



Mega Square

Victoria Charles
Dalí

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Painter, designer, creator of bizarre objects, author and film maker, Dalí became the most famous of the Surrealists. Buñuel, Lorca, Picasso and Breton all had a great influence on his career. Dalí's film, *An Andalusian Dog*, produced with Buñuel, marked his official entry into the tightly-knit group of Parisian Surrealists, where he met Gala, the woman who became his lifelong companion and his source of inspiration. But his relationship soon deteriorated until his final rift with André Breton in 1939. Nevertheless Dalí's art remained surrealist in its philosophy and expression and a prime example of his freshness, humour and exploration of the subconscious mind. Throughout his life, Dalí was a genius at self-promotion, creating and maintaining his reputation as a mythical figure.

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Victoria Charles Dalí

“In view of the tangle of riddles, Dalí has emerged to conquer the world of painting, and out of this fight has brought us something more valuable than gold. He has opened up new horizons to spread them before us, but above all has given us something more tangible: Salvador Dalí.”

Julien Green

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Biography



Self-Portrait, c. 1921
Oil on canvas, 36.8 × 41.8 cm
Salvador Dalí Museum, St Petersburg (Florida)

1903 – August 1, death of Dalí's elder brother, Salvador Galo Anselmo, at the age of two from gastroenteritis.

1904 – May 11, birth of Salvadore Felipe Jacinto Dalí in Figueras, a small fishing village in Spain. The family name, unusual in Spain, stems from the Catalan word “adalil”, which in turn has its roots in the Arabic and means “leader”.

1910 – Dalí's grandmother Maria Ana Ferrés and aunt Catalina moved into Dalí's family home.

1914 – Dalí's oldest existing works are dated from 1914.

1916 – Aged twelve, Dalí was sent on holiday to the “Mulí de la Torre” estate of some family friends, the Pitchots, a few kilometers from Figueras, a place which became a place of magic for the then young Salvador.

1918 – In winter, Dalí took part in a group exhibition of artists from Figueras. In the local newspaper, the fourteen-year-old was celebrated as an up-and-coming “master painter”.

1919 – Summer spent in Cadaqués, his father's birthplace on the Costa Brava, in a little holiday house.

1921 – February 6, death of Felipa Doménech, Dalí's mother. The father promptly married his deceased wife's sister, Catalin, who had already been living in his household for the last eleven years.

1922 – Accompanied by his father and his sister Ana Maria, Dalí traveled to the entrance examination at the art school in Madrid.

After the examination commission accepted him, he moved into a room at the “Residencia de Estudiantes”, a student residential and cultural centre based on the Oxford and Cambridge model.

1923 – Sigmund Freud's *The Interpretation of Dreams* was published. Dalí began reading it immediately and used it to analyse his own dreams. Meeting between Dalí and Federico Garcia Lorca.

1924 – At the beginning of his second year of studies, Dalí was gated from the academy for twelve months. Dalí returned to Figueras where his father stood against the dictator Miguel Primo de Rivera for the elections. In October, Dalí returned to the academy and continued his bohemian life.

1925 – In May, Dalí took part in the “First Iberian Artists' Art-Salon” with ten paintings, amongst them a portrait of his friend Luis Buñuel that he had painted in 1924. Dalí and Lorca traveled together to Figueras during the Easter holidays and developed a close relationship as from then. In November, the Dalmau gallery in Barcelona presented the first single-showing of Dalí's paintings.

1926 – Dalí traveled to Paris to visit Picasso in his apartment in the rue de la Boétie. Garcia Lorca wrote the *Ode to Salvador Dalí*. Painting of *Still Life (Invitation to Sleep)*. From a photo Ana Maria had taken of the sleeping poet in 1925, Dalí painted Garcia Lorca's head in the style of a Roman bust, where the plastic qualities in relief and outline are broken down into shadows and the portrayal of features. Dalí and Lorca began to work on a piece together, *Mariana Pineda*. Dalí began working on the painting *Honey is Sweeter than Blood*. The painting *Basket of Bread* was exhibited at the Carnegie Museum of Art in Pittsburgh.

