seems* based on surrealist ideological purity, but is it not rather based on

- some kind of intellectual laziness,
- some lack of will to experiment or even fear of learning
- on the rather surprising idea that in the specific case of software tools, **the tool and not the artist would make the Art**.

From there, a winning recipe : pick up brushes, colors and canvases and lock them all in a room, go on holidays, and when back home you have masterpieces.

# And Yet…

"*While the feather makes the plumage,*

*…*

*the glue does not make the collage*"

Max Ernst

But the **mind** does !

# What if…

## … "historical" surrealists" had known today's tools ?

(Remember that in the 1920's surrealists made films as soon as they could)

**We got some honest answers…**

**Roberto Matta** started to experiment with 3D tools when he was 90

**Jean Benoît** was more than 80 when shown some surrealist images done with recent software tools…
    He tried his best to look as in line with the surrealist "official" line but…
    His eyes said otherwise : "*If only I was younger…*"

# In any case… Keep Sane and Mentally Healthy

"Everybody gets so much information all day long that they lose their common sense. They listen so much that they forget to be natural"

- **Gertrud Stein,** Selected Operas and Plays



Gertrud Stein, Basket and Alice Toklas In LIfe Magazine. Photo Carl Mydans

# The one rule of all surrealist games ("Digital" or not)

"The marvelous is always beautiful, and even, only the marvelous is beautiful."

André Breton