



The Temptation of Saint Anthony, 1946. Oil on canvas. 89,5 x 119,5 cm. Musées royaux des Beaux-Arts de Belgique.

The subtitle of this exhibition comes from Salvador Dalí's *San Sebastián* (St. Sebastian), a 1927 article that is also an artistic manifesto. The phrase suggests a way in which the painter's work might be approached in a large-scale show such as this. Dalí is omnivorous, and we, the viewers, can follow suit thanks to the different possibilities offered by contemplation of his creations.

A singular artist of great painterly expertise, his pictorial and literary oeuvre is riddled with obsessive elements that are metaphors for our unconscious, generating a sometimes disturbing art that speaks directly to the viewer. Admired and controversial, Dalí defines himself as a thinking machine and, at the same time, the mediator and creator of a stereotype and of his own myth. Through more than two hundred paintings, sculptures, drawings and other exhibits presented in a discourse that divides them into eleven sections arranged in chronological sequence, this show invites us to reassess Dalí's place in the history of 20th century art by looking far beyond his role as artificer of the surrealist movement.

The inventor of the paranoiac-critical method also echoes the scientific discoveries of his time, which constantly impel him to expand the limits of his experience with relation to space and time. Imaginative, inquisitive and prodigal, the artist uses himself as an object of study, notably through the prism of Freudian psychoanalysis, and lays down the basis for the construction of the character he plays. His actions in the public sphere, whether calculated or improvised, now reveal him as one of the precursors of showmanship and a key figure in the field of performance.

1. From the multiplying glass to putrefaction – 2. Self-portraits

The exhibition begins with some of the painter's earliest works, whose predominant elements are those which marked his childhood, such as his family and his natural surroundings at that time. Here too are some of his self-portraits, which show us Dalí's vision, or visions, of himself. The family, the landscape and the self are the determining co-ordinates of the artist's period of apprenticeship, when his interests are centered principally on color, light, and constant experimentation.

3. Honey is sweeter than blood

His arrival in late 1922 at the Residencia de Estudiantes in Madrid, where he met, among others, Federico García Lorca and Luis Buñuel (with whom he was to collaborate on the film *Un chien andalou*), brought him face to face with the 'Generation of '27', a group formed by poets, writers, painters and film-makers. Dalí felt an affinity with the avant-gardes at that point, and he flirted with different early 20th century 'isms' like cubism, fauvism and futurism, although his gaze was also occasionally drawn to the 'return to order'. The collective imaginary developed at the Residencia is reflected in the numerous drawings of *Putrefactos*, a series of the mid-1920s.

4. Surrealism

Starting with the first influences of Masson, Bataille, Arp, Miró and Picasso, the surrealist period constitutes the nucleus of the exhibition. Special emphasis is laid on the paranoiac-critical method developed by the artist as a mechanism for the transformation and subversion of reality. Dalí's theory revolutionized surrealism by confronting the movement's passive automatism (automatic drawing, the *cadavres exquis*...) with a proposal for an active method based on the delirium of paranoiac interpretation. In Dalí's words: "In truth I am no more than an automaton that registers, without judgment and as exactly as possible, the dictate of my subconscious: my dreams, hypnagogic images and visions, and all the concrete and irrational manifestations of the dark and sensational world discovered by Freud... The public must draw its pleasure from the limitless resources of mysteries, enigmas and anguishes that such images offer to the viewers' subconscious." From that point on, the painter's work rests on double images or invisible images whose final completion depends totally upon the will of the spectator. With his paranoiac-critical method, Dalí invites us into a world of ambiguities where certainties elude us.

5. The Angelus

The paranoiac-critical method of interpretation, a conjunction of thought and image, is taken by the painter to its fullest expression in his interpretation of Jean-François Millet's *The Angelus* (1857-59). The artist's obsession with this painting makes it the protagonist not only of the pictures and objects he produced from 1929 to 1935, but also of various theatrical projects that never came to fruition: "Of all the pictures that have ever existed, Millet's *Angelus* 'suddenly' becomes for me the most perturbing, the most enigmatic, the densest, and the richest in unconscious thoughts," Dalí wrote in 1932. A year later, in June 1933, he penned an article for the journal *Minotaure* which would eventually form the prologue of his book *The Tragic Myth of Millet's Angelus*, not published until 1963. In Dalí's interpretation of Millet's picture, the female figure represents a praying mantis who is about to devour the male after mating with him. The male figure, just before he is eaten, uses his hat to cover up his sexual organs. In his obsession, the painter 'divines' Millet's *pentimento*, a child's coffin lying between the two figures, whose presence was confirmed by X-rays of the original painting shortly before the book's publication.

