

SALVADOR DALÍ AND HIS NATURAL SURROUNDINGS

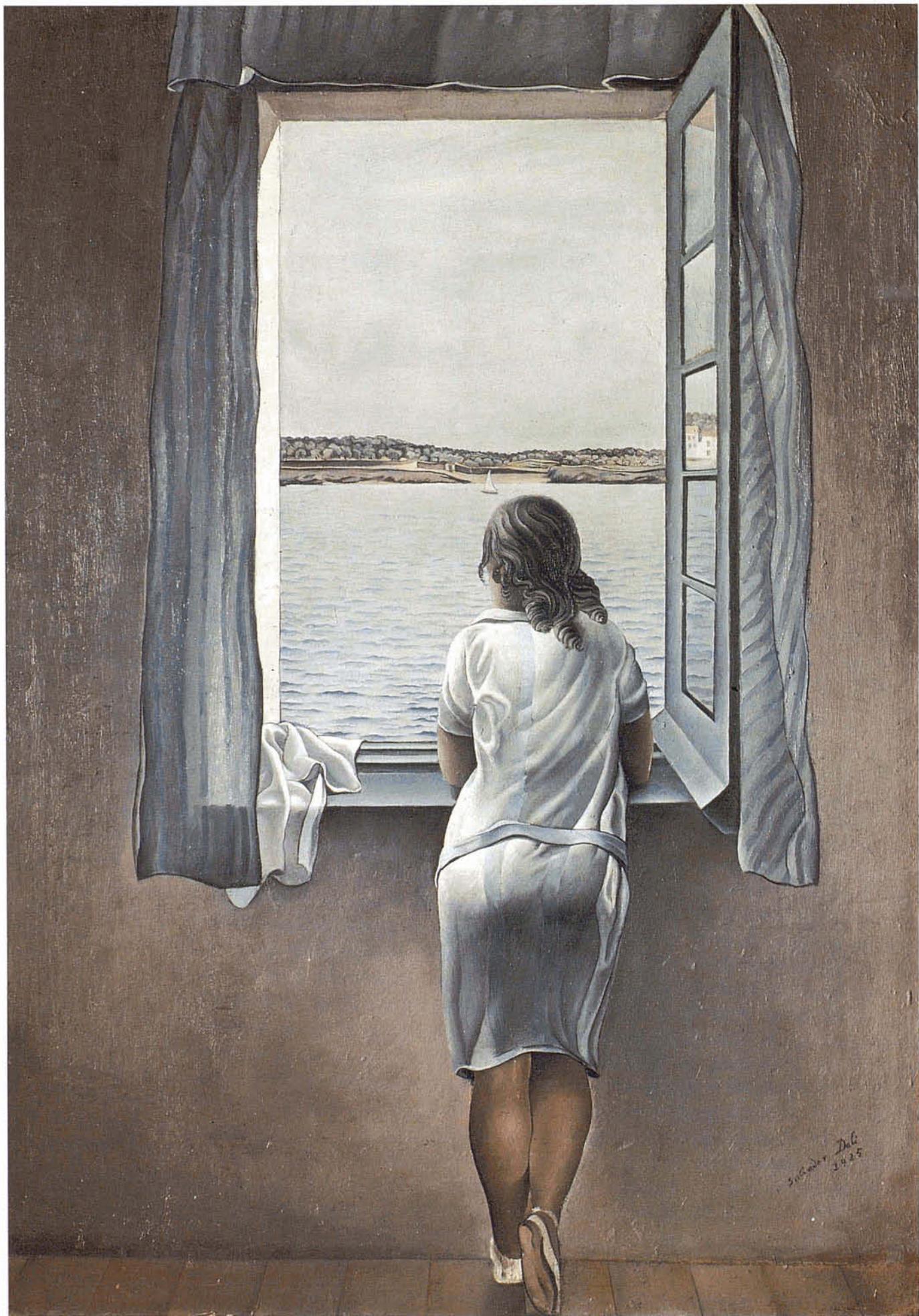


PORT ALGUER, 1924.

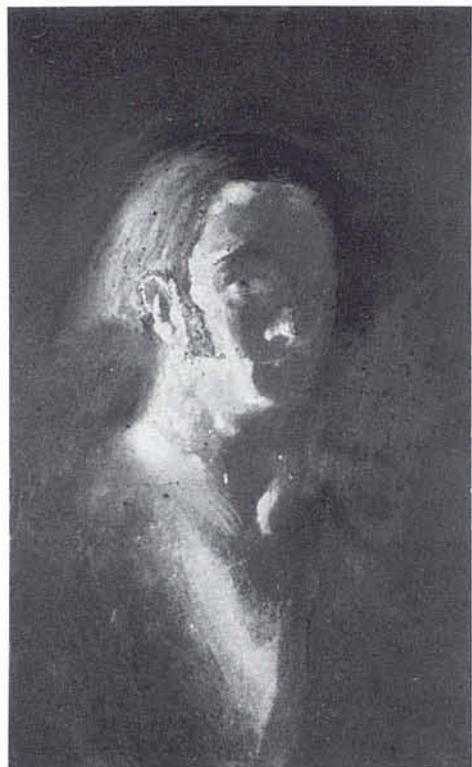
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DALÍ'S EARLIEST WORK DEPICTS THE RURAL AND MARITIME SETTINGS OF HIS CHILDHOOD, UNDER THE INFLUENCE OF CATALAN LANDSCAPE PAINTING. BUT IT WAS IN THE MATURITY OF HIS SURREALIST LANGUAGE THAT HE WAS TO INTERPRET THE MAGIC, THE MYSTERY AND THE POWER OF THE EMPORDÀ AND THE COSTA BRAVA.

