



Reframing Reality: The Aesthetics of the Surrealist Object in French and Czech Cinema

Alison Frank

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Marcel Duchamp's urinal re-named 'fountain' and placed in an art gallery. The classic image that can be seen as a duck or a rabbit, depending on how you look at it. A random object that grabs your attention and, like a Freudian slip, sums up whatever's on your mind. These are just a few examples of surrealist objects, items from everyday life that have something to tell us about the workings of the unconscious. In Reframing Reality, Alison Frank argues that the surrealist object offers a promising new way of understanding surrealism's legacy in cinema. Early studies of surrealist cinema restricted themselves to the handful of films that received official approval from the surrealist group. More recent studies have looked more broadly at films that explore the unconscious as a theme. Reframing Reality is the first to use the specifically surrealist concept of the surrealist object to trace the influence of surrealism in a broader range of films. When objects do more than just advance the storyline, or have a mysterious meaning that is never fully explained, they are imitating the form of the surrealist object. Reframing Reality finds surrealist objects in films by Luis Buñuel and Jan Švankmajer, who acknowledged the importance of surrealism in their work, but also in the films of René Clair, Jean-Pierre Jeunet, and the directors of the Czech New Wave, for whom surrealism was just one of many influences. By looking more closely at the role of objects in films, particularly those made during times of great change in the industry, we can gain a better understanding of both the legacy of surrealism in cinema and film language more generally.



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