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TITLE: Surreal Humor in Art and Design: Marx Ernst and Jan Lenica

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PAGES: 95-103

ORIGINAL PDF URL: <https://dergipark.org.tr/tr/download/article-file/2825959>



## Original Article

# Surreal humor in art and design: Marx Ernst and Jan Lenica

## Sanat ve tasarımda gerçeküstü mizah: Marx Ernst ve Jan Lenica

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### ARTICLE INFO

#### Article history

Received: 12 December 2022

Accepted: 20 December 2022

#### Key words:

Absurd, Jan Lenica, Max Ernst, surreal humor.

#### Anahtar kelimeler:

Absürt, Marx Ernst, Jan Lenica, gerçeküstü mizah.

### ABSTRACT

Visual humor is one of the important tools used by designers and artists. Art historians and thinkers have mostly analyzed, commented on, and researched humor in literary fields, such as stories and novels. However, in the context of the relationships of absurd and absurd humor in art and design, the analyses and research on their differences and similarities have been limited. The aim of this research is to analyze how and why absurd humor, which has absurd and absurd characteristics in art and design, is used in the fields of art and design, and to derive findings and results. In the research, it was seen that the absurd, absurd and strange aspects of visual absurd humor are a common approach in the works of dada and surrealist artists. In order to discuss and analyze the subject in a concrete form, the works of Max Ernst, one of the important representatives of surrealism, were examined in this context. It was determined that the unexpected surprises formed by the strange and absurd phenomena seen in Ernst's figurative works constitute the basis of absurd humor. On the other hand, it was seen that similar surreal and strange figurative elements seen in the works of Jan Lenica, an important name in poster design, were used to create communication to tell a specific concrete story. In the analyses and findings made within the framework of the works of Ernst and Lenica in the context of visual absurd humor in art and design, it was seen that the visual language used and the idea analyses have a parallel structure. On the other hand, since the purposes of art and design fields are different, the use of absurd humor in art is handled with a more vague and uncertain understanding, while similar images in design are transformed into a specific concept for communication. It is possible to say that the findings obtained in this research with the comparative methodology in academic studies on the relationship between art and design will contribute to the literature on the subject.

### ÖZ

Görsel mizah, tasarım ve sanatçılar tarafında kullanılan önemli araçlardan birisidir. Sanat tarihçileri ve düşünürler mizahın daha çok edebi, hikâye ve roman gibi alanlarda analizler, yorumlar ve araştırmalar yapmıştır. Fakat özellikle gerçeküstü mizahın sanat ve tasarım alanındaki ilişkileri bağlamında, birbirlerinden farklılıkları ve benzerlikleri yönünde, analizler ve araştırmalar kısıtlı kalmıştır. Bu araştırmanın amacı, sanat ve tasarımda görülen absürt ve saç-

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Published by Yıldız Technical University Press, İstanbul, Türkiye

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ma özelliklere sahip gerçeküstü mizahın, sanat ve tasarım alanlarında nasıl ve niçin kullanıldığını analiz ederek, bulgular ve sonuçlar çıkarmaktır. Araştırmada görsel gerçeküstü mizahın saçma, absürt ve tuhaf yönlerinin dada ve gerçeküstü sanatçıların çalışmalarında sık görülen bir yaklaşım olduğu görülmüştür. Konunun somut halde tartışılması ve analiz edilebilmesi için, gerçeküstü sanatın önemli temsilcilerinden Max Ernst'in çalışmaları bu bağlamda incelenmiştir. Ernst'in çalışmalarındaki figüratif çalışmalarda görülen tuhaf ve absürt olguların oluşturduğu beklenmedik sürprizlerin gerçeküstü mizahın temelini oluşturduğu tespit edilmiştir. Diğer taraftan özellikle afiş tasarımı alanında önemli isimlerden Jan Lenica'nın çalışmalarında görülen benzer gerçeküstü ve tuhaf figüratif unsurların belli bir somut hikâyeyi anlatmak için iletişim oluşturmak için kullanıldığı görülmüştür. Görsel gerçeküstü mizahın sanat ve tasarım bağlamında özellikle Ernst ve Lenica'nın çalışmaları çerçevesinde yapılan analizler ve tespitler sonucunda, kullanılan görsel dilin ve fikir çözümlemelerin paralel bir yapıda olduğu görülmüştür. Fakat diğer taraftan sanat ve tasarım alanlarının amaçları farklı olması sebebiyle, gerçeküstü mizahın sanatta kullanılması daha muğlak ve belirsizlik bir anlayışla ele alınırken, tasarımda benzer görsellerin iletişim oluşturmak için spesifik bir kavrama dönüştürüldüğünü söylemek mümkün. Araştırmada karşılaştırmalı metodoloji ile elde edilen bu araştırmadaki bulguların, akademik araştırmacılara, sanatçılara ve tasarımcılara faydalı olacağı düşünülmektedir.

**Cite this article as:** Arslan, D. (2022). Surreal humor in art and design: Marx Ernst and Jan Lenica. *Yıldız J Art Desg*, 9(2), 95–103.

