

Metaphors in architectural theory and poetic urbanism: Flânerie and drift within the surrealist perception of the city

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Artículo

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Abstract:

The history of architecture has been marked by the study of architectural treatises and the ornamental forms, or the lack of them in buildings. However, there is a deeper ground regarding not only architectural theory but also urban planning, especially the one corresponding to the 20th century. In this sense, we are going to focus on the Surrealist Movement and its literary work in order to understand its urban practice. The Surreal City is something purely theoretical, something that was not carried out during the surreal stage, but whose spectra and signals can be seen in the aesthetic and ideological basis that was used in the construction of other cities or contemporary urban spaces. From this study we will end up with a broader knowledge of the theoretical architecture and surreal urbanism of Paris at the beginning of the 20th century through the study of its literary sources. The surreal symbolic spaces will have an assimilation with the contemporaneity in which we live, which will reflect the timelessness of the public spaces of this stage of history.

Keywords: Architectural theory, drift; flâneur, surrealism, urban planning.

Metáforas en teoría arquitectónica y urbanismo poético: Flânerie y deriva en la percepción surrealista de la ciudad

Resumen:

La historia de la arquitectura ha estado marcada por el estudio de los tratados arquitectónicos y las formas ornamentales, o la falta de ellas, de los edificios. Sin embargo, hay un terreno más profundo en relación no solo con la teoría arquitectónica sino también con la planificación urbana, especialmente la correspondiente al siglo XX. En este sentido, nos vamos a centrar en el Movimiento Surrealista y su obra literaria para comprender su práctica urbana. La Ciudad Surrealista es algo puramente teórico, algo que no se llevó a cabo durante la etapa surrealista, pero cuyos espectros y señales se pueden ver en la base estética e ideológica que se utilizó en la construcción de otras ciudades o espacios urbanos contemporáneos. De este estudio terminaremos con un conocimiento más amplio de la arquitectura teórica y el urbanismo surrealista de París a principios del siglo XX a través del estudio de sus fuentes literarias. Los espacios simbólicos surrealistas se asimilarán con la contemporaneidad en que vivimos, lo que reflejará la atemporalidad de los espacios públicos de esta etapa de la historia.

Palabras clave: Teoría arquitectónica, deriva, flâneur, surrealismo, urbanismo.

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Introduction

Since the Renaissance, architecture books or the defense of the arts and their canon through written sources, have served to defend, emphasize or proclaim the validation of artistic forms and styles. In this way, programmatic texts or manifestoes have reinforced the character of an organization or affiliation through its fundamental ideas. Thus, the artistic avant-gardes have used this literary resource to lay the theoretical foundations of their future artistic contributions, and thus been able to justify without any objection their most extravagant avant-garde occurrences. The avant-garde manifesto must be for this reason, a literary contribution written in the first instance for the subsequent development of the artistic and creative activity of the group or school.

The Surrealist Movement generated a lot of theoretical work thanks to the fact that its founders, Andre Breton, Louis Aragon and Philippe Soupault were writers. From its two manifestoes to the periodical publications such as *Surrealism at the Service of the Revolution*, *Literature or Minotaure* in addition to the individual work that will produce referents of the movement like Breton or Aragon.

The estate of the art regarding this field is almost forgotten. We can find plenty of studies and different theories about the Surrealist Movement. However, and concerning the Surrealist architectural theory and urban space, this is a relatively new field of study regarding literature as a fundamental methodology. The above detailed aims to be put in common with a clear and chronologically structured methodology corresponding to this specific artistic moment.

The aim of this study is to elaborate an architectural imaginary that is closely related to the ideological and social grounds on which this artistic movement is based. Also to understand the evolution of the visions within contemporary city, the Surrealist perception of the city of Paris in this case. To carry out this study we will carry out the following methodology; analysis of the written sources of the Surrealist Movement Theorists in order to relate their ideas with the city of Paris in 1920's and 1930's.

