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Introduction

Salvador Dalí is among the most versatile and prolific artists of the 20th century and the most famous Surrealist. Though chiefly remembered for his painterly output, in the course of his long career he successfully turned to sculpture, printmaking, fashion, advertising, writing, and, perhaps most famously, filmmaking.

Biography

Salvador Domingo Felipe Jacinto Dalí i Domènech, 1st Marquis of Dalí de Púbol (11 May 1904 – 23 January 1989), known professionally as Salvador Dalí.

Salvador Dalí was born on 11 May 1904, at 8:45 am GMT, on the first floor of Carrer Monturiol, 20 (presently 6), in the town of Figueres, in the Empordà region, close to the French border in Catalonia, Spain. Dalí's older brother, who had also been named Salvador (born 12 October 1901), had died of gastroenteritis nine months earlier, on 1 August 1903. His father, Salvador Rafael Aniceto Dalí Cusí (1872–1950) was a middle-class lawyer and notary an anti-clerical atheist and Catalan federalist, whose strict disciplinary approach was tempered by his wife, Felipa Domènech Ferrés (1874–1921), who encouraged her son's artistic endeavors. In the summer of 1912, the family moved to the top floor of Carrer Monturiol 24 (presently 10).

When he was five, Dalí was taken to his brother's grave and told by his parents that he was his brother's reincarnation, a concept which he came to believe. Of his brother, Dalí said, "[we] resembled each other like two drops of water, but we had different reflections. He "was probably a first version of myself but conceived too much in the absolute. Images of his long-dead brother would reappear embedded in his later works, including *Portrait of My Dead Brother* (1963).

Dalí also had a sister, Anna Maria, who was three years younger. In 1949, she published a book about her brother, *Dalí as Seen by His Sister*.

His childhood friends included future FC Barcelona footballers Sagibarba and Josep Samitier. During holidays at the Catalan resort of Cadaqués, the trio played football (soccer) together.

Dalí attended drawing school. In 1916, he also discovered modern painting on a summer vacation trip to Cadaqués with the family of Ramon Pichot, a local artist who made regular trips to Paris. The next year, Dalí's father organized an exhibition of his charcoal drawings in their family home. He had his first public exhibition at the Municipal Theatre in Figueres in 1919, a site he would return to decades later.

On 6 February 1921, Dalí's mother died of uterus cancer. Dalí was 16 years old; he later said his mother's death "was the greatest blow I had experienced in my life. I worshipped her... I could not resign myself to the loss of a being on whom I counted to make invisible the unavoidable blemishes of my soul." After her death, Dalí's father married his deceased wife's sister. Dalí did not resent this marriage, because he had great love and respect for his aunt.

In 1922, Dalí moved into the Residencia de Estudiantes (Students' Residence) in Madrid and studied at the Real Academia de Bellas Artes de San Fernando. A lean 1.72 metres tall, Dalí already drew attention as an eccentric and dandy. He had long hair and sideburns, coat, stockings, and knee-breeches in the style of English aesthetes of the late 19th century.

At the Residencia, he became close friends with (among others) Pepín Bello, Luis Buñuel, and Federico García Lorca. The friendship with Lorca had a strong element of mutual passion, but Dalí rejected the poet's sexual advances.

Dalí with Federico García Lorca, Turó Park de la Guineueta, Barcelona, 1925

It was his paintings in which he experimented with Cubism, however, that earned him the most attention from his fellow students. Since there were no Cubist artists in Madrid at the time, his knowledge of Cubist art had come from magazine articles and a catalog given to him by Pichot.

Dalí, still unknown to the public, illustrated a book for the first time in 1924. It was a publication of the Catalan poem *Les bruixes de Llers* ("The Witches of Llers") by his friend and schoolmate, poet Carles Fages de Climent. Dalí also experimented with Dada, which influenced his work throughout his life.

Dalí held his first solo exhibition at Galeries Dalmau in Barcelona, from 14 to 27 November 1925. At the time Dalí was not yet immersed in the Surrealist style for which he would later become famous. The exhibition was well received by the public and critics. The following year he exhibited again at Galeries Dalmau, from 31 December 1926 to 14 January 1927, with the support of the art critic Sebastià Gasch.

Dalí left the Academy in 1926, shortly before his final exams. His mastery of painting skills at that time was evidenced by his realistic *The Basket of Bread*, painted in 1926. That same year, he made his first visit to Paris, where he met Pablo Picasso, whom the young Dalí revered. Picasso had already heard favorable reports about Dalí from Joan Miró, a fellow Catalan who introduced him to many Surrealist friends. As he developed his own style over the next few years, Dalí made a number of works strongly influenced by Picasso and Miró.