6. The face of war – 7. Surrealism after 1936

After 1936, Dalí and Gala fled from the Spanish Civil War, spending most of the time in France with the exception of occasional trips to the United States and Italy. The experiences of those years were not only reflected in his painting but also channeled the painter's thought toward his *Mystical Manifesto* of 1951. The artist transferred his personal experience to paintings in which the horror and death caused by conflicts are manifested explicitly and, for the viewer, disturbingly. Although Dalí never ceased to experiment in the meantime with the construction of surrealist objects, as he had formally announced in 1931, it was not until the 1936 Surrealist Exhibition of Objects at the Galerie Charles Ratton in Paris that this new form of surrealist expression became officialized.

8. America

The start of the Second World War forced Dalí and Gala into exile in the United States, where they lived uninterruptedly from 1940 to 1948. It was in the middle of this decade that he entered his mystical and nuclear phase, whose corpus, expounded in his *Mystical Manifesto*, is characterized by subjects of a religious nature or connected with the scientific advances of the period, special interest being shown in progress related to nuclear fusion and fission. The atomic bomb and its effects clearly influence the creations of this period, in which we discover at the same time the fidelity with which he depicted the concrete mineral landscape of Cadaqués and Cape Creus, a constant reflected from his earliest youth to his last works, despite the distance then separating him from both.

9. The secret life

In the course of 1941 and 1942, Salvador Dalí wrote and illustrated his autobiography, *The Secret Life of Salvador Dalí*, a magificent piece of writing that is often regarded by critics as his best. A tangle of truths, half-truths and also "falsehoods", this is a key narrative for a better understanding of the work and the personality that Dalí was then constructing. The situations and described or narrated concepts of *The Secret Life* are superbly reinforced, and sometimes exemplified, by the drawings which illustrate them, elements in an effective creative symbiosis between Dalí the draftsman and Dalí the man of letters. Here the drawing serves the artist not as a mere illustration but as an indispensable tool for continuing to narrate his memories, and for showing how Dalí is approaching the ideals of tradition and the Renaissance through an attitude to life of active investigation and perseverance. Dalí the draftsman and Dalí the writer form a whole, a cosmogony of the origin and formation of Dalí's universe.

10. Scenarios

Dalí defined himself as an eminently theatrical artist. This affirmation is manifested not only through his personality but also in his conception of his own work and its reception. From his cinematic incursions in collaborations with Luis Buñuel, Alfred Hitchcock and Walt Disney to his set designs for theatre and ballet, we see how the master and the genuinity of Dalí the painter placed itself at the service of the entertainment industry, a field that lay outside his own. Once again, his creative scope expanded to include the writing of film scripts as well as designs for sets and costumes, to which Dalí showed an active commitment in every case. Although his genius was not always understood by the industry, his various collaborations allowed him to stay in contact with the public at large.

11. The aesthetic enigma

From the 1960s to the end of his career, Dalí's interests continued to expand. While his fascination for science and technology translated itself into the exploration of new languages like stereoscopy and holography, his role as an agitator of the masses was strengthened by the happenings and performances he conceived for his own protagonism. At the same time, he never relinquished the great masters like Velázquez or Michelangelo, whom he championed repeatedly. At that moment, Dalí not only reinterpreted the classics but also reinterpreted himself. In the 1980s, the mathematical theories of René Thom gave form to a new universe which the painter was thereafter never to abandon.

Salvador Dalí i Domènech. Timeline

1904 Salvador Felipe Jacinto Dalí is born on May 11 in Figueres (Girona) to Salvador Dalí Cusí, a notary, and Felipa Domènech Ferrés.

1908 Birth of Anna Maria, his only sister.

1916 Discovers impressionism.

1922 Attends classes at the Special School of Painting, Sculpture and Engraving of the Real Academia de Bellas Artes in Madrid, and lives at the Residencia de Estudiantes, where he makes friends with Luis Buñuel, Federico García Lorca, Pedro Gariñas, Eugenio Montés, Pepín Bello and others.

1925 Participates in the first exhibition of the Society of Iberian Artists in Madrid, and his first solo exhibition is presented at the Galeries Dalmau in Barcelona.

1926 Takes part in several exhibitions in Madrid and Barcelona. Travels to Paris, where he meets Picasso and visits the Louvre. Expelled definitively from art school in Madrid.

1928 Together with Lluís Montanyà and Sebastià Gasch, publishes the *Manifest Groc* (Catalan anti-artistic manifesto), an all-out attack on conventional art.

1929 Travels again to Paris, and is introduced through Joan Miró to the surrealists, a group led by André Breton. The film *Un chien andalou*, the result of his collaboration with Luis Buñuel, is shown at the Studio des Ursulines cinema in Paris. Spends the summer at Cadaqués, where he is visited by the gallery owner Camille Goemans and his partner, René Magritte and his wife, Luis Buñuel, and Paul Éluard and Gala with their daughter, Cécile. From then on, Gala remains forever by his side. Holds his first one-man exhibition at the Galerie Goemans in Paris. This is the year when relations with his family are broken off.