1927 – June 24, premiere of *Maria Pineda*. In the summer, Dalí published a drawing titled *Holy Sebastian* in the magazine “L'Amic de les Arts”, dedicated to Garcia Lorca.

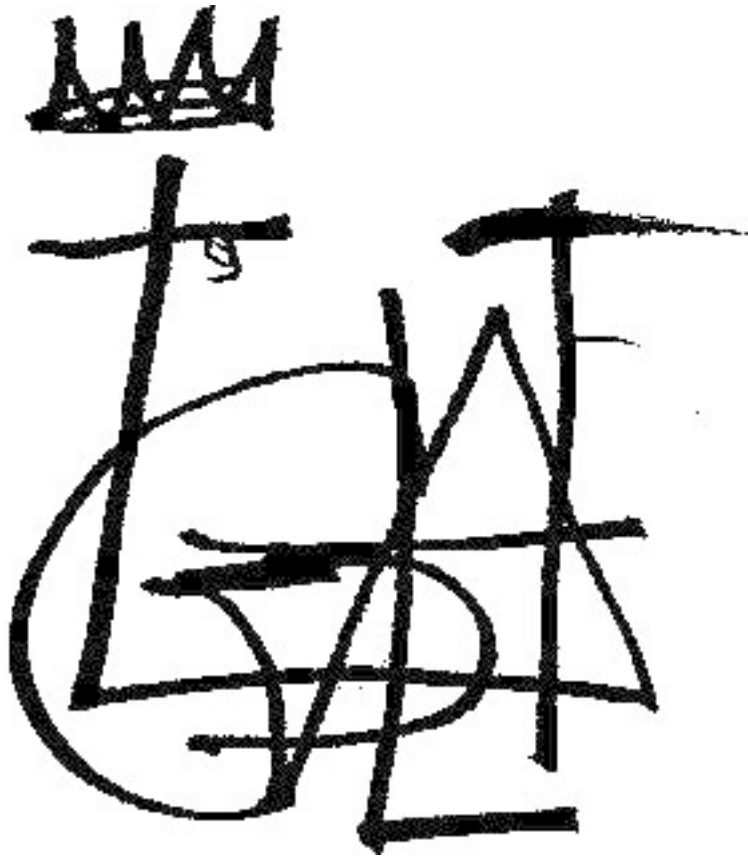
1928 – Drawing of the title-picture for “Gallo”, the magazine that Garcia Lorca published in Granada. Writing of the script for *Un chien andalou – An Andalusian Dog*.

1929 – Dalí travelled to Paris to see the film *Un chien andalou* being shot. During his stay there, Dalí also signed a contract with the gallerist Camille Goemans. In the summer, Dalí met Gala Eluard in Cadaqués and they both fell in love with one another. End of November, a dispute broke out between Dalí and his father, who told him the family wished to have nothing more to do with him. Painting of *The Great Masturbator*.

1930 – Gala published Dalí's *La femme visible – The Visible Woman*, a gathering of many of his thoughts on the double picture. October 22, presentation of *The Golden Age* – for which Dalí had made written contributions – to a discerning audience among whom were Gertrude Stein, Pablo Picasso, Marcel Duchamp, André Malraux and Man Ray.

1932 – Purchase of *The Persistence of Memory* by the New York Museum of Modern Art after it had been exhibited in Julien Levy's gallery that year.

1933 – Julien Levy was the first to devote a whole exhibition to Dalí. 1934 Dalí exhibited his painting *The Riddle of William Tell* in the Salon of the Indépendants early that year. Dalí and Lorca met for the last time in Barcelona. Two years later, shortly after the beginning of the Spanish civil war, Garcia Lorca was murdered by Franco's soldiers. Dalí and Buñuel's friendship came to an end. In November, Dalí and Gala travelled to the United States for the first time.



1935 – In January, the Dalís returned to Paris and were greeted with the news that they had caused a scandal in New York at a parting celebration at the elegant New York restaurant, Coq Rouge.

1936–1939 – More travels to the United States. In between times they lived in Italy and the south of France.

1936 – On his second trip to New York in December 1936, Time magazine devoted the title page to him. It featured a portrait that Man Ray had taken of him.

