Surrealism is a cultural movement that began in the early 1920s and is known for its visual artworks and writings like painting and photography. It seems like the goal was to lighten the mood up or make people happier because of the times they were in like the great depression and World War II. Artists painted unnerving, illogical scenes with photographic precision, created strange creatures from everyday objects and developed painting techniques that allowed the unconscious to express itself. Surrealist works feature the element of surprise, unexpected juxtapositions and non sequitur.

The movement grew out of Dadaism. It was during World War I, a protest at the meaningless of civilized life. At the same time the work of Sigmund Freud began to filter through, and affect the literary and art worlds. André Breton was trained in psychiatry, and during the war he worked in a hospital where he used Freud's methods on shell-shock patients. Not surprisingly, Breton influenced many writers and artists after the war. In 1924, Breton wrote a Surrealist Manifesto, which defined surrealism as:"Psychic automatism in its pure state, by which one proposes to express verbally, by means of the written word, or in any other manner the actual functioning of thought. Dictated by the thought, in the absence of any control exercised by reason, exempt from any aesthetic or moral concern".

Breton discussed his first encounter with the surreal, in a description of a hypnologic state in which a strange phrase inexplicably appeared in his mind: There is a man cut in two by the window. This phrase illustrates Breton's view of Surrealism as two distant realities brought together to create a new, uncanny union. Surrealist works have an element of surprise: unexpected items are placed next to each other for no clear reason. Many Surrealist artists and writers see their work as an expression of the philosophical movement first and foremost. The works are an artifact, and André Breton said that Surrealism was above all a revolutionary movement. From the 1920s in Paris it spread around the globe. It influenced films such as the Angel's Egg and El Topo.