## INTRODUCTION

The Dada movement was the first step of surrealism. Dadaism could not keep its popularity and bring fresh perspectives and Surrealism overtook dada's staleness internationally from New York to London. As Fiona Bradley says, "Dada is often considered the precursor of surrealism. In fact, Breton's description of the situation is more accurate 'The two movements were like two waves overtaking one another in turn' Dada predated surrealism and surrealism survived dada." (Broadley, 1997). When Dada transformed into the surrealism movement, the importance of humor endured. But Harriet Janis and Rudi Blesh think this humor was a bit different in each of these two movements. They claim that, "Dada's nonsense and sardonic humor contrast with Surrealism's humor noir and patent seriousness; dada's relentless war against all human system is at the opposite pole from Surrealism's proposed systematizing of creative methods." (Janis and Blesh, 1967). Janis and Blesh explain Andre Breton's view as; "...with dada, the attack on the past became universal, the negation of previous values was complete...The despair that prevailed could only be overcome by a kind of dismal jesting, a black humor." (Janis and Blesh, 1967).

Surrealists, like Dadaists, created absurd and playful images, photomontage, painting, collage and three-dimensional artwork, which were often funny, absurd and strange. Once, Andre Breton described surrealism as, "play of thought." Playing and juxtaposing objects and photographs can bring possibilities of surreal humor. Wollheim explains the process of play that leads to humor, "It consists in the mouthing of sounds or in the absurd combination of thoughts, put together without ref-

erence to meaning or coherence, and the pleasures of play derive from repetition or the rediscovery of what is familiar." (Wollheim, 1967). Steven Heller and Gail Anderson think that play creates some degree of humor, "while not all play is humorous, play is definitely the first stage in achieving graphic wit and design humor."

Andre Breton, author of *Anthology of Black Humor*, 1939 and Sigmund Freud, author of *Jokes and Their Relationship to the Unconscious*, 1905, both researched humor from a mainly literary perspective. Freud's approach was a crucial step towards the theoretical understanding of humor. Humor has a plethora of manifestations such as behavior, visual, literary and auditory displays. Freud's reason for researching the joke is that he found a strong relationship between jokes and the unconscious and repression. The unconscious is also one of the main subjects in surrealism, "Freud's concept of joking was based on his original theory of repression and unconscious conflicts. That at which we laugh is indicative of our problems or inhibitions. On the other hand, Freud contends, joking becomes a healthy and socially adaptive way of handling these problems." (Robinson, 1991).

Freud found many similarities between humor and dreams, both falling under the umbrella of surreal topics and as such, both sharing a form of subversive expression. Humor, jokes, unconsciousness, repression and dreams all relate to each other as concluded in Freud's research. Wollheim agrees that, "the joke, like the dream and, to some degree, the Para praxis, expresses a repressed or unconscious wish." It was a revolutionary observation that humor was a result of repression and unconscious conflicts. Robinson like Wollheim, agrees with Freud's connections between humor, joke and repression: "Civi-

lization has produced repression of many basic impulses, Freud says, and joking becomes a socially acceptable way of satisfying those needs.” (Robinson, 1991).

Robinson also mentioned that Freud divided purposeful jokes into five major types “The sexual, aggressive, hostile, and blasphemous and skeptical joke.” (Robinson, 1991). In the following chapter, I will analyze Magritte’s enigmatic work, *Rape*, which exemplifies Freud’s sexual, aggressive and hostile jokes. I will also explore visual posters that can be applied to Freud’s hostile joke.

Dada and Surrealist artists often used black humor in their surreal works. It is possible to generalize black humor as a negative evaluation of events in an often times ironic and critical style. Robinson describes black humor as a “defense mechanism”. In the following discourse of psychologist A. Ziv, black humor is strongly linked to fear. “The opportunity that we are given to laugh at things that are basically frightening or sad protects our mental health.” (Robinson, 1991). Robinson elaborates on the framework of black humor and its ability to elicit fear by describing it as a, “grotesque exaggeration, extravagance, sexuality and violence.” (Ziv, 1984). Moreover, in Robinson’s book, *Humor and the Health Profession*, Max Schulz describes black humor as; “an absurdity in existentialist fiction” (Ziv, 1984). In the same book Bruce Joy Friedman describes it as a “chord of absurdity”. Although not all absurdity is black humor, one must dually note that more often than not black humor is absurd.