1939 – On May 21, World Fair in New York. As subject, Dalí chose the *Dream of Venus*. End of the year, Dalí led the Metropolitan Opera in his first dramatic work titled, *Bacchantal*, based on motifs from Wagner's *Tristan and Isolde*.

1940 – Dalí leaves for the USA.

1941 – The Dalís moved into a house at Pebble Beach not far from Los Angeles. Painting of *Soft Self-Portrait with Fried Bacon*. October 8, *Labyrinth* was premiered by the Ballets russes at the Metropolitan Opera.

1942 – Halsmann designed the dust-jacket for Dalí's autobiography which appeared that year in English. End of the year, the New York Museum of Modern Art put on a retrospective of Dalí's work featuring fifty pictures and seventeen drawings. The exhibition subsequently went to eight other American cities. In December, Dalí met Eleanor and Reynolds Morse. Four months later the Morses bought their first "Dalí" for 1,200 dollars: *Daddy Longlegs of the Evening – Hope!*

1945 – Director Alfred Hitchcock brought Dalí into the studio to create the dream-sequence for his psychoanalytically inspired film *Spellbound*.

1946 – Dalí painted his first piece of work with a religious motive.

1948 – Dalí converted to the Roman Catholic church. In the same year he returned once more to Europe with Gala and moved back into their house in Port Lligat.

1949 – Salvador painted the first version of the Madonna of Port Lligat. As a model for the painting he used Piero della Francesca's *Madonna with Child* from the 15th century.

1950 – Dalí created the dream-sequence for Vincente Minelli's comedy *The Bride's Father*.

1951 – September 3, Dalí and Gala appeared as seven-metre tall giants at a ball in Venice.

1955 – Dalí transferred his atelier for some days to the rhinoceros enclosure at the zoo in Vincennes, a suburb of Paris, in order to work on his paranoiac-critical version of the Bobbin-Lace Maker of Vermeer.

1956 – Dalí married Gala (Jelena Deluwina Diakonoff of her real name, and called "Gradiva" by Dalí), a Russian born woman and widow of French poet Paul Eluard. She stayed by Dalí's side until her death in 1982 and acted as his muse, model and manager.

1967 – Dalí bought the half-ruined Chateau Púbol for Gala.

1974 – The seventy-year-old Dalí opened his "Teatro-Museo"

1976 – Enrique Sabater took over Dalí's general affairs management and quickly succeeded in becoming a multi-millionaire at Dalí's expense.

1979 – The Georges-Pompidou Centre in Paris devoted an extensive retrospective to Dalí.

1980's – Dalí became ill with Parkinson's Disease

1982 – The Morses acquired over four hundred of his works, and amongst these approximately ninety paintings. They built a museum in St Petersburg, Florida for their collection in 1982.

1983 – He painted his last picture: *The Swallow's Tail*

1989 – January 23, death of Salvador Felipe Jacinto Dalí.

1994 – Exhibition on Dalí's formative years.

* * *

At the age of 37, Salvador Dalí wrote his autobiography. Titled *The Secret Life of Salvador Dalí*, the Spanish painter portrays his childhood, his student days in Madrid, and the early years of his fame in Paris up to his leaving to go to the USA in 1940. The exactness of his descriptions are doubtful in more than one place. Dates are very often incorrect, and many childhood experiences fit too perfectly into the story of his life.





Dutch Interior (Copy after Manuel Benedito)

1914

Oil on canvas, 16 × 20 cm

Joaquín Vila Moner Collection, Figueras

The image that Dalí created of himself in 1942, and further developed in the years up to his death in 1989, shows an eccentric person, most at ease when placed in posed settings. Despite this tendency, Dalí often revealed intimate details of his life in front of the camera. This act of self-disclosure, as Dalí explains in his autobiography, is a form of vivisection, a laying bare of the living body carried out in the name of pure narcissism.

