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Visual Art Extended Essay

How did Freud influence the development of Dalí's surrealist style and how did he inspire the next generation of artists?

Image Reference:

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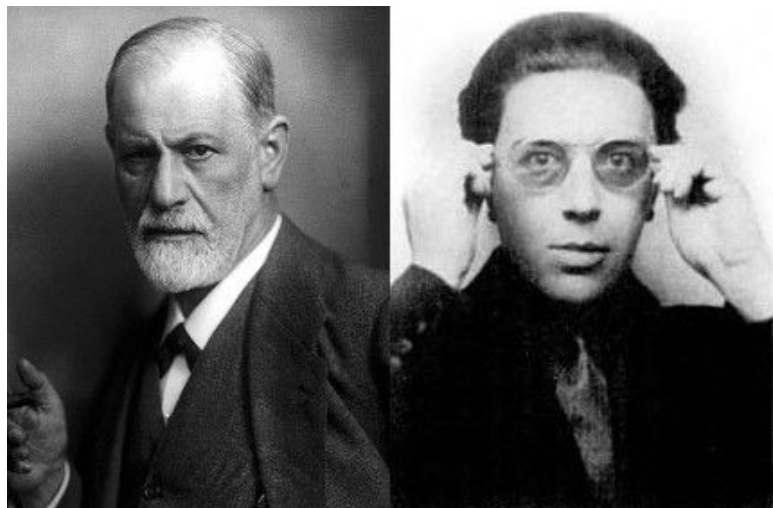
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How did Freud influence the development of Dalí's surrealist style and how did he inspire the next generation of artists?

Introduction:

Surrealism, a movement in visual art and literature, first flourished in Europe between World War I and II. Background research has demonstrated that Surrealism originated from the early Dada movement. It was an anti-art work that rebelled against the focus on reason before World War I; however, the focus of Surrealism was not negative, but positive expression. The Surrealism movement represented a response to its members, which was “the destruction caused by ‘rationalism’”, guiding European culture and politics in the past and eventually led to World War I's destruction (“**History of Surrealism**”). According to the major spokesman of the movement, poet—André Breton—who published *The Surrealist Manifesto* in 1924, Surrealism was the reunite of conscious and unconscious realms, so the worlds of dream and fantasy would be joined to the everyday rational world in “an absolute reality, a surreality.” Breton borrowed partially from the theory adapted from psychologist Sigmund Freud and regarded the subconscious as a source of imagination. He defined a genius as someone who delved into this normally untapped field, and he believed that both poets and painters could achieve this level of ingeniousness (image: “**Freud (left) and Breton (right)**”).



While the factions between Breton and Freud were going outrageously wild, Dalí showed an exclusive interest in interpreting and redefining the concept through expanding his artistic subjectivity. According to an editor of an artistic journal, Remus Bejan, Dalí established his own concepts: he believed the subjects have meaning beyond mechanical existence, those of which are evoked by unconscious or subconscious acts and minds (**“Finding The Way To Systematic Confusion”**). His famous statement “The only difference between a madman and myself is that I am not mad!” demonstrated his art form of combining regular artistic inspirations with mental delusion. To specify, the subjects Dalí painted were designed for the audiences to be able to decipher hidden messages through the paranoiac-critical method he created. Thus, how did Dalí establish his painting principles and create the paranoiac-critical method?

Psychological Theory of Sigmund Freud:

According to MoMA Learning (**“How Was Dalí Influenced In Style?”**), the education platform of contemporary art, “automatism” is a psychological term that refers to subconscious actions and thoughts not within the control of conscious awareness, such as dreaming. It plays an important role in the psychological aspect of Surrealist techniques that trigger people's spontaneous acts on painting and writing freely between images and words. Implicit and unspoken elements, including feelings and desires, were interpreted by the Surrealists through analysing them as dreams.

At that moment, Surrealism was separated from the literary and intellectual movement of Breton to an artistic revolution influenced by the works of psychologist

Sigmund Freud, because the new Surrealists discovered old Surrealism ideology as the oppressive constraints of human minds. Freud utilized a variety of approaches, such as psychoanalysis (**“investigating the interaction of conscious and unconscious elements through psychological therapy”**), to reveal the essence of subconscious thoughts. Furthermore, the Surrealists expanded the techniques to both writing and art, so Freud's theory that creative ideas and thoughts come from a person's unconscious awareness could be more impactful and authentic than those produced within a conscious mind.

