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DALÍ NEWS

Musical Rhinoceros Shoes

Ruven Afanador / Montse Aguer / Laura Bartolomé / Chicks on Speed / Noelia Collado / Salvador Dalí / Agustín Fernández Mallo / Krzysztof Fijalkowski / Philippe Halsman / Rosalind McKever / Jordi Mercader / Guo Pei / Miriam Ponsa / Daniel Roseberry / Albert Serra





DALÍ NEWS

‘But, as in newspaper it is necessary to deal with so many things, and following a Catalan proverb, “si vols esta[r] ben servit, fes-te tu mateix el llit” [if you want to be well served, make your bed yourself], I decided this time to write all that I should like to read in the papers about myself. In short, a paper where, instead of large headlines announcing mechanical catastrophies, there would be other headlines announcing the “quintessence” of Homeric breezes; instead of the melancholy shorthand of finance, of marriages without color and the births of future souls of purgatory, one should have shares of the cyclotomic exchange of the spirit, the couplings of “psicomorphologicocefales” bisexuals and the births of the completely viscuous “quintuplets” of my caprices. Instead of educational sections bordering upon mediocrity, sections of “deculturization” and confusion leading to the systematic cretinization of the masses. For our entire epoch is to be re-educated. Finally, instead of the atomic disintegration of matter surrounding an explosion, the sudden possibilities of integration materializing in the sublime and preeminently Catholic myth of the Resurrection of the Body. In any case, the **DALÍ NEWS** will offer this incontestable originality over all the other existing newspapers. It will not contain a single bad news item, even those which are true, and will contain all the good news items, even those which are false’.

SALVADOR DALÍ, **DALÍ NEWS**, VOL. I, No. 1, 20 NOVEMBER 1945

FUNDACIÓ GALA SALVADOR DALÍ

Art and Fashion

Jordi Mercader Miró / Montse Aguer Teixidor

President of the Fundació Gala-Salvador Dalí / Director of the Dalí Museums

Salvador Dalí's intense relationship to fashion and other twentieth-century means of creative expression reflects his desire to develop his genius in the Renaissance manner: complete and multi-disciplinary, with no separation between life and work, fashion and art. Thus Dalí became a total artist, whose impact can still be seen on the world's top runways.

Although it may seem contemporary, the relationship between art and fashion has a long history. While there is no evidence to support the long-held legend that Michelangelo was involved in designing the uniforms for the Vatican's Swiss Guard, the Renaissance was the moment when artists began to aspire to transcend the visual arts. Leonardo da Vinci is, surely, the paradigm of the total artist. He is now being studied as a pioneering figure in fashion and style, as well as in art and science.

Dalí, particularly from the 1940s, wanted to be considered a Renaissance master and to become a total artist. He also became a total fashion designer, creating dresses and fabrics, costumes, jewellery, shoes, neckties, scarves, perfumes and cosmetics, as well as mannequins and window displays, like the one he designed in 1936 for the flagship Bonwit Teller department store on New York's Fifth Avenue. This window display was a showcase for his boundless imagination, a stage to immerse passersby in the depths of the unconscious. Dalí was also a contributor to the leading fashion magazines, such as *Vogue* and *Harper's Bazaar*.

Surrealism represents a true turning point in the fusion of art and fashion. Some artists, wanting to work in every sphere of creation and to develop new languages, invest fashion with great importance, occasionally even considering it a form of visual art and cultural expression and integrating it into their creations. At the same time, some designers have great knowledge of and admiration for what is developing in the art world, and they incorporate into their work Surrealist elements such as subversion and free association. Fashion is also considered an experimental art, forming the basis of the modern dialogue these two disciplines now represent.

Dalí and Schiaparelli were pioneers of this conjunction between art and fashion, making evident fashion's symbolic function as a manifestation of its time. Schiaparelli, echoing Dalí's Paranoiac-Critical method, shows us that a shoe is not a shoe, but a hat. This spirit remains alive today in the latest collections by Daniel Roseberry, as well as in other collections by Chanel, Dior and Rabanne, houses with which Dalí collaborated. Its traces can also be seen in other major fashion names and in more artisanal conceptions such as that of Miriam Ponsa.

Photographers of the period played a significant role in these intersections – sometimes even fusions – between art and fashion. These included Man Ray – who was very close to Breton's Surrealist group – Brassaï, Cecil Beaton, Hoyningen-Huene and Horst P. Horst. Photography often contributed to blurring the boundaries between art and fashion, as Ruven Afanador, special guest for this issue of **DALÍ NEWS**, continues to do today.

