

Mayoral presents a solo exhibition devoted to Salvador Dalí (Figueres, 1904 – 1989) and containing a careful selection of 28 works by the artist. The pieces bear witness to his links to the Cadaqués landscape and to local traditions, leading to the creation of new ideas and new shapes. The exhibition includes the collaboration of Chus Martínez, who wrote the essay.

There are strong premonitions of situations which make up the present day both in the figure of the artist and in the work of Salvador Dalí, who was the architect of the great artistic paradigm shift of the contemporary age. Indeed, as Chus Martínez points out: “his obsession for self-generation, his insistence on maintaining ambivalence in the reading and interpretation of gender and sexuality, a non-binary identity, his interest in understanding life processes from art and in the company of science, his interest in investigating and expressing vernacular culture in his artwork and in his life...”. The artist himself stated that you have to systematically create confusion, since it sets creativity free: “Everything that is contradictory creates life”. It is this ambivalence that captivates us, attracts us and continues to be of considerable interest to us today.

Dalí goes one step further since, although we see the work here, in an exhibition setting, “it is not unreasonable to think that the work

could be in the middle of a forest, or rise up before us on a beach at Cadaqués. Salvador Dalí wants everything from us when we are in front of his work; he wants us to let our senses and the feelings of the artwork flow together always” (Chus Martínez).

Among the selection of pieces, we highlight *Étude pour la Madonna de Port Lligat (Study for The Madonna of Port Lligat)* (1949), a study for the first version of the work that Dalí undertook of *The Madonna of Port Lligat*, which already reveals a great part of the key iconography of his subsequent monumental work. For this work, Dalí was inspired by Renaissance religious paintings, particularly by Piero della Francesca. Gala appears in the centre, seated like a Madonna, and a naked baby Jesus appears to float in space on bread; in the background you can glimpse the Port Lligat landscape and islands. Other prominent works are the anthropomorphic landscapes *Primavera (Spring)* and *Tardor (Autumn)*, both dated circa 1950, in which the presence of elements of nature, life-death, plenitude-decadence... also show us how Salvador Dalí understands that art, as creation, is the ideal place to question aspects of the origin of life and intelligence.

Knowing how to look is a way of inventing.

Salvador Dalí

Another of the works in which Dalí used his personal iconography was *Destino, étude de personnages (Destino, study of characters)* (c. 1945), one of the preparatory drawings produced by the artist for the Disney film. Empordà is again present in this drawing and accompanies the characters in their creative process. The film used Dalí's works as a starting point and was finally released in 2003. This selection of drawings is accompanied by a series of objects and photographs of the artist.

Salvador Dalí / Painter, decorator, writer and thinker. He frequented the Residencia de Estudiantes and joined the Generation of '27 group. He settled in Paris at the end of 1920, where he became the most brilliant figure of pictorial Surrealism; there he met Gala, who became his wife, muse and adviser. He consolidated his international profile from 1940-48 in New York. The 1941 exhibition at the MoMA and the publication of *The Secret Life of Salvador Dalí* (1942) stand out from this time.

His painting started from Noucentisme and adopted what he called “paranoiac-critical activity”, which gave rise to his most characteristic works: dreamlike scenes created with extraordinary technical meticulousness. In Italy, during the Spanish Civil War, religious, historical and allegorical subjects were predominant and, on returning to Spain, in 1948, he followed the tradition of the great mystics of Spanish literature. In successive stages he used holography and created stereoscopic paintings. He cultivated poster art, engraving, book illustration, and also designed jewels and sculptures.

Mayoral / Founded in 1989, is a gallery located in Barcelona and Paris. The gallery articulates an intergenerational exhibition programme focused on the best of post-war and contemporary Spanish art, promoting artists such as Tàpies, Chillida, Millares, Saura, Zóbel, Francés and Chordà, alongside works by key twentieth-century avant-garde artists such as Miró and Picasso, and the best of today's generation with names such as Macarrón, Oliver and Pratts.