At the same time Robinson implies that black humor is a reflection of a negative environment. One may fascinatingly observe that perhaps lighter humor displays itself more frequently in a stable, affluent society. (Robinson, 1991). Robinson elaborates on how black humor expresses itself in a turbulent society, “It was to move to the opposite extreme: ‘making fun of’ in the most grotesque, macabre manners, those very things, which frightened and disturbed society. It seemed to be almost an attempt to ‘shock’ our self out of the horror and anxiety.” (Robinson, 1991). Author Mark Polizzotti presents a wide perspective, “Black humor is the opposite of joviality, wit, or sarcasm. Rather, it is a partly macabre, partly ironic, often absurd turn of spirit that constitutes the ‘mortal enemy of sentimentality,’ and beyond that a ‘superior revolt of the mind.’” (Breton, 1997). Robinson, focusing on the description of gallow humor, synonymous to black humor, states, “Freud’s basic concept that joking relieves repressed impulses and anxieties, and that laughter converts the unpleasant feeling to pleasant ones, underlies the theory of ‘gallow humor’. This gallow humor a grip, macabre humor, a bravado in the face of death, is a type of humor which is typically seen when individuals or groups are faced with considerable stress and precarious or dangerous situations, such as at war, on battle fields, in oppressed countries, in concentration camps and in life-and-death struggles within hospitals.” (Robinson, 1991).

The relation between humor and negativity in this description can be evaluated in the same scope as that of black humor. So, we can say that black humor in this time was a cathartic release, humorous outlet and intellectual defense mechanism in a disillusioned or stymied society. I consider the depiction of nonsense, post-war difficulties, famine and oppressive regimes in satirical works as black humor. Now we may focus on Max Ernst’s surrealist works in which may contain black humor.

## MAX ERNST’S HUMOR

Ernst was born in 1891, in Cologne, Germany. While he was studying philosophy in Bonn, he interested in art. Although he never received any formal artistic course, he played an important artistic, explorative role in both Dadaist and Surrealist movements. His natural artistic curiosity can be seen reflected in his artworks. He liked to develop his artistic skills of observation and experimentation. As Giuseppe Gatt agrees “He dedicated himself to continual experiment in technique and imagery.” (Gatt, 1968). He did not devote himself solely to any particular technique but nurtured his artistic needs, dreams and imaginations with various styles and techniques e.g. frottage, grattage, dripping, engraving collage and painting. It would not be wrong to liken Ernst’s artistic struggle to that of a visual explorer.

We can say that, from the magazine *View* (established by Charles H. Ford) artist such as Bosch and Bruegel influenced Ernst’s career, as they were his favorites. (Avalon, 1991). Ernst pointed out that Bosch and Bruegel were his favorite artists in the 1942 edition of *View* magazine, published from September through March of 1947 in New York. Human and animal figures, sometimes plants, were juxtaposed and metamorphosed by Ernst and other above-mentioned artists. This basic principle of blending process created absurd and humorous effects, which is a similar result in these artist’s paintings. Some other authors and poets, whom Ernst loved, became sources of inspiration for other surrealists who were also mentioned in this magazine: Baudelaire, Apollinaire, Rimbaud and Carroll. Andre Breton referred to such authors and poets in his book *The Anthology of Black humor*, because he thought that they were the leading literal writers of Black humor as well.

Ernst concentrated upon human-like figures in most of his works. Some examples are *The Angel of Hearth and Home* (1937), *The Antipope* (1941-42), *The King Playing with the Queen* (1944), *The Garden of the Hesperides* (1935) and *The Robing of the Bride* (1939). In such works, Ernst painted and manipulated human figures and their environments. These paintings are attractive and visually entertaining. Because Ernst blended human figures with monster-like creatures, their familiar forms and figures become unfamiliar. Art historian John Russell explains how Ernst’s artistic approach was similar with Grandville as a significant artist in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, “In devising his

animal headed human beings, Max Ernst leaned above all, as has been seen, on his own hallucinatory experience. But, in expressing this, he continued the tradition set in the nineteenth century by Jean-Isidore Gerard, best known as ‘Grandville.’” (Russel, 1967). For example, Ernst painting, *Human Figure* (1931), Image 1, was the result of an animal, plant and human figure. This work was a new form produced either consciously or unconsciously as a result of artistic and creative talent. The importance of fusion in form, for example human, animal and plant is exemplary in this painting. The image introduces us to unfamiliarity and strangeness that is Ernst’s approach. Werner Spies agrees that, “persistent research in pursuit of the strange and unfamiliar - this brings us to the crux of Max Ernst’s approach.” (Spies, 1991).

Ernst, in *Image 1*, placed an insect head at the top of the human-like figure. The body part of this figure is much more complex. A plant is getting out of the so-called head of the insect and is suspended through the bottom of the figure forming the body of the figure as well. The left arm seems to be the leaves of a plant. The right hand is more complex with human and plant mixed together. Therefore, the right ‘arm’ can be either a part of the plant or the arm of the human. The legs coming out of the waist of this figure resemble human legs more clearly. In the middle of the plant, suspended from top to bottom, are two fruits that resemble the testis of a male. Nevertheless, we do not know whether Ernst considered these two fruit-like round forms to be the sexual organ of a man.