In this paper, we will be looking at different aspects of the Surreal Movement and their different perceptions of the city and the individual within it. Firstly, the idea of a Surreal City will be introduced to then go deeper in what the city of Paris meant to this Avant-Garde movement. Having analyzed that, we will be looking at three pieces of literature which will disclose the surrealist perception of the urban environment and the metaphors implied. Lastly, the Surrealist Drift and their idea of the flaneur will be exposed to see the poetic perception of their city as a whole.

The Surreal City

The surreal city is something purely theoretical, something that was not carried out during the surreal stage, but whose spectra and signals can be seen in the aesthetic and ideological basis that was used in the construction of other cities or contemporary urban spaces. In this way, it would not be appropriate to call them surreal cities, since they do not correspond directly to the Manifesto. Following this pattern, we should use the name "surrealist perception of the city" due to the basis they support regarding surrealist precepts, but far away in time, place and form.

However, and despite what may seem to be an eminently practical lack of respect to the surrealists in the city, in 1933 the Surrealists held a series of meetings where they discussed certain aspects that might interest them in some way or another. Thus, in one of them they met to talk about the possibilities of the irrational ornamentation of the city. In this meeting, a total of more than thirty monuments or urban elements were raised and a series of questions were asked for all of them: "Should we preserve, replace, modify, transform or suppress?" Among them were emblematic sites such as the Eiffel Tower or the Arc of Triumph.

This demonstrates the surreal desire for the aesthetics of the city rather than the urban system itself. His way of understanding the city has more to do with surrealist iconography than with traffic facilitation or city functionality. Walter Benjamin explores

the urban experience and refers to it appealing to surrealism and the potential of the city and buildings, especially when they become ruins:

“Breton was the first to perceive the revolutionary energies that seem dated in the first iron constructions, the first industrial buildings, the first photographs, the objects that are beginning to become extinct [...] No one before these visionaries perceived as destruction - not only social, but also architectural, the poverty of interiors and objects - can be transformed into revolutionary nihilism”. (Linchestein, Kelley, Jones, 2009, p. 47)

In this way, the surrealists would see the city as a symbolic space in which to create their own artistic experience. It would be in a sense a place of inspiration, but also a set to carry out his works. Thus, the surrealist group would appeal for a city detached from radical urban transformations in front of a city in ruins and almost in decay to the romantic sense. In line with this they rejected the Haussmann Plan and the transformations carried out during the Second Empire. Remembering the meeting they had in 1933 about the ornamental elements of the city, the surrealists rejected the monumental sculptures of this era (Spiteri, 2005).

The group sought to protect the elements of the city they considered historical such as as *El Passage de l'Opera* as narrated by Luois Aragon in *The Peasant of Paris*. In their eagerness to preserve these places the surrealists included them in their writings as well as taking care of their image through photography as we will see later.

Paris: History and Artistic Culture of the City

If there is a leading city in the history of 20th century art, it is Paris: the city of dreams and Surrealist inspiration. Few places have evoked as much to a group of artists as the French capital has.

France has always been a cultural meeting point, especially from the 18th century with the Enlightenment, the Encyclopedia and hand in hand with authors in the 19th century such as Baudelaire, who will have an influence on the movements of the 20th century. It is important to mention the remarkable urban reform of Paris by Baron Haussman which that took place in the 19th century, in which the iconic avenues were created, centralizing and highlighting the most notable and well-known monuments of the city. In this way, this reform in turn marginalizes the most disadvantaged neighborhoods, something that will mark street photography and will have a deep impact on the Surrealist Movement and its literature.

Moreover, France, and especially Paris, represent a new artistic panorama with regard to contemporary and interwar art. The confluence of artistic groups, thanks to the cultural background that Paris had already enjoyed in previous historical moments, favored the city to experience a golden age during its particular Roaring Twenties. In the Paris of the 20s and 30s the avant-gardes were present historical, a meeting point for artists, writers, theorists that led to a vibrant cultural and artistic life.

