

# Study of Salvador Dali's Women Bodies during the 20<sup>th</sup> Century

ART 428

Michelle Sheppard



Portrait of Lucia (1918)

Salvador Dali was a natural born artistic genius who's body of work continuously changed during his life in the 20th century. The woman's body was a favorite subject of Dali and he rendered the form with many different representations and meanings over the course of his creative revolution. At just 14 years, Dali painted this picture which was his first portrait of his personal nurse, Lucia. He began using an impressionistic style which is apparent in his thick brushwork and vivid, fauvist colors. When painting this, Dali was ill and Lucia had moved in close to him to tell him stories as she had in his childhood. He was able to capture her gentle nature, wisdom, and even the foggy glaze over her partially blind eyes.

In 1925, Dali painted “Figure at a Window,” which moves away from his impressionistic style and is a very clear representation of his little sister Ana Maria looking out at the Bay of Cadaques. Because the viewer cannot see her face, which was his common theme with his paintings of his sister, they too are encouraged to gaze into the Spanish sea. The soft cool colors of light greens and blues create a sense of calm and serenity, which was uncommon in the majority of Dali’s work. Ana was the only female figure that Dali used in his paintings until he married his wife and muse Gala in 1929.

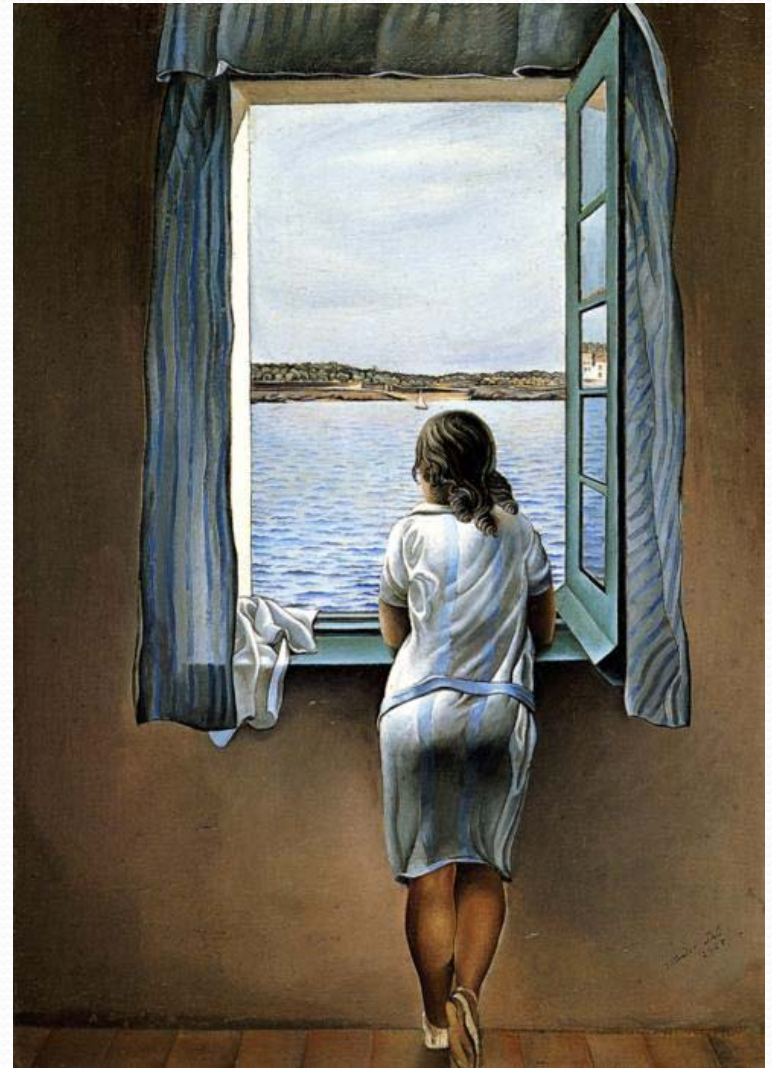


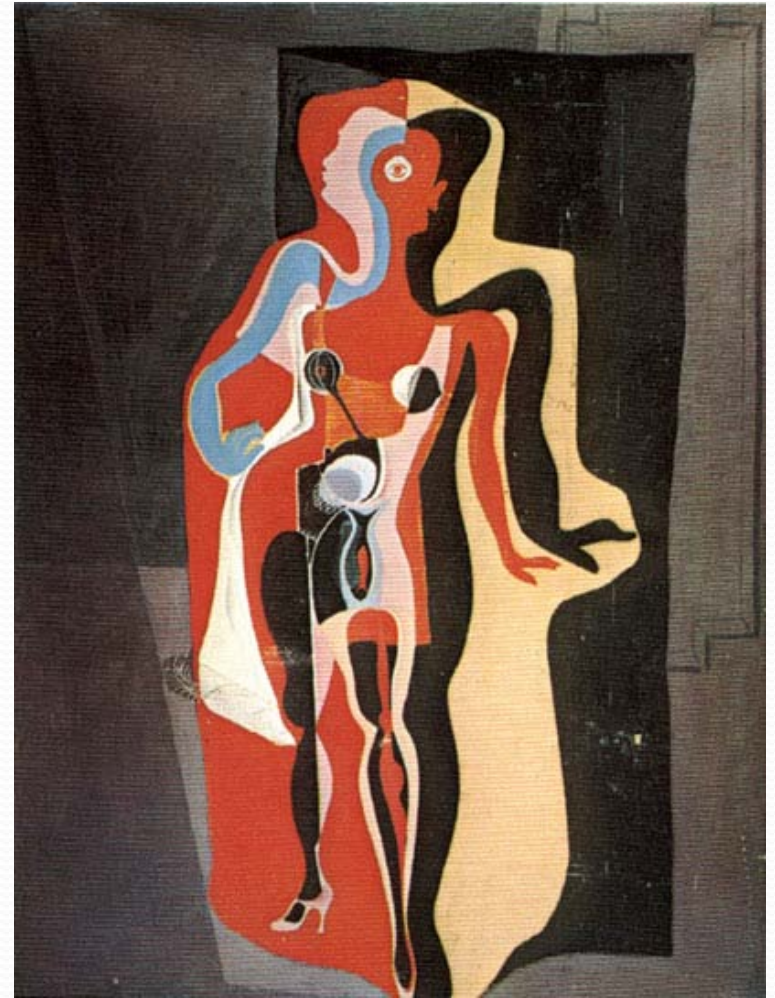
Figure at a Window (1925)