As a result, in *Image 1*, while the head of the figure looks like an insect head, an odd form that is a combination of plant and human makes up the body part. Likewise, even the right arm has a complex illustration of plant and human combination, while the left arm is clearly depicted as a human arm. Absurdity and humor combine in this work. On the one hand, I think the figure resembles a human, plant and insect at the same time. On the other, we may think that it resembles none of them. Here, Ernst presents the exaggerated method of caricature art used to make human figures look ridiculous, in a new form of exaggeration that associates three basic figures, ‘human’, ‘plant’ and ‘animal’. Ernst forces the boundaries of the real and surreal world in this study as well as most of his other studies. He constitutes illogical, absurd and odd relations between the symbolic figures that he uses in the real world. Gatt explains such findings in the works of Ernst as follows; “There is no difference between the image of reality and the reality of the image. The underlying meaning of things is tapped, there are allusions, ambiguities, a feeling of adventure, and one turns especially to self-examination.” (Gatt, 1968). How can we interpret this complex figure of plant-insect mixture, which is presented as a human figure? Did Ernst try to explain human as a creature identified with nature? Or, did he try to emphasize the wild nature of humans through symbolic ex-

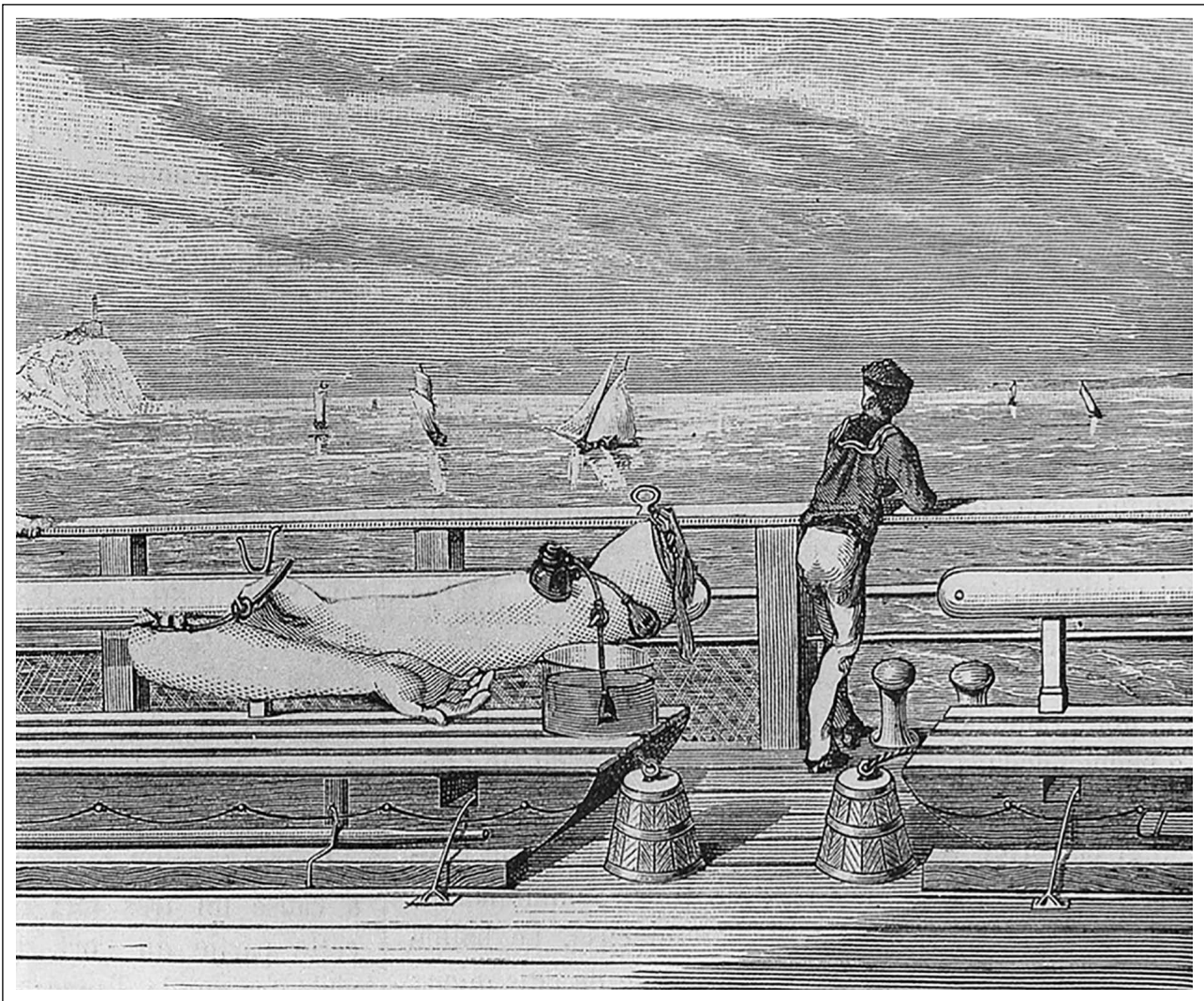


**Image 1.** *Human Figure* (1931), by Max Ernst.

planation of insect and plant? Is this figure work related to the metamorphosis of humankind? It is possible to produce more questions on this issue. The most significant point that Ernst focuses on in such works, as Gatt mentions in his above quotation, is the self-examination of the individual.

