

# Salvador Dalí: BIOGRAPHY

## Introduction

At the age of 37, in 1941, Salvador Dalí finished writing his autobiography *The Secret Life of Salvador Dalí*. The book, published the following year, revealed a web of factual and fictionalized events from the artist's life. Dalí was by this time an international celebrity, a status he enjoyed as much for his art as for his eccentric public image. In the years since, countless biographies have been written, unraveling the mystery Dalí created, telling of the man who became the legend: Salvador Dalí.

## Childhood and Family

Salvador Dalí began his life May 11, 1904, the second-born son of Salvador Dalí Cusí and Felipa Domènech Ferrés. Sadly, he never knew his older brother, also named Salvador Dalí, who died in infancy only nine months earlier. In 1908 came the birth of his only sister, Ana María. The family lived in the **Catalan** town of **Figueres**, Spain, but spent the summers in the seaside village of **Cadaqués**. Dalí's father was a notary, a position of political and social power. As a child Dalí feared his father, who was known for his bad temper, and took refuge in the comfort and kindness of his mother and the household servants who spoiled him.

At the age of four, the young Dalí began his formal education at the Escuela Pública (public school) in Figueres. Dalí disliked school, and spent much of his time daydreaming instead of studying. Displeased with Dalí's progress, his father transferred him to a private school where all of his classes were taught in French. Though Dalí spoke Catalan at home and was also learning Spanish, French was to become the language that he used as an artist. Dalí continued to dislike going to school because he hated the feeling of being confined to the classroom. During the school year he would long for the summer months his family spent together in the seaside town of Cadaqués. He enjoyed the freedom of his childhood summers when he could make paintings and drawings of his family and the picturesque coastline. At Cadaqués, Dalí studied painting with a family friend, Ramón Pichot, an artist who painted mostly in the style of the Impressionists, but also experimented with some styles of the Catalan **avant-garde**. Pichot, who lived in Paris and was friends with other artists including **Pablo Picasso**, was a mentor to Dalí throughout his youth, and was eventually successful in persuading

Dalí's reluctant father to allow his son to apply for admission at the San Fernando Academy of Art in Madrid.

### **Student Years and the Catalan Avant-Garde**

In 1922 Dalí gained admission to the Academy. He enjoyed the freedom of self-expression he felt in Madrid, and developed close relationships with several of his fellow students including **Federico García Lorca** and **Luis Buñuel** (two artists he would later collaborate with). Dalí experimented with several avant-garde painting styles, primarily **Cubism**, **Futurism** and **Purism**, which he learned about through reproductions in art journals. He began showing his work in galleries in Barcelona and Madrid and had two solo exhibitions, as well as showing his work in several other exhibitions with other Catalan modernists. Though he was experiencing success in the Spanish art world, Dalí felt unchallenged by his instructors at the Academy. His tendency to challenge the authority of the Academy and to encourage his peers to do the same, led to disciplinary actions and eventually to his dismissal in 1926. Following his dismissal, Dalí returned to Figueres and devoted himself to painting. He continued to exhibit with the Catalan avant-garde, but his works displayed an increasingly disturbing imagery of mutilation and decay. Even the Catalan art community became more and more horrified by his graphic depictions, and as a result galleries in Madrid and Barcelona began to exclude Dalí from exhibitions.

### **Dalí and the Surrealists**

In 1929, Dalí partnered with his friend, Luis Buñuel, to create a short avant-garde film titled *Un Chien andalou* (*An Andalusian Dog*) consisting of a series of short scenes of unexplained violence and rotting corpses. The widespread acclaim for the film among the European avant-garde elevated the two to international fame and brought Dalí to Paris. In particular, the **Surrealists** took notice of Dalí and Buñuel, welcoming them to their artistic circle. As a member of the Surrealist movement, Dalí was surrounded by artists who accepted his outlandish behavior, and celebrated the bizarre imagery in his art. Besides meeting artists such as René Magritte and Hans Arp, Dalí also made acquaintance with Gala, the wife of the Surrealist writer Paul Eluard. Even though she was nine years his senior and already married, Dalí and Gala quickly became inseparable, and moved to Paris together in the autumn of 1929. Five years later the couple married in a civil ceremony. Gala, who was born in Russia as Elena Dmitrievna

Diakona, became Dalí's muse but also served as his manager. Gala encouraged and at times even drove Dalí in his pursuit of fame and fortune.

Though Dalí was a member of the Surrealist movement, his affiliation was more the result of shared interests than any genuine unity with the group. Like the Surrealists, Dalí found artistic inspiration in **Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic** studies, however he did not embrace the communist social and political ideals of the movement, preferring to be apolitical. Many of Freud's publications began to appear in Spanish translations in the 1920s, and Dalí read them voraciously. He became increasingly obsessed with psychoanalysis and paranoia, and sought ways to include these concepts in his art, leading to his development of the '**paranoic-critical method**' and his introduction of Surrealist objects.

Dalí's relationship with members of the Surrealist movement, particularly with the group's leader and founder, **André Breton**, was strained throughout the 1930s. His self-promoting behavior and unwillingness to conform his own activities and attitudes to the Surrealist agenda created increasing disruption within the group. Though he continued to participate in Surrealist exhibitions and attracted a great deal of attention to the movement, Breton became more openly critical of Dalí's growing celebrity and commercialism, dubbing him with the **anagrammatic** nickname 'Avida Dollars.' By 1939 the rupture was absolute and Dalí broke from the Surrealists. Dalí's departure from the Surrealists marked the end of his affiliation with artistic groups and movements. Through the rest of his life he remained independent as an artist, working in his own style and exploring his own introspective and paranoic avenues.

### **Dalí in America**

The 1940s brought about many changes in Dalí's life and art. The civil war that had devastated Spain in the late 1930s was over, but a new war was on the horizon. As the Nazis prepared to invade France, Dalí and Gala fled to the United States in self-imposed exile, as did many other artists during the Second World War. Dalí was well known by the American public, and very popular with American collectors as well. During the course of the decade Dalí's works were exhibited in important galleries in New York and in major exhibitions at the Museum of Modern Art in New York and the Philadelphia Museum of Art. He also lent his talent to other media, collaborating with Alfred Hitchcock and Walt Disney on film and animation projects.