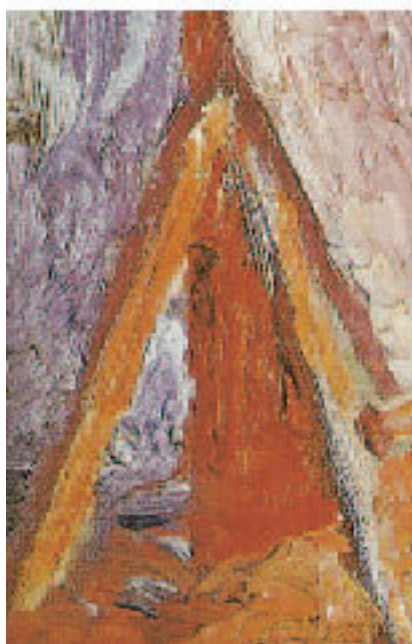


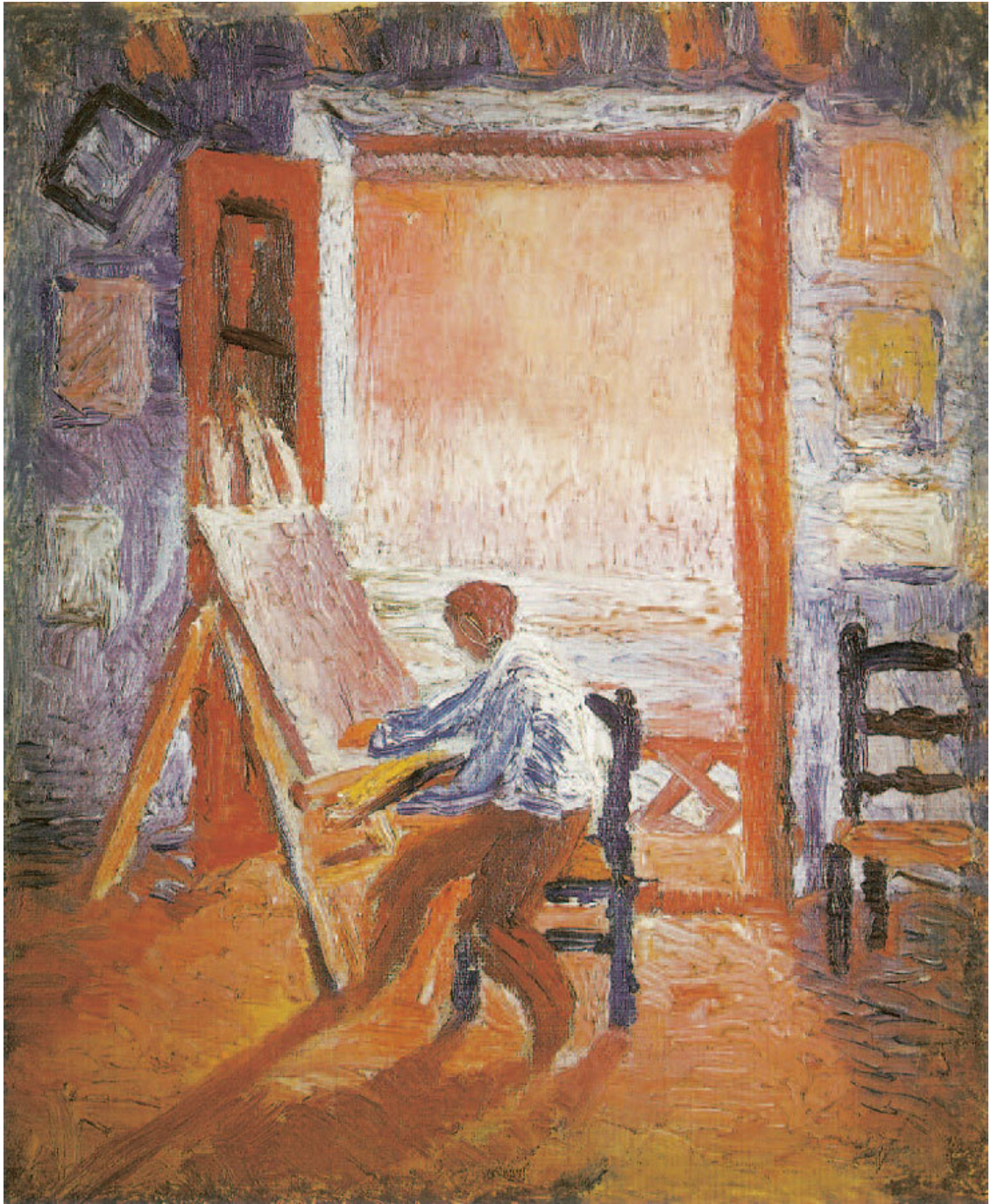


Portrait of Lucia
1918
Oil on canvas, 43.5 × 33 cm
Private collection

The more Dalí showed himself in public, the more he concealed himself. His masks became ever larger and ever more magnificent: he referred to himself as “genius” and “god-like”. Whoever the person behind the Dalí image really was remains a mystery.

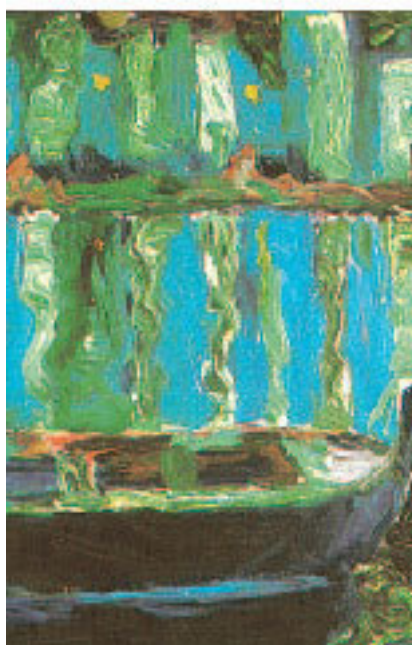
Dalí's memories appear to begin two months before his birth on May 11th, 1904.