Psychosocial educator Kendra Cherry stated that Sigmund Freud had a great impact on Salvador Dalí's thoughts and concepts. Freud's theory stated that dreams are the main approaches to slip in humans' subconscious awareness or even outside of it. By exploring dreams, Freud believed people would understand how the unconscious world functions and reveal some implicit messages hidden from consciousness because dreams are “the royal road to the unconsciousness”.

Freud concluded that dreams could be divided into two distinct types based on their content. The manifest content is the material the dreamer remembers upon waking, for example, images and events; these are all actual life contents. The latent content is all implicit or hidden with symbolic meanings in the dream, in which forms a wishful fulfillment delivered to the dreams themselves. People would be able to subconsciously reduce the potential uncomfortableness and anxiety by constituting ideas, perceptions, and desires in dreams to transform to general unconsciousness (**“An Overview of Sigmund Freud's Theories”**).

A Visit:

Salvador Dalí was inspired by Freud's theory, which depicted the division of two distinct approaches of how humans think, and discovered that one contains non-subjective elements to human perception. An assertion that Freud made was that dreams are hidden messages from the subconscious, from which Dalí and other Surrealists found their own faith to follow and continue their careers with these revelations upon dreams and awareness.

From an article of Stefan Marianski, an author at Freud Museum London, in that era, Surrealism and Freudian psychoanalysis were encouraged to be closely associated by the most popular character of the movement, Salvador Dalí, who was a dedicated follower of Freud and his theory, so Freud did make an encounter with his famous but self-appointed protégé, who crazily pursued his psychoanalysis (**“When Dalí Met Freud”**).

It is known that what Dalí pursued was mainly the validation of his own artworks, and if Freud, whose theory fostered Dalí as an initiator, indulged or at least approved his peculiar style and method, it would be the essential moment for him (image:



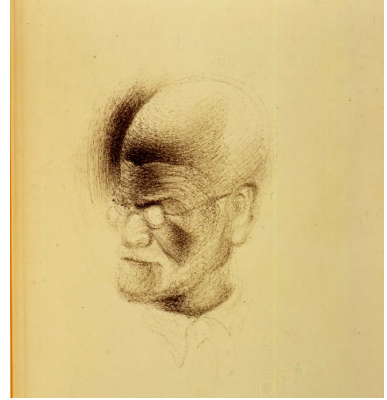
“The Metamorphosis of Narcissus”). “Dalí had spent his teens and early twenties reading Freud’s works on the unconscious,” writes Paul Gallagher at Dangerous Minds, “on sexuality and *The Interpretation of Dreams*.” He was obsessed with Freud's theory

and could not agree more. So the precious chance meeting with Freud, to Dalí, was like a believer coming to his God.

Dalí was prepared to impress his God and somehow fulfill himself with the revelation of the latest work *The Metamorphosis of Narcissus*, also a paragraph in which he presented his elevated paranoiac-critical method. Young Dalí was desperately hoping to earn the appreciation from the elderly Freud.

According to Salvador Dalí, the inspiration of his painting *The Metamorphosis of Narcissus* was not only from the Freudian theory, but also from a Greek mythology about Narcissus. Narcissus is the son of river God and nymph, and is known for his beauty. Because of his obsessive vanity on himself, he loved to stare at his reflection. However, he did not only love the beauty of himself; he had a same-sex relationship with Ameinias, whom Narcissus sent a sword to as a kiss-off. In Dalí's *The Metamorphosis of Narcissus*, he depicted a homosexual group of men to present the idea relating to Greek mythology. Narcissus is a perennial spring flower with mainly white blooms and yellow in the middle, which was also demonstrated in his painting. But the perennial flower as Narcissus fades into a stone hand when the audience gradually views the artwork from right to left. The historical background and the actual existence of these objects presented a conscious realm when Dalí was painting. Meanwhile, the double-image effect and the composition demonstrates the unconsciousness in the painting. Through Dalí's self-interpretation, this painting was an example of well-integrated Freudian Surrealism. According to Freudian theory, Dalí should be able to reduce the potential discomfort and anxiety by interpreting his idea combining both consciousness and unconsciousness elements.

While being presented by Dalí's artwork, Freud left him a profound message, "in classic paintings I look for the unconscious, but in your paintings I look for the conscious." Freud described Dalí as a "fanatic" since their thoughts were actually considerably different. Although Dalí could not fully understand the meaning, the comment



was short but sensational. He took the comment as further evidence to explore and improve on his artworks, and he also sketched (image: **"Sketch of Freud by Dalí"**) Freud with admiration when they met at Freud's home in London, and wrote down, "Freud's cranium is a snail! His brain is in the form of a spiral—to be extracted with a needle!"