The dropping of atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945 marked the end of World War II, and the beginning of a new period of artistic exploration for Dalí. He became fascinated with the power of the atom and the advances of modern science, particularly **physics**, and he sought ways to incorporate these elements into his art. At this same time, Dalí's artistic style also became more focused and deliberate in its borrowing from the **classical** style of the Italian Renaissance. His renewed classicism and new scientific interests were accompanied by growing spirituality and dedication to the Catholic Church. Dalí began painting in a style he described as '**Nuclear Mysticism**,' combining mystical and scientific iconography to express what Dalí saw as a unity between the two that was proof of a divine power.

### **Dalí's Later Years**

In the final decades of his life, Dalí painted less and less. He remained an international celebrity, with major exhibitions of his works in cities around the world including Tokyo, London, Paris, Ferrara (Italy) and Moscow. Before his death on January 23, 1989, Dalí even witnessed the inauguration of two museums dedicated to exhibiting his art, The Salvador Dalí Museum in Cleveland, Ohio (now in St. Petersburg, Florida) and his own Teatre-Museu in Figueres, where he is buried.

# Salvador Dalí: CHRONOLOGY (1904-1989)

- 1904 Born May 11<sup>th</sup> at Figueres, Spain. He is named after his brother who died a year earlier at the age of two.
- 1916 Dalí's father enrolls the young artist in evening classes at the Municipal School of Drawing in Figueres.
- 1919 Participates in an exhibition of local artists at the Municipal Theater at Figueres.
- 1921 Dalí's mother dies. His father marries her sister the next year.
- 1922 Enters the San Fernando Academy of Art in Madrid.
- 1923 Dalí is expelled for one year from the San Fernando Academy for criticizing his lecturers and causing dissent amongst the student population.
- 1924 Paints *Pierrot and Guitar*.
- 1925 First solo exhibition at the Dalmau Gallery in Barcelona, Spain.  
  
Paints *Figure at a Window*, which is exhibited the following year in a show of the Catalan avant-garde.  
  
Sketches *Don Salvador and Ana María Dalí* (Portrait of the Artist's Father and Sister).
- 1926 Dalí visits Paris for the first time and meets Pablo Picasso.  
  
Dalí is permanently expelled from the San Fernando Academy for subversive behavior.
- 1928 Paints *The Wounded Bird*.
- 1929 Dalí makes the film *Un Chien Andalou* with his friend Luis Buñuel. The two artists officially join the Surrealist movement.  
  
Dalí meets Gala and they begin their lifelong companionship in Paris. Their relationship causes a rift between Dalí and his father as well as other members of Dalí's family.  
  
Paints *The Enigma of Desire: My Mother*.

- 1930 Dalí begins developing and exploring his paranoic-critical method.  
He purchases a fisherman's cottage at Port Lligat near Cadaqués, which he inhabits for a part of each year for much of the remainder of his life.
- 1931 Dalí exhibits in the first Surrealist show in the United States.
- 1934 Surrealist leader André Breton criticizes Dalí for not following the principles of the Surrealist movement, and attempts to have him expelled from the group.  
Dalí and Gala marry in a civil ceremony.
- 1935 Paints *The Angelus of Gala*.
- 1936 Paints *Soft Construction with Boiled Beans: Premonition of Civil War*.  
The Spanish Civil War begins.
- 1937 Dalí creates fabric, clothing and accessory designs for fashion designer Elsa Schiaparelli.
- 1938 Visits Sigmund Freud in London.  
Creates the sculpture *Mae West Lips Sofa* and paints *Apparition of Face and Fruit Dish on a Beach*.
- 1939 Dalí completely disassociates from the Surrealist movement.  
The Spanish Civil War ends.
- 1940 Dalí flees with Gala to the United States via Spain after France falls to the Nazis in June. (He visits father in Spain for the first time since their falling-out nearly ten years before). Dalí and Gala remain in the United States until 1948.
- 1941 Retrospective exhibition of Dalí and Joan Miró opens at the Museum of Modern Art in New York.  
Completes writing *The Secret Life of Salvador Dalí*, a partially fictionalized autobiographical account of his life that is published the following year.

- 1945 The dropping of the first atomic bomb on Hiroshima marks the beginning of Dalí's period of "nuclear mysticism."
- Paints *My Wife, Naked, Looking at her own Body, which is Transformed into Steps, Three Vertebrae of a Column, Sky and Architecture*.
- Assists Alfred Hitchcock on the set for the movie *Spellbound*.
- 1949 Visits the Pope and presents a version of his painting *Madonna of Port Lligat*.
- 1950 Dalí's father dies.
- 1952 Begins painting *The Disintegration of the Persistence of Memory*.
- 1958 Dalí and Gala marry in a religious ceremony in Spain.
- 1963 Paints *Portrait of My Dead Brother*.
- 1964 First major solo retrospective for Dalí in the Seibu Museum in Tokyo.
- 1971 Inauguration of the Dalí Museum in Cleveland, founded by Reynolds Morse, a major Dalí collector. In 1982 the collection is moved to its current location in Saint Petersburg, Florida.
- 1974 Inauguration of the Teatre-Museu Dalí in Figueres.
- 1978 Elected to Académie des Beaux-Arts, Paris.
- 1980 Dalí spends much of the year at his home in Port Lligat recovering from an illness.
- 1982 Gala dies on June 10<sup>th</sup>. Dalí has her buried in a crypt at their home at Púbol castle in Spain.
- 1983 Paints his last picture, *The Swallow's Tail*, from the Series on Catastrophe.
- 1984 Dalí is severely burnt in a fire in Púbol castle. He moves to the Torre Galatea, an annex of the Teatre-Museu Dalí, where he resides until his death.
- 1989 Dalí dies on January 23<sup>rd</sup> of heart failure and is buried in the crypt of the Teatre-Museu Dalí. His will bequeathes his property and remaining works, not previously donated to the Teatre-Museu Dalí, to the Spanish State.

