

Bloomsbury International Encyclopedia of Surrealism. Bloomsbury, 2020. ISBN 978-1-350-21793-5. Online database.

A digital resource that presents an extensive and organized overview of surrealism, the *Bloomsbury International Encyclopedia of Surrealism* provides access to a three-volume major reference work (published in a print edition in 2019) in a visually pleasing and navigable format. The Encyclopedia includes 200 survey articles, 500 A-Z articles covering key figures, 500 rare documentary and archive images, portraits, and artworks as well as an interactive timeline that allows the user to explore surrealism from 1917 to 2016.

In the introduction, the editors — Michael Richardson, Dawn Ades, Steven Harris, Krzysztof Fijalkowski, and Georges Sebbag — describe the *International Encyclopedia of Surrealism* as a realization of André Breton's ambition when, in 1964, he announced a plan to create an *Encyclopaedia of Surrealism* in collaboration with a hundred contributors, containing 100 illustrations in color and 2,000 in black and white. Acknowledging that surrealism has grown and evolved in the half-century since, the editors state that the goal of this reference work is to evaluate and contribute to the developments and manifestations of surrealism, providing "a primer for its further development, both internally within the surrealist movement, and externally in critical engagement with it." As such, it is intended not merely as an external commentary on the surrealist movement, but as an integral contribution to it, and fittingly, its 130 contributors include artists and members of international surrealist groups as well as academics, scholars, and museum curators.

While acknowledging the importance of Breton and French surrealism, the editors also stress the global and internationalist nature of the movement, stating that the encyclopedia aims to give "a sense of the breadth and many byways that have constituted the surrealist movement over the past century," including "individuals that may prove unfamiliar even to specialists: a demonstration . . . that no single person or institution could be capable of claiming a 'complete' knowledge of the movement." To their credit, the encyclopedia is truly international in its scope, covering surrealist movements from over sixty countries across six continents. Finally, the editors note that the encyclopedia aims to situate surrealism in a historical as well as global perspective, tracing its development from its forebears and prehistory to the present. Here, too, the encyclopedia is impressive in its range: the interactive timeline covers events from 1917 to 2016, but articles about surrealism's ancestors include content from as early as the eighteenth century.

Volume 1 of the print-edition encyclopedia, subtitled "Movements," contains 200 survey articles on national surrealist movements across six continents, analyses of surrealism's underlying concepts, entries describing surrealism's influence across the visual, applied, and performing arts, and articles on movements and figures that prefigure or parallel surrealism. Volumes 2 and 3

present 500 A-Z articles covering individual surrealists, including theorists, critics, writers, filmmakers, and visual artists. The final volume concludes with an article on contemporary surrealism. In addition to these printed-turned-digital materials, the digitized encyclopedia offers the following under a dropdown menu of “Teaching and Learning Tools”: an interactive timeline of surrealism from 1917 to 2016, introductory articles, exclusive bibliographic guides, a world map that enables users to explore the encyclopedia by country or region, and a list of external resources.

The utility of this additional content varies. The timeline and world map are both visually pleasing and provide users with an interesting way to explore the content of the encyclopedia. The timeline, however, is not as “interactive” as it could be — names that appear on it are occasionally linked to relevant articles, but not consistently. There are also some formatting issues that detract from the professional appearance of the page: under the events listed for the year 1919, one bullet-point in the middle has been left blank, for example. The introductory articles are not exclusive to the platform; they are the introductions to the three print volumes. As of January 2021, there are only two bibliographic guides (“Women in Surrealism” and “Revolution”), although the platform promises that it will be updated with “new and exclusive Bibliographic Guides written by the Encyclopedia’s Editors up until 2022.” These guides, which are described as “short thematic articles that provide an introductory overview of the key readings from within the Encyclopedia on a particular subject,” are not particularly effective as introductions. The writing is at times excessively vague, and the content overwhelmingly specific, making the purported introduction inaccessible for a non-expert.

As an online resource, the encyclopedia is not bound by its print organization, and although it is possible to navigate through the original print volumes on the site, it has several useful search and explore functions. In addition to the timeline and world map, the site has a basic search bar and a dropdown “Browse By” menu providing options to browse by forms, themes, artistic movements and styles, ideologies and schools of thought, periods, people, and place. A “Related content” bar to the left of each article provides links to related articles, allowing users to discover new material organically while using the platform.

I have already offered some critiques of the content exclusive to the platform. However, there are some problems with the encyclopedia articles as well. The writing varies, and some are poorly written and difficult to read. They contain typos as well — in the title of one entry, “Marseille” is written “MarseilleS.” Most egregiously, they contain factual errors; in the entry on Antonin Artaud, for example, the article states that his *Le théâtre et son double* was published in 1936; the timeline, however, gives the correct publication date (1938).

There are many things to admire about the *Bloomsbury International Encyclopedia of Surrealism*: the ambitious scope of its contents, the diversity of its contributors, its visually pleasing and accessible layout, and its user-friendly

search tools. However, the lack of serious editorial standards undermines what has the potential to be a very useful resource.

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