War was one of the most important factors that invoked destruction, nonsense and consequently, humor. Ernst had participated in World War I and experienced the severity of war. He claimed how he was reborn after the war, in 1918, in these lines, “Max Ernst died on 1 August 1914. He returned to life on 11 November 1918, a young man who wanted to become a magician and find the myths of his time (bib.59).” (Spies, 1991). Uwe M. Schneede considers Ernst’s post-war transformation and comments, “This quest, which would have been unthinkable without the wartime despair and





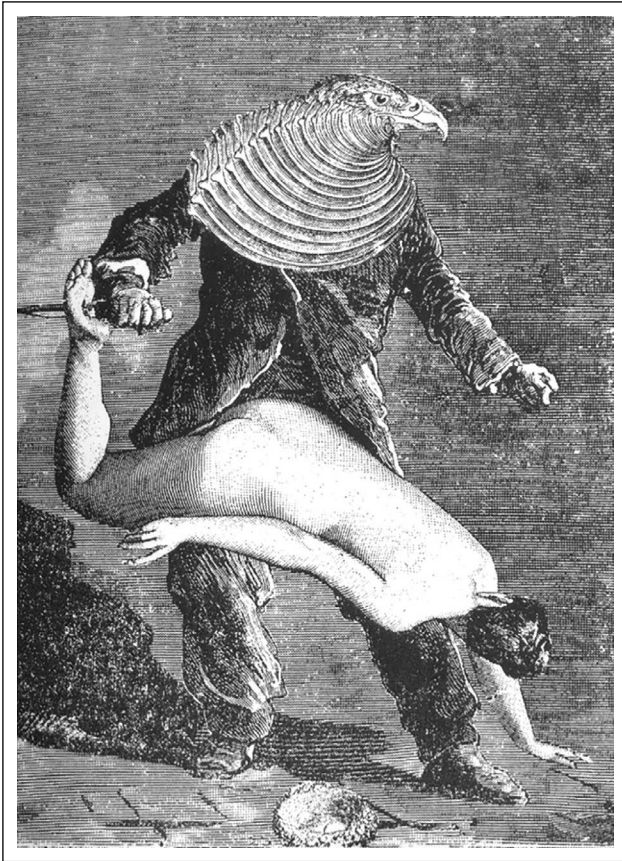
**Image 2.** Yachting, (1929), by Max Ernst.

subsequent political polarization that affected Germany, begins with Dadaism.” (Schneede, 1967). Schneede reflects on the rebellion, despair and nonsense of war in relation to Dada as follows, “Contrary to general belief, Dada did not want to shock the bourgeois. They were already shocked enough. No, Dada was a rebellious upsurge of vital energy and rage; it resulted from the absurdity, the whole immense ‘schweingerei’ of that imbecilic war. We young people came back from the war in a state of stupefaction, and our rage had to find expression somehow or other.” (Schneede, 1967). A major facet of Dada that needs to be closely considered is black humor. Society’s post-war paradigm shift and the consequential birth of Dada highlighted the absurdities of life. These absurdities are oftentimes seen expressed humorously in this era via black humor.

We can analyse one of Ernst’s collages, *Yachting* (1929), Image 2, that contains strong elements of black humor. It displays a sudden violation in an otherwise placid scene.

Odd and absurd elements bring about this violation and associate it with black humour. It is possible to describe this engraving as follows: There is a sailor watching the sea. The place is a port with some sailboat. This print probably illustrates an article or a story from the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. What we know is that Ernst assembled the illustrative and informative print with an extra print or prints to create a new look, a third picture. The other object, a group of human limbs, is on the port just behind the sailor. It seems that the sailor is not aware of the human limbs, which do not have any connection to the landscape and the sailor. This gives a strange and weird atmosphere to the collage.

A combination of these two different collages, the limb and the sailor with the background landscape, introduces us to a puzzle that captures our attention. Ernst complicates his image by adding the misplaced limb, to explore our perceptions. The complexity and intrigue in this collage results from marrying two different prints by the collage method.



**Image 3.** Bird-Man, (1933), Max Ernst.

These images, originally illustrated with different aims, naturally, seem odd to us in this new form. It is a challenge to draw logic from this combined result. We face difficulty in comprehending how a human organ can exist behind the sailor. Such an illustration is of course bizarre and humorous for us. It is irrational and ridiculous for a torn or cut human limb to be illustrated as a background image, in the daytime, at sightseeing, can be described as black humor.

Ian Turpin who comments Ernst's above work, as primarily idyllic, while pointing out how such a case suddenly changed, "The brief title Yachting that accompanies the collage illustrated evokes perfectly the idyllic situation that will be shattered irrevocably when the sailor turns round to be confronted by the huge dismembered limbs lying on the bench beside him." (Turpin, 1979). The imagined surprise of the sailor should he turn around and see the dismembered limb behind him is darkly humorous. The surprise and unexpected situation combine with fear due to the human limb. Does Ernst want to shock the sailor? Is he perhaps subconsciously revealing his sadistic psyche? In fact, we do not have any clear answers for these questions. I beg to differ with the finality and clarity of Schneede when he comments that the collage reveals, "a sadistic streak which tips over into black humor." (Schneede, 1967). Such a decisive interpretation is short-sighted.