This unpleasant encounter certainly did not meet the expectation of talking to his ideology hero in person of Dalí: *"Trying to interest him, I explained that it was not a surrealist diversion, but was really an ambitiously scientific article, and I repeated the title, pointing to it at the same time with my finger. Before his imperturbable indifference, my voice became involuntarily sharper and more insistent."* The monologue from Dalí's perspective demonstrated the indifference of his hero, Freud, towards him. Through this paragraph, Salvador Dalí shows his exceptional infatuation to Freud and his theory, although he might just seek for the agreement from his inspiration.

Based on the records from Freud Museum London, although the meeting of Freud and Dalí was not extremely pleasant as they expected, Freud still showed his preference and appreciation on Dalí, "Until then," he wrote to Zweig, a mutual friend to him and Dalí, "I was inclined to look upon the surrealists... as absolute (let us say 95

percent, like alcohol), cranks. That young Spaniard, however, with his candid and fanatical eyes, and his undeniable technical mastery, has made me reconsider my opinion.” That was a twist on the relationship between Freud and Dalí in spite of Freud's distaste of modern art and obnoxious opinion on Surrealism.

Dalí's Metamorphosis:

According to British art historian Dawn Ades, *The Metamorphosis of Narcissus* (image: **“Metamorphosis of Narcissus”, oil painting, 1937**) is Dalí's first attempt at a paranoiac-critical method to combine multiple illusions. So it was feasible to assume the cracked egg in the painting stood for the newborn concept with advanced self-interpretation of Freudian psychoanalysis. This artistic method was possibly incubated in Dalí's subconscious dreams as well, because it was the epitome of his surreal ideas.

Based on the statement from the study of Pual Chimera, a historian who focused on Salvador Dalí, the double-imagery technique was very consistent with Dalí's paranoiac-critical method, because the true paranoia actually



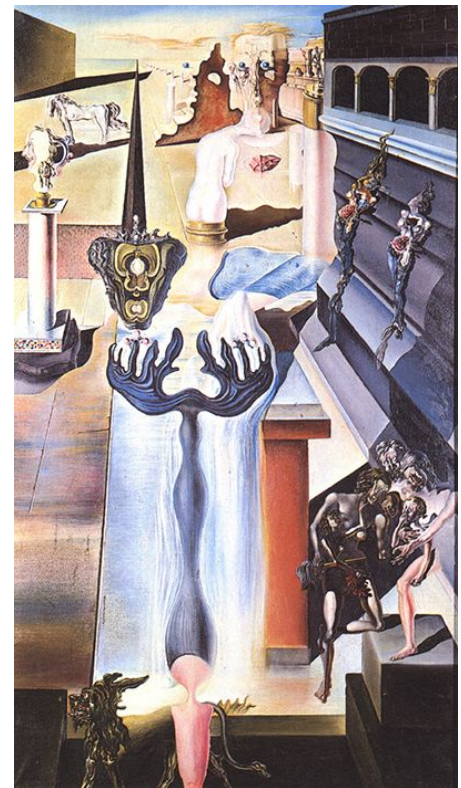
perceived the double image (“**a figure or object that appears in more than one place to create an illusion**”) and multiple meanings in the surrounding elements. Dalí was able to conceive these images in the way of observing and perceiving most things, and then transcribed his vision (which is the "key" part of paranoiac-critical method) onto

canvas (or print matrix, paper, copperplate, etc.) so that the audiences can also experience his double-visual experience.

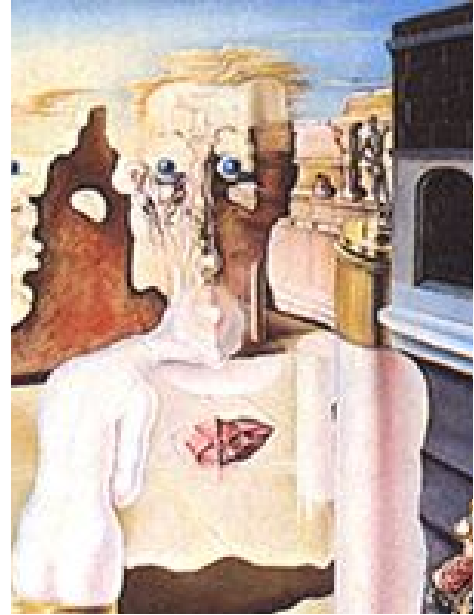
Just as Freud commented, the painting was painted in consciousness; nonetheless, the double-imagery effect somehow elucidated the delusion from Dalí whether it was coincidentally prone to Freudian theory or not. By comparing the color and tone of these two images in one painting, Dalí revealed his exceptional understanding of life and death because one image is lighter than the other. Throughout this artistic method, Dalí explored his career and style even further.

