

# ANDREW WEISS GALLERY



## **DALÍ**

**Born:** 1904

**Died:** 1989

**Nationality:** Spanish

Salvador Dalí was born in Figueres, Catalonia, near Barcelona. His father, a notary, was an atheist and his mother was a devout Catholic. An older brother, also called Salvador, had died nine months before Dalí's birth, and Dalí later wrote that he identified morbidly with his namesake and had an overwhelming desire for attention. According to the account in his autobiography *The Secret Life of Salvador Dalí* (1942), his childhood was marked by hallucinations and extraordinarily intense emotional experiences, in which many of his later dreams and obsessions were prefigured.

From an early age Dalí showed a talent for art. Between 1921 and 1926 he studied intermittently at the San Fernando School of Fine Arts in Madrid. In 1924 he was suspended for a year for insubordination, and in 1926 he was expelled for his rebellious behavior, which included a refusal to take an examination because he felt that his teachers were not qualified to judge him. However, during this time he perfected his meticulous drawing technique by emulating the 17th-century Dutch still-life masters and 19th-century French and Spanish genre painters. Dalí's paintings had attracted attention in student exhibitions, and in 1925 he had a successful one-man show at a Barcelona gallery.

In 1929 Dalí moved to Paris and became officially a surrealist. That year he made the first surrealist film, *Un chien Andalou* (An Andalusian Dog), in collaboration with director Luis Buñuel. The film shocked audiences with such images as a razor slicing an eyeball. Also in 1929 Dalí had a one-man show in Paris, from which every work was sold. The preface to the exhibition catalogue was written by André Breton, the founder of surrealism, and it marked Dalí's formal membership in the group.

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During the 1930s Dalí painted the majority of the works for which he is now most famous. These include some of the most celebrated surrealist images, such as the limp watches in *The Persistence of Memory* (1931, Museum of Modern Art, New York City). In contrast to the usual surrealist preoccupation with the phenomenon of unconscious thought, Dalí insisted on a more consciously objective presentation of the experience of paranoid obsession. He depicted with great precision familiar objects in illogical settings and combinations, describing his paintings as “handmade dream photographs” and his technique as the “paranoiac-critical method.” Many of his paintings make use of repeated imagery—the multiple watches of *The Persistence of Memory*, for example—and of shapes that metamorphose, or turn into other objects, and are therefore open to multiple interpretations.

A flamboyant and controversial figure, Dalí remained newsworthy until the end of his life. The second volume of his autobiography, *Diary of a Genius*, appeared in 1965. He died in Figueres at the age of 84 and is buried there in the Dalí Museum that he had helped establish in 1974. Another museum dedicated to his work is in Saint Petersburg, Florida.