In this period of the early twentieth century, the birth and development of Surrealism stands out. A group of artists who previously had been related to Dada. Thanks to the prosperous period that the city was experiencing, and in particular some of the well-known bohemian neighborhoods such as Montparnasse, and also fostered by the turbulent political times that some European countries were experiencing, artists, writers, sculptors and creators arrived in Paris. People arrived from all kinds of origins and regions, bringing with them new ideas, new skills and new practice to be integrated within artistic groups, which converged in a vibrant, cosmopolitan and naturally creative and artistic city.

Writings of the city

After the Surrealists' own debates about the city and its urban transformations, the most immediate theory and practice on its part about it will be represented through photographic and literary works. In this sense we are interested in studying the writings

first in order to understand the most visual work of the group. Some of these writings will be more novel than essay, and vice versa. However, their true value lies in their understanding of the city and its incursion into the surrealist practice itself.

Thus, we are faced with works of great value for the understanding and assimilation of surrealist thinking itself, materializing it in this way through the works of Breton: *Nadja* (1928) and *The Communicating Vessels* (1934). However, he will not be the only one, since Louis Aragon in *Paris Peasant* (1926) somehow begins this tendency to introduce us to the lesser-known neighborhoods of Paris, analyzing its architecture with a properly surrealist vision.

Breton's *Nadja* (1928) and the idea of the Surrealist Flâneur

The participation of women in the Parisian life of Montparnasse became very active during this stage, which was one of the reasons why eroticism and sensuality were already latent in the creative environment itself. The surrealist game and moral freedom of the 1920s, made many women pass through the life of each artist, almost all of them starting as models and eventually becoming their lovers. Women like Kiki de Montparnasse were popularly known since in addition to dedicating themselves to *variétés*, she posed for numerous artists during this era - her back is in *The Violon d'Ingres*, an iconic photograph of the movement -. As for the participation of women in the group, it did not take place until the 1930s, and the figure of Meret Oppenheim stands out.

In reference to femininity and what the female figure supposed within the group, we find *Nadja*. It seems that Breton himself once again establishes a theoretical basis on the subject with his work *Nadja* (1928), this is what he calls a woman who awoke in him love and sensuality. *Nadja* is an unreal woman, a fantasy that takes him all over Paris in order to show the city, to fall in love with it, to fall in love with *Nadja*, and with women in general. By the end of the Breton story, *Nadja* is admitted to a mental hospital, symbolizing madness, the irrational and primitive (Fer, Batchelor, Wood, 1993), and after all, that is surrealism. In this sense, the surrealists used a stereotyped image of women as a symbol of madness, being in turn a devouring subject (Fer, Batchelor, Wood, 1993). The woman as a symbol of madness is a being closer to the unconscious than the man, and the unconscious is surrealism itself. In this sense, we could see the woman as a muse, since she is closer to surrealist irrationality than the artists themselves.

André Breton's story has eminently surreal dyes throughout the writing. In the first part, it focuses on introducing a whole class of personalities of the surrealist group, as well as authors with whom they are related. Likewise, it takes us to visit several places in Paris, especially theaters or different performance rooms in which different artistic meetings have taken place. Sometimes, he refers to how he arrives in certain places unconsciously and how he continues to do it again and that again and that has a direct relationship with the Theory of Drift developed by Guy Debord and the Situationist International and practiced by the first Dadaists and the Surrealists after. This practice is about a behavior related to urban planning and the city, in which the individual practices wandering or drift, walking and walking the city without a specific destination. Thus, we can also see a clear reference to Baudelaire's flâneur since it refers again and thagain into the term "walking." The flâneur is in charge of observing the urban aspects, the ordinary activities of the city and its common inhabitants. In this way, he intends to discover the depths of urban and city life from an intellectual and critical point of view. They deliberately choose their path giving greater importance to mobility in space, when walking, to the promenade which invites reflection (Duran Segura, 2011).