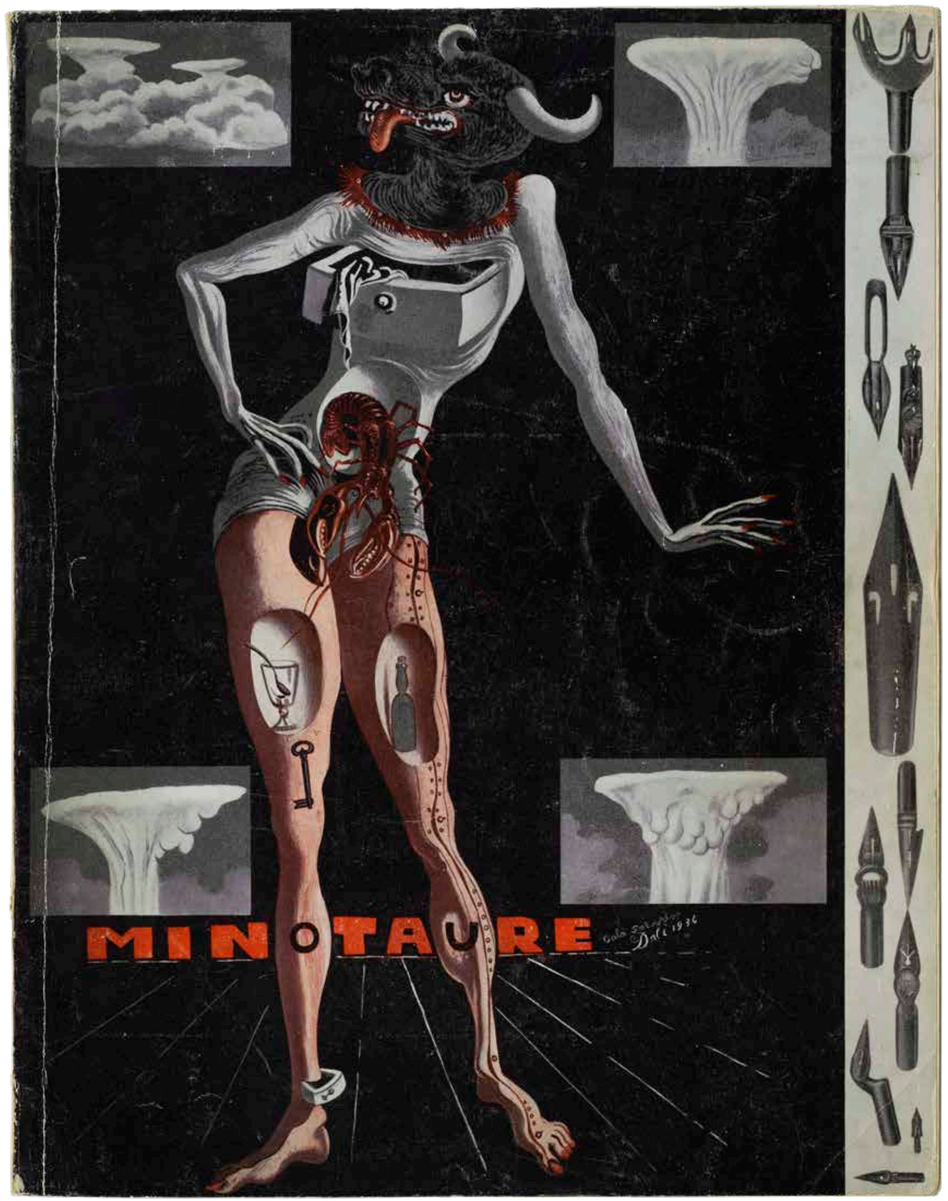
Another element we would like to highlight is how Dalí and Gala, and the binomial Gala-Salvador Dalí, became symbols of dandyism. Their apparel was essential to establishing a certain image they wanted to project and capture in their artwork, from the paintings and drawings to the performances and happenings. For them, the fashion of their time – Dalí even 'predicts' the fashion of the future – is art and the expression of a way of seeing the world.

Museums have also blurred these boundaries and offer new forms of expression for each era, among which fashion has a major role – fashion created by artists as well as by designers, fashion that is a significant

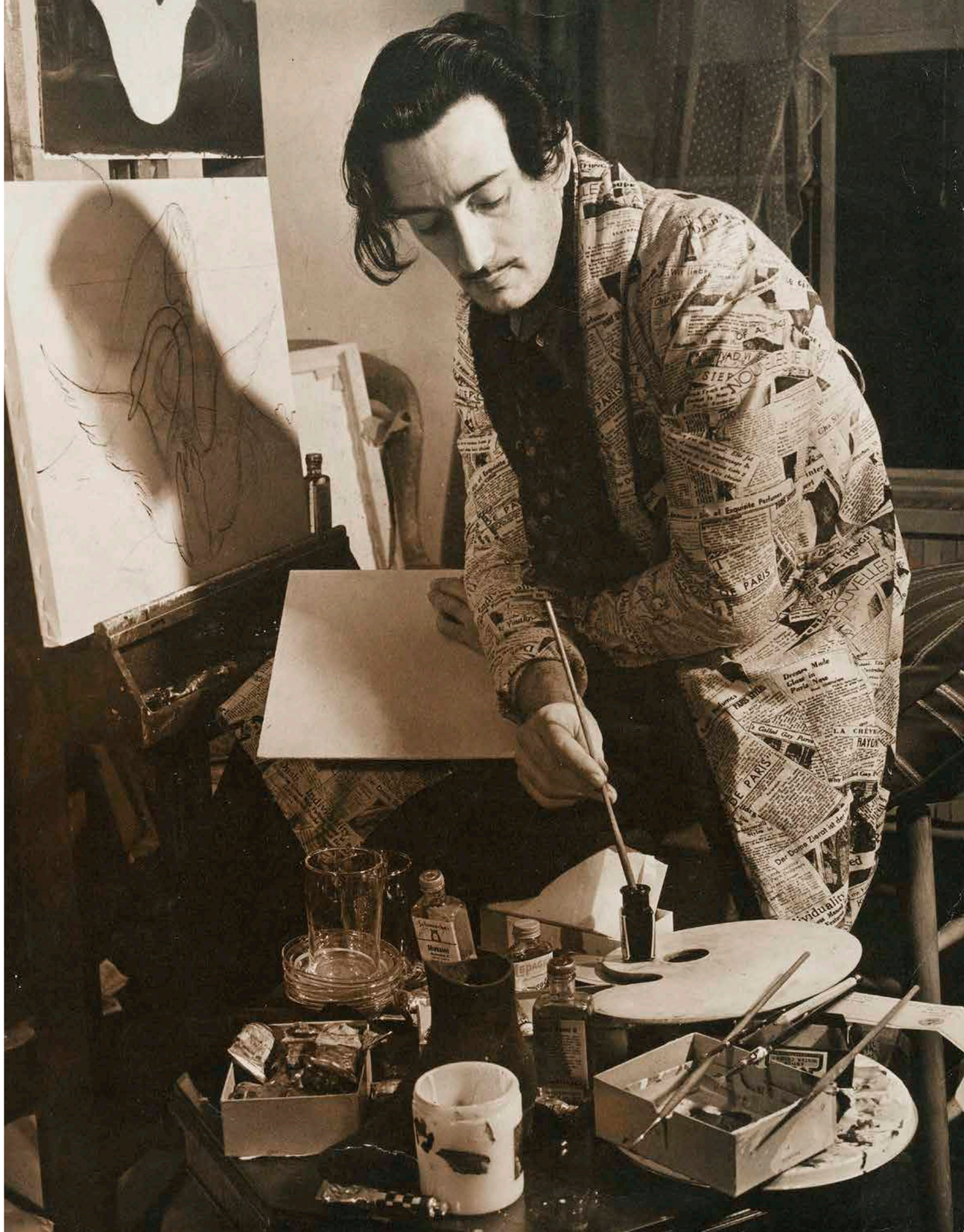
> Dalí designs perfume vials, carpets, neckties! But those uncultured miserabilists were ignorant of the fact that Michelangelo designed the Pope's garters and the costumes for the Vatican guards. There is no dishonor of any sort for him who, during his lifetime, excels in the greatest possible number of fields, and I do nothing in fashions, furniture, décor, ballets, or jewelry that is not dalinian.
>
> —Salvador Dalí, *The Passions according to Dalí*, 1968

