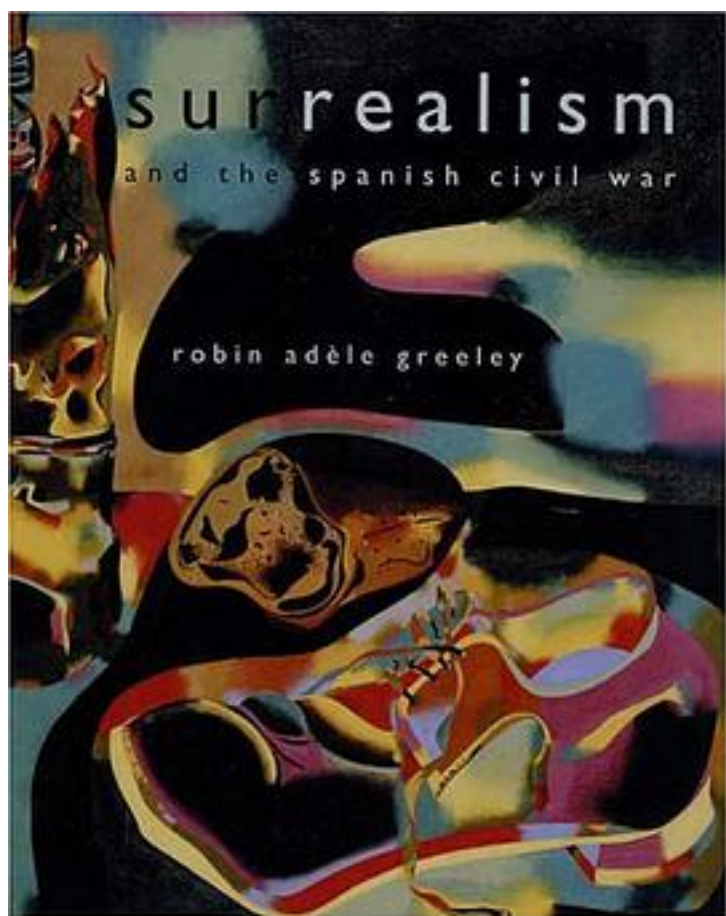


Surrealism and the Spanish Civil War



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著者:Greeley, Robin Adele

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How might artistic practice offer unique insight into the cataclysmic debacle of war? "Surrealism and the Spanish Civil War" plumbs this provocative question through an ambitious account of a pivotal period in European cultural history. A new approach to the subject of artists' responses to war, it articulates the relation between artistic

endeavour and politics during periods of social crisis. By scrutinising the widely varying responses to the Spanish Civil War in the work of Miro, Dali, Caballero, Masson and Picasso, this book investigates Surrealism's efforts to bridge the divide between political thought and political act. Robin Adele Greeley examines such central works as Miro's "Still Life" with "Old Shoe" and Dali's "Autumn Cannibalism" in the context of contemporary works and historical events. Only when these images are thus considered, she argues, do they disclose the role of politics in their manufacture. In so doing, Greeley makes a case for the ambivalent status of visual representation vis-a-vis politics, to claim that politics enters the image through the formal strategies of artmaking and viewing, while simultaneously resisting that very incorporation. Volatile topics such as Surrealism's various flirtations with fascism, the movement's troubled relationship to the Communist Party and the Popular Front, and the distinct development of Spanish versus French Surrealism are closely analysed by Greeley. She explores how the actuality of shifting politics often undermined carefully constructed visual practices, as in the case of the Catalan nationalism which represented one pole of Miro's surrealism, or Masson's inability to resolve the tension between a Nietzschean celebration of ecstatic violence and directed political action. The book concludes with a discussion of Picasso's "Guernica", to reveal the profound role politics played in the constitution of Guernica, not as something to be represented iconographically, but as a 'performative' force remade through the actual process of representation.

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