The figure of the flâneur is represented here by Breton himself, but not only this, since some of the photographs that will be analyzed in this study respond to these characteristics of the flânerie. The work itself is accompanied by photographs that show us some of the places where *Nadja* and Breton meet or simply those that are mentioned in the novel. It refers again and again to the buildings for what happens, and even pays attention to the sign of the stores and their names, and not only that, but also to the behavior of the people who pass through those same places.

In the same way, he constantly wonders if he is living in a dream or in reality, since he cannot distinguish one state from the other - the main characteristic of the surrealists and their method of work - in fact, he ends the chapter by saying that he prefers to walk at night to believe himself a man who walks with daylight (Bretón, 1960) referring a few lines later to Nadja's appearance. The ambiguity of the reference to night and daylight and the non-differentiation between sleep and reality may lead us to think that Nadja herself may be a part of his dream and that, therefore, it is not real.

When Nadja appears on the scene, it seems that she also does not go anywhere in particular, she just continues walking. She tells him a past love story and as she realized two years later that her lover had a deformity, asking Breton if that was possible. It seems that everything is in the spectrum of unconsciousness and sleep.

The streets of Paris become not only a geographical space in the Breton story, but also have a symbolic value, something that will be closely linked to surrealist practice and its relationship with the city. This, however, does not mean that it is directly about the city, but rather it can be related to its own artistic method and to the Theory of Drift. Nadja does not make decisions beforehand, but rather gets carried away; something that is also related to drift. For example, when Breton asks where she is going to have dinner, she responds "in that restaurant, or in that other, wherever, it is always like that, you know" (Bretón, 1960, p 71). On the other hand, there are also references to an almost disoriented or lost Nadja in the city and it is even said that she does not know how she ended there, as is the case of the meeting in Rue de la Chaussée - d'Antin when Nadja is looking for a place to buy Dutch chocolate, Breton enters the scene and "without knowing how" to enter the first coffee they meet (Bretón, 1960).



Figure 1. Image published in *Nadja*, Jacques-André Boiffard, 1928. © Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York/ ADAGP, Paris.

Nadja defines herself as a "soul in limbo" (Bretón, 1960, p. 71) when Breton asks who she is. This answer is very much in line with the surrealists and their inability to differentiate between dream and reality. It is now when we begin to wonder if Nadja really exists or is simply Breton's dream. In another episode, Breton wonders how he can find Nadja to which she replies that she cannot be found. In this way, she also refers to dreams when she tells the story of the man who called her Lena in honor of her daughter. Here, and according to the story, Nadja says that calling her Lena is as if she were in a dream leaving almost in a trance from which Breton has to release her. Nadja also has fun with

automaton games in which she talks to herself and tells invented stories that occur to her at that moment.

Walter Benjamin points out that Breton feels closer to things that Nadja likes than Nadja herself, which is closer to the theory that Nadja works as a muse to inspire Breton not only for this novel, but for later works, since she gives him new ideas and leads him to consider new challenges regarding the taste for the city and its Suances (Linchestein, Kelley, Jones, 2009).

At the end of the story, Breton begins to talk about the sanatoriums and their opposition to them, since according to him, they do not help you heal, but rather worsen all the symptoms and even create new ones. He also mentions how these types of sites serve to silence artists and theorists as they did according to him with Sade, Nietzsche and Baudelaire (Bretón, 1960). The story goes on to say that Nadja has been admitted to a psychiatric hospital although Breton does not say it with completely clear words and does not say the exact place in which he has left Nadja - something unusual in this book since she has been detailing all the places for those who have walked and where they have gone -. Breton now asks himself again if there is anyone else there - Nadja - or is he simply leaving us between seeing once again the game between dream and reality, whether Nadja really exists or is part of his dreams of imagination.