The gallery develops projects that are rigorously curated and grow out of an exhaustive process of research. The gallery relies upon the support of the artists' families, foundations and other institutions as well as collectors and museums, both public and private, when it comes to accomplishing its mission.

The gallery participates in art fairs such as Art|Basel Miami Beach, Art|Basel Hong Kong, TEFAF Maastricht, TEFAF New York and ARCOMadrid.



Dalí and the epigenesis

Salvador Dalí's work and person embody strong premonitions of situations which make up the present: his obsession for self-generation, his insistence on maintaining ambivalence in the reading and interpretation of gender and sexuality, a non-binary identity, his interest in understanding life processes from art and in the company of science, his interest in investigating and expressing vernacular culture in his artwork and in his life...

Salvador Dalí understands that art, as creation, is the ideal place in which to pose fundamental questions on the origin of life and intelligence. In this respect, if art is creation, it is not just the creation of artwork but also the creation of forces of creation, that is to say epigenesis. Epigenesis is the embryological theory according to which the organs are formed progressively starting from, or arise from, an originally undifferentiated and homogeneous material. To understand creation — from Aristotle to Harvey, Cavendish, Kant and Erasmus, Darwin, including 19th-century biology, with Wolff, Blumenbach and His, and the 20th century — entails placing artistic creation beyond the aesthetic order and establishing a parallel between nature and artist. What constitutes a work of art? The addition of the parts which emerge successively or the superaddition of parts? Is the shape something that exists in the mind and is reflected, is represented on a canvas, is developed starting from a specific object, or does it respond to the power of a pre-existing substance?

In the hands of Salvador Dalí, epigenesis functions according to an Aristotelian model. In an Aristotelian theory of generation, epigenesis implies that the unformed organic substance adopts a shape which is potentially inside it. In this respect, it is important to indicate that an artwork is always at the intersection between a theory of the biological development of shapes and of motifs, and a theory of the vital potentiality of matter to self-organize.

It is the self-organizing capacity of the artwork which gives rise to the motifs, to the worlds which emerge inside it. It is not therefore by chance that Salvador Dalí pays particular attention to vernacular culture and traditions. In them, dreams are happenings that create myths, stories, rites and customs. In popular culture, transmission is a differential occurrence that interprets the past and connects it to the present and the future in a physical manner, maintaining the archaic forms without renouncing or coming into contradiction with scientific explanations or new ways of understanding the world. This is why Salvador Dalí's work deliberately seeks to create a universe which is easy to access, simple, direct and at the same time beautiful, open, naive, attentive to the great archaic myths, closely committed to popular wisdom, to spontaneous ingenuousness... Salvador Dalí's artwork wants to be nature and to be able to create a universe, create the moon, create the oceans, create life, at the same time as wanting to be a people, a community, a longing for home and happiness. In his work, everything is geared toward the creation of conditions for a situation in which we not only understand the work, but the work itself is established as such through our presence and participation. In this respect, as spectators we are essential. However, we should also consider that this "we" can and must be extended to the animals, the forests, the rivers and the seas which, like the

Mediterranean, are a fundamental space in his work. We see the work here, in an exhibition setting, but it is not unreasonable to think that the work could be in the middle of a forest, or rise up before us on a beach at Cadaqués. Salvador Dalí wants everything from us when we are in front of his work; he wants us to let our senses and the feelings of the artwork flow together always.

His way of making art calls for a reinvention and constant revision of the order of ideas, values, beliefs. Artistic practice creates new ideas, like science and technology. Artistic practice creates new forms, like nature, which is the origin of life. The challenge consists of giving life to *poiesis*, capable of always remaining open to flexible causality, open to the accidents of life, on the one hand, and on the other hand to the changes that art and society experience over the succession of time that we call history. Indeed, Salvador Dalí's work is artificial intelligence, a substance that wants autonomy to create experiments which demonstrate that it is possible to create more intelligent life in and from art.

Chus Martínez