# Salvador Dalí: CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

## ART ACTIVITIES:

### **Automatic Technique Collages**

Suggested Images: *Pierrot and Guitar*  
*The Wounded Bird*

Materials: Art paper suitable for glue and paint, pencils or oil pastels, glue, collage materials (such as sand and found objects) and paint (optional).

Automatic technique was a method used by many Surrealists for writing or creating works of art. The automatic process is guided by the unconscious, a technique which contrasts sharply with the more controlled and refined traditional artistic methods.

Activity Description: To begin, select a pencil or pastel crayon and draw a variety of lines over the paper. Encourage the students to allow their pencils to move freely over the page without trying to control the image. Now stop drawing and look at the forms created on the paper. Select some of the forms that are more prominent or interesting to you. Using paint, pencils and collage materials add definition to the forms to create a unified composition.

### **'Paranoic-Critical' and Double Image Drawing**

Suggested Images: *My Wife, Nude, Contemplating Her own Flesh Becoming Stairs,*  
*Three Vertebrae of a Column, Sky and Architecture*  
*The Angelus of Gala*  
*Soft Construction with Boiled Beans: Premonition of Civil War*  
*Apparition of a Face and Fruit Dish on a Beach*  
*Mae West Lips Sofa*

Materials: Drawing paper, pencils and a collection of images everyday objects (such as chairs, clocks, cars, scissors, etc.).

Dalí developed his 'paranoic-critical method' as a technique for visual representation intended to exploit delusional tendencies by creating images that can also suggest alternative realities and images to the unconscious mind. By the late 1930s Dalí had evolved his technique as a way to create double images, pictures that can be read simultaneously as two images.

Activity Description: Select an inanimate object. Study the features of the object carefully and imagine the object transformed into a face, or a human or animal body. Make a drawing that follows the form of the original, but also including the imagined human or animal features.



## **Inkblots**

Suggested Images: *The Angelus of Gala*  
*Soft Construction with Boiled Beans: Premonition of Civil War*  
*Apparition of a Face and Fruit Dish on a Beach*  
*Mae West Lips Sofa*

Materials: Art paper suitable for paint, nib pens and ink or very wet watercolor paint.

Inkblots are unintentional images created when ink is dropped or splattered onto a piece of paper. Often the inkblots remind people of familiar objects or images. At the time the Surrealists were active, psychoanalysts used inkblots in order to gain a better understanding of the unconscious of their patients by asking them to interpret the ink spills.

Activity Description: Using droppers or nib pens, drop a small amount of ink onto the center of the paper. Tip the paper to assist the ink in moving over the paper then fold the paper in half. Unfold the paper and allow the ink to dry. What do you see? As a class look at the inkblots that were created. Ask students to describe what they see in the inkblots.

## **Surrealist Objects**

Suggested Image: *Mae West Lips Sofa*

Materials: Assortment of found objects, glue and paint or Sharpie pens (optional).

Surrealist artists created objects that described the irrational images of dreams. The process through which many of these Surrealist objects were assembled was guided by the unconscious, without consideration of the object's final form.

Activity Description: Look through an assortment of found objects to find one that inspires you. It may be helpful to handle the objects while thinking about what the textures, colors and shapes remind you. Then select several other objects at random, and experiment with assembling them in different ways. When you have achieved an arrangement you find appealing, glue the objects together. You may wish to embellish your object by painting it or writing on the surface using a Sharpie pen.

# Salvador Dalí: CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

## WRITING ACTIVITIES:

### **Exquisite Corpse Drawing and Writing Small Group Activity**

Materials: Unlined paper and pencils.

The Surrealists were a group of artists and writers who often collaborated in their work. They invented games, such as the 'Exquisite Corpse,' in which each participant contributes creatively to the outcome.

**Activity Description:** To play 'Exquisite Corpse,' divide students into groups of four. Each group should use one piece of paper folded into four equal horizontal parts. The first person should draw the head of the creature in the top section, extending the drawing slightly (about half an inch) into the second section. The second player extends the lines from player one to draw a torso in the second section, the third player draws legs, and the last player draws the feet. Each person should draw their section without showing it to the other players. Before passing it on to the next player, fold the paper so that all except a half-inch section of the drawing is covered. After the feet are drawn open the paper to examine the results.

**NOTE:** You can also play this game by writing a sentence or short paragraph. Follow the same rules as above, but instead of drawing, have each person write a short phrase or a few sentences, folding the paper so that only a few words are visible to the next player. After the last person has finished writing, read the results.

### **Dream Writing Activity**

Suggested Images: *Enigma of Desire*  
*Soft Construction with Boiled Beans: Premonition of Civil War*  
*Apparition of a Face and Fruit Dish on a Beach*  
*Disintegration of the Persistence of Memory*

**Activity Description:** Display an image of one of Dalí's paintings. Ask students to copy the following sentence beginning onto their paper: "I had the strangest dream last night...". Instruct the students to imagine that the painting they are looking at is an image from a dream. Complete the sentence above and incorporate it into a paragraph describing their imagined dream scenario.

# Salvador Dalí: CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

## RESEARCH ACTIVITIES:

### **Research Topic: Spain and Catalonia**

Dalí and several other artists of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, including Joan Miró and Pablo Picasso, were originally from the Catalonia region of Spain. Learn more about the geography, history and cultures of Spain and the region of Catalonia. Make a timeline of historical events and a list of important people from Spain and Catalonia.

### **Research Topic: Sigmund Freud**

Dalí and the Surrealists proclaimed the psychologist Sigmund Freud as the father of their movement. His theories on the unconscious and the 1900 publication *The Interpretation of Dreams* inspired their use of automatic technique and dream imagery. Learn more about Sigmund Freud, dream theory and psychoanalysis. How did Freud feel about Dalí after the two met in 1938? What do psychology experts feel about Freud's theories today?