Some historians point out that it is Léona Camille Guislaine who is behind the character of Nadja since in 1928 Breton brought to light his romance with her. Leona - who would have practiced prostitution during her stay in Paris - and Breton were together for a short period of three months, however, she marked his literary work according to the author himself (Adsuar Fernandez, 2009).

Artistic movements have their own characteristics, not only plastic and stylistic, but also on the basis - theoretical or not - of the treatment of the different components that generate these characteristics. In surrealism, one of these basic components is the feminine and feminine image as a symbol. Thus, surrealism places the image of women at the center of their sensual aspect, being the object of their dreams as they show in the first issue of the *Revolución Surréaliste* with an image of the anarchist Germaine Berton, accompanied with the following quote from Baudelaire (Kadiu, 2014).

“The woman is the being who casts the greatest shadow or the greatest light in our dreams”

CHARLES BAUDELAIRE

La Révolution Surréaliste

For Breton, Nadja is the personification of surrealism itself. She contains all the surreal elements described in the First Surrealist Manifesto (1924). In turn it is a sign of freedom since she is not governed by social conventions and does what she desires at any time, without foresight and without plans (Kadiu, 2014). In this way, Nadja becomes almost an icon of the movement that will inspire later works, not only literary, but also plastic. Nadja's irrationality is a cry for freedom and surreal creation as well as the feminine vision within the group. In this way, the figure of Nadja goes from being a muse to being the one who directs the work and life of Breton at that moment, she is the one that sets the guidelines of where and how to meet, the one that tells him where to walk and what to visit. Nadja's irrationality involves Breton in an urbanistically descriptive account at the beginning but ends up being an ode to creativity and automatism, reaffirming again and again the validity of the method.

Architectural dualities in *The Peasant of Paris* (1926) by Louis Aragon

Andre Breton and Louis Aragon were very close not only personally, but also artistically. Although we know Breton as the main ideologue of the group, he had the support of Aragon and Philippe Soupault to strengthen surrealism as such. Thus, *El Campesino de Paris* is considered a key work for the surrealist movement.

Despite his close relationship, his work was distancing itself over the years since Aragon was not a participant in some of the group's premises. Due to his break with the group

and his commitment to the Communist Party, Breton was relegating Aragon's works to the background, falling even some fundamental writings into oblivion as happened with *A wave of dreams* (1924) precursor of the *First Surrealist Manifesto* (1924) (Ferrando Mateu, 2014). However, Breton remembers Aragon as one of the most active people in the walks through the streets of Paris (Aragon, 1994), something that will be fundamental to understand this work.

This work evokes fantasy diaries such as *La Flâneur des deux rives*, Apollinaire (Aragon, 1994) since in contrast to the work of Breton, Aragon writing follows a model of spontaneous but conscious creativity, without being carried away by the automatism of Breton's writing (Ferrando Mateu, 2014).

Aragon intended to create a mythology of the modern, for this he begins his work by talking about his own thoughts reflecting the surrealist ideology making reference to how at times he feels that he is not aware of himself, something linked to automatism and dreams. However, it should be noted that Aragon rejects automatism, the purest act of creation according to the surrealists of the first stage (Aragon, 1994).

Choose an environment that will soon be unidentifiable as the Passage de l'Opera would soon be demolished to make way for Boulevard Haussmann with the aim of developing as a descriptive writer without risking too much criticism that could lead to (Aragon, 1994). He focuses the first part of his work on this passage, talking about metaphoric worlds and the metaphysical entity of places, criticizing in turn the Haussmannian transformations of Paris, and how this leads to the impersonality of the city and the dehumanization of its individuals. Then, it focuses on describing the Passage de l'Opera in detail, giving us an exhaustive content not only architectural, but historical, developing the type of walkers or inhabitants that could be found in that same place.



Figure 2. Passage de l'Opera ca 1865-1868, Charles Marville. Musée Carnavalet, Paris.