1930 *L'Âge d'or*, his second film collaboration with Buñuel, has its premiere at Studio 28 in Paris. Published by Éditions Surrealistes, his book *La femme visible* (The Visible Woman) compiles texts which have previously appeared in journals like *L'âne pourri* (The Rotten Donkey). Here he lays the foundations for his paranoiac-critical method of interpretation.

1931 First one-man exhibition at the Galerie Pierre Colle in Paris.

1932 Takes part in the exhibition *Surrealism: Paintings, Drawings and Photographs* at the Julien Levy Gallery in New York. At the end of the year, Dalí informs the Viscount of Noailles of the formation of the so-called 'Zodiac group', a coterie of friends who gather to help Salvador Dalí financially by regularly commissioning and purchasing works from him.

1933 First one-man exhibition at the Julien Levy Gallery in New York.

1934 Marries Gala in a civil ceremony. Solo exhibition at the Julien Levy Gallery in New York.

1936 Appears on the cover of *Time* magazine, photographed by Man Ray. Takes part in the exhibition *Fantastic Art, Dada, Surrealism* at the MoMA in New York. Solo exhibition at the Julien Levy Gallery in New York.

1938 The *Exposition Internationale du Surrealisme*, organized by André Breton and Paul Éluard, opens on January 17 at the Galerie Beaux-Arts in Paris. Exhibited at the entrance to the gallery is Salvador Dalí's *Rainy Taxi*. Dalí visits Sigmund Freud in London.

1939 Designs the *Dream of Venus* pavilion for the entertainment area of the New York World's Fair. The deterioration of his relationship with Breton leads to Dalí's expulsion from the surrealist group.

1940 When the German troops enter Bordeaux, Dalí and Gala leave for the United States, where they remain until 1948.

1942 His autobiography, *The Secret Life of Salvador Dalí*, is published in New York by Dial Press.

1945 On August 6, the first atomic bomb falls on Hiroshima. The event marks the beginning of the atomic-nuclear period of his production, characterized by his treatment of subjects related to religion and scientific progress. Moves to Hollywood to work with Alfred Hitchcock on the film *Spellbound*, for which he makes the dream sequences. On the occasion of the opening at the Bignou Gallery of the exhibition *Recent Paintings by Salvador Dalí*, the first issue of *Dalí News* is presented.

1946 Walt Disney hires Dalí to collaborate on the film *Destino*.

1948 Publishes *50 Secrets of Magic Craftsmanship*. In July, Dalí and Gala return to Spain.

1951 The *Mystical Manifesto* is presented in Paris. Dalí gives the talk "Picasso and I" at the Teatro María Guerrero in Madrid.

1954 Anthological exhibition at the Palazzo Pallavicini in Rome. The film *Histoire prodigieuse de la Dentellière et du Rhinocéros* is co-produced with Robert Descharnes. The book *Dalí's Mustache* is published in collaboration with the photographer Philippe Halsman.

1958 On August 8, Dalí and Gala are married in a Catholic ceremony at the shrine of Els Àngels in Sant Martí Vell, near Girona.

1960 Makes the documentary film *Chaos and Creation* in collaboration with Philippe Halsman.

1964 Awarded the Grand Cross of Isabel la Católica, the highest distinction in Spain. *Journal d'un génie* (Diary of a Genius) is published by Éditions de La Table Ronde.

1965 Opening of the retrospective exhibition *Salvador Dalí 1910-1965* at the Gallery of Modern Art in New York.

1968 Participates in the exhibition *Dada, Surrealism and Their Heritage* at the MoMA in New York.

1969 Buys Públol Castle and decorates it for Gala.

1970 A major retrospective is organized for him by the Boijmans van Beuningen Museum in Rotterdam.

1971 Inauguration of the Dalí Museum in Cleveland, Ohio, which houses the collection of A. Reynolds Morse.

1974 The Teatre-Museu Dalí is inaugurated in Figueres on September 28.

1979 Admitted as a foreign associate member to the Académie des Beaux-Arts de l'Institut de France. The great retrospective on Dalí opens at the Centre Georges Pompidou in Paris. In the 1980s, he paints what are to be his last works, basically inspired by Michelangelo and Velázquez.

1982 The Salvador Dalí Museum, owned by Albert and Eleanor Morse, opens in St. Petersburg, Florida. On June 10, Gala dies in Portlligat. King Juan Carlos I grants the artist the title of Marqués de Dalí de Públol. Salvador Dalí takes up residence in Públol Castle.

1983 A major anthological exhibition, *400 obras de Salvador Dalí de 1914 a 1983*, is shown in Madrid, Barcelona and Figueres. His last pictorial work dates from this period.

1984 Owing to a fire at Públol Castle, he moves to Torre Galatea, Figueres, where he lives until his death.

1989 Dies in Figueres on January 23, at the age of 85.

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Gala-Salvador Dalí,

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Images

Of Salvador Dalí's work:
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