



Leonora Carrington, *Artes 110*, c. 1942. Oil on Canvas. NSU Art Museum Fort Lauderdale; promised gift of Stanley and Pearl Goodman

*I Paint My Reality:
Surrealism in Latin America*

TEACHER GUIDE

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Produced by the Department of Education of the NSU Art Museum Fort Lauderdale.

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Dear Teachers,

We are excited to welcome you to the *I Paint My Reality: Surrealism in Latin America* Virtual Tour, which can be viewed by clicking the link below.

<https://nsuartmuseum.org/exhibition/i-paint-my-reality-surrealism-in-latin-america/>

As many of us are going virtual, classrooms included, we are adapting our Museum on The Move program to help ease the transition, and give students the opportunity to access our museum from the comfort and safety of their own homes.

I Paint My Reality: Surrealism in Latin America explores a time in which the Surrealist art movement, associated with dreams and the unconscious mind, found its way around the world. Eventually, the epicenter of the art movement shifted from Europe to Latin America and the United States, where many artists sought refuge from the war. Contrary to the views of the European artists, Latin American artworks reflected the artists' world and their history, rather than dreams. This exhibition joins together European artists, some of which made a permanent home in places like Mexico, and Latin American artists to explore the evolution of the movement and the influences the artists had on each other and on contemporary art today.

This teacher guide serves to prepare you and your students for an engaging virtual visit to the exhibition and provides activities that can be adapted for the virtual classroom.

We hope you and your students enjoy your virtual visit!

Sincerely,

NSU Art Museum
Education Department

ABOUT MUSEUM ON THE MOVE

Museum on the Move (MOTM) is NSU Art Museum's innovative educational program that provides free school group visits for qualifying Broward County students. During interactive exhibition tours, students engage in dynamic dialogue with Museum educators, while exercising their creative, analytical, critical, and observational skills.

This interdisciplinary art program provides:

- FREE admission (for up to 100 students per visit)
- FREE transportation (for qualifying schools)
- FREE annual museum educator memberships
- FREE interactive docent-led tours of exhibitions
- FREE STEAM-based art activities in the galleries
- FREE sketchbooks

For more information and to schedule your class visit, contact moagroupsales@moafl.org or call 954-262-0204. To learn more, visit: nsuartmuseum.org

ABOUT THE EXHIBITION

The avant-garde Surrealist movement emerged in France in the wake of World War I and spread globally as artists and art works traveled, and ideas circulated through art journals and mass media. Dreams, psychoanalysis, automatism (creating without conscious thought), collage, assemblage and chance were among the methods the Surrealists used to tap into the unconscious mind and stimulate the imagination. The European Surrealists embraced their Latin American colleagues, who nevertheless expressed ambivalence about the movement. Mexican artist Frida Kahlo famously refuted being labeled as a Surrealist, stating that she never painted dreams, instead asserting, "I painted my own reality," while Uruguayan Joaquin Torres-Garcia advocated for a modern art that was not beholden to European modern art. Latin America's complex history, magical landscapes, indigenous cultures, archeological sites, mythologies, migrations, and European and African religious traditions shaped these artists' reality.

The rise of fascism in Europe in the 1930s as well as the Spanish Civil War and World War II shifted the focus of Surrealism to the United States and Latin America, where many of the European artists sought refuge. These artists' proximity to each other promoted friendships that were especially fruitful during this period and in the post-war years. While many of the exiled European artists who lived in the United States during the war returned home afterwards, those in Latin America and in Mexico, in particular, tended to remain there for the rest of their lives.

This exhibition is drawn exclusively from NSU Art Museum's Latin American collection, including promised gifts from Fort Lauderdale collectors Stanley and Pearl Goodman. The depth of the museum's substantial collection of contemporary Latin American art and art by South Florida artists makes it possible to follow the influence of Surrealism through today.

Among the exhibition highlights is Leonora Carrington's, *Artes 110*, c. 1942, painted after the British-born artist arrived in Mexico after fleeing Nazi-occupied France, where she had been living with her lover, Surrealist Max Ernst. Titled after the address of where she first lived in Mexico City, the painting represents the artist as a spirited young woman flying away from the crumbling old world towards a new land. Carrington is just one of several women artists in the exhibition who actively contributed to the Surrealist movement in Latin America. Others include photographer Kati Horna, Frida Kahlo, Amelia Pelaez, Alice Rahon, Bridget Bate Tichenor, and Remedios Varo, to name a few.