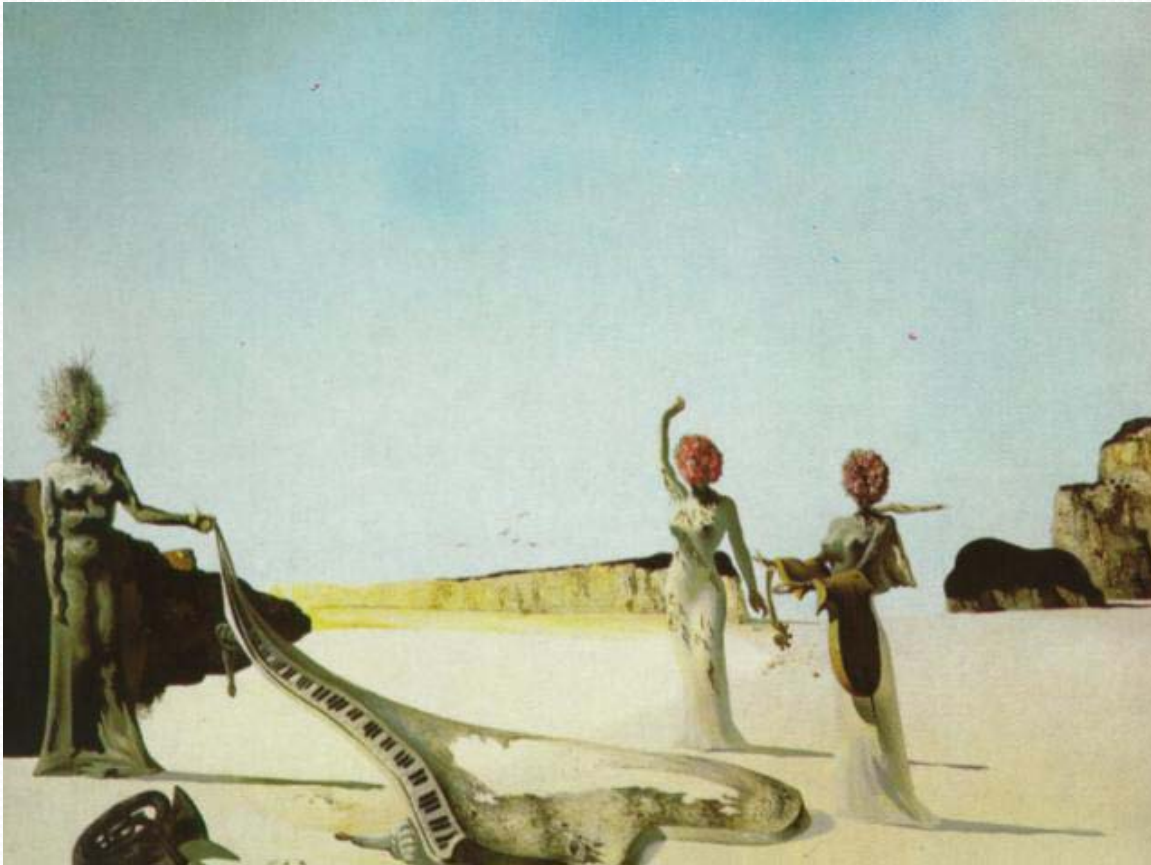
Figure on the Rocks (1926)

Salvador Dalí also became interested in Cubism compositions, and was especially influenced by Picasso. This is one of only about six of Dalí's Cubist studies. This block-like representation of the stretched out woman's body is much different from his previous works. Dalí's interest in this painting was simply the contrast of the soft flesh of the woman against the hard rocks.

After studying Sigmund Freud's writings, Dali became interested in surrealism. This oil painting, "Barcelona Mannequin" is a combination of surreal and cubist elements. Dali was inspired by a young, elegant, and pretty friend who reminded him of his memories of mannequins and the women of Barcelona. Although this woman in the painting is distorted, she is obviously still petite and feminine.



Barcelona Mannequin (1926-27)



Three Young Surrealist Woman Holding In Their Arms  
the Skins of an Orchestra (1936)

Salvador Dalí's love for the irrational and subconscious has led him to become the most famous surrealist painter of all time. As he explored dream-like and fantasy inspired compositions, the meaning the woman's body began to change. The women are not realistic and seem to contradict themselves with ghastly bodies accompanied by flower heads. Along with the barren landscape, the painting evokes the sense of uneasiness, he certainly did not intend for the bodies to be aesthetically pleasing.

This painting is the embodiment of the interchangeable relationships of particular changes and elements during Dali's artistic movements. It has representational, classical, and surrealist elements. It is a portrait of his wife and muse, Gala, watching herself manifest into an architectural structure. Dali enjoyed painting Gala's backside because he believed from that view that she was the reincarnation of his childhood love whom he had waited his whole life for. The steel structure of her body in the distance represents Dali's belief in the solid strength of his beloved wife.