part of mass culture and can contribute new aesthetic and cultural values. In that sense, 2026 is a particularly important year. The Fashion Institute of Technology (FIT) in New York explored the relationships between art and fashion with the exhibition 'Art X Fashion', while the theme of this year's Met Gala was *Fashion is Art*, challenging guests to explore fashion as a form of artistic expression. Meanwhile, in London, the V&A South Kensington is hosting a major exhibition of the work of Elsa Schiaparelli, in which Dalí played a substantial role. What better moment to discuss Dalí's role in twentieth-century fashion and everything that emerged from his alliances with the top designers of the last century – alliances both creative and epistemological. As such, this year the Fundació Gala-Salvador Dalí, expanding and enhancing the task begun in 2020 with temporary exhibitions at the Castell Gala-Dalí in Púbol, opened the exhibition 'Dalí e la moda' at the Palazzo Reale in Milan, one of Europe's fashion capitals, during International Fashion Week – a unique opportunity to champion Dalí as the total artist he is.

Cover of *Minotaure* magazine designed by Salvador Dalí, 1936



Salvador Dalí, wearing a Schiaparelli robe, working on the set design for *Bacchanale* in New York, 1939





Salvador Dalí predicts

All last December the busiest gallery on Manhattan's art-clogged 57th Street was the Carstairs, where a selection of new paintings by the irrepressible Salvador Dalí was on display. People came by the thousands, some to admire, a few to buy (at prices that might make a millionaire pause), and many just to look and to wonder how this 'maddest' of eccentrics continues to rock the boat of modern art. One answer was offered by Alain Jouffroy, a Paris art critic: Despite 'this irritating mixture of audacity, genius, conformity, and boasting... Dalí maintains certain values above the flux; one would laugh less while listening to him if one remembered that each of his pleasantries plunges a sword into the heart of our history'.

On the following pages, *Nugget* offers four more (in the series of 12) predictions of the future as envisioned and rendered by Dalí, who answers those, particularly critics and fellow artists, who consider him a phony: 'They're jealous'.

PHOTO BY HALSMAN



MUSICAL RHINOCEROS SHOES

Women's shoes patterned along the contours of rhinoceros snouts will be equipped with heels pleated like accordions and containing built-in springs attached to noise – or music – making device. Thus there will be not only a 'new look' in footwear, but a 'new sound', with saucy or lifting melodies to brighten the streets.

Double page reproduced in *Nugget*, vol. I, no. 9, New York, 30/04/1957. For more information, see page 72.

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DALÍ NEWS

MUSICAL RHINOCEROS SHOES

And Dalí Also Predicted Fashion

Laura Bartolomé Roviras

Deputy Director of Research and Projects of the Fundació Gala-Salvador Dalí

Since childhood, encouraged by a family environment where clothing was a calling card, Salvador Dalí used fashion to construct his personality, and he was also a fashion creator and tastemaker. Dalí's extensive engagement with the world of fashion began in 1936, unfolding in collaborations with haute couturiers and specialised magazines, the dressing of department-store windows, jewellery design, and artistic performances in the late 1960s that turned Portlligat into the backdrop for inventive runway shows. His was a universe in which the Surrealist object was always key.

Salvador Dalí in the Pichot family's garden in Figueres, *c.* 1909



Musical Rhinoceros Shoes. The title of this 1957 prediction could easily be the name of a Surrealist object. The references implied in this creation seem to also pay tribute to various episodes in which Dalí had already combined art and fashion. Women's shoes were among the first symbolic elements of his Surrealist painting and became the axis of his assemblage *Object Functioning Symbolically* [OE 1], created in 1931. Furthermore, the crossed hands that decorate the shoe's instep are reminiscent of the belt on one of the figures in *Woman with Head of Roses* from 1935 [P411] and, in turn, can be linked with a Schiaparelli belt.[1] Nevertheless, when he spoke of the 'new look' and the 'new sound' of these futuristic shoes, it is highly likely he was also paying tribute to the *New Look* of Christian Dior's 1947 haute couture collection, with wide skirts, corseted bodies and wasp waists.

But fashion was inherent to Dalí from the very beginning. First of all, it was a family mandate, since dressing up and getting dressed was much more than a quotidian act at the home of the Dalí-Domènech family. Fashion became a language in the family's public sphere, beyond any situation or context, as can be seen in their portraits both in society and in the private realm.[2] He himself recalled the impact his way of dressing caused at primary school: 'I alone wore a sailor suit with insignia embroidered in thick gold on the sleeves and stars on my cap, I alone had hair that was combed a thousand times and that smelt good of a perfume that must have seemed so troubling to the other children who would take turns coming up to me to get a better sniff of my privileged head. I was the only one, moreover, who wore well-shined shoes with silver buttons [...]. For that matter my schoolmates, too, considered me so much apart that they would only come near me with some misgivings in order to admire at close range a lace handkerchief that bloomed from my pocket, or my slender and flexible new bamboo cane adorned with a silver dog's head by way of a handle'.[3] Fortunately, some photographs from the period show him dressed this way. Otherwise, those lines could have been confused with an evocation of Dalí as an adult, or with all the false memories in his *Secret Life*. Meanwhile, we already see his early childhood attention for detail and adoption of a precise vocabulary borrowed from the world of fashion, suits and tailoring. His sister Anna Maria recalled how he would refer to his grandmother Anna as someone 'neat as a spool of black silk thread'.[4] He would use this delicate, concise vocabulary on other occasions, for example in his 1954 text 'Exhibitionism', in which he astonishingly describes his outfit using the third person: 'He will not wear a hat, but he will wear a marine blue tie without any design, a tie pin, old enough, representing the bilious face of a cardinal cut in a moon-stone, bonnet and collar in rubies, coat very worn, silk socks, one black, the other grey, a cane of evergreen with a head of Faberger, a piece of worn and bloody residue in the buttonhole of the overcoat will show that Dalí is just finishing to the last vegetal sighs the remains of a red eyelet which he has carried for five days'.[5]

