

## GALA DALÍ

July 5th to October 14th, 2018

**ORGANISED AND PRODUCED BY:** Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya, Barcelona, and Fundació Gala-Salvador Dalí

**CURATOR:** Estrella de Diego, professor of Art History (UCM)

With this exhibition, the Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya and Fundació Gala-Salvador Dalí will reveal Gala Dalí: muse and artist, as well as a key figure in twentieth-century art.

A companion to Dalí, and before that to the poet Paul Éluard, Gala Dalí was sometimes admired but often slighted or ignored. Nonetheless, she was without doubt one of the key figures of the avant-garde. Representations of her in paintings by Max Ernst, in photographs by Man Ray and Cecil Beaton, and especially in works by Salvador Dalí are much more than portraits: they comprise an autobiographical odyssey on which Gala imagined and created her own image—like a true postmodern heroine.

The exhibition will also follow Salvador Dalí's evolution as a painter, gathering a significant collection of his works—some 60 in total—including oil paintings and drawings. It will also present a selection of paintings, drawings and photographs by other artists who were part of the surrealist movement, including Max Ernst, Pablo Picasso, Man Ray, Cecil Beaton and Brassai. An interesting collection of letters, postcards and books will also be on display for the first time, as well as dresses and objects from Gala's personal wardrobe. In total, the exhibition will present approximately 180 pieces that reconstruct this complex and fascinating character.

It will unveil a woman who camouflaged herself as a muse while forging her own path as an artist: writing, imagining, creating her own image while also playing an essential role in Salvador Dalí's artistic development.

“Who was the real Gala? Who was this woman whom everybody noticed, who awakened the hatred of Breton and Buñuel, unconditional love in Éluard and Dalí,

passion in Max Ernst, loyal friendship in Crevel; who served and was Man Ray's model? Was she simply an inspiring muse for artists and poets? Or, despite having few signed pieces – only a few surreal objects that are currently lost, certain *cadavres exquis* and the pages of a diary – was she more of a creator? In truth, Gala was a creative woman who wrote, read and designed her own clothes, as well as her own image for portrayal by Salvador Dalí. She co-authored much of her second husband's work, to such an extent that towards the end of his life, he began to sign his pieces with both their names: 'Gala-Salvador Dalí'. And we could go further still: if we believe that she is not only present in Dalí's paintings, but that she forms the basis of the very image he constructs, to what extent can we say that Gala is part of that manoeuvre of the 'artist as a work of art?'" These are some of the questions that curator Estrella de Diego asks in this exhibition.

Never before has such an exhibition been proposed at an international level, both on account of preconceptions about Gala Dalí, and because of the extreme fragility of many of the pieces that are essential to a reconstruction of her portrait.

The works in this exhibition will come mainly from Dalí Foundation (more than 40 pieces), as well as from private collections and international museums such as the Dalí Museum in St. Petersburg (Florida); the Haggerty Museum of Art (Milwaukee); the Centre d'Art Georges Pompidou (Paris); the Bayerische Staatsgemäldesammlungen and Pinakothek der Moderne (Munich); the Museo di Arte Moderna e Contemporanea di Trento e Rovereto (Rovereto); the Fundación Thyssen-Bornemisza and the Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía (Madrid), among others.

For the **Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya** this exhibition represents a closer look at this fascinating figure of the 20<sup>th</sup> century avant-garde.

As museum director Pepe Serra explains, *Gala Dalí* "entails an important milestone for the museum. On the one hand, it is the first show ever dedicated to Gala; as such, it will provide new knowledge on the subject—a requirement for all of our programming. On the other, collaboration with the Gala-Salvador Dalí Foundation has been extraordinarily positive, and—thanks to an extremely generous contribution of works—has allowed us to present an exhibition of international scope in Barcelona, one related to Dalí but narrated from a totally unique point of view."

For the **Gala-Salvador Dalí Foundation**, the show represents an opportunity to showcase a figure absolutely central to the painter's work.

In the words of director Montse Aguer, "Thanks to this exhibition, Gala Dalí, previously a 'femme invisible', will become a 'femme visible': at long last the star of her own exhibition. She always felt more comfortable in the shadows, but like Dalí she also wanted to become a legend one day. This mysterious, cultured woman, a gifted creator, colleague and peer of poets and painters, lived her art and her life in

an intensely literary manner. From the time she left her native Russia, she was always surrounded by books. She was a writer, a creator of surrealist objects, a designer and art dealer who guided and advised her husbands Paul Éluard and Salvador Dalí. She was a woman among the surrealists, a friend to René Char and René Crevel, a lover of Max Ernst, a character from Thomas Mann. She was a sufferer of tuberculosis—an illness which involved long stays in sanatoriums—, a survivor of two world wars and the Russian revolution. Gala, an elegant and sophisticated woman, acutely aware of the image she wanted to project. Gala, the focal point of mythologies, paintings, sketches, engravings, photographs and books. Gala Salvador Dalí.”



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