### **Research Topic: Atomic Energy**

After atomic bombs were dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945 to end the Second World War, Dalí became interested in atomic energy and the destructive power of the atom. Learn about how atomic energy is created. What was the impact following the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki?

## SPANISH LANGUAGE ACTIVITIES:

### **¡Viva Dalí!**

Activity Description: Pretend you are a journalist or a friend of Salvador Dalí writing an epitaph or eulogy memorializing the artist. Be sure to mention important dates and events in the life of Dalí and describe at least one of his works of art. Remember to write in Spanish!

### **¿Qué tu veas?**

Activity Description: Display an image of one of Dalí's paintings. Instruct students to make a vocabulary list in Spanish of the objects, composition and other features they observe in the painting. Divide students into small groups or pairs and ask them to have a conversation in Spanish about the painting, being sure to use the words from their list.

# Salvador Dalí: GLOSSARY OF TERMS

<b>anagram</b>	A word or phrase created by rearranging the letters in a word or phrase.
<b>anthropomorphic</b>	Something with human form or characteristics.
<b>automatism</b>	A method of writing or creating works of art without conscious intention regarding the appearance of the end product.
<b>avant-garde</b>	Describes art or artists departing from accepted tradition to explore techniques or concepts in an original way.
<b>classicism</b>	Describes art that is made with the qualities of order, clarity and harmony associated with the art of ancient Greece and Rome.
<b>collage</b>	A work of art created by assembling paper, fabric or other materials on a flat panel or canvas.
<b>Cubism</b>	A 20 <sup>th</sup> century art movement developed as way to explore realities of three-dimensional form in painting and sculpture.
<b>Dada</b>	A 20 <sup>th</sup> century artistic and literary movement based on deliberate irrationality and a rejection of traditional artistic values.
<b>double images</b>	A compositional technique used by Dalí in which forms appear as multiple images simultaneously.
<b>enigma</b>	Something that is mysterious or difficult to understand.
<b>Futurism</b>	A 20 <sup>th</sup> century Italian art movement concerned with representing the dynamism of modern technology and society in art.
<b>Nuclear Mysticism</b>	An artistic style developed by Dalí express what he saw as a connection between religious mysticism and science (particularly physics), such that he believed science was proof of God's existence and God's existence was proof of the powers of science.
<b>paranoic-critical method</b>	A method of visual representation developed by Dalí through which he attempted to exploit delusional tendencies by creating images that can also suggest alternative realities and images to the unconscious mind.

<b>physics</b>	The science of matter and energy.
<b>Pierrot</b>	A male character of French pantomime usually having a whitened face and loose white clothing.
<b>psychoanalysis</b>	A personality theory focusing on the impact of personal experiences, particularly childhood experiences and dreams. Also, a method of treating a person's mental illness through therapy sessions during which the person speaks openly about such experiences.
<b>Purism</b>	A 20 <sup>th</sup> century art movement concerned with order, clarity and objectivity, inspired by modern mechanics.
<b><i>putrefacto</i></b>	(Spanish) Putrid; relating to decomposition of organic matter. During their student years, Dalí, Lorca and Buñuel applied this term to everything that was sentimental and conventional in bourgeois Spanish society.
<b>Realism</b>	A term used in a general sense to describe non-idealized and objective representation.
<b>Surrealism</b>	A 20 <sup>th</sup> century artistic and literary movement dedicated to exploring the creative power of the unconscious mind, particularly dream imagery.
<b>unconscious</b>	A mental state not marked by conscious thought, sensation or feeling.

# Salvador Dalí

Philadelphia Museum of Art  
February 16 – May 15, 2005

## **TEACHER RESOURCE MATERIALS: IMAGE PROGRAM**

These fourteen images represent only a small sample of the wide range of works by Salvador Dalí featured in the exhibition. These materials are intended for use in your classroom before, after or instead of visiting the exhibition. These materials were prepared for use with grades 6 through 12. Therefore, you may need to adapt the information to the particular level of your students. Please note that some of the images included in this program contain nudity and/or violence and may not be appropriate for all ages and audiences.

## SALVADOR DALÍ

Philippe Halsman

1942

Photograph

Phillipe Halsman Estate,

Howard Greenberg Gallery, New York.



© 2004 Salvador Dalí, Gala-Salvador Dalí Foundation/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York

### Discussion Questions:

- Describe the way Dalí appears in the photograph.
- What do you think Dalí would say if he could speak?

This portrait of Dalí was made when the artist was 38 years old. Philippe Halsman, a friend of Dalí's, photographed the image, capturing the artist's face animated by a maniacal expression. Since his days as an art student at the Academy in Madrid, Dalí had enjoyed dressing in an eccentric way to exhibit his individuality and artistic genius. In this portrait Dalí's mustache, styled in two symmetrical curving arcs, enhances the unsettling expressiveness of his face. Dalí often treated his long mustache as a work of art, sculpting the hairs into the curve of a rhinoceros horn or weaving dollar bills into it. Unlike many of Dalí's other relationships, his friendship with Halsman was quite stable, spanning more than three decades. In 1954, Dalí and Halsman collaborated in the production of *Dalí's Mustache*, a book of portrait photographs of Dalí featuring the artist's characteristic mustache, sculpted into odd and imaginative shapes, as though it were its own personality. The text of the book is a dialogue of humorous interview-style questions about Dalí and his mustache, together with the artist's witty responses. For example: "Why do you wear a mustache? In order to pass unobserved."

## PIERROT AND GUITAR

1924

Oil and collage

22 x 20 in. (55 x 52 cm.)

Madrid, Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza.



© 2004 Salvador Dalí, Gala-Salvador Dalí Foundation/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York

### Discussion Questions:

- Which parts of this work appear to be painted? Which parts are collaged? Is it difficult to tell?
- Which shapes stand out the most? Can you find places where these shapes are repeated?
- Why do you think an artist would borrow from another artist's ideas? Is it cheating?