1. It is an evening belt from the 1934 fall collection. See: https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/155919.
2. These photographs have been published on various occasions. See: Montse Aguer and Fèlix Fanés, *Salvador Dalí. Àlbum de família*, Fundació Gala-Salvador Dalí, Fundació "la Caixa", Figueres, Barcelona, 1998; Mariona Seguranyes, *Els Dalí de Figueres. La família, l'Empordà i l'art*, Ajuntament de Figueres, Museu de l'Empordà, Figueres, 2018.
3. Salvador Dalí, *The Secret Life of Salvador Dalí*, Dial Press, New York, 1942, p. 37.
4. Anna Maria Dalí, Mariona Seguranyes, *Salvador Dalí vist per la seva germana*, Viena Edicions, Barcelona, 2012, p. 73.
5. Salvador Dalí, 'Exhibitionism', *Dalí News*, vol. 1, no. 1, New York, 20/11/1945.



Salvador Dalí, *She Was a Surrealist Woman – She Was Like A Figure in a Dream*, 1936, photograph by Worsinger Photo

It is clear Dalí learned to maintain a distinct presence from an early age. For one reason or another, or perhaps for many reasons simultaneously, he soon turned that family legacy into a personal constant – a constant that he transformed at every step, in every stage of his life, and on every occasion into an expression of his unique personality. It was a process that recalled a profound, silent metamorphosis that reached its moment of emergence when wings were ready to unfold, like a chrysalis. Dalí sensed, in the way he presented himself to the world, the potential of an entire life and an entire oeuvre. During the 1920s, he revealed a noteworthy capacity for combining many different outfits at once. In his studio in Figueres, he was just as likely to pose in front of the camera dressed as Nefertiti as in a shirt and tie. With Federico García Lorca, he was photographed in formal wear fit for a dandy during his stays in Madrid and Barcelona, and in knit jumpers and wide trousers during his summer stints in Cadaqués. When Gala entered his life in 1929, that relentless transformation became something they shared. The first photos of the couple in Portlligat and Paris in the early thirties are a constant contrast of styles, shifting between the abrupt simplicity and free-spiritedness of Cap de Creus and the chic of the French capital. Dalí and Gala took fashion to new limits, and together they conceived a strategy of self-representation in which the clothes they wore were highly relevant.[6] This became even more evident when they both posed for some of the most celebrated fashion photographers of the period, such as Man Ray, Cecil Beaton, George Hoyningen-Huene and Horst P. Horst.[7]

Dalí not only used fashion; he also created it and set trends – not in the same way as the great twentieth-century designers, but with a broad, cross-disciplinary gaze that led to extraordinary alliances. It is no coincidence that, from his first collaboration with Elsa Schiaparelli for her 1936–1937 winter haute couture collection, dresses and jackets with drawer-pockets emerged. Like a good Pygmalion, Dalí did something quite similar to giving life to a sculpture, transforming his *Venus de Milo with Drawers* [OE24] into a sublime outfit. With that work, art became fashion – immortalised by Cecil Beaton and published in *Vogue* in September 1936.[8] And the top fashion magazines did not merely publish images of Dalí's creations; they also asked him to illustrate covers, articles and advertisements directly related to fashion.[9] Between 1935 and 1937 he began to collaborate with *Harper's Bazaar* and *Vogue*, and with the latter he established a more extensive commitment that lasted through the fifties and even beyond, since in 1971 he designed the magazine's fiftieth-anniversary issue, titled *Vogué*.

Although it is possible to identify some previous incursions, 1936 marked the beginning of Dalí's great adventure in the world of fashion. It was also when his portrait, taken by Man Ray, appeared on the cover of *Time* magazine,[10] a recognition afforded very few artists at the time – Picasso was featured on it in February 1939. It was a high point, in which Dalí embraced transatlantic fame and established a new centre of gravity in his life in New York City. During the last months of 1936, he took part in the exhibition 'Fantastic Art, Dada, Surrealism' at MoMA and held a monographic exhibition at the Julien Levy Gallery.[11] Before the year ended, he also designed a window display on New York's Fifth Avenue: 'By way of demonstration, I accepted an offer to dress one of the windows of Bonwit-Teller's shop with a surrealist display. I used a manikin whose head was made of red roses and who had fingernails of ermine fur. On a table, a telephone transformed into a lobster; hanging on a chair, my famous "aphrodisiac coat" consisting of a black dinner jacket to which were attached one beside another, so as to entirely cover it, eighty-eight liqueur glasses filled to the edge with green *créme de menthe*, with a dead fly and a cocktail straw in each glass'.[12] Dalí not only evoked his famous *Telephone Transformed into a Lobster* [OE30] and *The Aphrodisiac Jacket* [OE31] – one of his most recent Surrealist objects at the time, in which fashion revealed itself in the form of a tuxedo jacket – but also he produced the mannequin with a head of flowers, one of the most peculiar iconographies in his paintings from 1935–1936. Later, he himself identified these creations as the 'characters of the grouping'.[13] Experiment, Surrealist display, and grouping are terms through which he developed a new way of understanding department store window display using language and artistic practices. This creation, therefore, cannot be considered separate from art; quite the opposite, it was one of the first spaces in which a pioneering Dalí pursued art through fashion and dissolved the boundaries between those two universes.

