

Salvador Dalí

Biography

Salvador Dalí was born May 11, 1904 in Figueres, Spain. From an early age Dalí was encouraged to practice his art and would eventually go on to study at an academy in Madrid. In the 1920's Dalí went to Paris and began interacting with Picasso, Magritte, and Miro leading to his first Surrealist phase. The rise of the fascist leader Franco in Spain led to Dalí's expulsion from the Surrealist movement, but that did not prevent him from painting.

His father, Salvador Dalí y Cusi, was a middle class lawyer and notary. Salvador's father had a strict disciplinary approach to raising children—a style of child-rearing which contrasted sharply with that of his mother, Felipa Domenech Ferrer. She often indulged young Salvador in his art and early eccentricities. It has been said that young Salvador was a precocious and intelligent child, prone to fits of anger against his parents and schoolmates. Consequently, Dalí was subjected to furious acts of cruelty by more dominant students or his father. The elder Salvador wouldn't tolerate his son's outbursts or eccentricities, and punished him severely. Their relationship deteriorated when Salvador was still young, exacerbated by competition between he and his father for Felipa's affection.

Dalí had an older brother, born nine months before him, also named Salvador, who died of gastroenteritis.

Salvador, along with his younger sister Ana Maria and his parents, often spent time at their summer home in the coastal village of Cadaques. At an early age, young Salvador was producing highly sophisticated drawings, and both his parents strongly supported his artistic talent. It was here that his parents built him an art studio before he entered art school.

Upon recognizing his immense talent, Dalí's parents sent him to drawing school at the Colegio de Hermanos Maristas and the Instituto in Figueres. By 1919, Dalí had his first public exhibition at the Municipal Theater in Figueres.

In 1921, Salvador Dalí's mother, Felipa, died of breast cancer.

In 1922, Dalí enrolled in the Academia de San Fernando in Madrid, Spain, and stayed at the student residence. In 1923, Dalí was suspended from the Academy for criticizing his teachers and allegedly starting a riot among students over the Academy's choice of a professorship. That same year, he was arrested and briefly imprisoned in Gerona for allegedly supporting the Separatist movement, although Dalí was apolitical then and remained so throughout most of his life.

In between 1926 and 1929, Dalí made several trips to Paris, and met with influential painters and intellectuals including Pablo Picasso, whom he revered. During this time, Dalí painted a number of works that displayed Picasso's influence. He also met Joan Miro, the Spanish painter and sculptor who, along with poet Paul Eluard and painter Rene Magritte, introduced Dalí to Surrealism. By this time, Dalí was working with Impressionism, Futurism, and Cubism.

In August 1929, he met his muse and future wife.

In 1930, Salvador Dalí became famous in the surrealist movement. Famous painting in this style: *The Persistence of Memory*.

During the World War II, Dalí and his wife moved to the United States. They remained there until 1948, when they moved back to his beloved Catalonia. These were important years for Dalí. The Metropolitan Museum of Modern Art in New York gave him his own retrospective exhibit in 1941. This was followed by the publication of his autobiography, *The Secret Life of Salvador Dalí*, in 1942.

Over the next 15 years, Dalí painted a series of 19 large canvases, concerning scientific, historical or religious themes.

From 1960 to 1974, Salvador Dalí dedicated much of his time to creating the Dalí Teatro Museo (Theater-Museum) in Figueres,

In 1980, Dalí was forced to retire from painting due to a motor disorder that caused permanent trembling and weakness in his hands. . Then in 1982, his beloved wife and friend, Gala, died. The two events put him in a deep depression. In 1984, Dalí was severely burned in a fire, which confined him to a wheelchair. .

On January 23, 1989, he died of heart failure at the age of 84.