The exhibition also focuses on the catalytic role artists such as Roberto Matta played by connecting the European artists with those based in the United States and Latin America. In addition, it explores how Frida Kahlo, Wifredo Lam, Ana Mendieta, and Xul Solar, among others, drew on ancient symbols and myths as well as indigenous cultures for their distinct imagery. Latin American Surrealism has had a significant impact on contemporary art in South Florida. Echoes of this movement are evident in the work of South Florida artists, such as Luis Gispert's photograph of a mysterious tower constructed of boom boxes that inexplicably occupies a domestic interior, Pablo Cano's distinctive marionette assemblages, and Jorge Pantoja's works that are drawn from Stanley Kubrick's psychological thriller, *The Shining*.

This exhibition was curated by Bonnie Clearwater, Director and Chief Curator, NSU Art Museum Fort Lauderdale.

Teacher Guide Activities

The activities in this guide can be adapted to fit the grade level of your students. Each activity is based on an artist or artwork in the *I Paint My Reality: Surrealism in Latin America* exhibition. Feel free to use this guide as a starting point for your virtual classroom.

Grade Level: Middle School (6-8) and High School (9-12)

Description: Surrealist artists reveal their subconscious thoughts, feelings, desires, and dreams on their canvases, using different techniques to do so. Students will explore some of these techniques as they learn about selected artists in the exhibition.

Learning Objectives:

- Students will analyze the emotions being expressed by the artists in the selected artworks from the exhibition.
- Students will compare and contrast artworks made in different time periods.
- Students will build an understanding of the art-making process by creating plans for artworks of their own.
- Students will utilize a literary device to develop their own thoughts.

Essential Questions:

- What techniques are used to create from the unconscious mind?
 - How do these techniques lead to creativity?
 - What do these techniques reveal about the artist?
- In what ways do artists of the past influence artists today?
 - How might the response to these artworks change over time? Why?
 - What is the intention of the artist in painting a self-portrait?

Standards:

- **VA.68.C.3** The processes of critiquing works of art lead to development of critical-thinking skills transferable to other contexts.
- **VA.68.H.1.1** Describe social, ecological, economic, religious, and/or political conditions reflected in works of art.
- **VA.68.C.1.2** Use visual evidence and prior knowledge to reflect on multiple interpretations of works of art.
- **VA.912.H.1.1** Analyze the impact of social, ecological, economic, religious, and/or political issues on the function or meaning of the artwork.
- **VA.912.C.1.8** Explain the development of meaning and procedural choices throughout the creative process to defend artistic intention.
- **VA.912.C.2** Assessing our own and others' artistic work, using critical-thinking, problem-solving, and decision-making skills, is central to artistic growth.

What is Surrealism?

In France, Surrealism began as a literary movement in the early twentieth century that explored the unconscious mind through a type of writing exercise called automatic writing, or automatism. With the publication of the *Manifesto of Surrealism* by Andre Breton, the movement morphed into an intellectual and political movement aligned with ideas of Sigmund Freud and Karl Marx.

Eventually, making its way into the visual art world, Surrealist artists gave form to the unconscious mind, capturing inner visions, fantasies, dreams and nightmares. This could be done by juxtaposing familiar objects in unfamiliar contexts or depicting irrational and bizarre scenes that defy common sense. Surrealist art aimed to puzzle, challenge, and fascinate its viewers.

In Latin America, the complex history of migration, mythologies, mixture of indigenous cultures, and European and African traditions shaped artists' reality. These artists were creating works influenced by cultural surroundings and experiences that were very different from their European counterparts, arriving in Latin America from Europe, as they fled the war. Although creating from a different perspective, European and Latin American artists' works showed visual similarities, as they forged friendships, and began to learn from and influence each other.

Use the following resources to explore the Surrealist art movement.

[Google Arts & Culture: Surrealism](#)

[The MET Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History: Surrealism](#)

[Khan Academy: Surrealism, an introduction](#)

[Khan Academy Video: The Case for Surrealism](#)

[Video - TICE ART 1010: Twentieth Century Art](#)

HYBRID CREATURES OF HAPPINESS ACTIVITY

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Honduran born American artist **Emilio Martinez** moved with members of his family to Miami when he was 13. His mixed-media work (painting, sculpture, installation) is based on his childhood memories and dreams, which he records in his sketchbooks. He conveys his anxieties and experiences of dislocation in his work by using spiritual symbols derived from ancient, indigenous peoples.

Meet the artist in NSU Art Museum's newly released video [In the Artist's Studio with Emilio Martinez](#)

ACTIVITY GUIDELINES

For this activity, introduce students to Martinez's *Being Happy is My Choice (Ser feliz es mi decisión)*, an artwork that presents an imaginative hybrid animal-human form in blue high-heeled shoes, sporting a helmet-like hat out of which sprouts spikey hair. The artist describes this work as a representation of the state of happiness that accompanies self-conscious acceptance of who we are despite our physical limitations. Martinez's imagery is influenced by his awareness of animal forms in the work of the European and Latin American Surrealists, Pablo Picasso, and Cobra artist Karel Appel.