Some trends in Dalí's work that would continue throughout his life were already evident in the 1920s. Dalí was influenced by many styles of art, ranging from the most academically classic, to the most cutting-edge avant-garde. His classical influences included Raphael, Bronzino, Francisco de Zurbarán, Vermeer and Velázquez. He used both classical and modernist techniques, sometimes in separate works, and sometimes combined. Exhibitions of his works in Barcelona attracted much attention and a mixture of praise and puzzled debate from critics.

Dalí grew a flamboyant moustache, influenced by 17th-century Spanish master painter Diego Velázquez. This moustache became an iconic trademark of his appearance for the rest of his life.

In 1940, as World War II tore through Europe, Dalí and Gala retreated to the United States, where they lived for eight years splitting their time between New York and Monterey, California. They were able to escape because on June 20, 1940, they were issued visas by Aristides de Sousa Mendes, Portuguese consul in Bordeaux, France. Salvador and Gala Dalí crossed into Portugal and subsequently sailed on the *Excambion* from Lisbon to New York in August 1940. Dalí's arrival in New York was one of the catalysts in the development of that city as a world art center in the post-war years. After the move, Dalí returned to the practice of Catholicism. "During this period, Dalí never stopped writing", wrote Robert and Nicolas Descharnes.

Dalí worked prolifically in a variety of media during this period, designing jewelry, clothes, furniture, stage sets for plays and ballet, and retail store display windows. In 1939, while working on a window display for Bonwit Teller, he became so enraged by unauthorized

changes to his work that he shoved a decorative bathtub through a plate glass window.

Dali spent the winter of 1940–41 at Hampton Manor, the residence of bra designer and patron of the arts Caresse Crosby, near Bowling Green in Caroline County, Virginia. During his time there, he spent his time on various projects. He was described as a "showman" by residents in the local newspaper.

In 1941, Dalí drafted a film scenario for Jean Gabin called *Moontide*. In 1942, he published his autobiography, *The Secret Life of Salvador Dalí*. He wrote catalogs for his exhibitions, such as that at the Knoedler Gallery in New York in 1943, in which he attacked some often-used surrealist techniques by proclaiming, "Surrealism will at least have served to give experimental proof that total sterility and attempts at automatizations have gone too far and have led to a totalitarian system. ... Today's laziness and the total lack of technique have reached their paroxysm in the psychological signification of the current use of the collage". He also wrote a novel, published in 1944, about a fashion salon for automobiles. This resulted in a drawing by Edwin Cox in *The Miami Herald*, depicting Dalí dressing an automobile in an evening gown

In *The Secret Life*, Dalí suggested that he had split with Luis Buñuel because the latter was a Communist and an atheist. Buñuel was fired (or resigned) from his position at the Museum of Modern Art (MOMA), supposedly after Cardinal Spellman of New York went to see Iris Barry, head of the film department at MOMA. Buñuel then went back to Hollywood where he worked in the dubbing department of Warner Brothers from 1942 to 1946. In his 1982 autobiography *Mon Dernier soupir (My Last Sigh, 1983)*, Buñuel wrote that, over the years, he had rejected Dalí's attempts at reconciliation.

An Italian friar, Gabriele Maria Berardi, claimed to have performed an exorcism on Dalí while he was in France in 1947. In 2005, a sculpture of Christ on the Cross was discovered in the friar's estate. It had been claimed that Dalí gave this work to his exorcist out of gratitude, and two Spanish art experts confirmed that there were adequate stylistic reasons to believe the sculpture was made by Dalí.

In 1968, Dalí had bought a castle in Púbol for Gala; and starting in 1971 she would retreat there alone for weeks at a time. By Dalí's own admission, he had agreed not to go there without written permission from his wife. His fears of abandonment and estrangement from his longtime artistic muse contributed to depression and failing health.

In 1980 at age 76, Dalí's health took a catastrophic turn. His right hand trembled terribly, with Parkinson-like symptoms. His near-senile wife allegedly had been dosing him with a dangerous cocktail of unprescribed medicine that damaged his nervous system, thus

causing an untimely end to his artistic capacity.

In 1982, King Juan Carlos bestowed on Dalí the title of Marqués de Dalí de Púbol (Marquis of Dalí de Púbol) in the nobility of Spain, hereby referring to Púbol, the place where he lived. The title was in first instance hereditary, but on request of Dalí changed to life only in 1983

Gala died on 10 June 1982, at the age of 87. After Gala's death, Dalí lost much of his will to live. He deliberately dehydrated himself, possibly as a suicide attempt; there are also claims that he had tried to put himself into a state of suspended animation as he had read that some microorganisms could do. He moved from Figueres to the castle in Púbol, which was the site of her death and her grave.

In May 1983, Dalí revealed what would be his last painting, *The Swallow's Tail*, a work heavily influenced by the mathematical catastrophe theory of René Thom.

