



Salvador Dalí (1904-1989)
Figueres was the birthplace of the painter Salvador Dalí and it was here too that he died. Most of his works are in the Theatre-Museum, built by Dalí himself around the former theatre where his first exhibition was held. Dalí was also buried in the Theatre-Museum, alongside the church that was the scene of both his christening and his funeral, the first and last acts of a perfectly planned scenario.

Salvador Dalí i Domènech, the son of a highly respected notary, was born on 11 May 1904 in a house on Carrer Monturiol in Figueres. After attending the local state school, he was subsequently educated at the Salesian and Marist schools and the high school. From the age of 13 he received drawing lessons at the school run by Joan Núñez. His works were shown for the first time at a collective exhibition held at the beginning of 1919 and he published his first literary articles in his high school magazine, *Studio*.

Dalí's name appeared for the first time in the Barcelona press in 1922, when he was awarded a prize at the exhibition of the Asociació Catalana d'Estudiants held in the Dalmau gallery. In the autumn of the same year he registered at the School of Fine Arts in Madrid and went to live at the prestigious Residencia de Estudiantes. There, his friendship with Federico García Lorca and Luis Buñuel had a more enduring effect on his artistic future than his studies at the School, from which he was finally expelled. As a result of his indiscretion and the attitude of his father, who clashed with the Primo de Rivera dictatorship over a matter related to elections, the young Dalí spent a month in prison.

Dalí's first individual exhibition opened at the Dalmau gallery in Barcelona in November 1925 and featured various works for which his sister Anna María had served as the model. The poet García Lorca, who was shortly to write his *Oda a Salvador Dalí*, was invited by Dalí to spend the Easter holidays that year in Figueres and Cadaqués. Lorca returned there in 1927, the year in which the first performance of his *Mariana Pineda* took place in Barcelona with scenery designed by Dalí, who at the time was doing his military service at Sant Ferran Castle in Figueres.

This period marked the beginning of Dalí's career, not only as an artist but as creator of controversy. Along with Sebastià Gasch and Julián Montanya, he signed the *Manifest Groc* ('Yellow Manifesto', March 1928), which was a severe attack against the prevailing Noucentista movement. The gallery owner Joan A. Maragall refused a picture of his at the Autumn Salon in Barcelona; the articles he published in the magazine *L'Amic de les Arts* and the lectures he subsequently gave at Figueres, Barcelona and Sitges, gave rise to perpetual controversy; he and Luis Buñuel wrote an insulting letter attacking Juan Ramón Jiménez and prepared the scenarios for *Un chien andalou* and *L'Âge d'Or*, which were to go down in history as two of the finest Surrealist films.

René Magritte, Paul Éluard and his wife Gala came to stay at Cadaqués in the summer of 1929 and their visit caused sweeping changes in Dalí's life. The young painter left his family and fled with Gala to Paris, where he became an enthusiastic member of the Surrealist movement. Some of his most famous paintings—*The Great Masturbator*, *Lugubrious Game* and *Portrait of Paul Éluard*—date back to this period. Dalí and Gala went to live at Portlligat, where they were visited during the following years by René Crevel, André Breton, Valentine Hugo, Paul Éluard, Marcel Duchamp and Man Ray. As Dalí himself wrote, those were "the last happy days in post-war Europe". Mas Juny in Palamós, the property of the painter Josep M. Sert, who was married to the Georgian princess Roussoff Mdvani, was the scene of other well-known gatherings on the Costa Brava during those years. It was particularly famous for parties, which were also attended by the Dalís. Dalí spent the Spanish Civil War in Paris and when the Germans invaded France, after a short stay in his native Empordà region, he moved to the United States, where he had already held his first exhibitions.

Following Dalí's expulsion from the Surrealist movement, his work underwent a radical change, with a return to classicism and what he called his mystical and nuclear phase. He became one of the most fashionable painters in the United States and André Breton baptized him "Avida Dollars". He wrote a partly fictitious autobiography entitled *The Secret Life of Salvador Dalí*, and *Hidden Faces*, a novel containing biographical elements. These two short literary digressions earned him still greater prestige and wealth, as did his collaborations in the world of the cinema (such as the dream set in Alfred Hitchcock's *Spellbound*, 1945), and in those of the theatre, opera and ballet.

His return to Portlligat in the summer of 1948 was manifested in his works by the rediscovery of the landscapes of that part of the Cap de Creus peninsula. When he visited Pope Pius XII, he showed him the painting *The Madonna of Portlligat*. In October 1949 he gave a lecture at the Ateneu Barcelonès entitled "Why I am a saintly and why I am a mystic", the content of which was not far removed from another address he gave one year later at the Teatro María Guerrero in Madrid under the title "Picasso and I". During these years Portlligat again became the scene of gatherings of important personalities such as Walt Disney, the Duke of Windsor, Umberto of Savoy, the former king of Italy, the multi-millionaires Arturo López and Niarchos and the intellectuals Dionisio Ridruejo and Eugeni d'Ors. On 8 August 1958, Dalí and Gala were married according to the rites of the Catholic church in a ceremony performed in the strictest secrecy at the shrine of Els Àngels, just a few kilometers from Girona.

During the 1960s, Dalí painted some very large works such as *The Battle of Tetuan*—which he presented in 1962 at the Tínnell in Barcelona alongside the original work by Marià Fortuny—, *The Apotheosis of the Dollar*, *Tuna Fishing*, *The Hallucinogenic Bullfighter* and *The Discovery of America by Christopher Columbus*. Another important work painted at this period is *Perpignan Station*, a veritable revelation of his paranoid-critical method which relates this centre of Dalí's mythological universe to his obsession with Millet's *The Angelus*.

On his 75th birthday in 1979, Dalí made a speech at his investiture as a member of the Académie des Beaux-Arts in Paris and a major exhibition of his works was held at the Centre Georges Pompidou. However in the same year his health began to decline. After failing to recover from an attack of influenza in New York, he retired to Portlligat in a state of deep depression. On the death of Gala he moved to Póblols where, obsessed by the theory of catastrophes, he painted his last works until suffering severe burns in a fire which nearly cost him his life. On his recovery he moved to the Torre Galatea, a building which he had bought as an extension to the Museum in Figueres. There he lived for five more years, hardly ever leaving his room. He was buried at his own request beneath the dome of the Theatre-Museum.

Salvador Dalí will go down in history as one of the great artists of the 20th century, one who was capable of becoming the standard-bearer of Surrealism, to which he brought his own personal paranoid-critical