Symbolism

Dalí employed extensive symbolism in his work. For instance, the hallmark "soft watches" that first appear in *The Persistence of Memory* suggest Einstein's theory that time is relative and not fixed.[26] 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.[65]

The elephant is also a recurring image in Dalí's works. It first 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,[66] are portrayed "with long, multijointed, almost invisible legs of desire"[67] 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." [67] "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;[68] it appears in *The Great Masturbator* and *The Metamorphosis of Narcissus*. *The Metamorphosis of Narcissus* also symbolized death and petrification.

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.

The artist worked extensively in the graphic arts, producing many etchings and lithographs. While his early work in printmaking is equal in quality to his important paintings, as he grew older he would sell the rights to images but not be involved in the print production itself. In addition, a large number of unauthorized fakes were produced in the 1980s and 1990s, thus further confusing the Dalí print market.

Fashion and photography

Dalí built a repertoire in the fashion and photography businesses as well. He was also involved in creating textile designs and perfume bottles. In 1950, Dalí created a special "costume for the year 2045" with Christian Dior.

Photographers with whom he collaborated include Man Ray, Brassai, Cecil Beaton, and Philippe Halsman. With Man Ray and Brassai, Dalí photographed nature; with the others, he explored a range of obscure topics, including (with Halsman) the *Dalí Atomica* series (1948) — inspired by his painting *Leda Atomica* — which in one photograph depicts "a painter's easel, three cats, a bucket of water, and Dalí himself floating in the air." [

In theatre, Dalí constructed the scenery for Federico García Lorca's 1927 romantic play *Mariana Pineda*.^[73] 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.^[74] *Bacchanale* was followed by set designs for *Labyrinth* in 1941 and *The Three-Cornered Hat* in 1949.^[75]

Dalí became intensely interested in film when he was young, going to the theatre most Sundays. He is credited as co-creator of Luis Buñuel's surrealist film *Un Chien Andalou*/

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.

Architecture

Architectural achievements include his Port Lligat house near Cadaqués, as well as his Teatro Museo in Figueres. A major work outside of Spain was the temporary Dream of Venus surrealist pavilion at the 1939 New York World's Fair, which contained within it a number of unusual sculptures and statues, including live performers posing as statues

The Dream (1931)

By the Thirties, Surrealist painting had moved toward the arena of dreams for inspiration and relied less on the ideas of automatism that had marked the beginning of the movement. The Dream was painted in 1931 but the main image, the woman's head, had first appeared the year before in *The Fountain*, where, although in the background, it was a striking and dominant feature. Dali found the inspiration for the woman from a scene on a box and a monument in Barcelona.

In the foreground of this dark painting is the bust of a woman, painted in dull, metallic grays, her hair floating above her as if frozen in movement. The colors used and her apparent immobility bring to mind the Classical myth of Medusa. The woman has no mouth and her eyes also appear sealed shut, like those of the giant head in *Sleep*. The absence of a mouth, together with the seeming immobility of the woman implies a loss of control, of paralysis. Ants crawl across the face in the place where a mouth should be. As a child, Dali had found a pet bat crawling with ants and so, for him, they became symbols of death and decay.

Sleep (1937)

Sleep was painted for Edward James, a British millionaire who was Dali's patron from 1936 to 1939. *Sleep* deals with a subject that fascinated the Surrealists: the world of dreams. They believed that the freedom of the subconscious within sleep could be tapped into and then used creatively.

Sleep is a visual rendering of the body's collapse into sleep, as if into a separate state of being. Against a deep blue summer sky, a huge disembodied head with eyes dissolved in sleep, hangs suspended over an almost empty landscape. The head is "soft", appearing both vulnerable and distorted; what should be a neck tapers away to drop limply over a crutch. A dog appears, its head in a crutch, as if half asleep itself.

The head is propped above the land by a series of wooden crutches. The mouth, nose and also the eyes are all held in place by the crutches, suggesting that the head might disintegrate if they were removed. Crutches were a familiar sight in Dali's work. In *The Secret Life of Salvador Dali*, the artist wrote that he had imagined sleep as a heavy monster that was "held up by the crutches of reality".