Discuss the artwork with students, either through conversation or as a discussion post on your e-learning platform. Analyze the physical features of the creature. Notice individual elements, such as the face, legs, shoes, clothing, and head gear. Students think about what each element means or represents. Then, consider the elements as a whole. How does this creature express the artist's idea of self-acceptance and happiness?

Post-discussion, students think about what a creature who exudes confidence and self-acceptance in a state of happiness, might look like. Jot down features and ideas for a part human, part animal creature, of their own creation, that embodies those characteristics. Then, students sketch and color their creature. Students write a short explanation of how their creature represents self-acceptance and happiness.



Emilio Martinez, *Being Happy is My Choice (ser feliz es mi decisión)*, 2019. Pastel, acrylic, charcoal, and pencil on heavy paper. NSU Art Museum Fort Lauderdale; purchased with funds provided by Michael and Dianne Bienes, by exchange, 2019.51

FRIDA KAHLO JOURNALING ACTIVITY

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Frida Kahlo was a self-taught artist whose work served as an expression of her life's misfortunes and motivations. Through her paintings, as well as writings in her diary, she built a self-awareness and connection with her own feelings, unleashing her deepest thoughts and emotions onto a page or a canvas. Kahlo suffered with polio as a child and at 18 was the victim of a devastating traffic accident that caused severe injuries from which she never fully recovered. She began painting while convalescing and, at 22 years of age, married renowned Mexican Muralist painter, Diego Rivera. The two artists had a turbulent relationship that involved many separations, a divorce and remarrying a year later. Kahlo derived her imagery from her imagination and personal experience, making herself the subject of her work, portraying personal events. Yet, in many of her self-portraits, she defined herself as a strong, authoritative Mexican woman in customary dress, who stares directly at the viewer.

Kahlo is often associated with Surrealist artists due to the dreamlike quality of her paintings, but she insisted that she never painted her dreams, instead she painted her reality, the comment that inspired the name of the exhibition at NSU Art Museum.



Frida Kahlo, Self-Portrait on Diary Page, 1945. Watercolor, crayon, and ink on paper. NSU Art Museum Fort Lauderdale; promised gift of Stanley and Pearl Goodman

ACTIVITY GUIDELINES

Note that Surrealism originally emerged as a literary movement in the early 1900s, an experimentation of a new form of expression called **automatic writing**, or **automatism**. The idea was to write from the subconscious mind, without a goal and without judgement. Frida Kahlo used her diary to write, draw, and paint from a place of experience and imagination.

Allow students to view parts of Kahlo's diary to get a better understanding of how she used it as catharsis, here [A Peek at Frida Kahlo's Diary](#).

Explain to students that writing can be a way to make sense of one's thoughts and feelings, as well as a way to process experiences and events taking place in the world around you. Writing can also be a practice of mindfulness. Personal writing often takes place in journals or diaries.

For this activity, students will journal either by writing on paper or typing on a computer. There are two types of journaling students or teachers can choose from.

Suggestion: Students do not necessarily need to turn in their writings if it is personal to them. Instead, students may write a short paragraph describing their writing experience, stating the ways in which it may have benefitted them.

1) The first type is stream-of-consciousness journaling, in which you write for 15-20 minutes non-stop about whatever comes into your mind. There's no beginning, middle, or ending to your writing.

2) The second type of writing is prompt-directed writing. Both these ways of journaling can elicit the flow of creative juices. A sample prompt is provided, but teachers may create their own prompts. Students will use a prompt to write for at least 15 minutes.

Sample: At the top of the page, write: "I remember." Begin by writing down the first memory that emerges. Keep writing without lifting your pen off the page. See where your subconscious mind brings you.

INSPIRED BY A MASTER: COMPARE & CONTRAST DISCUSSION ACTIVITY

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Fernando Botero was born in Medellín, Colombia in 1932. His artistic tendencies showed up as a young child. By the age of 16, his first illustrations were published in newspapers. He had his first solo exhibition just three years later in Bogotá. In his early 20s, he traveled with fellow artists to Europe, where he studied and copied the Old Master painters of various art historical periods, in Madrid, Paris, and Florence. Inspiration struck in 1956 when Botero painted a mandolin with an extremely small sound hole, giving the instrument exaggerated proportions. From that moment, the artist began his exploration of volume that would be present in his work throughout his career. In addition to painting, Botero displayed his interest in volume through his large-scale bronze sculptures. Now in his mid-80s, there is still a high demand for his work, and he continues working tirelessly.

