

Historical Dictionary Of Surrealism Historical Dictionaries Of Literature And The Arts By Aspley Keith 2010 Hardcover

Aspley Keith's Historical Dictionary of Surrealism: A Deep Dive into the Absurd

Aspley Keith's 2010 **Historical Dictionary of Surrealism**, part of the broader **Historical Dictionaries of Literature and the Arts** series, offers a unique and invaluable resource for anyone seeking to understand the complexities and nuances of the Surrealist movement. This comprehensive work goes beyond a simple glossary, providing a rich tapestry of biographical information, artistic analysis, and historical context crucial for navigating the often-elusive world of Surrealism. This article delves into the book's contents, exploring its key features, usage, and lasting significance in Surrealist scholarship. Keywords like **Surrealism dictionary**, **Surrealist art history**, **Keith's Surrealism Dictionary**, **Surrealist artists**, and **20th-century art history** will be organically woven throughout.

A Comprehensive Overview of Surrealism's Lexicon

Keith's **Dictionary** is not merely a list of definitions; it's a meticulously researched exploration of Surrealism's key figures, concepts, and artworks. The book effectively bridges the gap between the purely artistic and the deeply theoretical, providing insightful entries on both prominent artists like Salvador Dalí and André Breton, and crucial theoretical concepts such as automatism and the **objet trouvé**. This breadth of coverage makes it an indispensable tool for both the

seasoned scholar and the curious newcomer. The entries are not just descriptive; they are analytical, offering contextual information and critical perspectives on the significance of each entry within the broader history of the movement.

Key Features and Strengths

One of the dictionary's standout features is its detailed biographical entries on key figures in the Surrealist movement. These entries are not simply factual; they delve into the artists' lives, influences, and creative processes, providing a nuanced understanding of their contributions to Surrealism. For example, the entry on Dalí explores not only his iconic imagery but also the controversies surrounding his persona and his evolving relationship with the Surrealist group. Similarly, the entries on less well-known figures illuminate the collective nature of the movement and its far-reaching influence.

Furthermore, the *Dictionary* excels in its treatment of key Surrealist concepts. Entries on automatism, paranoiac-critical method, and the concept of the “marvelous” provide clear and concise definitions, while simultaneously situating these ideas within the broader philosophical and artistic contexts of the period. The book effectively unpacks the complex interplay between the artistic and the intellectual in Surrealism, providing a solid foundation for understanding the movement's theoretical underpinnings.

Practical Application and Usage

Keith's *Historical Dictionary of Surrealism* serves multiple purposes. It functions as a reliable reference tool for researchers, students, and art enthusiasts alike. Its alphabetical arrangement allows for quick access to specific information, making it ideal for looking up terminology, identifying artists, or understanding specific artworks within the context of the movement.

Beyond its utility as a reference source, the dictionary also serves as a valuable tool for developing a deeper understanding of Surrealism's rich history and complex intellectual landscape. Reading through entries on various artists, concepts, and artworks reveals the interconnections and evolution of ideas within the movement. The cross-referencing within the

text encourages exploration and allows the reader to build a holistic understanding of Surrealism's development and impact.

Analyzing the Scope and Style

The *Historical Dictionary of Surrealism* distinguishes itself from other works on Surrealism through its comprehensive scope and concise, informative style. Keith avoids overly academic or jargon-heavy language, making the book accessible to a wide range of readers. This clarity of writing, coupled with the detailed and well-researched entries, makes it an invaluable resource for both novice and expert researchers. The dictionary also benefits from its inclusion of illustrative examples, artwork reproductions (where appropriate), and concise yet insightful analysis of pivotal works. This visual and textual combination allows for a multifaceted understanding of the material being presented.

The Enduring Value of Keith's Contribution

Aspley Keith's *Historical Dictionary of Surrealism* stands as a significant contribution to the field of Surrealist scholarship. Its comprehensive coverage, clear writing style, and meticulous research make it an indispensable resource for anyone interested in learning more about this complex and fascinating movement. The dictionary's enduring value lies in its ability to synthesize a vast amount of information into a readily accessible format, making it a valuable tool for scholars, students, and art enthusiasts alike. It serves as a reliable point of reference for understanding the key figures, ideas, and artworks that define the Surrealist legacy. Furthermore, the book's focus on both the artistic and theoretical aspects of Surrealism provides a richer and more complete understanding of the movement's significance. The integration of biographical information, alongside theoretical concepts and artistic analysis, strengthens the book's overall impact and longevity within the field of Surrealist studies. As a cornerstone of the *Historical Dictionaries of Literature and the Arts* series, it sets a high bar for similar lexicographical endeavors.

FAQ: Understanding Aspley Keith's Dictionary

Q1: What makes Keith's *Dictionary* different from other books on Surrealism?