In 1984, a fire broke out in his bedroom under unclear circumstances. It was possibly a suicide attempt by Dalí, or possibly simple negligence by his staff. Dalí was rescued by friend and collaborator Robert Descharnes and returned to Figueres, where a group of his friends, patrons, and fellow artists saw to it that he was comfortable living in his Theater-Museum in his final years.

There have been allegations that Dalí was forced by his guardians to sign blank canvases that would later, even after his death, be used in forgeries and sold as originals. It is also alleged that he knowingly sold otherwise-blank lithograph paper which he had signed, possibly producing over 50,000 such sheets from 1965 until his death. As a result, art dealers tend to be wary of late graphic works attributed to Dalí.

In November 1988, Dalí entered the hospital with heart failure; a pacemaker had been implanted previously. On 5 December 1988, he was visited by King Juan Carlos, who confessed that he had always been a serious devotee of Dalí. Dalí gave the king a drawing, *Head of Europa*, which would turn out to be Dalí's final drawing.

In early January 1989, Dalí was returned to the Teatro-Museo and on his return he made his last public appearance. He was taken in a wheelchair to a room where press and TV were waiting and made a brief statement, saying:

When you are a genius, you do not have the right to die, because we are necessary for the progress of humanity.

On the morning of 23 January 1989, while his favorite record of Tristan and Isolde played, Dalí died of heart failure at the age of 84. He is buried in the crypt below the stage of his Theatre and Museum in Figueres. The location is across the street from the church of Sant Pere, where he had his baptism, first communion, and funeral, and is only 0.45 kilometres (1,500 ft) from the house where he was born.

Symbolism

Dalí employed extensive symbolism in his work. For instance, the hallmark "melting watches" that first appear in *The Persistence of Memory* suggest Einstein's theory that time is relative and not fixed. The idea for clocks functioning symbolically in this way came to Dalí when he was staring at a runny piece of Camembert cheese on a hot August day.

The elephant is also a recurring image in Dalí's works. It appeared in his 1944 work *Dream Caused by the Flight of a Bee Around a Pomegranate a Second Before Awakening*. The elephants, inspired by Gian Lorenzo Bernini's sculpture base in Rome of an elephant carrying an ancient obelisk, are portrayed "with long, multijointed, almost invisible legs of desire" along with obelisks on their backs. Coupled with the image of their brittle legs, these encumbrances, noted for their phallic overtones, create a sense of phantom reality. "The elephant is a distortion in space", one analysis explains, "its spindly legs contrasting the idea of weightlessness with structure." "I am painting pictures which make me die for joy, I am creating with an absolute naturalness, without the slightest aesthetic concern, I am making things that inspire me with a profound emotion and I am trying to paint them honestly." – Salvador Dalí, in *Dawn Ades, Dalí and Surrealism*.

The egg is another common Dalíesque image. He connects the egg to the prenatal and intrauterine, thus using it to symbolize hope and love; it appears in *The Great Masturbator* and *The Metamorphosis of Narcissus*. *The Metamorphosis of Narcissus* also symbolized death and petrification. There are also giant sculptures of eggs in various locations at Dalí's house in Port Lligat as well as at the Dalí Theatre and Museum in Figueres.

Various other animals appear throughout his work as well: ants point to death, decay, and immense sexual desire; the snail is connected to the human head (he saw a snail on a bicycle outside Freud's house when he first met Sigmund Freud); and locusts are a symbol of waste and fear.

Both Dalí and his father enjoyed eating sea urchins, freshly caught in the sea near Cadaqués. The radial symmetry of the sea urchin fascinated Dalí, and he adapted its form to many art works. Other foods also appear throughout his work.

Sculptures and other objects

Two of the most popular objects of the surrealist movement were *Lobster Telephone* and *Mae West Lips Sofa*, completed by Dalí in 1936 and 1937, respectively. Surrealist artist and patron Edward James commissioned both of these pieces from Dalí; James inherited a large English estate in West Dean, West Sussex when he was five and was one of the foremost supporters of the surrealists in the 1930s. The *Lobster Telephone* telephone was functional, and James purchased four of them from Dalí to replace the phones in his retreat home. One now appears at the Tate Gallery; the second can be found at the German Telephone Museum in Frankfurt; the third belongs to the Edward James Foundation; and the fourth is at the National Gallery of Australia.

The wood and satin *Mae West Lips Sofa* was shaped after the lips of actress Mae West, whom Dalí apparently found fascinating. West was previously the subject of Dalí's 1935 painting *The Face of Mae West*. The *Mae West Lips Sofa* currently resides at the Brighton and Hove Museum in England.