For a more detailed and interactive introduction to Botero, see [10 Things You Should Know About Fernando Botero](#). Teachers please review as guns, smoking, and nudity are present.

Rembrandt Harmenszoon van Rijn, born in Leiden, Netherlands in 1606, was a draftsman, painter, and printmaker. Rembrandt's works depict a wide range of style and subject matter, from portraits and self-portraits to landscapes, genre scenes, allegorical and historical scenes, and biblical and mythological themes as well as animal studies. He favored realism, and developed his skills by studying people, objects, and their surroundings through direct observation. In studying his own face, ten percent of his works were self-portraits focused on every wrinkle and hair. He was influenced by the work of the Italian masters and Netherlandish artists who had studied in Italy. Rembrandt is generally considered one of the greatest visual artists in the history of art and the most important in Dutch art history.

More on Rembrandt and his self-portraits:

[Video - Rembrandt, Self-Portrait 1659](#)

[Rembrandt, Self-Portrait \(Kenwood\)](#)

[Google Arts & Culture: Rembrandt](#)

ACTIVITY GUIDELINES

Suggestion: Complete the compare and contrast chart before sharing information about the artists with the students, to avoid any preconceived notions about meaning or intention.

Divide a sheet of paper into three columns. Label the left column 'Botero', the middle column 'Similarities', and the right column 'Rembrandt'.

Show students Rembrandt's *Self-portrait with Two Circles*, on the following page. Give students 3-5 minutes to make observations, jotting down visual qualities and adjectives to describe the painting, under the 'Rembrandt' column. There are no right or wrong answers, students should just write whatever comes to mind in observing the painting.



Rembrandt, *Self-portrait with Two Circles*, c. 1665 – 69, oil on canvas, 114.3 x 94 cm
Kenwood House Collection.

Next, show students *Self-Portrait in the Style of Rembrandt* by Fernando Botero. Repeat the process, jotting down observations in the 'Botero' column.



Fernando Botero (b. 1932, Medellín, Colombia; lives and works in Paris and Italy).
Autorretrato según Rembrandt (Self-Portrait in the Style of Rembrandt). 1959. Oil on canvas.
NSU Art Museum Fort Lauderdale; promised gift of Stanley and Pearl Goodman

Then, show both artworks side-by-side and have students jot down similarities between the two artworks.



Rembrandt, *Self-portrait with Two Circles*, c. 1665 – 69, oil on canvas, 114.3 x 94 cm. Kenwood House Collection.



Fernando Botero (b. 1932, Medellín, Colombia; lives and works in Paris and Italy). *Autorretrato según Rembrandt (Self-Portrait in the Style of Rembrandt)*. 1959. Oil on canvas. NSU Art Museum Fort Lauderdale; promised gift of Stanley and Pearl Goodman

DISCUSSION GUIDE FOR BOTERO & REMBRANDT

1. Describe the qualities observed in Rembrandt's *Self-portrait with Two Circles*.
2. In what ways did Rembrandt's painting inspire Botero's self-portrait?
3. Compare and contrast the way in which each artist applied paint to the canvas.
4. How does Botero explore volume in his painting?
5. Discuss what each artist's intention may have been. They each made choices about the colors, techniques and styles they would use. What do you think they are each trying to express about themselves?
6. The 'selfie' is a modern-day version of the self-portrait. Have students discuss what they might include and how they would portray themselves in a 'selfie' that would be visible to the entire world for eternity.

*Students can explore Rembrandt's use of self-portraits to meet various goals in his career at the link below.

[Rembrandt: king of the selfie](#)

RESOURCES

http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/surr/hd_surr.htm

<https://www.khanacademy.org/humanities/art-history/art-1010/dada-and-surrealism/surrealism/a/surrealism-an-introduction>

south85journal.com/2018/05/5-prompts-for-mindful-writing/

<https://www.christies.com/features/Fernando-Botero-7354-1.aspx>

<https://artsandculture.google.com/story/10-things-you-should-know-about-fernando-botero/EQICKPamcRm3IA?hl=en>

<https://artsandculture.google.com/entity/rembrandt/m0bskv2?categoryid=artist>

https://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/rmbt/hd_rmbt.htm

<https://smarthistory.org/rembrandt-self-portrait-kenwood/>

<https://smarthistory.org/rembrandt-van-rijn-self-portrait-1659/>

<https://artuk.org/discover/stories/rembrandt-king-of-the-selfie>