

SURPRISE ELEMENTS

you can use in your surreal photos



WHY DO YOU NEED TO SURPRISE YOUR VIEWER

Surprise is one of the basic emotions that humans have and therefore will be one of the strings you want to touch in your viewers in order to make an impact on them with your work.

According to a new study from Microsoft people now generally lose concentration after 8 seconds – compared to the average attention span for the notoriously ill-focused goldfish which is 9 seconds. This is highlighting the effects of an increasingly digitalized lifestyle on the brain. In today's world, when we are drowning in the ocean of visual information, grabbing attention becomes crucial, if you want your message to be seen. This is where making your images surprising comes handy.

Surprise can be brought into an image in a variety of ways and an image doesn't have to be surreal to surprise a viewer. Yet, I my method of surprising my audience is with the instruments of surrealism. Over the years, I've collected a list of surprise elements that I go to when I think of creating a new visual story.

All of the magic tricks listed here can be used as tools for bringing the unexpected touch to your work. This list is by no way complete, but it will give you the idea of where to start from and what to explore in your future work.



MULTIPLE OBJECTS

Using multiple objects always attracts attention and surprises a viewer, because it looks out of the ordinary.

Your image will look more surreal, if you use **identical** objects, however it might also work, when using objects of the same type, which are not identical.





UNUSUAL SIZE

Images capture attention when the size of an object or person used in them is different from what we are used to.





MINIATURE WORLD

Very close to the previous one, in which the majority of objects and people are "normal size", yet different. In this case you turn your subject into a Thumbelina and place your subject in a world of giant objects.



by Joel Robison



LEVITATION

When objects, people or animals (that are generally not supposed to fly) **levitate**, it looks very unusual and instantly grabs your viewers' attention.

You can get creative with levitation and apply it to either:

- people
- hair
- objects
- animals



by Anka Zhuravleva



by Tim Walker



by Katerina Plotnikova

ANIMALS

Our ancestors needed to detect animals for survival. In order to survive, they developed brain regions that detected animals in their periphery. And we inherited those mechanisms. That means – even today – animals capture a portion of our finite attention. Especially, animals do so when you photograph them in unusual proximity and interactions with humans.





Water tank by Lara Zankoul



Soap bubbles by Anka Zhuravleva

ON-STAGE EFFECTS

Smoke, sun flares, flashes, light painting, physical film or fabric filters, underwater and alike will always look unusual and therefore surprising to your viewers.



Smoke by Kirsty Mitchell



Lightpainting by Ragne Kristine Sigmond



UNUSUAL WARDROBE

It goes without saying that the way people look, if it's out of the ordinary will immediately grab the viewers' attention.





UNUSUAL MUAH

Closely connected with the previous one, but more specific to the face of your subject. Works better with close-ups.





COMPOSITION

You can create a surreal effect by arranging elements in your shot in an unusual way.

Often, if things and objects in an image are **carefully organized** it alone looks surreal, because it can very rarely be seen in real life.