Chimera believes that Dalí's first official double-imagery painting was "The Invisible Man". It was an oil painting integrated with an ambitious and complicated element within, and the appearance of people sitting in various elements was very successful.

In *The Invisible Man* (image: **"The Invisible Man"**, oil painting, 1929-1931), there were some trivial but ubiquitous double-imageries: the clouds as the person's hair, unknown blue spheres as the subject's eyes, the torso of a woman as a person's nose, the reflection as a mouth and a chin, even the highlights and shades were presented through the background architecture. Because of these dualities, the properties of objects changing without a contradictory visual, this image provided the audiences a completely different perception from reality. *The*



Invisible Man, as the title of the artwork, was concealed in the technique of double-imagery. Among these multiple facades, which one was truly invisible and which one was truly revealed? In such a confusing picture, (**“Dali's double imagery technique”**) Anna Sidelnikova, Dalí Art analysis author stated that Dalí did not limit the audiences' imagination and encouraged them to even see what he meant. The more crazy characters that appeared



in Dalí's painting, the more realistic the realization of Dalí's plan would be. Dalí's purpose of creating the technique was to lay out multiple meanings in one object, to specialise objective implication and firm its original implication. The double-imagery was created by Dalí not to confuse people by his specific intent, but to enrich human's imagination and knowledge for the better.

The Position of Paranoiac-critical Method And Double-imagery:

Indicated by surrealism experts Dr. Steven Zucker and Haim Finkelstein, throughout the years Dalí redefined and developed his theory by explaining how a paranoid person could “misread, mangle, and misconstrue ordinary appearances.” By self-inducing paranoiac-critical methods, the artists could see the simultaneous existence of both rational and irrational objects. In other words, Dalí believed that a unique person is able to experience rational objects such as a realistic being and also as a paranoid person. Dalí claimed that he was not delirious, but he had the special ability to participate in both identities as an actor and a spectator. To establish Dalí's own theory,

Dalí himself acknowledged a misunderstanding of Freudian theory, later stating that he could embrace both conscious and unconscious minds at the same time, which he demonstrated in his painting through analyzing as well.

By fluctuating between the concepts of paranoia and consciousness, Dalí often painted “double-image” and paranoid-critical methods to express the ideas which could also be interpreted in at least two different ways easily. For instance, the best example, again, would be *Metamorphosis of Narcissus*, which was shown and later commented on by Freud. This was Dalí’s first painting using a paranoid-critical method. By infusing his first painting with the idea of paranoia-criticism, Salvador Dalí promoted his artworks as well as his theory and successfully gained favor from the audience and authority as a Surrealist painter. Ambitious Surrealists like Dalí did not desire to be an “invisible man” as his painting was, he was a prosperous painter at that point.

Viewing Surrealism history throughout the years, the theory that Salvador Dalí established was quite unique and personalized with regard to his style and concepts. To other Surrealists, however, it has been an ego-centric methodology to announce the authenticity of paranoid-critical theory, so Dalí was banished by the general group of Surrealists.

Pursuing the stream of eccentricity, Dalí desired to be seen as a person who was different from the rest of the regular society. Dalí sometimes viewed himself as a Renaissance man (according to the game show “What’s My Line?” in 1957, although



the answers of most questions were yes), and made a gradual but explosive development with a title of “artist-genius” (image: **“What’s My Line?”**). Dalí was ambitious when exploring other fields besides visual art, such as creativity and psychoanalysis abilities, so that the paranoid-critical method could be successful thoroughly. His anticipation that the audiences’ reactions would be unlimited came from the belief in himself to be an infinity of anything with endless possibilities. He wished to see his unrestrained spirit appear and flourish, so *The Invisible Man*, the double-image masterpiece was later followed by the same named photograph.