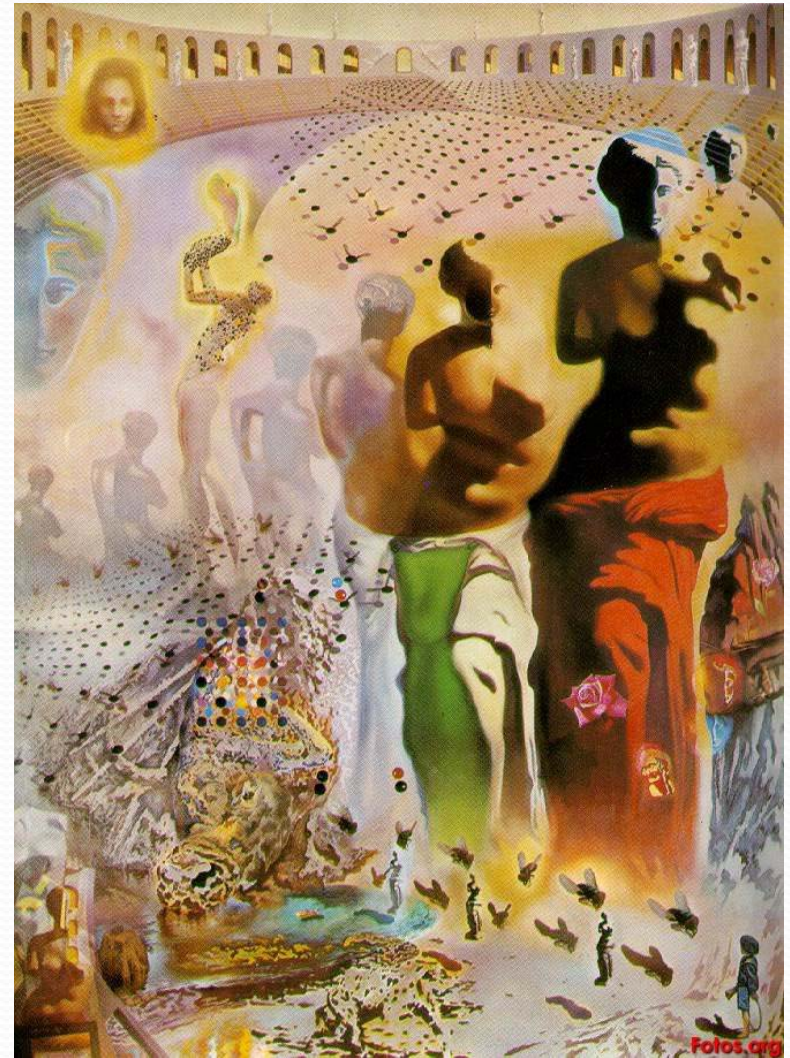
My Wife, Naked, Looking at Her Own Body (1945)



In this painting “Galatea of the Spheres,” Gala’s body is not necessarily represented, but her form is used by Dali to be the central canvas used to convey his other interests. Dali obsessively painted his passion of science, spheres, the spiritual, and the general order of the universe. The combination of all of his interests are depicted in this work.

Galatea of the Spheres (1952)

“The Hallucinogenic Toreador” was inspired by a box of pencils in one of Dali’s favorite art stores. The woman in the painting is one of his favorite subjects Venus de Milo. This painting is thought to be one of the most retrospective and comprehensive embodiments of Dali’s artistic ideals. It combines all elements of his life into an intricate “hallucination.” Here the woman’s body is used both as the face of the toreador, and as the sympathetic mourner of the dying bull.



The Hallucinogenic Toreador (1968-70)



The Three Glorious Enigmas of Gala (1982)

“The Three Glorious Enigmas of Gala” was created right before the sudden death of Dalí’s wife. It was his final homage to her, and was a combination of three creative periods in Dalí’s life. During this time he was a devout Catholic, and the three classic women’s faces can possibly be interpreted as the Holy Trinity. Dalí’s use and interest of the woman’s figure was evident throughout his career, and even to his final works. After Gala’s death Dalí lost the will to live, and soon passed in 1984, just two years after his wife.