The New York department store window marked a departure from the spirit of the window displays Dalí had created in Paris in the early 1930s for some exhibitions.[14] In New York, his creations were no longer exhibited just as works of art, but as artistic evocations in commercial circuits. What is more, this occurred at a time when it was not yet common for artists to explore this creative threshold. In a way, Dalí was anticipating the window displays that Jean Tinguely would create in Basel in the forties, and also those that such varied artists as Robert Rauschenberg, Jasper Johns, Susan Weil, Sari Dienes and Andy Warhol would create for Bonwit Teller in the fifties and sixties.[15]

During the second half of the thirties, Dalí's influence expanded towards sectors located outside the confines of art, and those of Surrealism. As Krzysztof Fijalkowski explains, the Surrealist group was ambivalent toward fashion.[16] Although the Paris group forged connections with some designers of the period – for example, with Paul Poiret and Jacques Doucet – and used symbols related to fashion in some of their publications and writings, it is not clear they considered that world a space of creative interest. As such, it seems significant that, beyond his first collaboration with Schiaparelli,

Like a good Pygmalion, Dalí did something quite similar to giving life to a sculpture, transforming his *Venus de Milo with Drawers* into a sublime outfit. With that work, art became fashion – immortalised by Cecil Beaton and published in *Vogue* in September 1936. Moreover, the top fashion magazines did not merely publish images of Dalí's creations; they also asked him to illustrate covers, articles and advertisements directly related to fashion.

6. Bea Crespo and Lucia Moni, 'Soft Self-Portrait of Gala and Salvador Dalí: Fashion as a Strategy of Self-Representation'. In *Dalí and Fashion*, Skira, Milan, 2026, pp. 45–61.
7. For the photographs of Gala and Dalí by Horst P. Horst, see: https://horst.salvador-dali.org.
8. 'Disciples of Dalí', *Vogue*, vol. 88, no. 6, New York, 15/09/1936, p. 70.
9. *Salvador Dalí i les revistes*, Fundació Gala-Salvador Dalí, Fundació "la Caixa", Figueres, Barcelona, 2009.
10. *Time*, vol. 28, no. 24, New York, 14/12/1936.
11. *Souvenir - Catalogue*, Julien Levy Gallery, [1936–1937].
12. Salvador Dalí, *The Secret Life of Salvador Dalí*, *op. cit.*, p. 344.
13. Salvador Dalí, André Parinaud, *The Unspeakable Confessions of Salvador Dalí*, William Morrow and Company, New York, 1976, p. 183.
14. Compare it, for example, with the window display created in 1934 for the exhibition 'Salvador Dali 42 eaux-fortes et 30 dessins pour Les Chants de Maldoror' at the Librairie Les Quatre Chemins.
15. Adrian Dannatt, 'Reflections on the Store Window'. In *A Fresh Window. The Art of Display & Display of Art*, Museum Tinguely, Basel, 2024, pp. 7–25.
16. Krzysztof Fijalkowski, 'Fashion in the Formative Years of Parisian Surrealism: the Dress of Time, the Dress of Space'. In *Journal of Surrealism and the Americas*, vol. 12, no. 1, 2021, pp. 6–32. See the article by the same author on pages 16–21.



André Caillet, Gala wearing Elsa Schiaparelli's *Shoe Hat* inspired by a Salvador Dalí design, 1938

Dalí was exploring fashion alone in a moment when his relationship with Breton's group had already begun to deteriorate after the 1934 'trial'. And perhaps it is not too bold to see the Bonwit Teller window displays as a reaction against Breton's orthodoxy. The title of the window display – because, in fact, Dalí titled it as if it were an artwork – might offer a clue: *She Was a Surrealist Woman – She Was Like a Figure in a Dream* [OE28]. For Dalí, fashion had to be Surrealist or not be at all.

Beyond such conjecture, we know that from 1936 onwards, Dalí constantly sought out collaborations with the top names in fashion. His intense relationship with Schiaparelli continued to bring about memorable creations,[17] such as the *Lobster Dress* from the 1937 summer haute couture collection, in which Cecil Beaton photographed Wallis Simpson before her wedding to the Duke of Windsor, formerly King Edward VIII of the United Kingdom. Or the *Skeleton Dress* and the *Tears Dress* from the *Le Cirque* collection of spring 1938. And, of course, the *Shoe Hat* from the 1937–1938 winter haute couture collection, a piece that reveals the striking pairing of art and fashion with a common symbolic object: a woman's shoe. André Caillet's 1938 photographs frame the fabulous *tête-a-tête* between Gala and the *Retrospective Bust of a Woman* [OE33] – a Surrealist object created by Dalí in 1933 – both wearing the hat. What Dalí's Surrealist object contributed to fashion is immediately comprehended on seeing these images.

That collaboration with Schiaparelli did not prevent Dalí from establishing a close relationship with Gabrielle Chanel; both women were top figures and rivals in French fashion of the period between the wars. It is likely that, during the months in 1938 when Dalí was staying at La Pausa, Gabrielle's house/refuge on the Côte d'Azur, they began to discuss ideas about the costumes for the ballet *Bacchanale*, a total creation by Dalí for the Ballets Russes de Monte-Carlo.[18] Snapshots by George Hoyningen-Huene immortalised Chanel working on some of those pieces.[19]

Dalí, however, knew no limits and also took an interest in jewellery. His first jewellery designs date from 1941, created in collaboration with Fulco di Verdura, a jeweller originally from Italy and a friend of Gabrielle Chanel.[20] That was the prelude to his collaboration with the jewellers Alemany & Ertman in the late forties, which resulted in the large collection of jewellery pieces that now form part of the Dalí Theatre-Museum in Figueres.[21] Some were directly inspired by fashion, such as the magnificent *Corset Ring*, a piece made of gold, diamonds and pearls, created in 1949.