What would the reason be for the tendency of Ernst into violence, death, sexual violence and other propulsive concepts in his black humor works? Werner Spies claims that the World War I would have influenced the works of Dada period including the works of Ernst. Spies describes the issues used in the works of the artists of the period like that, "The moment had been prepared by the experience of war and destruction, which so obviously dominates the iconography of the early Dada period of Max Ernst's oeuvre. The anatomical dissections, the skeletons, the associations with air battles, the sadism, and the erotically excited lust for life, the artificial limbs, the cuts and amputations carried out the world with a pair of sharp scissors." (Spies, 1967). It is possible to think that, after his war experience in World War I, Ernst's use of black humor in his collages can be interpreted as a psychological recovery in his adapting to a 'post-war' normal life.

We can analyze another collage of Ernst's, Bird-Man (1933), Image 3, from his collage book, *Une Semaine de Bonte*. The collage bears very complex emotions related to violence, sex, fear, vagueness, absurdity and, finally black humor. Russel defines such an approach as "a new degree of emotional" involvement. (Russel, 1967). In the collage there are two main figures, a man and a woman. The man has an eagle head, possibly representing power, and is stabbing the left foot of the woman. The woman is in a bizarre position, bending toward the ground as if she is falling down. The most interesting feature in the image is that the man wears a suit while the woman is naked. An egg in a symbolic bird nest under these two figures increases the mysticism of this collage. I guess that this collage is made up from four different prints: the eagle head, the man with a knife in his hand, the naked woman and the symbolic bird nest.

Many questions arise from this collage. For instance, does the violent act also represent an erotic interchange? Does the egg and nest symbolize the possibility of offspring from this interchange? What exactly is the meaning of the man's mask? What kind of expression is on the woman's turned face, partial delight or pure agony and fear?

Another curiosity is whether there is any relation between the eagle-headed man and Ernst himself. Russell supports this idea, "...the bird, with whom Max Ernst had so often identified himself." (Russel, 1967). Gatt associates two of Ernst's youthful events as follows: "There were two important events during his early adolescence: the birth of sister Loni and the death of his pink cockatoo in 1906 - two events which Max linked in his mind, to the extent of deciding that the birth of the young child had provoked the death of the bird." (Gatt, 1968). Can we say that a youthful experience influenced and is reflected in his works subconsciously? of course it is possible. Gatt expresses how Ernst's childhood experiences influenced the later periods in these lines, "The works of his first decade of his activity, from 1909 to 1918, are clearly linked with Ernst's childhood both on a psychological level and so far as their setting is concerned." (Gatt, 1968).

We may say that the bird image in Ernst's paintings can be the reflection of his subconscious. Similar to a still frame drama, we can understand that Ernst may be seeking revenge for the death of his beloved pink cockatoo by stabbing his sister, the alleged murderer. Although the sister is vulnerable, naked and falling toward earth head first, as she did on the day of her birth, she is depicted as a fully matured woman. This brings into question Ernst's subconscious incestuous perversion. A sexual charge between the supposed brother and sister is impossible to ignore. The inappropriateness and absurd nature of this loaded collage is darkly humorous. And the questions it raises are quite endless. Although the knife attack displays an obvious violence, the myriad of possible answers to why and for what reason shows its complexity. The absurd combination of events and images may be mysterious, but are certainly humorous. It is possible to say that the man, while committing a violent act, seems to have a sadistic joy. The sadistic behavior, portrayed violence and erotic undertones clearly categorize it as black humor.

It is possible to define the odd and irrational case in Image 3, as dream-like. Such an odd violence performed by the eagle-masked man against the woman, can be defined as bizarre in real life. Spies mentions, "He [Ernst] was fascinated by the disconnected way in which the images of manifest dream content impinge on one another, less by the interpretations attached to them." (Spies, 1991). One can imagine Ernst's work making utter and clear sense in dream-state, however, in the waking hours it loses its clarity and is looked upon with great humor and skepticism. In Image 3, obscurity brings about skepticism creating a dream-like effect while absurdity brings about humor. Schneede points out, "Skepticism, irony, doubt: the states of mind which characterize Max Ernst's work are intellectual ones." (Schneede, 1967).

The obscurity and complexity do not constitute an obstacle in terms of comprehending the absurdities. These are quite apparent, humorous and obvious. The eagle head of the man and his stabbing the underside of the woman's left foot is bizarre. Another point is that the eagle head looks forward and has no emotional expression. An additional nonsensical element is the position of the woman while being stabbed.