DANIEL GIRALT-MIRACLE ART CRITIC



GIRL AT THE WINDOW, 1925.



SELF-PORTRAIT, 1921.

Since his death last January, the figure of Salvador Dalí has grown in importance and international consideration. The retrospective exhibitions organized in honour of his eighty-fifth anniversary by the Staatsgalerie in Stuttgart and the Kunsthaus in Zurich (between the months of May and October) are yet another example of the admiration and devotion this genial Catalan artist inspires in the world of art and culture. Dalí succeeded in creating a unique artistic world, directly linked to Surrealism, and at the same time he built up an almost mythical personality which helped to make his work popular. On more than one occasion he said, "all my work is a reflection, one of the countless reflections of what I do, write and think". This doing, writing and

thinking helped to make him a truly universal figure who was as respected as he was controversial.

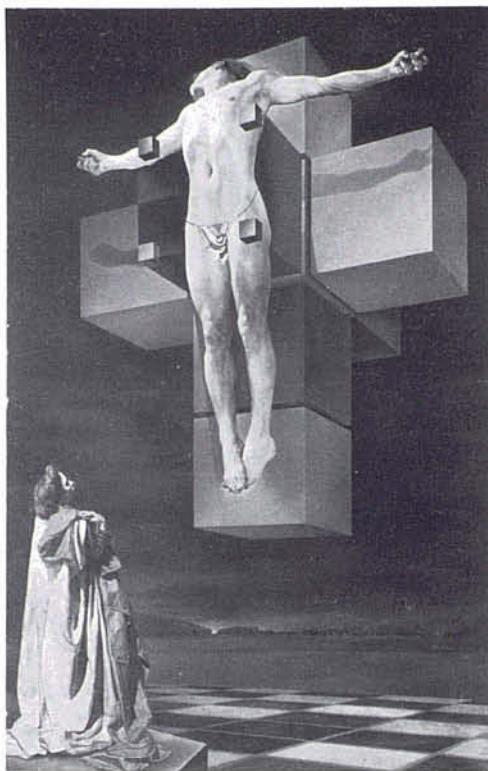
It is difficult to assess the personality of Salvador Dalí from a single viewpoint, as he was such an extraordinarily versatile figure. Painter, sculptor, draughtsman, illustrator, designer of objects, poet, playwright, author of fiction, filmmaker, showman, provoker of scandals –all are aspects of a character which alternates between rationality and exhilaration, between sense and senselessness.

Many critical studies have already been written about Salvador Dalí's different artistic periods: *noucentisme*, Cubism, metaphysical painting, Surrealism, new Realism, etcetera. But all emphasize the close link between Salvador Dalí and the environment into which he was born

and with which he maintained a truly biological relationship.

Dalí was a genuine globe-trotter. First he travelled to Madrid to study. Later, he spent long periods in Paris. Finally he moved to New York, where he first emerged as a star figure of our century. But he always kept his country and its landscape as his point of reference, declaring, in 1975, "I am inseparable from this sky, from this sea, from these rocks, which are tied forever to Port Lligat –tethered port–, where I have defined all my truths and roots".

The world we find between Figueres and Cadaqués is the world of Dalí's geography, so deeply rooted in his life, constantly present in his work, and which on occasions he extended as far as Perpignan. This is something he made quite clear in his inaugural ad-



CRUCIFIXION, 1954.

dress to the French Academy of Fine Arts in 1979, when he said, "One must always return to what is ultralocal, and therefore universal, which is why I always end my speeches saying, 'Long live Perpignan station and long live Figueres'."

Dalí's earliest work depicts the rural and maritime settings of his childhood, under the influence of the Catalan landscape painting of the turn of the century. But it was in the maturity of his Surrealist language that he was to interpret the magic, the mystery and the power of the Empordà and the Costa Brava. In Cadaqués and in Port Lligat, where he had a house and a studio, he invented an imaginary world, a mental landscape dominated by the naked, rocky landscapes of this part of Catalonia. Steep, lonely cliffs, landscapes with in-

finite horizons, all those objects shaped by the waves and the *tramuntana*, become the background to his melting watches, his giant crutches, his deformed bodies, flaming giraffes, gold coins and the whole range of images which are so unmistakably Dalí's.

Aparell i mà (1927), *L'enigma del desig* (1929), *L'espectre del fantasma* (1931), *La persistència de la memòria* (1931), *Elements enigmàtics d'un paisatge* (1934), *La madona de Port Lligat* (1950), etcetera, are pictures that are all directly linked to the light, the flora, the geology, the atmosphere and the enigmatic, fantastic shapes of the Empordà.

With an art and a personality like his, Dalí was bound to create a Teatre-Museu –as a work for posterity– which would be more than just an art gallery.

It is a stage for his memory, a setting made to fit his dreams, a temple to the physical and the metaphysical, a universe where the rational and the mythical live side by side, as was the case with Salvador Dalí himself, who, over the years, broke with his family, with the friends of his youth, with his companions in the Surrealist movement, with his dealers, with anything that might be taken as a stable relationship. There is only one exception; his relationship with the landscape of his country, a relationship which developed into a granite structure, with which he carried on his mystical, indestructible dialogue. ■