Double-imagery Chain Reaction:

Not only did Salvador Dalí have *The Invisible Man* as his own artwork, he was also photographed by Philippe Halsman (image: **Philippe Halsman**), who was influenced by Dalí’s double-imagery technique, and named the photograph “Invisible Dalí” (**“Dalí’s double imagery technique”**) ', in which included Dalí’s own persona and his advocating idea. For example, the image has the features of Dalí's double



image, because the white negative space left the audience to imagine a face of Dalí without depicting one. This serves as a similar doctrine to earlier in how Dalí was expecting the audience to build up their own understanding on the double-imagery painting. Influenced by Salvador Dalí, the contrast of the double-image photograph is simple but also distinctive. Also influenced by Dalí, this quite famous surreal piece

plagiarized the name of Dalí's "The Invisible Man" (image: **"The Invisible Man by Philippe Halsman"**) to create an intriguing atmosphere between the two Surrealists.

Although Freud had assisted Dalí with innovating and inspiring his own method, to his state of paranoiac delirium, no other external aid had been provided. However, his authentic paranoiac-critical method could be employed by other Surrealism artists, who were also involved in the movement of creating between unconscious awareness and clear minds. When Dalí was asked for his opinion of being the inspiration of a new generation of Surrealists, he



famously said, "I have never taken drugs, since I am a drug. I don't talk about my hallucinations, I evoke them. Take me, I am the drug: take me, I am hallucinogenic!" Artists are always prone to label themselves as geniuses or other positive objects, but Dalí was the only artist in history who claimed himself to be a drug.

Personal Values Delivering To Audience:

Inspired by the "addictive drug" that was Salvador Dalí and his works, Surrealism became a prevalent stream in the mid-1900s for conceiving a subconscious state of mind truer than reality's. The movement intended to avoid the use of logic and reason since these are considered as impediments to creativity. However, the idea, made popular by Dalí, is still believed today.

One of his most famous artworks, entitled *The Persistence of Memory* (image: “**The Persistence of Memory**”), created in 1932, served as both an outlet of his imagination and a source of allegory. Through close-reading in MoMA’s learning



platform (“**Dalí, The Famous Painter**”), Dalí applied the methods from Freud's theory of Surrealism, digging deep into the non-rational mechanisms without conscious awareness: imagination, dreams and subconsciousness, to integrate the unrealistic forms that prevail in his works, which he described as “hand-painted dream photographs”. These combinations with coherent features appeared in the real world, including the rocky areas on the top corner of *The Persistence of Memory*, which interprets the cliffs of the Cap de Creus peninsula. Dalí states that this painting has the most “imperialist fury of precision” by utilizing his paralyzing tricks, but only “to systematize confusion and thus to help discredit completely the world of reality”. The objects of clocks, tree branches and mountains are real-life materials, which exist upon the waking realm. Meanwhile, the clocks melting, the tree not growing from the soil, the mountain in a strange shape, and—the most “surreal”—the melting human face with impossibly long eyelashes, illustrate how these distorted states of living are far from normal everyday objects. Art critic Anai Gonzalez stated that it is very profound that Dalí wanted to inform people that time runs out sooner than later, just like the clocks seem to approach their end as they slip down towards the open darkness on the bottom of the painting, which also persuades the audiences to reflect on their lives and their limited

time on this Earth. He utilized the best tool —painting, as an outlet to express— to influence people with his own values and philosophies.

Influence On Future Generations:

Joe Nuzzolo, the founder and president of the Salvador Dalí Society, is one of the professional experts of Dalí and his artworks (“**Art, Interview, Salvador Dalí**”). In order to build the best-known private exhibition of Dalí’s works, he collects authentic paintings, drawings, graphics, and sculptures as the renowned Dalí expert. In the interview held by “Simply Charly”, Joe Nuzzolo was asked about Dalí’s influence on Surrealism and the future generation of artists. According to his answer, it is impossible to state who has not been influenced by Dalí, who is heralded as the most famous Surrealist; he catalyzed the Surrealism movement and blended it into daily life. Among the few self-proclaimed “Surrealists” nowadays is Jeff Koons (image above: **Jeff Koons**), an American artist known for his popular culture and balloon animals, who has publicly announced Dalí’s influence on him by meeting him at Koons’ teenage years. The connection between Dalí’s sculpture, The Bust of Kennedy (image below: **The Bust of Kennedy, 1971**), with the feature of paper clips of bureaucracy,



and Koons sculptures (image: “**Play-doh**” by Jeff Koons), serves as an evidence to trace the influence of Dalí on this future Surrealist. Nuzzolo also has discovered the ghost of Dalí through Juxtapoz and Art News (famous visual art magazines) and throughout the underground visual art movement, such as the Lowbrow movement and the Comic movement, there were also credits to Dalí. Although known for his eccentric and strange style, his presence can also be found in the mainstream publications like Time and Newsweek.