Ernst described the black humor in his collages, "The quantity of black humor contained in each authentic collage is found there in the inverse proportion of the possibilities for happiness (objective and subjective)." (Spies, 1991). In Figure 39, black humor is heightened by the macabre, violent, sinister and sadistic elements and also in the absence of happiness. As far as the prior definitions of black humor are concerned, black humor emerges from negativity such as violence and war. Saklar's emphasis on 'sexuality and violence' in his definition of black humor can be compared closely to the black humor in Image 3.

Now, we may compare and analyze Ernst's complex Bird-Man collage with one of Jan Lenica's posters image, Visited by the Old Lady.

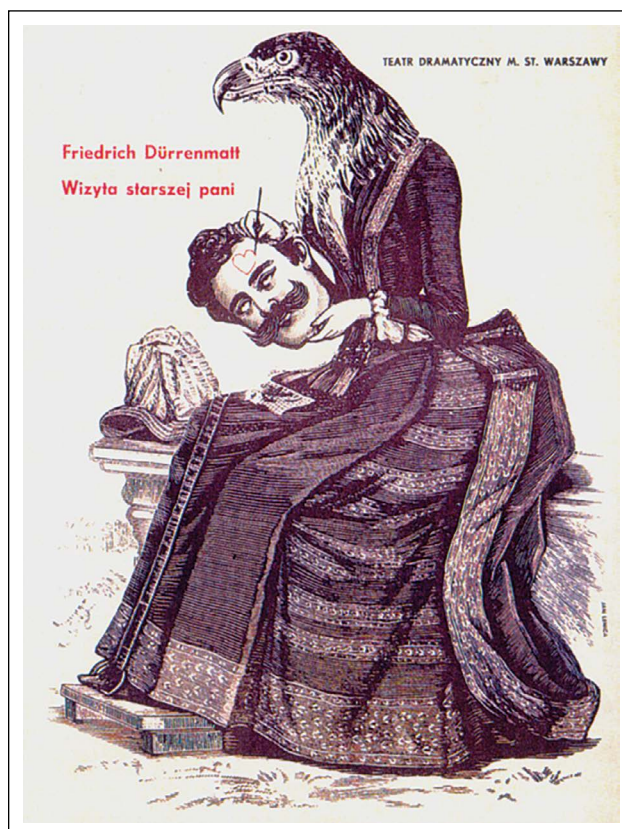


Image 4. Visited by the Old Lady (1958), by Jan Lenica.

## JAN LENICA

Lenica was born in Poznan, Poland, in 1928. He studied music, architecture and art. His powerful cinema posters brought him international fame and recognition in 1950s. (Stephenson, 1974). Andrejz Klimowski emphasizes that a significant characteristic of Lenica's poster works is a 'surreal tendency'. It is possible to point out that Ernst influenced the surreal language in Lenica's works. Ernst's inspirations affected Lenica in the early years of his career. I had the privilege of communicating over the telephone with Lenica just before he passed away in Berlin, Germany. When I asked him if he had a particular mentor or artist who inspired him, he said, "When I was young, I liked Ernst's collages which helped me to create my conceptual posters. Later on, I found my own technique and approach in poster." Lenica emphasizes this connection in his autobiographical book, *Labiryth* "I tried collage and assemblage of 19<sup>th</sup>-century etchings, whose unconscious comic element and the naïve charm were discovered by Max Ernst," (Lenica, 2002). Lenica's many posters' collages and painted images, as well as Ernst's works, are a result of juxtaposing and assembling more than one image or idea. Ernst's humorous dream-like and absurd collages also influenced Lenica's posters. For example, Lenica's collage style poster, Visited by the Old Lady (1958), Image 4, that he made in 1958 was a play adapted from the theatre story of Swiss Friedrich Durrenmatt.



Lenica's theatre poster and Ernst's collage work have similar approaches. Although the representation and content of both collages are different from one another, we see features in common, particularly, dream-likeness, humor, obscurity and violence. Lenica like Ernst placed an eagle head on a human body. The female human figure in Lenica's collage wears 19<sup>th</sup> century attire. The woman in Ernst's collage was violated by an eagle headed man. It is quite the opposite in Lenica's poster where the eagle headed woman is holding the severed head of a man. The woman in Figure 40 is not in a sexual or harassed situation, indeed, her eagle head may signify a degree of inner strength. The woman's ultra-ladylike posture contradicts the fact that she is holding a gentleman's decapitated head. At the same time, she appears to be a lady, she also appears to be a predator. Despite the contradiction, the collage retains an odd and complex meaning. Another odd and puzzling point is that while the eagle headed woman comfortably holds the severed head, she draws a heart on the forehead. Lenica's collage, from the woman's action, raises some questions. Has she killed him because of a love relationship? If she did not, why does she have an eagle head? Had someone else already killed him? Did she simply want to show her love by drawing the heart on his forehead? If so, is it not odd behavior to draw a heart on a severed man's forehead? All these questions are alleviated when the play's synopsis is examined. "Claire Zachanassian returns to her poverty-stricken native village, Güllen, somewhere in Central Europe. She is an extremely rich woman and she arrives with an offer: a million for the life of her former love, [Edward] Ill, who forty-five years before, seduced her and then left for another woman. (another woman's advantage was that she owned a small store.) Claire, in love, abandoned, and pregnant, landed in a bordello in Hamburg, where one of her rich clients took pity on her and married her. Now she is back with cash and coffin." (Mount, 2000).