Dalí's first big foray into the world of fashion occurred in the second half of the thirties, at a moment when his creative and personal centre of gravity was gradually shifting from Europe to the United States, where he lived from 1940 to 1948. Who knows, perhaps that new skin he describes in the final pages of his *Secret Life*, often interpreted as a sign of rebirth and the start of a new phase, could also be a metaphor for a new way of confronting art from a broader ambit, expanded to include fashion?[22] For what is fashion, if not a second skin?

Whatever the case, in the United States, Dalí glimpsed new horizons in many varied realms and began to design products for mass consumption.[23] These included fabrics for dresses and scarves, neckties and perfumes. He also designed textiles for home furnishings such as rugs and curtains. At the same time, he intensified his link to commercial art by creating advertising campaigns. Particularly notable are the ads he created for Bryans Hosiery stockings between 1944 and 1948, which were published in *Vogue* and other magazines of the period. However, one of his most noteworthy collaborations was with Wesley Simpson, a well-known textile empresario for whom Dalí designed different dress fabrics. Some creations incorporated motifs inspired by the iconography of his Surrealist period: women with flower heads, brick walls, rocks decorated with eyes, keys, ants and birds, among others. These fabrics were chosen by renowned designers such as Adrian, one of the most celebrated in the Hollywood scene of the thirties and forties.

But while Dalí was reading and interpreting the needs of his new American mass audience, he remained in contact with the big names in European fashion and haute couture. In 1951 he created, with Christian Dior, in collaboration with Pierre Cardin and with Gala as intermediary, the costumes for their group at the Beistegui Ball, held at the Palazzo Labia in Venice.[24] And the Egyptian-born designer Jean Dessès created, circa 1960, a cocktail ensemble patterned after a lithograph by Dalí from the series 'Pages choisies de Don Quichotte de la Manche'.

During the sixties, Dalí's involvement in the world of fashion expanded into a more performative role. In that direction, his collaboration with Paco Rabanne was highly significant, reflecting the search for new spaces in which performance art and fashion promotion gave way to new creative languages. Between 1966 and 1969, he organised a series of performances in Portlligat, Barcelona and Paris with some famous models, including the American supermodel Donyale Luna and the Europeans Elsa Peretti and Amanda Lear, in Rabanne's new *Unwearable Dresses*.[25] These were dresses made of rhodoid disks linked by metal rings, his first collection-manifesto, in 1966. That was not the only time, however, that Dalí featured the most daring designs of the period. In 1965 he had used the famous *Eskimo* glasses by French designer André Courrèges to

17. One of the most recent examinations of the collaboration between Dalí and Schiaparelli can be seen in the catalogue of the exhibition at London's V&A South Kensington: *Schiaparelli: Fashion Becomes Art*, Victoria and Albert Museum, London, 2026.

18. The start of the Second World War meant that this ballet could not premiere in Europe, as planned, and ended up debuting at the New York Metropolitan Opera House on 9 November 1939. That led to the costumes having to be improvised and they were finally created by Barbara Karinska, a collaborator with the Ballets Russes. See: Simon Brandes, *Salvador Dalí und das Theater*, Michael Imhof Verlag, Petersberg, 2012, pp. 161–176; Montse Aguer and Laura Bartolomé, 'Salvador Dalí à La Pausa : les jours ultimes de bonheur en Europe'. *In La Pausa. La villa méditerranéenne idéale de Gabrielle Chanel*, Flammarion, Paris, 2025, pp. 291–322.

19. 'Chanel dresses Dalí's new Ballet', *Harper's Bazaar*, year 72, no. 2729, New York, October 1939, pp. 94–95.

20. These jewellery pieces were featured that same year in *Vogue*, 15/07/1941, pp. 32–33.

21. *Dalí Jewels*, Fundació Gala-Salvador Dalí, Figueres, 2011.

22. Salvador Dalí, *The Secret Life of Salvador Dalí*, *op. cit.*, pp. 396–398.

23. For an overall description, see: *Dalí. Mass culture*, Fundació "la Caixa", Fundació Gala-Salvador Dalí, Barcelona, Figueres, 2004.

24. Bea Crespo, 'The Ball of the Century'. In *Gala, Dalí, Dior: Of Art and Fashion*, Fundació Gala-Salvador Dalí, Figueres, 2020, pp. 56–60.

25. Marketa Uhlirova, 'Eccentric and Concentric: Dalí's Fashionable Dalliances with the Moving Image in the 1960s'. In *Dalí and Fashion*, Skira, Milan, 2026, pp. 135–143.

present his swimming costume designs produced by the Wisconsin-based manufacturer Jack A. Winter.[26] Dalí's role in these performative spaces was not a passive one; quite the opposite, he took part and became a protagonist while, at the same time, exploring action painting. All this took place before the constant gaze of cameras and television crews, to the point that, in 1968, Portlligat was transformed into a set for a photographic feature on Spanish fashion published in *The Daily Telegraph*.[27] The models, dressed in creations by Manuel Pertegaz, Pedro Rodríguez, Carmen Mir, Elio Berhanyer, Pedro Rovira and Paco Rabanne, were photographed by the French photographer Jean Clemmer in the most singular spaces of Dalí's home. But that wasn't all: the images published were in fact Clemmer's photographs with interventions by Dalí.

With less intensity, but with the same genuine curiosity, Dalí continued to work with other fashion designers in the seventies. One significant example is his collaboration with the Chinese-born, U.S.-based designer Kaisik Wong on a performative action at the Dalí Theatre-Museum in Figueres in 1974. This is a museum where fashion is still present today, since Dalí converted one of Paco Rabanne's *Unwearable Dresses* into a permanent installation in one of the windows of the first-floor hallway.

Dalí's creative work in the expanded field of fashion is an integral and inextricable part of his artistic practice. What is most surprising, however, is discovering the extent to which his contributions were absolutely innovative. His capacity to imagine what did not yet exist gave him – like other great visionaries throughout history – an indisputable leadership role in the alliance between art and fashion within a new creative space that he himself began to shape, a leadership that still today continues to inspire the creative directors of our century. The latest collections by Daniel Roseberry for Schiaparelli and by Julien Dossena for Rabanne attest to the continued relevance of the connections established by Dalí from the 1930s onwards, and stand as living testimony to the timelessness of his legacy.