Like Breton in *Nadja*, Aragon, he strives to include other members of the group or other artists residing in the Paris of the time, in his story. Remember that is where Picabia, Marcell Noll or Jacques Baron lived. In this way he gives a human value to the architecture, which seeks the habitability of it, as opposed to what he believes could happen with the new urbanism of Paris. According to Aragon, an American model of urbanism had been imported in which straight lines prevail what Aragon will define as "human aquariums" (Aragon, 1994). We can interpret this metaphor with the fact of

creating a modern and busy city, where individuals walk from one place to another in a hurry, without even stopping to contemplate the city, a city that has been merely built for aesthetic reasons and the tourist. Aragon somehow predicts the urban planning of the Modern Movement and International Style, but with a difference: the latter will not have aesthetic aspirations.

In this work architecture works as a differentiating element between dualities, describing Aragon, architecture as a kind of atmosphere and as a border, building a perception in itself that moves between dream and reality. The buildings and architecture

in Aragon do not act as metaphors as they insist on describing these elements twice so that it is clear what they are, or as he sees them. In this way he describes them objectively and then analyzes them from a more subjective perspective (Read, 2005).

Aragon creates dualities - light against darkness - since that is how he perceives the world being in turn a criticism of rationalism (Read, 2005). We find again and again references to how darkness can distort visible reality by contrasting it with the same urban experience during natural daylight hours. In this way, architecture is the threshold between light and darkness.

A threshold between reality and dream, between the material and the surreal, Aragon fights between these two currents since he is almost in his last years next to the surrealist movement. We can see almost an internal debate of the author himself about his ideas and ideals.

Surrealist creation and absence of time and space understood by André Bretón in *The Communicating Vessels*(1932)

Unlike his other written works, *The Communicating Vessels* are closer to an essay than to the novel. It is then a philosophical and political essay with the excuse of studying dreams and how they influence Surrealist creation. In this way, he exposes several theories and points to Freud and his work published in 1900 as the main driver of this method. However, he also presents different opinions about him and other authors (Bretón, 1978).

In this way, this work could well have been treated as part of the section on Surrealist writings and their manifestoes for they carry certain relationship with the studies regarding the theory of dreams. However, it is not a manifesto in itself, but it is a work that tries to reinforce surrealist practice through sleep and wakefulness. *The communicating vessels* also constitute an ode to surrealism and its creative method, dream and reality, applied and set in an urban and architectural environment that we cannot ignore.

The public to whom this work is directed is a small group of people who have an interest in studies in reference to the theory of dreams. Among these are not only the members of the surrealist group themselves, but also Freud's followers since, to a large extent, *The Communicating Vessels* are based on analyzing their work through everyday stories as we saw in *Nadja*. However, this time these stories bring with them a more technical, analytical and specialized ground (Caws, 1988).

The communicating vessels are the dreams themselves, the same that enter us into a world of vigil and reverie (Ferrando Mateu, 2014). Breton studies here the dream as absence of time and space, being these same mere representations in the waking state (Bretón, 1978). Time and space will be exemplified in the stories that Breton tells us, which take place in the same streets of Paris that he was walking more or less consciously with *Nadja*.

In *The Communicating Vessels*, Breton tells how he lost consciousness during his walks in Paris causing him to walk and wander aimlessly through the city. Undoubtedly, we return once again to the Theory of Drift, since this practice was based on the involuntary ride, however, with a differentiation, although the ride is unconscious and aimlessly fixed, the passerby was not in a state of reverie. In this way, what Breton tells in this work is something more related to sleepwalking with the difference that the sleepwalker does not remember what happened, while here Breton is aware of what has happened and where his walk has passed despite of not being voluntary.

Freud's psychoanalysis and sexual theories had an enormous influence in the surrealists, so much so that they took Freud's pure psychic automatism as a surrealist mode of expression. However, they were not interested in these studies from the scientific point of view, but used the experience of dreams and sexual desire as the basis for surrealism. In this way, the surrealists understood the disorders of the human mind, as a result of hidden passions, praising hysteria as a surrealist way of expression, although Freud will always focus on treating it as a pathology (Fer, Batchelor, Wood, 1993).