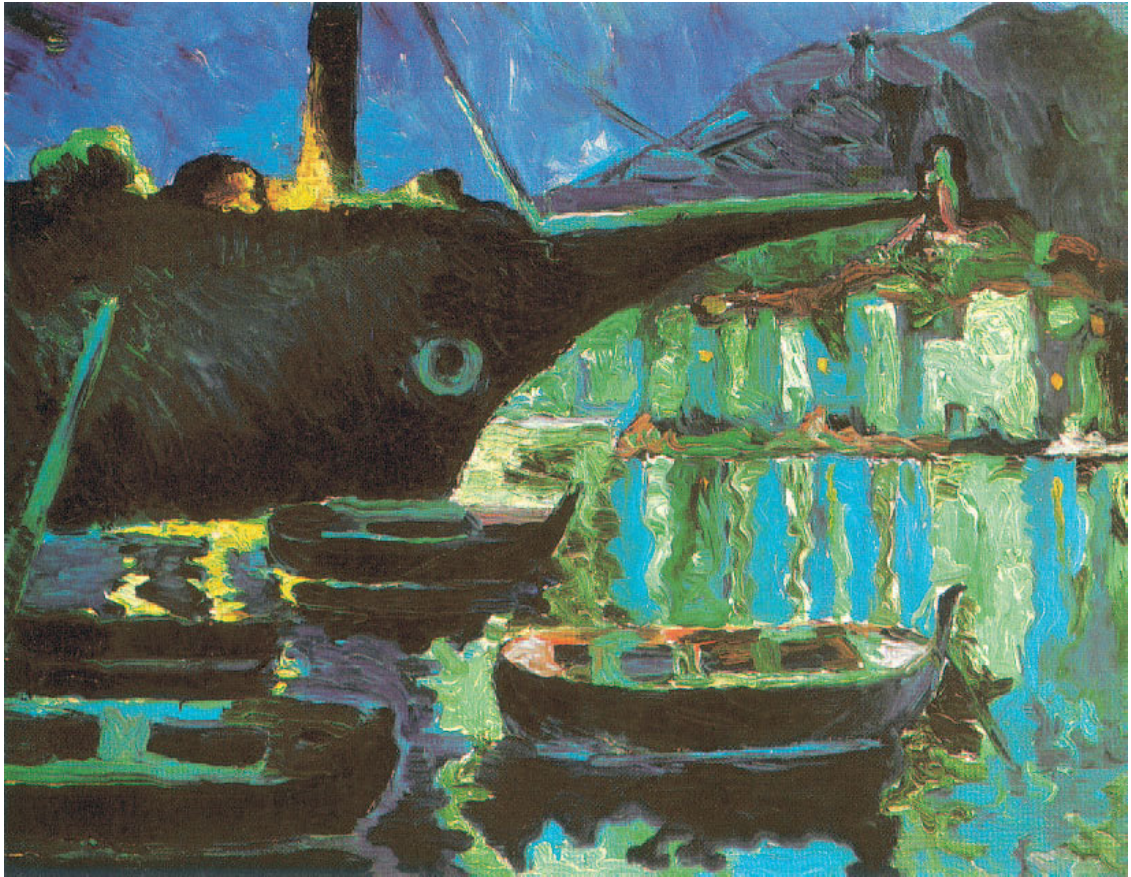




Self-Portrait in the Studio
c. 1919
Oil on canvas, 27 × 21 cm
Salvador Dalí Museum, St Petersburg (Florida)

Recalling this period, he describes the “intra-uterine paradise” defined by “colors of Hell, that are red, orange, yellow and bluish, the color of flames, of fire; above all it was warm, still, soft, symmetrical, doubled and sticky.” His most striking memory of birth, of his expulsion from paradise into the bright, cold world, consists of two eggs in the form of mirrors floating in mid-air, the whites of which are phosphorising: “These eggs of fire finally merged together with a very soft amorphous white paste, characterized by their extreme elasticity. Technical objects were to become my biggest enemy later on, and as for watches, they had to be soft or not at all.”





Port of Cadaqués at Night

1919

Oil on canvas, 18.7 × 24.2 cm

Salvador Dalí Museum, St Petersburg (Florida)

Dalí's life is overshadowed by the death of his brother. On August 1st, 1903, the first-born child of the family, scarcely two years old, died from gastroenteritis. The child Salvador sees himself as nothing more than a substitute for the dead brother: "Throughout the whole of my childhood and youth I lived with the perception