

Meet the Masters

April Program

Renee Magritte "The Empire of the Light"

Wassily Kandinsky "Watercolor Number 13"

About the Artist:

See the following pages.

About the Artwork:

See the following pages.

Topics for Discussion:

1. How do you think each of these artists used their imaginations?
2. Which of these paintings looks more real? Why?
3. Can you find the way Magritte has used his imagination in the painting "Empire of the Light"?
4. Can you tell how Kandinsky has used his imagination in the painting "Composition 13"?
5. Which painting do you like best and why?

Hands-on Art Activity:

Painting With Imagination

Materials: Paper (11" x 14" or larger)
Watercolor paints
Soft brushes
Water tubs
Permanent markers (black, fine point)
Paper towels

Directions:

1. Using plenty of water with your paint and apply colors all over the paper being careful to control the flow of the paint.
2. Allow the paint to dry. Look carefully at the colors and the shapes they resemble.
3. Using the marker outline interesting shapes and add details to the composition.
4. Students should sign their name on front when complete.

About the Art:

Rene Magritte painted "The Empire of the Light" in 1954. The painting, of which a number of variations exist, shows a house at the dead of night, surrounded by trees. The subdued light of a street lantern shows the house and its lighted windows reflected in water. The only bewildering element about this peacefully idyllic scene is the surprising fact that it has been placed under the light blue clouds of a daylight sky, as if it were enchanted. The picture is divided into a day and a night section. Magritte manipulates everyday reality by changing the color of the sky.

Rene' Magritte
(1897-1967)

Born in Belgium in 1898 Rene' Magritte painted some of the most memorable icons of surrealist art. These images, which have often been appropriated by the advertising media, and have been, copied more than more than any other artist of the 20th century. The paintings of Magritte evoke a silent and disquieting world, where the familiar is rendered strange. Ordinary objects confront each other in unexpected, sometimes menacing juxtapositions. Magritte's paintings have been described as dreams.

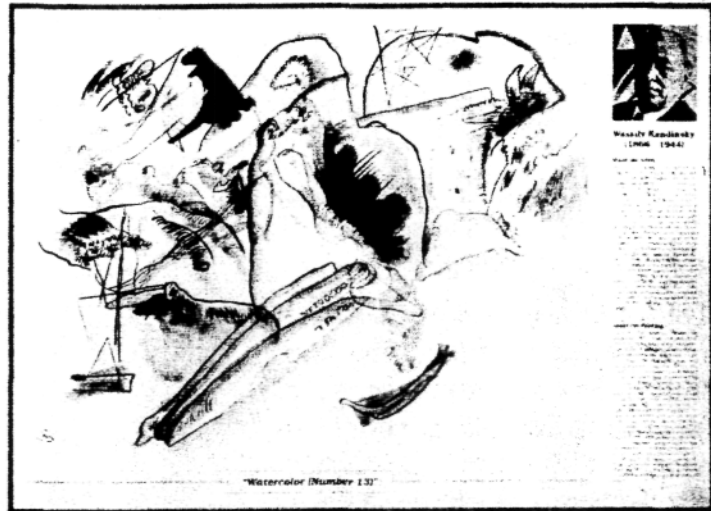
Magritte grew up in the province of Hainaut in south central Belgium, the eldest son of a businessman. When he was 13, a traumatic event occurred which seems to have influenced much of Magritte's art – his mother drowned herself in a river near their family home. The following year, he met Georgette Berger, whom he married in 1922 and lived with for 45 years until his death.

Over a three-year period in the late 1920's Magritte spent much of his time in Paris, where he met and was accepted by the surrealists. At this time, influenced by Freud's newly published theories on the mind, surrealist artists were mostly employing automatism and collage in an attempt to achieve a direct, unmediated link to the unconscious. The influential collages and wood-grain rubbings of Max Ernst and mysterious metaphysical painting of di Chirico provided Magritte with points of departure. Before returning to Brussels in 1930, Magritte along with Salvador Dali, Man Ray, and Paul Delvaux, began producing works that helped to pioneer a new direction for surrealism. This superreal style portrays, in precise detail, recognizable scenes and objects taken out of natural context, distorted, and combined in startling, often poetic ways, as they might be in dreams. It was an approach that Magritte mastered and has become identified with,

More About the Artist

Vassily Kandinsky (1866 - 1944)

Vassily Kandinsky was in many ways a man ahead of his time. Although he began his artistic career at the height of the Impressionist movement of the late 1800s, his work clearly belongs to the 20th century. In fact, he is often called the originator of modern abstract art.



Kandinsky was born in Moscow on December 4, 1866. When Kandinsky was five years old, his family moved to Odessa. But Kandinsky returned each summer, and the colors and shapes he remembered from his childhood would later reappear in his paintings. Kandinsky was nearly thirty years old before he decided to become a painter, and his writings offer no clues as to what made him decide to give up his legal training to pursue art. Trips to Paris familiarized him with the works of the Post-Impressionists and the Fauves. In 1907, he placed some of his works in an exhibition of German expressionist art. But it was in 1910 that Kandinsky took the step which was to revolutionize painting. That year he created his first entirely abstract work. The painting, done in watercolor and India ink, consists of thin, squiggly lines which trace out unrecognizable shapes. These shapes are filled in or highlighted by splashes of muted color. The painting, like much of Kandinsky's work, provoked a great deal of controversy. Many people criticized the painting because, they said, it had no real subject. But for Kandinsky, a painting could be like a piece of music. That is, it did not have to "show" something or be "about" something. Its beauty could be derived simply from the arrangement of its elements, just as the beauty of a symphony derives from the arrangement of notes on a musical scale.

In his later years, Kandinsky's works became more precise and geometrical. But he retained his love of the abstract. His influence can clearly be seen in the works of artists like Joan Miro, Piet Modrian, and Arshile Gorky.