The fragmented and abstract planes of *Pierrot and Guitar* show clearly Dalí's interest in **Cubism** in the early 1920s. As a young artist in Madrid, Dalí's experiments with European **avant-garde** styles were well in advance of his fellow students and even many of his instructors. Dalí learned about these movements by studying reproductions of artwork in Modern art journals, including the Italian journal *Valori Plastici*. *Pierrot and Guitar* is heavily influenced by the Cubist **collages** of **Pablo Picasso**, both in the use of the collage technique and the subject matter of Pierrot and the guitar, images that are used frequently in Picasso's works. It was not until two years after Dalí created this painting, however, that he made his first trip to Paris and finally met Picasso. Though *Pierrot and Guitar* is one of Dalí's earliest works, it may be as close as he ever ventures into painting abstract forms. Throughout his life Dalí maintains a preference for **classical** form, figural imagery and scientific concerns and avoids art that might be considered sentimental or picturesque.



## DON SALVADOR AND ANA MARÍA DALÍ (PORTRAIT OF THE ARTIST'S FATHER AND SISTER)

1925

Pencil on paper

20 x 11.8 in. (50 x 33 cm.)

Madrid, Juan Abelló Collection.



© 2004 Salvador Dalí. Gala-Salvador Dalí Foundation/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York

### Discussion Questions:

- What adjectives would you use to describe the man in Dalí's drawing? What adjectives could describe the woman? Why?
- Why do you think Dalí chose to show the faces of Don Salvador and Ana María in such detail, and not their bodies? Do you think the drawing is finished?

In his portrait of *Don Salvador and Ana María*, Dalí shows his father with a stern and impassive gaze. Though Dalí makes careful use of light and shadow to render the faces of his father and sister, their figures are described by simple, outlined forms. With Dalí's mastery, both techniques are successful in expressing the volume and solidness of the figures. Look at the pendant watch hanging from the father's vest, or the solidly three-dimensional box of matches on the table. Notice how the lines of the father's jacket have been drawn with one fluid motion. Despite its unfinished appearance, this sketch was among the works shown in Dalí's first solo exhibition at the Dalmau Galleries in Barcelona, Spain in 1925.

Dalí had his first formal instruction in drawing at the age of twelve when his father enrolled him in evening classes at the Escuela Municipal de Dibujo (Municipal School of Drawing). Dalí's father encouraged the young artist by buying him supplies and art books, but was reluctant to allow his son to pursue a career as an artist because he did not believe Dalí would be able to earn enough money from his paintings. Dalí's

relationship with his father was often tumultuous. As a child Dalí felt intimidated by his imposing and authoritative father; as an adult Dalí rarely spoke with his father following a rift between the two over Dalí's relationship with Gala, which began four years after this drawing was completed, while she was still married to another man, the Surrealist writer Paul Eluard.

## FIGURE AT A WINDOW

1925

Oil on canvas

40 x 30 in. (103 x 75 cm.)

Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia.



© 2004 Salvador Dalí, Gala-Salvador Dalí Foundation/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York

### Discussion Questions:

- Where is the girl standing? What is she looking at? Why do you think Dalí has positioned her so that we can only see her back?
- How would you describe the mood of this painting? How does the use of color effect the overall mood?
- What visual relationships can you find between the girl, the curtains, the window and the landscape? What elements of the composition connect her to the room?

During his years as a student at the San Fernando Academy of Arts in Madrid, Dalí experimented with several styles of the European **avant-garde** including **Cubism**, **Futurism** and **Purism**. Dalí entered the Academy in September 1922 after passing the school's entrance exam, which consisted of creating a single drawing. Though Dalí found little of the school's academic program to be challenging, he developed close friendships with fellow students who shared in his passion for modernism. Two of his closest friends in Madrid were **Federico García Lorca** and **Luis Buñuel**. Because Dalí was so critical of his instructors and encouraged dissent amongst the student population, he was suspended from the Academy the following year and permanently expelled in 1926, the same year that *Figure in a Window* is first shown in Madrid at an exhibition of **Catalan** Modern art. The painting features the figure of a girl with her back to the viewer, modeled by Dalí's sister Ana María. Ana María frequently posed for her brother's drawings and paintings during the family's summers at **Cadaqués**: "During the

hours I served him as model, I never tired of looking at the landscape which already, and forever, formed part of me. He always painted me near a window. And my eyes had time to take in all the smallest details.” Though *Figure in a Window* appears traditional in many ways, its limited palette of colors and the simplified curvilinear forms of the girl reflect some currents of Modern art in the 1920s.

## THE WOUNDED BIRD

1928

Oil, sand and coarse sand on cardboard

22 x 26 in. (55 x 65 cm.)

Tel Aviv, Tel Aviv Museum of Art,

The Mizne-Blumental Collection



© 2004 Salvador Dalí, Gala-Salvador Dalí Foundation/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York

### Discussion Questions:

- What image stands out in this painting? How does Dalí let you know the thumb is rotting?
- Would you have named the painting *Wounded Bird*? Why or why not?

The rotting flesh of a severed thumb and the skeletal remains of a bird lie together on a ground or 'beach' of real sand in Dalí's 1928 painting *The Wounded Bird*. Dalí called these images of decay and disgust **putrefacto**. He included numerous depictions of severed body parts and skeletal birds in many of his works during the late 1920s. The nightmarish thumb represents Dalí's fear of dismemberment that he said was inspired in part by the experience of seeing his thumb sticking through his painter's palette as though it were separated from his body. Though Dalí was actively developing his own themes and styles, he was also very aware of the work of other European **avant-garde** artists. The use of actual sand representing a beach adds coarse texture to the flat ground of the painting and is similar to the incorporation of sand and other materials in **Picasso's Cubist collages**, and to works of **Surrealist** artists such as André Mason.