Despite being in the fine art world, film directors like Spike Jones, Michel Gondry, and David Lynch, who are also known for their Surreal films. The closest link to Dalí has possibly come from Terry Gilliam's films, such as *The Fisher King* (image: **Terry Gilliam**). The film *The Man Who Killed Don Quixote* in particular has accumulated the highest reverence to Dalí as he



depicted Don Quixote under numerous circumstances. On the poster, it is quite obvious to see the outlines from Dalí's painting of *Don Quixote* if the audiences pay attention to the gold statue on the character's hat. Influenced by Dalí's *The Face in the Windmill*, a lithography painted in 1965, Gilliam plotted the windmill elements into his film through the confusion of Don Quixote between giants and the windmill. The long leg creature in the background can also be seen as Dalí's representative elephants (image next page: **Poster of Don Quixote and comparison to Dalí's**). Overall, the design of this film poster is quite surreal, including Dalí's theory of paranoiac-critical method and a combination of conscious and unconscious realms.

Although the Surrealism movement is no more in its prime, its spirit is still alive, and it remains the most influential artworks from the greatest spirits for the future generations. By discovering Dalí's trace in modern artists, film directors, magazine publications, and even television commercials, we all understand: Dalí is everywhere!

Being in the newest generation in the 21st century, I am also inspired by Salvador Dalí and dream to be an artist like him. The first time I was brought by my parents to a personal art exhibition of Dalí was in the K11 Museum in Shanghai, China. I was simply a middle school girl who enjoyed art and painting since I was six years old in kindergarten, and of course I did not know of any art genres. So, going on an exhibition tour in Shanghai to explore Dalí's style introduced that surreal atmosphere to me.

To me, the most influential artwork of Dalí is "Napoleon's Nose, Transformed into a Pregnant Woman, Strolling His Shadow with Melancholia amongst Original Ruins" (image: **"Napoleon's Nose, Transformed into a Pregnant Woman", oil painting,**



1945). Firstly, the length of the title has intrigued me and convinced me Dalí was a character with eccentric and addicting charisma. Although Dalí had claimed that the title of this painting explains the meaning completely, different from other paintings of his that provide a strong ambiguity, the audiences still found the style enigmatic, even more



due to the tedious title of this artwork. I thought so too, but the title actually prompted me to research more about Dalí, his artwork, and the symbolisms behind it. Behind the meticulously painted, carefully structured and perfectly geometrical work, there are multiple double images, architecture, crutches and the Empordà landscape. Napoleon, painted in the middle, is his representation in terms of victory, authority and creativity that has always haunted Dalí throughout his life. In Dalí's artwork, there are often bones on the outer walls of buildings, while the soft buildings are supported by crutches in the barren landscape. This painting also has a dramatic aspect related to Dalí's stage scenes. This is a surrealist painting "Dalí" with a wide desolate space and almost academic Freudian symbols.

Like Freud was to Dalí, Dalí is the more distinctive Freud to future generations of artists. Dalí's resistance to standardization and rationality doctrine is the hegemony of his pragmatic values. It shows the fantastic emphasis on irrationality and anomalies in our big cities technical culture. So, I learnt to express my life of unfettered imagination not yet in metaphor and myth, but in a spectrum of colour, in a spacious canvas, and in quite convoluted but skillful techniques. The technique of double images was derived from Dalí's ideas, and utilized by me in my artworks while I was trying to transform my art style from realistic, which I was adept in, to a more obscure, surreal style. By fulfilling the wills, ideas, and skills for the next generation of artists, Dalí did indeed introduce his personal methods to inspire us.

Further on, Dalí has always been my favourite artist: I love his eccentric style, his strange personalities, even his condescending attitudes. The curiosity to understand him has always prompted me to discover myself deeply not only in the field of the Arts, but also in real life. Dalí and his artworks have become the inspiration of my creation.

Eccentric, unpredictable, irrepressible, Dalí has been repudiated by the leaders of the Surrealist movement, but this has in no way checked his flair for the sensational, his mania for incessantly publishing his greatness. His growth from a young artist cultivating by psychoanalysis to one of the greatest creators of all time inspires future generations in an immensely impactful way.

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