His first jewellery designs date from 1941, created in collaboration with Fulco di Verdura, a jeweller originally from Italy and a friend of Gabrielle Chanel. That was the prelude to his collaboration with the jewellers Alemany & Ertman in the late forties, which resulted in the large collection of jewellery pieces that now form part of the Dalí Theatre-Museum in Figueres. Some were directly inspired by fashion, such as the magnificent *Corset Ring*, a piece made of gold, diamonds and pearls, created in 1949.

Oriol Maspons and Julio Ubiña, Elsa Peretti and Natasha Gounkevitx wearing Paco Rabanne's *Unwearable Dresses* in Portlligat, 1966



26. The presentation of these bathing costumes can be seen on the NO-DO news reel 'Las nuevas fantasías del pintor de Cadaqués ', NOT N 1171 C, 14/06/1965, Filmoteca Española.

27. 'Dalí's Brush with Fashion', *The Daily Telegraph*, no. 205, London, 06/09/1968, pp. 20–29.

Surrealist Modes

Krzysztof Fijalkowski

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The time and place of Surrealism's first era, from soon after the First World War to the late 1930s, coincides with the rise of the modern fashion world we know today, with Paris as its centre. Yet the two emerging currents of fashion modernity and Surrealism were already in dialogue before the movement even had a name. Professional networks, representations in texts and images, and, on a personal level, the clothes worn by Surrealists wove a close relationship between haute couture and art.

Man Ray, Salvador Dalí upside down in Portlligat, 1933



Testing the hidden possibilities of the mind and material existence, challenging conventions of knowledge, logic and reason, Surrealism seeks a more profound relationship between humanity and the world. Texts, artworks, films, documents, events, encounters… and clothes? Ever since the 1930s, the relationship between Surrealism and fashion has been a subject of fascination. For designers, the movement provides inspiration and drama; for commentators, curators and the public, the connection testifies that Surrealism's relevance to culture and society is far greater than the narrow realms of art and literature.[1]

From within the Surrealist movement, however, this encounter looks more ambivalent. In the second half of the 1930s, media publicity from highly successful exhibitions propelled Surrealism onto an international stage, challenging the radical activist commitments that were already a source of tension for Surrealists in Paris struggling to counter fascism. These priorities invariably evaporated when the mass media and popular imagination focused solely on innovations in the visual arts – sidelining ethics for style at just the worst moment. Disdaining this frivolity, Louis Aragon's 1928 polemic *Treatise on Style* read it as a vampiric recuperation: 'These ideas little by little become axiomatic, or thematic, quite different from their original intent. They become idiocies. Fashion then takes possession of them. Tyrannically'.[2] Wary of the 'fashionable', its compromises and commercial interests, Surrealist participants nevertheless repeatedly risked stepping over this threshold. To cite just the most obvious example, the enduring appeal of Paris-based Italian fashion designer Elsa Schiaparelli, the subject of several museum exhibitions in recent years, stems in large part from her 1930s collaborations with Surrealist artists such as Alberto Giacometti, Méret Oppenheim and, of course, most famously, Salvador Dalí. We could read this activity as, at best, a chance for young artists to seek much needed earnings, or, at worst, recuperation by an industry flaunting the seductions and inequalities of modern capitalism. But if we remind ourselves that the French and Spanish words *mode / moda* do not just designate 'fashion', but mean first of all (to quote the Larousse online dictionary) 'a manner of living, of behaving, particular to a period', we alight on a set of concepts that are central to the promise of Surrealism's liberations: time, ethics, life.

The time and place of Surrealism's first era, from soon after the First World War to the late 1930s, coincides with the rise of the modern fashion world we know today, with Paris as its centre.[3] But that the two emerging currents of fashion modernity and Surrealism were already in dialogue before the movement even found its name becomes clearer once we notice their repeated exchanges throughout the 1920s.[4] In this decade, fashion is embedded in Surrealism's history and prehistory at three levels: professional networks, representations in texts or images, and, at a personal level, the clothes that Surrealists wore.

Some of these interactions are well known. Soon after his arrival in Paris in 1921, Man Ray began working for leading designer Paul Poiret, a moderniser of French couture who was seeking a visual language to promote this trend. In later life Man Ray tended to play down his commercial practice, but this is to miss his

1. Projects on this theme include the V&A exhibitions and catalogues *Fashion and Surrealism* (1988), *Surreal Things: Surrealism and Design* (2007), *Frida Kahlo: Making Her Self Up* (2018), and the Vitra Design Museum's *Objects of Desire: Surrealism and Design 1924–Today* (2019).

2. Louis Aragon, *Treatise on Style*, University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln, 1991, p. 33.

3. While the history of Surrealism is often charted from André Breton's first *Manifesto of Surrealism* of 1924, the earliest properly Surrealist works predate this by several years. On Paris as a centre for fashion in this period, see Valerie Steele, *Paris Fashion: A Cultural History*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1988, chapter 12.

4. I have explored this theme in more detail in my essay 'Fashion in the Formative Years of Parisian Surrealism: The Dress of Time, the Dress of Space' *Journal of Surrealism and the Americas*, vol. 12, no. 1, 2021, pp. 6–32.

Soon after his arrival in Paris in 1921, Man Ray began working for the leading designer Paul Poiret, a moderniser of French couture who was seeking a visual language to promote this trend. In later life Man Ray tended to play down his commercial practice, but this overlooks his influential role as a fashion photographer, and the fact that his other 'serious' work was also being published for fashion-magazine audiences.

