

René Magritte (Belgian, 1898-1967) – Artist Resources

[Fondation Magritte, Brussels, Belgium](#)

[MoMA](#) organized the 2013-14 traveling retrospective, *The Mystery of the Ordinary*, in partnership with [The Menil Collection, Houston](#) as well as [The Art Institute of Chicago](#). The exhibition was the first to focus on Magritte's formative breakthrough years, from 1926 to 1938, when the Belgian Surrealist sought to "challenge to world" through image. Visit the links to explore each museum's exhibition resources.

[Profile and review of *The Treason of Images*, 2016 retrospective at the Centre Pompidou, Paris](#)

The Treachery of Images, 2017 retrospective at [Schirn Kunsthalle, Frankfurt](#). The first major retrospective of Magritte's work in Germany.

Recent scholarship:

In [Rene Magritte and the Art of Thinking \(2019\)](#), Magritte specialist, Lisa Lipinski (George Washington University) employs post-structuralist theory and a keen art historical eye in a rigorous discussion of the Surrealist's unique blend of the ordinary and illusion as he sought to the challenge expectations and perceptions of his viewers.

[Watch Lipinski's talk at JSMA, "The Man in the Bowler Hat," December 2019](#)



Magritte, 1967

Photograph: Lothar Wolleh (German, 1930-79)



Magritte, photobooth, 1929



René Magritte (Belgian, 1898-1967)

Le Cicerone, 1948

Oil on canvas

Private Collection L2019:145.3

Belgian artist René Magritte was a pivotal member of the international Surrealist movement, celebrated for an oeuvre that intentionally defies interpretation as it questions knowledge, language, and reality. His visually stunning and conceptually complex paintings subvert the ordinary and familiar with unexpected juxtapositions that challenge preconceptions. In **Le Cicerone**, Magritte brings viewers into closer proximity with the subject of an earlier painting, *Les Droits de l'homme* (1945, "The Rights of Man"). Atop the baluster-like chess piece of a



Les Droits de l'homme , 1945

body sits a *bilboquet*, a simple toy comprised of a wooden cup with a ball attached by a string, which in Magritte's rendition bears an uncanny resemblance to the head of a cannon. The title (referencing the ancient Roman orator, Cicero) is an antiquated term for an educated guide who gives tours of historical and cultural sites. Placed on an outdoor balcony overlooking a moonlit ocean and gazing at a leaf held by a human hand, the anthropomorphized object appears lost in thought. As is typical for Magritte, the scene is a collection of motifs repeated throughout his career; it serves as a reminder that although knowledge may seem within our grasp, there is little we can truly know with certainty.

On view January 29 – May 3, 2020