that I was a part of my dead brother. That is, in my body and my soul, I carried the clinging carcass of this dead brother because my parents were constantly speaking about the other Salvador." Out of fear that the second-born child could also sicken and die, Salvador was particularly cosseted and spoiled. He was surrounded by a cocoon of female attention, not just spun by his mother Felipa Doménech Ferrés, but also later by his grandmother Maria Ana Ferrés and his aunt Catalina.





Portrait of José M. Torres
c. 1920
Oil on canvas, 49.5 × 39.5 cm
Museum of Modern Art, Barcelona

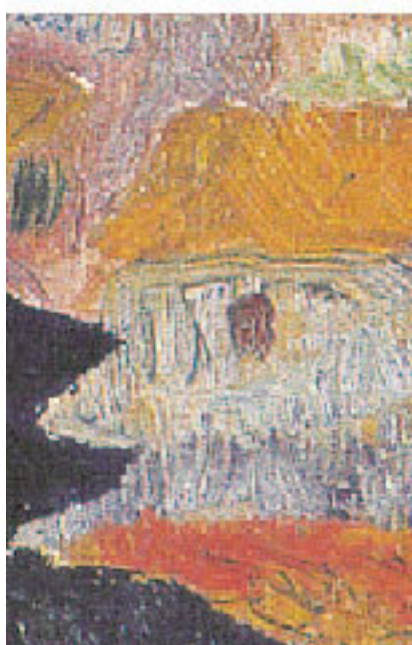




Portrait of the Cellist Ricardo Pichot
1920
Oil on canvas, 61.5 × 49 cm
Private collection, Cadaqués

Dalí reported that his mother continually admonished him to wear a scarf when he went outdoors. If he got sick, he enjoyed being allowed to remain in bed. Dalí's sister Ana Maria, four years younger, writes in her book, *Salvador Dalí visto por su hermana* (*Salvador Dalí, Seen through the Eyes of His Sister*), that their mother only rarely let Salvador out of her sight and frequently kept

watch at his bedside at night, for when he suddenly awoke, startled out of sleep, to find himself alone, he would start a terrible fuss.