Dalí enjoyed making others uncomfortable through his art. He relished the reactions people had to the revolting imagery he painted, the way they contradicted their expressions of disgust by their inability to look away from the morbid scenes. The increasingly graphic and disturbing content of his art caused Dalí to become estranged from the art scene in Barcelona and Madrid as galleries and critics began to reject his works. Dalí welcomed this separation for he felt that Paris was the center of true modernism, and he worked to have his paintings displayed in prominent Parisian galleries. Though he was not officially a Surrealist, his shared obsession with dream imagery and human psychology would lead him to join the movement the following year.

## THE ENIGMA OF DESIRE

1929

Oil on canvas

43 x 59 in. (110 x 150.7 cm.)

Munich, Bayerische Staatsgemäldesammlungen,  
Pinakothek der Moderne.



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Foundation/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York

### Discussion Questions:

- What objects in this painting are recognizable to you? Which objects might you expect to find in a landscape? Which seem out of place?
- What does the large yellow-brown shape remind you of?
- How many times can you find the phrase 'ma mère' in the painting? What does 'ma mère' mean? How do you imagine Dalí feels about 'ma mère'?
- What is an enigma? What is enigmatic about this painting?

In 1929, Dalí officially joined the **Surrealist** movement, a group of artists dedicated to exploring the creative and often disturbing power of the **unconscious** mind. The group proclaimed the psychologist **Sigmund Freud** as the father of their movement, embracing his **psychoanalytic** theories as inspiration for their artistic methods and art. At this time, Dalí's own obsessions and childhood traumas begin to feature more prominently in his art, no doubt fuelled by his fanatical study of Freud's theories.

In *The Enigma of Desire*, Dalí recalls the **Catalonian** landscapes of his youth. The empty and expansive setting resembles the great Ampurdán Plain, the location of Dalí's childhood home at **Figueres**, while the shape of the structure that dominates the painting is reminiscent of coastal rock formations at **Cadaqués**. Contrary to its rocklike form, however, the surface of the structure appears soft and fleshy. Several of Dalí's Freudian concerns emerge from this form, most significantly his obsession with 'ma mère,' French for "my mother." This phrase is repeated more than a dozen times in the recesses of the enormous eroded form that oveshadows the limp and mouthless head of Dalí which lies on the sand in the lower left. This style of painting, with every object rendered in sharpest detail while the overall composition remains impossible to explain, presents a paradox: everything seems real, but nothing conforms to reality.

## THE ANGELUS OF GALA

1935

Oil on wood panel

13 x 10 in. (32.4 x 26.7 cm.)

New York, The Museum of Modern Art,  
Gift of Abby Aldrich Rockefeller, 1937.



### Discussion Questions:

- Why do you think Dalí painted Gala twice in this painting? Do you think Gala is looking at her mirror image?
- What connections can you see between the painting behind Gala's head and Dalí's painting?

The *Angelus of Gala* depicts Gala twice as though she is gazing at her reflection in a mirror. In the foreground Gala is seated on a cube, her back turned to the viewer. To her left is the forward-facing image of Gala who gazes not at the viewer, but at Gala. The symmetry of the mirror-like image of the two Galas is broken by the replacement of the cube stool with a wheelbarrow, an object that refers to the framed painting hanging behind her. The painting is a reproduction of *The Angelus*, a well-known work by the 19<sup>th</sup> century French painter **Jean-François Millet**, depicting two peasants, a man and a woman, standing next to their wheelbarrow in an empty field, praying over a small basket of potatoes. Dalí was familiar with the image, which hung in the classroom of the school he attended as a young boy. To him the image had always been a disturbing one. He believed the praying woman resembled a praying mantis preparing to devour her partner, and he was suspicious that the basket of potatoes concealed the small coffin of a child. Dalí made numerous references to Millet's *Angelus* in his paintings from the early 1930s while developing his '**paranoic-critical method**,' a creative process where the images he painted were infused with hidden images and meanings inspired by Dalí's obsessions and fears.

## SOFT CONSTRUCTION WITH BOILED BEANS: PREMONITION OF CIVIL WAR

1936

Oil on canvas

39 x 39 in. (101.3 x 100 cm.)

Philadelphia, Philadelphia Museum of Art,  
The Louise and Walter Arensberg Collection.



© 2004 Salvador Dalí, Gala-Salvador Dalí Foundation/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York

### Discussion Questions:

- Does this image look real to you? Why or why not?
- What is a civil war? How do you think Dalí's creature reflects civil war? What other objects in the painting might relate to civil war?

When Dalí painted his *Soft Construction with Boiled Beans: Premonition of Civil War*, the Spanish Civil War had not yet begun. In fact, he completed the painting nearly six months before General Franco's fascist army unseated the democratically elected socialist government of the Second Spanish Republic. Though it is likely that Dalí changed the title after the military coup to add to the seemingly prophetic power of his **unconscious** mind, a volatile climate of social and political struggle had existed in the country for years. Dalí began his studies for *Soft Construction with Boiled Beans* in 1935, sketching the hideously deformed anatomy of the colossal creature. The aggressive monster destroys itself, tearing violently at its own limbs, its face twisted in a grimace of both triumph and torture. Dalí employs his '**paranoic-critical method**' in the painting by contorting the massive limbs into an outline of a map of Spain. Though Dalí intended this painting as a comment on the horrors of the Spanish Civil War, he did not openly side with the Republic or with the fascist regime. In fact, the painting is one of only a few works by Dalí to deal with contemporary social or political issues. Unlike other Spanish modernists, including **Pablo Picasso** and **Joan Miró**, who used their art to make political statements in support of the Spanish Republic, Dalí preferred to remain apolitical. Even when Dalí's sister Ana María was tortured and imprisoned by communist soldiers fighting for the Republic, and **Federico García Lorca**, his friend from his days at the Academy in Madrid, was murdered by a fascist firing squad, Dalí did not take sides.



## APPARITION OF FACE AND FRUIT DISH ON A BEACH

1938

Oil on canvas

45 x 57 in. (114.5 x 143.8 cm.)

Hartford, Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art,  
Ella Gallup Sumner and Mary Catlin Sumner  
Collection Fund.