Now it becomes very clear that the woman, Claire Zachanassian, indirectly murdered the man, Alfred Ill, in revenge for his desertion years earlier. Her eagle head symbolizes her power and ability to hunt and destroy. Black humor is very evident in her actions. She ironically draws a heart on the decapitated forehead. She tenderly expresses love, a love she will never fully possess. Both artist's collages are violent and absurd, however, each artist's intention was different. Ernst used banal engraving advertising images to create a powerful combination and explore his unconsciousness as Schneede states: "Max Ernst once said of the collage that its hallucinatory power transforms 'the banal advertisement page into a drama which reveals my most private desires.'" (Schneede, 1967). At the same time, Lenica used similar engraving prints to create an advertisement to promote a theatrical play. Lenica's collage brings a humorous dream-like quality to poster art

inspired by Ernst's collages. Lenica interpreted the plays, instead of simply illustrating them with visual decoration.

The absurdity of human behavior in both collages brings a taste of black humor, which softens the sexual violence in Figure 39 and the cruel murder in Figure 40. In both collages, the woman and man have eagle heads. Freud's verbal joke technique, displacement can be applied to these replaced human heads. Displacement of words can create absurdity that opens the door to humour. According to Freud meaningless words can create absurd and meaningful jokes: "The meaningless combination of words or the obscure putting together of thoughts must nevertheless have a meaning." (Freud, 1976).

Displacement in the works of Ernst and Lenica highlights absurdity and visual humor. Visual humor in Image 3 and Image 4 was over shadowed by obscurity. For example, in Image 4, the eagle headed woman draws the shape of a heart on the decapitated head's forehead. But at the same time, we assume that he was the eagle-headed woman's prey. This contradiction confuses us. Symbolic clues are not decisive enough to solve the puzzle without background information. The collage is a symbolic visual play. One may interpret it as the woman having loved the man, and love killed him. Ernst's collage, however, remains with its complexity intact, offering no decisive solution. His intention was purely artistic and abstract. I would also like to point out that Lenica's humorous poster collage is more complex than Dadaist John Heartfield's. Earlier, I had analyzed Heartfield's satirical collage, Figure 34. Paired with text, it was clear and obvious. Text demystifies the scary Nazi fish-headed man. Heartfield clearly attacked the Nazi regime. But Lenica's collage introduces us to an intriguingly absurd humour that does not have explanatory text. At the same time, Lenica's poster has more indelible visual information derived from its obscurity and enigmatic features.

Although Lenica and Ernst delivered unclear and humorous dream-like scenes with displaced relationships between figures and objects in collage, the possibilities of storylines and symbolic visual play entertains us. Ernst, as mentioned earlier, assembles banal engraving prints into fascinating collages to explore his desires. His dream-like scenery extends the barriers of commonplace thinking. Lenica, on the other hand, did not make his collages to explore his depths. His purpose was to interpret dramatic theatrical plays by assembling collages. His approach to these collages was similar to that of Ernst's. While Lenica's humorous collage in poster maintains its artistic dream-like, mysterious quality, it also serves its commercial purpose for promotion of the theatrical world. Analyzing both Ernst's humorous, dream-like collage and Lenica's commercial yet absurd poster reveals a very common humorous approach, technique and visual style despite the decades between them.

## CONCLUSION

In this article, we analyzed the visual humor, particularly black humor, that has a significant place in Dada, Surrealism and poster art. The purpose of this article is to investigate the visual humor in Surreal art in order to understand if such absurdness and strange image may role in poster art. For that reason, we have concentrated on the visual humor in both Dada and Surrealism. In this framework, I delved into the relationship of Max Ernst “allegorical” and “satirical” humorous paintings. In this article, I observed the fact that the “absurdness” and humor, which are formed by “juxtaposed” type of surreal images, created by means of the painting technique, had parallel relations with poster art.

Furthermore, we identified the different kinds of humor in the works of Max Ernst by studying the most important features of surreal humor. I compared a humorous work Ernst attained through collage with the poster illustrations of Jan Lenica. In this comparison, I highlighted how the works of the artists, who are almost equivalent in terms of technique, method and the use of the visual language, could differ in terms of the image usage process. Although we may say that visual surreal humor is exiting strongly in both art and design, the purpose of these areas are different from each other. Visual surreal humor in art may be interpreted more broad way, while humor in poster may have specific purpose in order to clarify message.

**Ethics:** There are no ethical issues with the publication of this manuscript.

**Peer-review:** Externally peer-reviewed.

**Conflict of Interest:** The author declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

**Financial Disclosure:** The author declared that this study has received no financial support.

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