Portrait of Hortensia, Peasant Woman from Cadaqués
1920
Oil on canvas, 35 × 26 cm
Private collection

Salvador enjoyed the company of the women and especially that of the eldest, his grandmother and Lucia (his nurse). He had very little contact with children of his own age. He often played alone. He would disguise himself as a king and observe himself in the mirror: “With my crown, a cape thrown over my shoulders, and otherwise completely naked. Then I pressed my genitals back between my thighs, in order to look as much like a girl as possible. Even then I admired three things: weakness, age and luxury.”





Self-Portrait with the Neck of Raphael
1920–1921
Oil on canvas, 41.5 × 53 cm
Gala-Salvador Dalí Foundation, Figueras

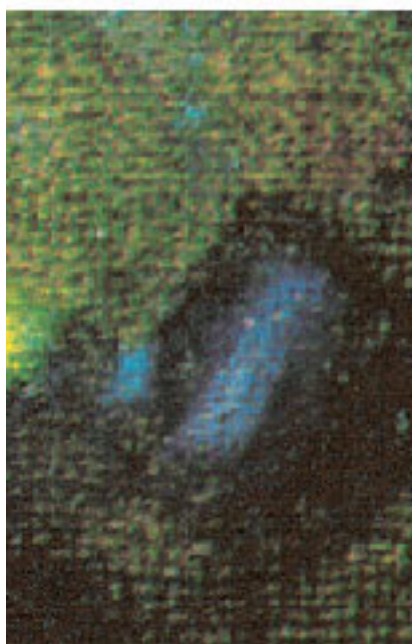
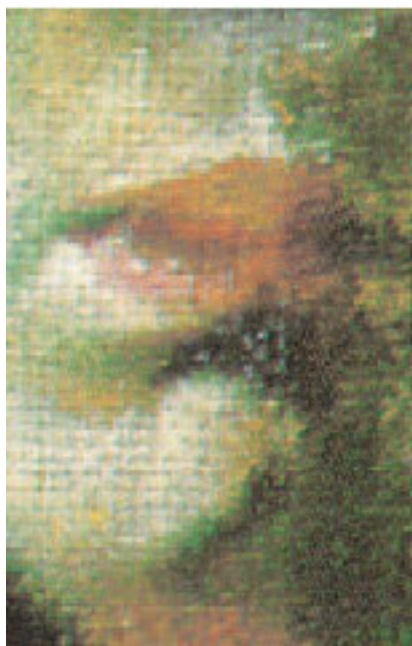
Dalí's mother loved him unreservedly, even lionized him. With his father, Dalí enjoyed a different type of relationship. Salvador Dalí y Cusi was a notary in the Catalan market-town of Figueras, near the Spanish-French border. An anti-Catholic free thinker, he decided not to send his son Salvador to a church school, as would have befitted his social status, but to a state school.





Landscape near Cadaqués
1920–1921
Oil on canvas, 31 × 34 cm
Gala-Salvador Dalí Foundation, Figueras

Only when Salvador failed to reach the required standard in the first year did his father allow him to transfer to a Catholic private school of the French “La Salle” order. There, among other things, the eight-year-old learned French, which was later to become his second mother tongue, and received his first lessons in painting and drawing.





Self-Portrait
c. 1921
Oil on canvas, 36.8 × 41.8 cm
Salvador Dalí Museum, St Petersburg (Florida)

At about the same time as Salvador was receiving his first lessons from the brothers of the “La Salle” order, he set-up his first atelier in the old, disused washroom in the attic of his family home: “I placed my chair in the concrete basin and arranged the high-standing wooden board (that protects washerwomen’s clothing from the water) horizontally across it so that the basin was half covered. This was my workbench!”





Festival at San Sebastián
1921
Gouache on cardboard, 52 × 75 cm
Gala-Salvador Dalí Foundation, Figueras

Dalí's oldest existing works date from the year 1914. They are small-format watercolors, landscape studies of the area around Figueras.

Oil paintings by the eleven-year-old also exist, mostly as copies of masterpieces which he found in his father's well-stocked collection of art books. For Salvador, the atelier became the "sanctuary" of his loneliness.





