

## Dalí and Fages: "that intelligent and most cordial of collaborations"

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Salvador Dalí

Christ of the Tramuntana, 1968

Watercolor and ink on paper, 38,5 x 28,2 cm

Fundació Gala-Salvador Dalí

The Museum of the Empordà is holding a very interesting exhibition on the subject of Carles Fages de Climent within the framework of activities hosted by the town of Figueres to celebrate the poet's centenary. The exhibition, which vindicates the figure of this poet from the Empordà, contains three distinct display areas described by a complete catalogue intended to facilitate future research on this writer.

We would like to focus on one of the aspects dealt with in this exhibition, namely the relationship between Salvador Dalí and Fages de Climent. This commenced at an early stage, indeed we could say from birth, since both were born in the same street, Carrer Monturiol, in the town of Figueres. The relationship lasted all their lives and produced some fruitful results.

Dalí worked with Fages from as early as the 1920s. In 1924 the former illustrated *Les bruixes de Llers* ('The witches of Llers'). In 1950 Fages published the *Poema dels tres reis* ('Poem of the three kings') illustrated by Joan Commeleran. The copy kept by Dalí in his library is dedicated by the author and says: "I dedicate the POEMA DELS TRES REIS to Salvador Dalí, my lifelong friend, in remembrance of the shoemaker of Ordís". In 1954 Dalí illustrated and wrote the epilogue for the *Balada del sabater d'Ordís* ('Ballad of the shoemaker of Ordís'), which Fages de Climent dedicated to him as follows: "To my brilliant and constant friend Salvador Dalí, celebrated illustrator and most honourable author of the epilogue for the Balada del sabater d'Ordís, with a most affectionate embrace - CFages de Climent, 1954". In 1956 an article about

Cadaqués written by Fages and published in the magazine *Canigó* included a text by Dalí entitled "Cadaqués, el poble més bonic del món" ('Cadaqués, the prettiest town in the world') as well as an illustration by the artist. In 1961, some years before the death of Fages, and on the occasion of a tribute paid by the town of Figueres to the artist, Dalí and Fages together prepared an auca (a series of pictures with captions in rhyming couplets which tell a story) entitled *El triomf i el rodolí de la Gala i en Dalí* ('The triumph and the couplet of Gala and Dalí'), with the writer contributing the verses and the artist the drawings to accompany them.

We can see, therefore, that beyond mere friendship, Salvador Dalí and Fages de Climent were united by a close artistic collaboration. It could be claimed that there was no other Catalan writer and very few writers from around the world with whom Dalí worked so assiduously. It could also be claimed that the exchange of ideas was mutual. The poet, speaking of Dalí in an interview with Josep Maria Bernils published in *Canigó* in December 1955, said: "We grew up and went to school together. The fact that I was one year older than him meant that he thought highly of me and we were great friends. I had the honour of his helping me with my first book". The interview went on to refer to a common project which was not disclosed. A clear example of this intellectual exchange can be found in the origins of *El sabater d'Ordis*. In Fages' dedication of the *Poema dels tres reis* to Dalí there are references to this work which was published three years later. In a letter to the artist dated 12 August, 1951, now part of the archives of the Centre for Dalinian Studies, Fages wrote: "Referring to *El sabater d'Ordis*, I have concluded the poem. [...] I have added a second part, almost as long as that which you know, and I believe that it is a success, it may well be better than the first, making that great personage of ours more concrete. I hope that it will be possible for you to make and send me your artistic interpretation of the great director of wind, dated 1923. I will have it published immediately. The format will be that of the *Poema dels tres reis* with the same margins. For me it would be an indescribable treasure to return to that intelligent and most cordial of collaborations".

We can find another example of this communication and deep knowledge of both personalities in *El triomf i el rodolí de la Gala i en Dalí*, which is a summary of the myths, obsessions and iconography of Salvador Dalí. In our archives we have an unpublished document (copies of which can be seen in the exhibition), which leads us to believe that perhaps they had decided to continue working on it. It is a typed text with autographed annotations by Fages in the Spanish language and with the images that appear in the auca attached. The text is incomplete and we have no further references to it. The fact that this document was found in the artist's estate would indicate that this was a document made by both. It is the translation to Spanish of a part of the couplets (numbers 4 to 26), with detailed explanations by the poet as to the significance of the iconography illustrating the verses and also on the life, thoughts and the work of Dalí. There are also allusions to the preparation of the auca and its repercussions in the press. Fages acknowledges three of the couplets as being Dalí's, and this is corroborated by his son Pere Ignasi Fages.

The last collaboration that took place between the poet and the artist was in the context of the work *El somni del cap de Creus* ('The dream of cape Creus') which was

never published. Nonetheless, some fragments were known, such as the *Oració al Crist de la tramuntana* ('Prayer to the Christ of the north wind'). As a posthumous tribute to Fages de Climent, we recommend a study of the magnificent painting *Christ of the Tramuntana*. Cultural heritage of the Empordà, fruit of the skill of two artists born in Figueres.

*Fages de Climent (1902-1968). Poetry and Myth of the Empordà*

16 May - 8 September 2002

Museum of the Empordà, Figueres

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The exhibition will subsequently travel to Barcelona and Girona