A1: Keith's work distinguishes itself through its comprehensive coverage of both major and minor figures, theoretical concepts, and artworks within a concise and accessible format. Other books may focus on specific artists or aspects of Surrealism, while Keith provides a broader, more encyclopedic approach.

Q2: Is this dictionary suitable for beginners?

A2: Yes, absolutely. The clear and concise writing style makes it accessible to those new to Surrealism. It serves as an excellent introduction to the movement's key players, concepts, and aesthetic principles.

Q3: Does the dictionary include illustrations or images?

A3: While the extent of visual material may vary, the edition usually contains a selection of relevant images, though the primary focus remains the textual entries.

Q4: How is the dictionary organized?

A4: The dictionary is alphabetically organized, allowing for easy access to specific entries. Internal cross-referencing further enhances navigation and allows for a deeper understanding of interconnected concepts and figures.

Q5: What are the limitations of Keith's *Dictionary*?

A5: As with any dictionary, the book's content reflects the knowledge available at the time of publication. New discoveries and evolving interpretations of Surrealism might not be fully represented. Furthermore, the brevity of some entries, owing to space constraints, might necessitate further research in specialized texts for more in-depth understanding of specific

topics.

Q6: Where can I find this book?

A6: You can generally find this book through online retailers like Amazon, used bookstores, or academic libraries. Searching for "Aspley Keith Historical Dictionary of Surrealism" should yield relevant results.

Q7: Is this dictionary relevant for art history students?

A7: Absolutely. This dictionary is a valuable resource for art history students studying 20th-century art, particularly Surrealism. It offers a solid foundation in the movement's history, key figures, and theoretical underpinnings.

Q8: What are the key takeaways from studying this dictionary?

A8: Studying Keith's *Dictionary* provides a strong grasp of Surrealism's historical context, its leading figures, its evolution, and its complex relationship between artistic practice and theoretical thought. It equips readers with the fundamental knowledge necessary to engage critically with the movement and its ongoing relevance in contemporary art and culture.

Delving into the mysterious World of Surrealism: A Look at Aspley Keith's monumental Dictionary

Aspley Keith's 2010 volume "Historical Dictionary of Surrealism," part of the esteemed "Historical Dictionaries of Literature and the Arts" catalog, offers a fascinating journey into the heart of one of the 20th century's most significant artistic and literary movements. This book isn't merely a compilation of names and dates; it's a gateway to understanding the layered philosophy and progression of Surrealism, its effect on subsequent aesthetic outpourings, and its enduring legacy.

The potency of Keith's dictionary lies in its capacity to unify a vast quantity of knowledge into a unified and accessible format. Each item is not simply a description, but a brief essay in itself, providing setting, relationships to other key figures and concepts, and insights into the

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complexities of Surrealist thought and practice.

Keith masterfully navigates the frequently unclear territory of Surrealism, sidestepping simplistic depictions and welcoming the diversity of readings that reside within the school. He addresses the controversies surrounding key figures like André Breton, highlighting the inward frictions and divisions that formed the movement's trajectory. The dictionary doesn't shy away from investigating the social flows that influenced Surrealist creation, connecting it to broader cultural contexts.

The scope of the glossary is impressive. It covers not only major artists and writers but also under-recognized figures, offering a more holistic portrayal of the Surrealist landscape. This inclusion of marginal figures is vital to comprehending the trend's complexity and variety. Furthermore, Keith's concentration to detail stretches to specific aesthetic methods, schools within Surrealism (like Automatism), and key notions such as the "marvelous" and the unconscious.

The style is lucid, concise, and approachable even to those without prior knowledge of Surrealism. While academic in its technique, the text manages to avoid turning into excessively technical. It's a useful resource for students, creators, and anyone fascinated in learning more about this powerful phenomenon.

In closing, Aspley Keith's "Historical Dictionary of Surrealism" stands as a authoritative reference for grasping the complexity and effect of Surrealism. Its complete range, clear prose, and insightful interpretation make it an essential supplement to any library dedicated to culture history. Its value lies not only in its data substance, but also in its ability to encourage further research into this fascinating and lasting literary phenomenon.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ):

Q1: Is this dictionary only for specialists in Surrealism?

A1: No, while the book is detailed, it is written in an accessible style and is beneficial for anyone

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interested in Surrealism, regardless of their level of prior knowledge.

Q2: What makes this dictionary different from other resources on Surrealism?

A2: Its comprehensive scope, including less prominent figures and nuanced contextual analysis, sets it apart. It integrates diverse aspects of the movement into a cohesive whole.

Q3: Is this dictionary suitable for undergraduate research?

A3: Absolutely. Its detailed entries, comprehensive bibliography, and clear style make it a valuable resource for undergraduate research papers on Surrealism.

Q4: Can I find digital versions of this book?

A4: While a physical hardcover edition is mentioned, the availability of digital versions should be checked with online booksellers and libraries.

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