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### Discussion Questions:

- Have you ever looked at anything that reminded you of something else?
- Make a list of every identifiable object in this painting.
- What image do you see when you first look at this painting? What other images do you see? Can you see a dog? A landscape? A tabletop with a bowl of pears? A face?

By 1938, ongoing philosophical and political differences with the **Surrealists**, especially with the movement's founder and leader **André Breton**, led to Dalí's break with the group. Breton had long thought Dalí's art had become too commercialized and that Dalí's growing fame threatened the unity and agenda of the Surrealists. His growing disgust with Dalí's financial success as an artist led him to dub Salvador Dalí with the **anagrammatic** nickname 'Avida Dollars,' describing what he perceived as Dalí's greed for money and fame.

Though no longer associated with the Surrealists, Dalí never abandoned his Surrealist pursuits entirely. For example, he continued to refine his '**paranoic-critical method**,' a creative process of interpreting **unconscious** thoughts and feelings, into increasingly elaborate visual illusions called '**double images**.' These double images are actually individual compositions depicting commonplace objects and surroundings from which multiple images emerge. The title *Apparition of Face and Fruit Dish on a Beach* refers to three of the simultaneous images in the 1938 painting, though a careful study of the composition reveals a fourth image of a brown and white dog. Dalí's double image paintings were wildly popular with the American public despite André Breton's criticism that the paintings were "entertainments on the level of crossword puzzles." Ironically, even though he had been expelled from the Surrealist movement, the public continued to associate Dalí with the group, a perception that neither he nor Breton could erase.

## MAE WEST LIPS SOFA

1938

Wood frame upholstered in pink satin  
34 x 72 x 32 in. (86.5 x 183 x 81.5 cm.)  
Chichester, The Trustees of the  
Edward James Foundation.



© 2004 Salvador Dalí. Gala-Salvador Dalí  
Foundation/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York

### Discussion Questions:

- Do the lips look real to you? Do they seem safe and comforting or menacing and dangerous?
- Who is Mae West? Why do you think Dalí chose to use her lips as his inspiration for the sofa?

In December 1931, Dalí first proposed the idea of the **Surrealist** object. Initially these works were created by assembling unrelated found objects in a kind of three-dimensional **collage**, without any conscious intent or consideration of the object's final form. Dalí's *Lobster Telephone* is one example. Later, Surrealist objects such as Dalí's **anthropomorphic Mae West Lips Sofa** were created with more careful planning and attention to form. Because they were not intended to be functional, these objects fit appropriately into the Surrealist world of obsessions, repressed desires and irrational dream imagery.

Dalí's *Mae West Lips Sofa* was inspired by an interior-decorating scheme he envisioned based on the facial features of Mae West, a Hollywood actress of the 1930s. Her lips took the form of a sofa, her nose a fireplace and mantle, while her eyes were transformed into framed paintings hanging on the wall of the Surrealist interior. Edward James, a friend and patron of Dalí, proposed that a real sofa be manufactured based on Dalí's design, and in this way the production of the sofa became a collaborative effort between the two men.

# MY WIFE, NUDE, CONTEMPLATING HER OWN FLESH BECOMING STAIRS, THREE VERTEBRAE OF A COLUMN, SKY AND ARCHITECTURE

1945

Oil on wood panel

24 x 20.5 in. (61 x 65 cm.)

San Francisco, Private Collection,  
on long-term loan to the San Francisco  
Museum of Modern Art.



© 2004 Salvador Dalí, Gala-Salvador Dalí Foundation/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York

## Discussion Questions:

- What resemblance is there between the realistic figure of Gala and the architectural form in the distance?

Although Dalí was now famous for his contributions to Modern art, especially the **Surrealist** movement, he had always maintained a respect and passion for **classicism**, and admired Renaissance artists such as **Raphael**, as well as Old Master painters including **Vermeer**. The first atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima in 1945, an event that deeply affected Dalí, prompting him to look for new ways to express rational order in his paintings. He found his inspiration in the classicism of the Italian Renaissance painting tradition.

Dalí makes careful use of line and shading to define the forms in his composition in a realistic way, recalling the works of classical artists he admired. Notice the elegant form of Gala that is described through Dalí's careful use of light and shadow, or the idealized head painted on the wall next to her that looks like an ancient Greek or Roman statue. Dalí also continues to include the irrational imagery of many of his earlier works. As the title suggests, the figure of Gala appears twice in the painting, first as an almost photographic depiction of Gala's fleshy, curving back, and secondly as a fanciful architectural structure that duplicates the form and curves of Gala's body as though it were a skeleton. The two images of Gala side by side recall Dalí's earlier 'soft structures' or 'soft constructions,' **anthropomorphic** structures expressing the shifting realities the **unconscious** mind.

## MADONNA OF PORT LLIGAT (FIRST VERSION)

1949

Oil on canvas

19 x 15 in. (49.5 x 38.3 cm.)

Milwaukee, The Patrick and Beatrice Haggerty  
Museum of Art, Marquette University,  
Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Ira Haupt, 1959.



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### Discussion Questions:

- What has Dalí done to the objects and people in this painting?
- Why do you think Dalí made holes or windows in parts of the figures?
- What objects seem out of place? Why might Dalí include these?

Many of Dalí's post-World War II paintings express a renewed interest in Christian imagery combined with visual explorations of the concepts of nuclear **physics**. He called this art '**Nuclear Mysticism**.' Dalí felt that science and religion were interrelated and that the proof of God's mysticism and power lay in the scientific realities of nuclear physics. Dalí himself was experiencing a deepening of his own faith, demonstrated through his Catholic marriage to Gala performed in 1958, twenty-four years after their civil marriage ceremony. Dalí based his composition for the *Madonna of Port Lligat* on **Piero della Francesca's** circa 1475 Brera Altarpiece, *Madonna and Child with Angels and Six Saints*, though much of the imagery is transformed significantly by Dalí's use of personal symbolism. Dalí paints his wife Gala as the Madonna, seated in an architectural throne suspended above the waters of Port Lligat, the seaside village on the **Catalonian** coast where Dalí and Gala spent much of their time together, and near the place Dalí had summered as a child. A sea urchin in the lower left corner of the painting occupies the space where the image of the donor (a financial sponsor of a work of art) was often placed in Renaissance paintings of the Madonna and Child. The shelled sea creature was one that Dalí used on occasion as a personal symbol of fragility and insecurity. Dalí presented a smaller version of this composition to Pope Pius XII who blessed it during a visit with the artist in 1949.