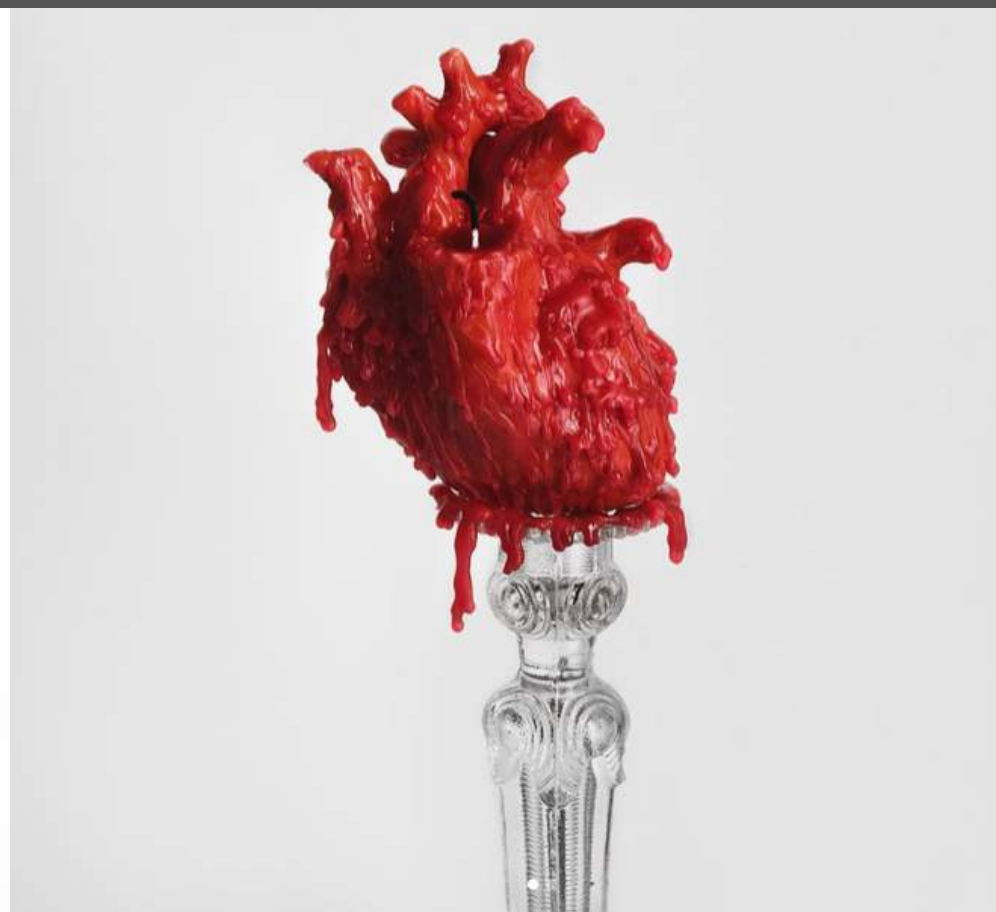
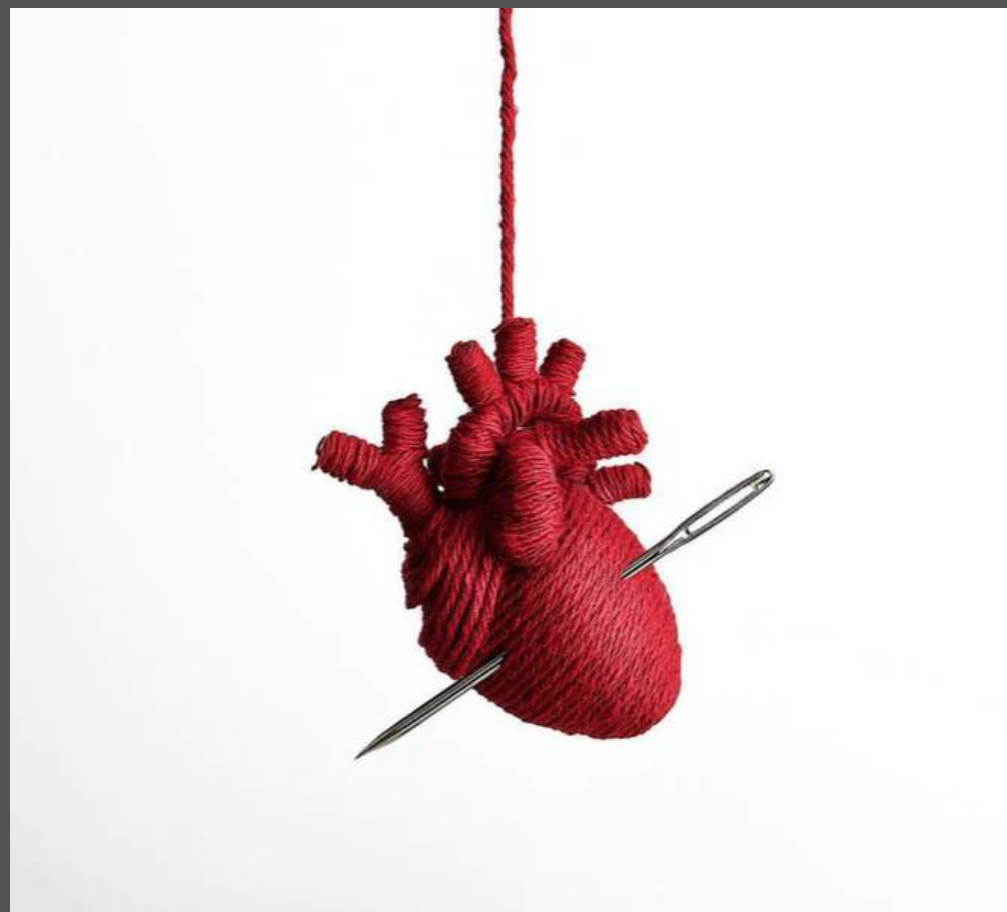




by Hugo Castro (aka Sheiku)

METAPHORS AND IDIOMS

When you make idioms or popular metaphoric phrases visual it will always entertain people and make them stop and reflect.





by Sheidlina

UNCONNECTABLE THINGS

Sometimes you can find visual similarities in things that would never be connected in real life. Those, when done right will immediately pause people and make them stumble.



ADD YOURS!