Scene in Cabaret
1922
Oil on canvas, 52 × 41 cm
Bénédicte Petit Collection, Paris

In the laundry-room atelier the little king tried out a new costume: “I started to test myself and to observe; as I performed hilarious eye-winking antics accompanied by a subliminal spiteful smile, at the edge of my mind, I knew, vague as it was, that I was in the process of playing the role of a genius. Ah, Salvador Dalí! You know it now: if you play the role of a genius, you will also become one!”





Family Scene

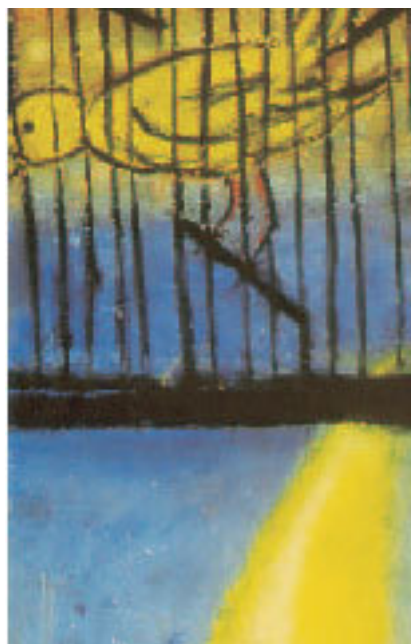
1923

Oil and gouache on cardboard, 105 × 75 cm

Gala-Salvador Dalí Foundation, Figueras

Later Dalí analysed his behavior: “In order to wrest myself from my dead brother, I had to play the genius so as to ensure that at every moment I was not in fact him, that I was not dead; as such, I was forced to put on all sorts of eccentric poses.”

Salvador's attempts to distance himself from his dead brother went so far that he believed himself immortal. Descending the stairs one day at school, it suddenly occurred to him that he should let himself fall.





The Sick Child (Self-Portrait in Cadaqués)
c. 1923
Oil and gouache on cardboard, 57 × 51 cm
Salvador Dalí Museum, St Petersburg (Florida)

But at the very last moment fear held him back. However, he worked out a plan of action for the next day: “At the very moment I was descending the stairs with all my classmates, I did a fantastic leap into the void, and landing on the steps below bowled over and over until I finally reached the bottom. The effect on the other boys and the teachers who ran over to help me was enormous.”





Satirical Composition ("The Dance" by Matisse)

1923

Gouache on cardboard, 138 × 105 cm

Gala-Salvador Dalí Foundation, Figueras

The ability to attract the attention of the others, and to be subsequently admired by them afforded the little king Salvador untold enjoyment. However, he did prefer it when his "entourage"

kept their distance. From his window in the laundry-room atelier he spied on the other children, particularly the schoolgirls from the neighboring school.





Cubist Self-Portrait

1923

Gouache and collage on cardboard, 104.9 × 74.2 cm

Reina Sofia National Museum, Madrid

In the summer of 1916, the twelve-year-old was sent on holiday to the estate of some family friends, the Pitchots. The “Mulí de la Torre” estate, named after its tower-mill, and just a few kilometers from Figueras, was to become a place of magic for Salvador. For weeks he gave himself up to his day-dreams undisturbed, a reverie for which he only had the odd single hour in Figueras in his laundry-room atelier. Most of his fantasies at this time were of an erotic nature. Eroticism and death become unified very early in Dalí’s life.





Portrait of Ana María
c. 1924
Oil on cardboard, 55 × 75 cm
Gala-Salvador Dalí Foundation, Figueras

From a net of fantasies centered around eroticism, death, and disgust, Dalí only managed to save himself by his own mental agility. During puberty, and wholly without any system, he began to read through his father's extensive library. He occupied himself especially with the philosophers Voltaire, Nietzsche, Descartes, and Spinoza; but without doubt his favorite was Kant: "I loved very much to lose myself in the labyrinth of his avenues of thought, in which the ever expanding crystals of my youthful intelligence found true heavenly music reflected."





Portrait of Luis Buñuel
1924
Oil on canvas, 70 × 60 cm
Reina Sofía National Museum, Madrid

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