

Surrealism from Paris to Shanghai

Lauren Walden

Fine Art / Art History

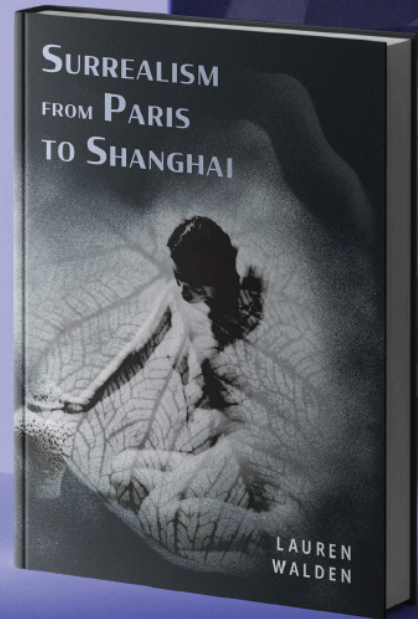
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Surrealism in China initially gained a foothold in Shanghai's former French concession during the early 1930s, disseminated by returning Chinese students who had directly encountered the movement in Paris and Tokyo. Shanghai surrealism adopted a dialectical form, resonating with the *modus operandi* of the Parisian movement as well as China's traditional belief system of Daoism. Reconciling the thought of Freud and Marx, Surrealism subsumed the multiple contradictions that divided Republican Shanghai, East and West, colonial and cosmopolitan, ancient and modern, navigating the porous boundaries that separate dream and reality. Shanghai surrealists were not rigid followers of their Parisian counterparts. Indeed, they commingled Surrealist techniques with elements of traditional Chinese iconography. Rather than revolving around a centralized group with a leader, Shanghai Surrealism was a much more diffuse entity, disseminated across copious different periodicals, avant-garde groups, and the entire gamut of political ideology, ranging from Nationalist party supporters to Communist sympathizers. Ultimately, the pervasive presence of Surrealism in Shanghai can

be attributed to a wide range of factors: a yearning for national renewal, the stagnancy of the *guohua* genre, anticolonial protest, the rise of Western individualism, circumnavigating censorship and experimentation in search of a unique artistic voice. This is the first English-language book dedicated to introducing Chinese Surrealism, using periodicals and other primary sources to reveal the mutual cultural influences between China and Western avant-garde, and broaden the scope of Surrealist studies beyond Eurocentric prisms.

Lauren Walden is a research fellow at Birmingham City University.



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