

Rene Magritte

RENE MAGRITTE
(1898 - 1967)

Rene Magritte was born on Nov. 21, 1898 in Lessines, Belgium. His home was a low white house that was later demolished to build a high brick freight building. When he was one the family moved to Gilly. The family moves again in 1910 and around twelve years of age, Rene begins to study drawing.

When Rene is 14 his mother commits suicide by flinging herself into a river. Her body is found with her nightgown wrapped around her head and her face hidden. Magritte becomes very troubled. The following year he moves with his father and two brothers to Charleroi. Rene scares his governess with his sense of the bizarre such as enjoying visits to cemeteries. It is in this year, 1913, that he meets his future wife, Georgette Berger, at a fair.

At the age of 20 he moves to Brussels and in 1920 has his first exhibit. The following year in 1921 he serves in the military. In 1922 he marries Georgette. They never have any children. At this point he works as a wallpaper designer, he makes posters and advertising sketches. Rene is greatly influenced by Cubism, Abstractism, and Futurism, which shows same object at several moments in time.

During 1926 when he is 28 years old he paints 60 canvases, some of which are quite large. In 1928 Rene paints The Lovers where a flowing white cloth hides his subjects faces, echoing his mother's death. He then paints Unexpected Answer in 1933 and Amorous Prospect in 1935. From 1927 - 1938 he has exhibitions in Belgium, New York City, and London. By the time he reaches 45 in 1943 he is spending his time not only by painting and exhibiting, but also by writing, playing chess, reading detective stories and watching John Wayne movies. Rene continues this quiet life in Belgium until his death on Aug. 15, 1967 at the age of 69.

Quotes from Rene Magritte:

"My paintings aren't humorous. I haven't the intention to make people laugh. I look for mystery."

"Everything we see hides another thing. We always want to see what is hidden."

"When I look at my work, I think I'm in the heart of mystery and there is nothing in the world which can explain it."

"The thought in my work is absolute. It can't be interpreted. A bird is a bird. A bottle is a bottle, not a symbol."

"I hate history"

"I paint images that appear to me whether my eyes are closed or open."

"I have no desire to express ideas or sentiments through my painting."

"My titles do not illustrate or explain the picture."

The Son of Man

The Son of Man (French: *Le fils de l'homme*) is a 1964 painting by the Belgian surrealist painter René Magritte.

Magritte painted it as a self-portrait. The painting consists of a man in an overcoat and a bowler hat standing in front of a low wall, beyond which is the sea and a cloudy sky. The man's face is largely obscured by a hovering green apple. However, the man's eyes can be seen peeking over the edge of the apple. Another subtle feature is that the man's left arm appears to bend backwards at the elbow.

About the painting, Magritte said:

At least it hides the face partly well, so you have the apparent face, the apple, hiding the visible but hidden, the face of the person. It's something that happens constantly. Everything we see hides another thing, we always want to see what is hidden by what we see. There is an interest in that which is hidden and which the visible does not show us. This interest can take the form of a quite intense feeling, a sort of conflict, one might say, between the visible that is hidden and the visible that is present.¹