Between 1941 and 1970, Dalí created an ensemble of 39 pieces of jewelry; many pieces are intricate, and some contain moving parts. The most famous assemblage, *The Royal Heart*, is made of gold and is encrusted with 46 rubies, 42 diamonds, and four emeralds, created in such a way that the center "beats" much like a real heart. Dalí himself commented that "Without an audience, without the presence of spectators, these jewels would not fulfill the function for which they came into being. The viewer, then, is the ultimate artist." The "Dalí - Joies" ("The Jewels of Dalí") collection is in the Dalí Theater Museum in Figueres, Catalonia, Spain.

Dalí took a stab at industrial design in the 1970s with a 500-piece run of the upscale Suomi tableware by Timo Sarpaneva that Dalí decorated for the German Rosenthal porcelain maker's "Studio Linie".

Theatre and film

In theatre, Dalí constructed the scenery for Federico García Lorca's 1927 romantic play *Mariana Pineda*. For *Bacchanale* (1939), a ballet based on and set to the music of Richard Wagner's 1845 opera *Tannhäuser*, Dalí provided both the set design and the libretto. *Bacchanale* was followed by set designs for *Labyrinth* in 1941 and *The Three-Cornered Hat* in 1949.

Dalí became intensely interested in film when he was young, going to the theatre most Sundays. He was part of the era where silent films were being viewed and drawing on the medium of film became popular. He believed there were two dimensions to the theories of film and cinema: "things themselves", the facts that are presented in the world of the camera; and "photographic imagination", the way the camera shows the picture and how creative or imaginative it looks. Dalí was active in front of and behind the scenes in the film world.

He is credited as co-creator of Luis Buñuel's surrealist film *Un Chien Andalou*, a 17-minute French art film co-written with Luis Buñuel that is widely remembered for its graphic opening scene simulating the slashing of a human eyeball with a razor. In *Un Chien Andalou*, surreal imagery and irrational discontinuities in time and space produce a dreamlike quality. The second film he produced with Buñuel was entitled *L'Age d'Or*, and it was performed at Studio 28 in Paris in 1930. *L'Age d'Or* was "banned for years after fascist and anti-Semitic groups staged a stink bomb and ink-throwing riot in the Paris theater where it was shown".

Both of these films, *Un Chien Andalou* and *L'Age d'Or*, have had a tremendous impact on the independent surrealist film movement. "If *Un Chien Andalou* stands as the supreme record of Surrealism's adventures into the realm of the unconscious, then *L'Âge d'Or* is perhaps the most trenchant and implacable expression of its revolutionary intent".

Dalí worked with other famous filmmakers, such as Alfred Hitchcock. The most well-known of his film projects is probably the dream sequence in Hitchcock's *Spellbound*, which delves into themes of psychoanalysis. Hitchcock needed a dreamlike quality to his film, which dealt with the idea that a repressed experience can directly trigger a neurosis, and he knew that Dalí's work would help create the atmosphere he wanted in his film.

Dalí also worked with Walt Disney on the short film production *Destino*. Completed in 2003 by Baker Bloodworth and Walt's nephew Roy E. Disney, it contains dreamlike images of strange figures flying and walking about. It is based on Mexican songwriter Armando Dominguez' song "Destino". When Disney hired Dalí to help produce the film in 1946, they were not prepared for the quantity of work that lay ahead. For eight months,

they worked on it continuously, until their efforts had to stop when they realized they were in financial trouble. However, it was eventually finished 48 years later, and shown in various film festivals. The film consists of Dalí's artwork interacting with Disney's character animation.

In 1960 Dalí and the photographer Philippe Halsman made a documentary video called *Chaos and Creation*, that showed him creating a painting

Dalí completed only one other film in his lifetime, *Impressions of Upper Mongolia* (1975), in which he narrated a story about an expedition in search of giant hallucinogenic mushrooms. The imagery was based on microscopic uric acid stains on the brass band of a ballpoint pen on which Dalí had been urinating for several weeks

In the mid-1970s, film director Alejandro Jodorowsky cast Dali in the role of the Padishah Emperor in a production of *Dune*, based on the novel by Frank Herbert. According to the 2013 documentary on the film, *Jodorowsky's Dune*, Jodorowsky met Dali in the King Cole Bar in the St. Regis hotel in Manhattan to discuss the role. Dali expressed interest in the film but required as a condition of appearing that he be made the highest-paid actor in Hollywood. Jodorowsky accordingly cast Dali as the emperor, but he planned to cut Dali's screen time to mere minutes, promising he be the highest-paid actor on a per minute basis. The film was ultimately never made.[128]

In the year 1927, Dali began to write the libretto for an opera, which he called *Être Dieu*. He wrote this together with Federico Garcia Lorca one afternoon in the Café Regina Victoria in Madrid. In 1974, for a recording in Paris, the opera was adapted by the Spanish writer Manuel Vazquez Montalban, who wrote the libretto, while the music was created by Igor Wakhevitch. During the recording, however, Dali refused to follow the text written by Montalban, and instead, began to improvise in the belief that "Salvador Dali never repeats himself."