For Freud, every psychic process first goes through an unconscious phase (darkness, negative) before accessing consciousness. In this sense, many parts of the unconscious remain unrevealed, although this does not mean that they will be lost. On the other hand, moving from the dark area to the light does not mean that this image will find a new meaning that already existed, but rather to become one that never existed (Jenny, 2003).

However, this could not have directly influenced Breton since for the year in which the First Surrealist Manifesto was written, these texts were not available in French, which is why it seems more than surprising that this metaphor between psychoanalysis and photography is present in surrealism since its inception (Jenny, 2003).

To get into the subject, Breton himself had practiced medicine in war veterans' hospitals, coming into contact with patients with acute delirium. This is how he begins to investigate the resources and psychoanalytic studies, which he would use to create his own aesthetic and artistic thinking (Sanchez Moreno, Ramón Díaz, 2007). Later, Breton begins to combine psychoanalysis with sleep. In this sense, the unconscious will now be something prophetic, moving away from the darkness that was linked to the photographic negative, now relaxing consciousness (Jenny, 2003).

Due to Freud's interest in the study of dreams, Breton and Freud got to know each other but the visions of one and the other did not coincide and the meeting was not to Breton's taste, since he as an artist and writer intended to use the Freud's theories as a technique for his creative support. However, Freud, as a psychoanalyst, will always give a more scientific vision that has nothing to do with surrealism or historical avant-garde. From this meeting they exchanged letters several times, samples of these letters can be found published in some versions of *The Communicating Vessels*. We can interpret this not as a union with Freud, but almost as a breakdown of their ideas since despite this, the surrealists would find their own theory depending on their own experience, school, momentum and technique.

The Surreal Drift

The Surrealist Movement has always been characterized by having a rich artistic theory and eminently visual representations; but little or nothing has been revealed about the Surrealists' concern for the city and the urban elements that surrounded them. However, the exits made by the surrealists along with the situationists to experience the Drift, lead us to talk about a theory of their own in the creation of an architectural and urban thought that will be carried out through photographic representation and literary practice .

From the first departure of the surrealists - still Dadaists - to experience an arbitrary and random walk through Paris, to the evocative *Nadja* (1928) of Breton, we find a direct relationship of the related surrealist group in a theoretical-aesthetic orbit of what urban planning and city planning meant for the surrealists.

From these approaches, Situationism, Psychogeography and Drift emerged, from the hand of Guy Debord, in them we can detect clear parallels with what the Surrealist movement was and what the members of the group experienced with the walks and drifts - physical or aesthetic - through the Paris of the time, with reflections on what we can find in our contemporary cities.

The "Drift" was one of the concepts that most attracted the surrealists in this regard. So much so that they participated in certain urban activities that encouraged the use of this practice. In a very correct way, Paola Berenstein defines the drift as "a mode of

experimental behavior of urban society. In this way of action and knowledge, especially in respect of psychogeography and the theory of unitary urbanism. In other ways, such as aerial photography and maps, the study of statistics, graphics or results of sociological research, without theorists or that active and direct side that belongs to experimental drift” (Berenstein Jacques, 2003).

Due to the relative suitability of the drift concept for some avant-garde movements, - mainly Dadaism and later Surrealism -, the artists wanted to put the drift theory into practice. Thus, in 1921, Dadaist artists propose to wander through the most remote and least attractive places of the city.

The Dadaists saw the walk as “anti-art”, a concept on which they based their movement. However, with the surrealist group already formed, his idea of wandering around the city became a kind of automatic writing within the city’s own space (Carreri, 2013). Their objective was to create a work of art, which will be the urban act in itself, thus attributing an aesthetic value to a space and not to an object, as was usual until then (Sanchez del Moral, 2009).