# THE DISINTEGRATION OF THE PERSISTENCE OF MEMORY

1952-54

Oil on canvas

10 x 13 in. (25 x 33 cm.)

St. Petersburg (FL), The Salvador Dali Museum.



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## Discussion Questions:

- What objects do you see in the painting? Do they appear to be moving or still? What makes them seem this way?
- What do you think the rectangles and cone-like shapes might represent?

By the 1950s Dalí had reached celebrity status, particularly in the United States where his work had already been shown in several major exhibitions and where he had also collaborated on projects with famous filmmakers Alfred Hitchcock and Walt Disney. Though his fame as an artist was originally a result of his affiliation with the **Surrealist** movement, by this time Dalí had shifted his focus from **psychoanalytic** theories to atomic **physics**. Scientific advances in the understanding of molecules, atoms and sub-atomic particles described a new kind of reality for Dalí whereby everything in existence, from the ordinary to the extraordinary, was made up of molecules that were in a continuous state of flux, constantly gaining and releasing energy. While the Surrealists had declared the symbolic power of objects, science now proved they held real power as well, in the form of energy.

Perhaps for the purpose of demonstrating the difference between the Surrealist object and the atomic object, Dalí chose to base the composition for *The Disintegration of the Persistence of Memory* on his 1931 painting *The Persistence of Memory*, a painting that, like Dalí, had risen to iconic status. *The Disintegration of the Persistence of Memory* preserves much of the imagery of the earlier painting with the depiction of the four soft watches drooping over a barren tree and through the hauntingly empty landscape of **Port Lligat**. However, instead of the melancholic Surrealist vision of the first painting, Dalí presents here a view of the world divided into smaller particles that, like the atom, hold enormous and potentially apocalyptic energy.

# PORTRAIT OF MY DEAD BROTHER

1963

Oil on canvas

69 x 69 in. (69 x 69 cm.)

St. Petersburg (FL), The Salvador Dali Museum.



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## Discussion Questions:

- Describe the way Dalí paints his brother's face. What facial features do you notice? How old does Dalí's brother appear to be in this painting? Why might Dalí have chosen to represent his brother in this way?
- Do you notice any images in the painting that you have seen in other works by Dalí? Why would he choose to repeat these images in this portrait?

In *Portrait of My Dead Brother* Dalí expresses the profound influence on his life of an older brother he never knew. Like the artist, his older brother, Salvador Dalí, was named after their father. Tragically, the first Dalí son died at 22 months of age. When Dalí was born less than a year later, his parents gave him the same first name as his dead brother: Salvador. Throughout his life Dalí struggled to maintain his own self-identity under the pressure and inadequacy he felt from believing that his parents wanted him to be a replacement for their absent son. Dalí explores the identity he shares with his brother in his 1963 painting of the ghostly image of the face of a young boy. Unlike his '**Nuclear Mystic**' images that depict a world shattered into atomic particles, here Dalí builds the image of the boy's face by creating a matrix of dark and light-colored cherries in a pattern resembling the Benday dots used by contemporary Pop artist Roy Lichtenstein. Dalí described the image as a composite portrait of himself and his dead brother, whereby the dark cherries create the image of the dead Salvador, and the light cherries the image of the living one. Adding to the macabre portrait, is the scene of **Millet's** *Angelus*, enacted by the tiny figures in the vast, empty landscape. Dalí believed Millet had originally painted the man and woman praying over the coffin of their dead child, rather than standing over a basket of potatoes as they appear in the finished painting. In this way, Dalí's inclusion of the scene becomes a poignant metaphor for the overwhelming grief of his parents over the loss of their first-born child

# Salvador Dalí: PRONUNCIATION GUIDE

**Breton**, André (bre-TAHN): French writer and critic who becomes the founder and leader of the Surrealist movement (1896-1966).

**Buñuel**, Luis (boon-YOU-ell): A Spanish filmmaker and friend of Dalí who joined the Surrealist movement in 1929 (1900-1983).

**Cadaqués** (ka-DA-kess): A small coastal fishing village in the Catalonia region of Spain, not far from Figueres.

**Catalonia** (cat-ah-LO-nyah): A region in northeastern Spain bordering on France and the Mediterranean. The main city in Catalonia is Barcelona.

**Figueres** (fee-GAY-race): A town in the Catalonia region of Spain where Dalí is born and raised.

**Freud**, Sigmund (froyd): Austrian psychiatrist widely known as the 'father of psychoanalysis' (1856-1939).

**Ingres**, Jean-Auguste-Dominique (AN-gr(uh)): French Neoclassical painter greatly known for his portraits (1780-1867).

**Lorca**, Federico García (lohr-KA): Spanish poet and dramatist and friend of Dalí during his student years. Killed by a fascist firing squad during the Spanish Civil War (1898-1936).

**Millet**, Jean-François (mee-LAY): French painter known for his paintings of peasant life in Normandy (1814-1875).

**Miró**, Joan (mee-ROE): Spanish Surrealist painter and sculptor (1893-1983).

**Picasso**, Pablo Ruiz (pee-KAH-soe): Spanish painter and sculptor known as the founder of the Cubist movement and for his development of collage.

**Piero della Francesca** (pee-AIR-oh del-luh fran-CHESS-kah): Italian Renaissance painter (1416-1492).

Port **Lligat** (yi-GOT): A very small fishing village within walking distance of Cadaqués.

**Raphael** (RAH-fy-el): Italian Renaissance painter (1483-1520).

**Vermeer**, Jan, of Delft (fer-MEER): Dutch painter known for his paintings of domestic life (1632-1675).