

Art for April Fools' Day

For April Fools' Day, here are some pieces of art that seem appropriate. They are associated with tricks of the eye, with a hoax, with having fun with the observer, being incongruent with the expected, or just being a little "out there". Enjoy!

The first piece I chose dates back to the 16th century. Guiseppe Archimboldo (1527-1593) created imaginative portraits from fruits, flowers and animals. Combining these everyday objects, he created recognizable portraits. This one is particularly fishy.



April Fool's Day and Trompe l'Oeil paintings seem to go together. A couple of fabulous ones are below.

The first one is called the *Raft of Lampedusa* (2017), which depicts a boat of refugees capsizing in the River Seine and aimed to alert Parisians to the urgency of the situation of refugees drowning in the Mediterranean Sea. Pierre Delavie created this piece (in collaboration with the Bureau d'accueil et d'accompagnement des migrants (Reception and Support Office for Migrants)). The original photograph was taken by the Italian Navy in 2016.



The second one is a trompe l'oeil fresco in Québec City, entitled *La Fresque des Québécois*. Painted by 12 Québécois and French artists in 1999, the mural depicts historical figures from various periods of Québec history.



I put this one in to test whether *my sweetheart* actually reads any of my postings.



Dadaism was an artistic movement that arose in Zurich in reaction to World War I. Zurich became a hub for people in exile where artists protested against the pointlessness and horrors of the war under the battle cry of DADA.

One of the most famous artists of the Dada movement was Marcel Duchamp (French, 1887-1968). His *La Joconde* (1919) is an iconic example of the movement.



It was created from an inexpensive postcard of Leonardo da Vinci's *Mona Lisa* on which Duchamp drew a waxed mustache and goatee. The letters on the bottom (L.H.O.O.Q) are translated as "Elle a chaud au cul" ("There is fire down below"). According to the Norton Simon Museum website, "The image trespasses the boundaries of appropriation by presenting a reproduction, however tarted up, as an original work of art."

Max Ernst (German, 1891-1976) was a pioneer of both the Dada and Surrealist movements. A prolific artist, Ernst is well known for his collage novels. *Une Semaine de Bonté* ("A Week of Kindness"). It is also known as *The Seven Deadly Elements*. The book comprises 182 images cut from Victorian encyclopedias and novels rearranged. The work is divided into seven sections, each named for a day of the week. In addition to the days of the week, the sections are entitled: Mud, Water, Fire, Blood, Blackness, Sight, and Unknown. The entirety of the collage novel presents a dark, surreal world. The photo below is a scene from the third book (Tuesday, Fire).



Undeniably, the best known artist of the Surrealist movement is Salvador Dalí (Spanish, 1904-1989). Dalí created in multiple mediums: painting, sculpting, printmaking, filmmaking, and performance art. Although some might say that Dalí was a madman, Dalí would have taken issue with that characterization. "The difference between a madman and me," he said, "is that I am not mad."

His best known work is *Persistence of Memory* (1931). Part of NYC's Museum of Modern Art collection, *Persistence of Memory* was painted with what Dalí called "the usual paralyzing tricks of eye-fooling". The limp watches picture "the camembert of time".



Dalí's *Lobster Telephone* (1938) is a classic example of a Surrealist object, a conjunction of items not normally associated with each other. About lobsters and telephones (and champagne), Dalí said, "I do not understand why, when I ask for a grilled lobster in a restaurant, I am never served a cooked telephone; I do not understand why champagne is always chilled and why on the other hand telephones, which are habitually so frightfully warm and disagreeably sticky to the touch, are not also put in silver buckets with crushed ice around them."



If you didn't know the name René Magritte (Belgian, 1898-1967) before the pandemic, you probably do now. Magritte was part of the Surrealist movement, often depicting ordinary objects in an unusual context. His work is known for challenging observers' preconditioned perceptions of reality. With the pandemic's lockdowns, Magritte's *The Lovers* (1928) became a phenomenon on social media, reflecting feelings created not only by the wearing of masks, but the feeling of isolation and necessary separation brought on by social distancing protocols.



Magritte's *Son of Man* (1946), a self-portrait, has also been a popular image during the pandemic, one of a number of works of art that were creatively reimagined by people with too much time on their hands.



Juan Miró (Spanish, 1893-1983) was a painter, sculptor and ceramicist. His work is primarily interpreted as Surrealism, but it often takes on aspects of Fauvism and Expressionism. Miró's work reflects his pride in his Catalan roots and his love of the childlike. The painting below, *The Tilled Field* (1923), is a view of his family's farm in Montroig, Catalonia. This painting is said to be the first example of Miró's Surrealist vision. It is part of the collection of NYC's Guggenheim Museum.



The Pop Art movement of the 1950s and 1960s used every day, mundane objects to create innovative works of art that challenged consumerism and mass media. Pop artists like Andy Warhol believed that art can be drawn from any source. Warhol's *Campbell's Soup Cans* (1962) is among the most popular works of the Pop Art movement. When asked why he chose to paint Campbell's soup cans, Warhol offered a deadpan reply: "I used to have the same lunch every day, for twenty years, I guess, the same thing over and over again." That daily meal is the subject of this work consisting of thirty-two canvases, one for each of the flavors then sold by Campbell's.



Claes Oldenburg (Swedish-American, 1929-current) is known for his public art installations, frequently featuring replicas of everyday objects. He is also known for his soft sculpture versions of everyday objects. *Floor Burger* (1962) marks Oldenburg's journey to making soft sculptures that were focused on "everyday items presented on a magnified scale. It stands 4 feet, 4 inches tall, by 7 feet in diameter. *Floor Burger* (originally titled *Giant Hamburger*) is made of canvas filled with foam rubber and cardboard boxes, painted with latex and Liquitex. The piece's acquisition by the Art Gallery of Ontario was not without protest from the public, who viewed the sculpture as not appropriate for the gallery. The soft sculpture is iconic because it was the first time sculpture had been associated with Pop Art.



What would a piece on Art for April Fool's Day be without a work of art by the street artist, Banksy. From an outlaw spray bomber of the 1990s to an artist whose work recently commanded \$23 million at auction, Banksy remains anonymous, despite attempts to unmask him. His stencil murals of *Girl With Balloon* (started 2002) have been cited as the UK's favorite artwork. In 2018, a copy of the artwork spontaneously shredded at an auction in 2018, the result of a mechanical device Banksy had hidden in the frame.



The Game Changer (2020), depicted below, was donated to the UK's National Health Service by the artist, and auctioned in March 2021, with the proceeds of \$23 million going to the NHS charities. The work recognizes the tireless work of UK's health workers during the pandemic.