Figure 3. Rue du Figuier, Eugène Atget, 1924. ➤

The link between surrealists and situationists is based on criticism of a society directed and organized, in which there is no place for imagination; since it is the situationists who defend that urban planning should not have as a culmination the mass construction, but the elevation of the individual as a participant of his own city (Parreras de Faria, 2011), something we have already seen in *The Farmer in Paris* and his rejection of the Haussmann Plan.

In the First Surrealist Manifesto, Breton dreams and creates a castle, a metaphor of the movement that is about to be born; in the castle each one has its function, and in there are all the members of the surrealist group. These characters represent the

Parisian current situation, artists, writers and scholars who participate in the life of the Montparnasse neighborhood. The castle ends up being a mere fantasy of Breton, an image, but when it is created by itself, it becomes a real fantasy, and we live in it, since, according to Pierre Reverdy's words, the image is a pure creation of the spirit; something that neither Cubism nor Dada have achieved, however, it is one of the basic premises of surrealism. Despite not being a royal castle, Breton imagines it with a base and an ordination not only territorial, but also state, where each person will fulfill a function.

One of the anchoring points of Surrealism has always been Freud, and his analysis of his own vision of the city and the urban layout. In *The Upset of Culture*, Freud takes up the Roman city model. Thus, the reader must imagine the city of Rome, leaving it in his mind, transforming the memory (Ramallo Guzman, 2014). In this way, Ramallo Guzmán (2014) points out that cities are nothing more than the materialization of the dreams of the different architects who build them. In this way, all cities would have a surreal halo, since they all come from dreams, from dream to art creation.

Thus, there are purely surrealist architects such as Guy-René Doumayrou, who proposed to make constructions and variations in the urban layout of Paris. However, what interests the surrealists is the part of the city that is abandoned, in ruins, something that carries with it the romantic clamor. In this way, they present their own *Ville Surrealiste* at the International Surrealism Exhibition of 1938, which will follow the Surrealist World Map line (Ramallo Guzman, 2014) published in the magazine *Variétés* (1929).

In this way, and in accordance with what Ramallo Guzmán proposes (Ramallo Guzman, 2014), the city would be treated as an object, a new form of surrealist expression, which could be transformed and approached as a dreamlike object. However, not only the surrealists were going to treat it as such, but, throughout history, architects, urban planners, artists, dictators and politicians have used the city to create an image of themselves, transforming the object with an aesthetic and sometimes propagandistic end.

Conclusions

Urban practice is one of the great unknowns, or not so thoroughly investigated by scholars of the Surrealist Movement and History of Art in general. Due to the lack of architectural production, the surrealist interest in architecture and the city has been ignored. Through this research it has been seen how, despite what it may seem, Surrealism shows a clear interest in urban elements, from the city as a muse to the situationist drift, in this case the city of Paris being a great protagonist in the history of surreal avant-garde art.

As we have seen, the city itself inspired the artists, photographers and writers to experience different approaches towards the city of Paris in this case. They did this in different kinds of practices, from the exits to experience the drift, to the debates originated on whether monuments of Paris should be preserved or not, the surrealists saw in architecture a perfect setting for their artistic practice, especially for literature and photography.

With regard to literature, the importance of it within the movement is prevailing as writings such as manifestos were the artists' guide to follow. We need to remember that the leader of the surrealist group was André Bretón, recognized for his literary work, followed by other authors also known for their essays such as Louis Aragon. The interest of the group regarding urban practice arises in great part from these previously analyzed writings such as *Nadja*, *The Communicating Vessels* and *The Peasant of Paris* written by the leaders or mentors of the Surrealist group. Hence, they all had great repercussion for the rest of the members of the group and how they have served as inspiration for the creation of later work. To a large extent, these writings want to understand the city as a source of inspiration and as a place to get lost and practice their automation. In this way, they have seen the resources that the city of Paris has given them through their urban transformations and the diversity of their urban fabric.

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