The movement also benefited from connections to the influential fashion designer and art patron Jacques Doucet, for whom André Breton and Louis Aragon, founders of Surrealism, worked as personal advisers on his art and literature collection. This arrangement helped launch the movement, since Breton's salary meant he could afford to pursue his creative ambitions (and marry his wife, Simone), while Doucet also supported emerging Surrealist painters and bankrolled the group's journal *Littérature*.

influential role as a fashion photographer, and the fact that his other 'serious' work was also being published for fashion magazine audiences.[5] However much Man Ray wished to keep the two domains apart, the lines – are these photographs by a Surrealist or Surrealist photographs? – keep blurring, as for instance when one of his images commissioned by *Vogue* turned up on the front cover of the Surrealist journal *La Révolution surréaliste* (in the next decade, these fertile exchanges would also mark the career of his one-time collaborator and former fashion model Lee Miller). A link from Surrealism to Poiret is already telling; more covert but just as impactful, the movement also benefitted from connections to the influential fashion designer and art patron Jacques Doucet, for whom André Breton and Louis Aragon, founders of Surrealism, worked as personal advisers for his art and literature collection.[6] The arrangement helped launch the movement, since Breton's salary meant he could afford to pursue his creative ambitions (and marry his wife Simone), while Doucet also supported emerging Surrealist painters and bankrolled the group's journal *Littérature*.[7]

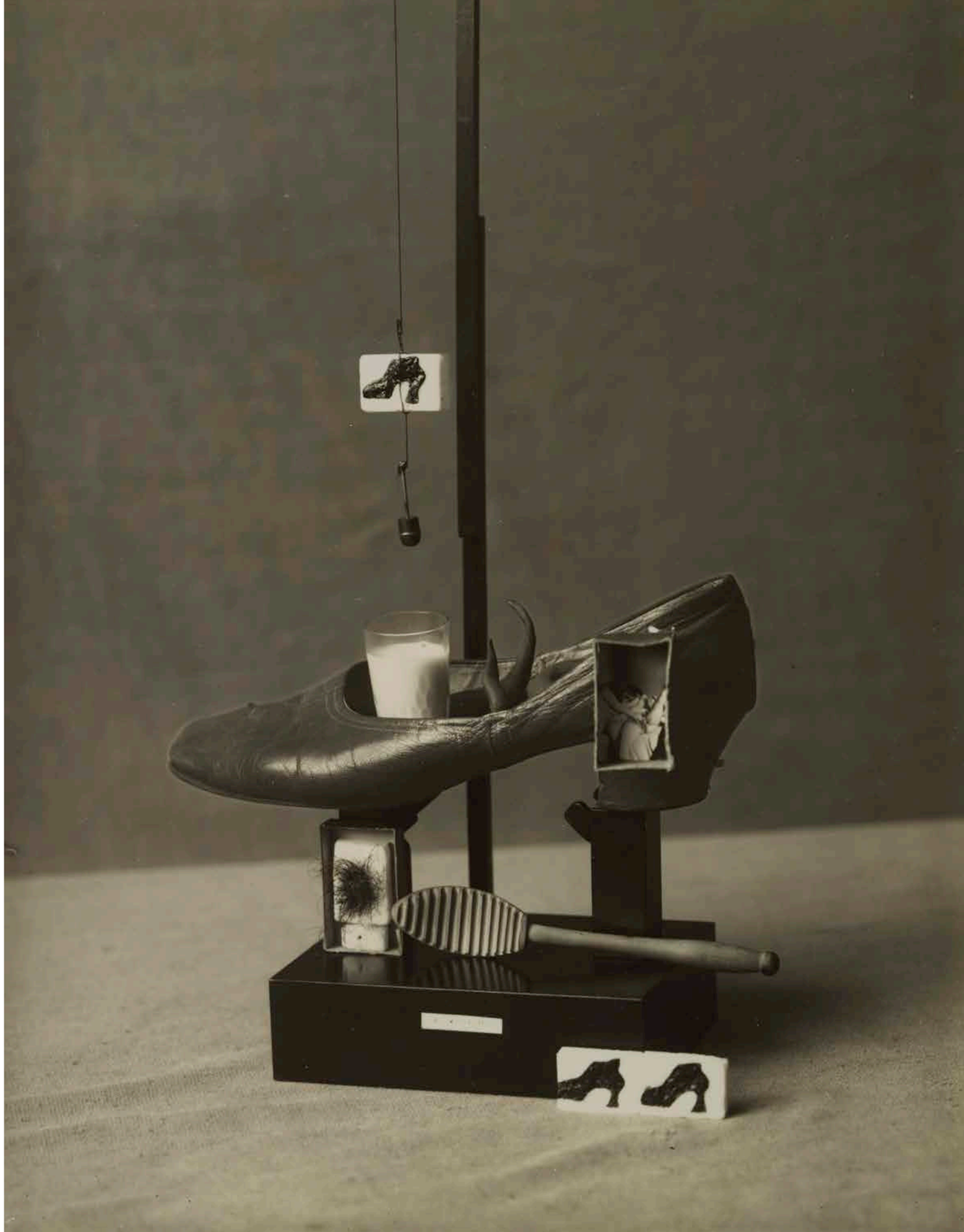
Such relationships look less coincidental when we notice fashion as a recurring motif in Surrealist works of this era, and how subtly attuned Surrealists were to the changes in style that were transforming French fashion from top to bottom. Aragon's *Paris Peasant* (1926) includes a documentary account of the Passage de l'Opéra, an arcade in the district that was also the centre of the Paris fashion industry. In intricate detail the book describes its dusty, old-fashioned haberdashery and clothing boutiques in Aragon's quest for the city's 'modern mythology'.[8] We find equally precise references to garments, accessories and trends in the poems and texts of Surrealist authors such as René Crevel or Robert Desnos. Around 1922 Breton had contemplated writing a novel titled *The Year of Red Hats* (spurred by a moment when the style was in season), while his autobiographical book *Nadja* (1928) is studded with observations of its namesake's dress choices and the recurring items, such as gloves, in the uncanny, revealing encounters this troubled young woman (Léona Delcourt) has the power to trigger.

Given these factors, it is no surprise that many in the Paris-based Surrealist group should also be alert to their own fashion choices. Memoirs, letters and photographic documents are evidence of what Surrealists were wearing, in a period when few of them could afford extravagance. Among the male participants, in the overwhelming majority in the group at this time, options ran from the casual scruffiness of the poet Benjamin Péret to the dapper out-of-town garb of the painter Joan Miró, or dandies like Jacques Rigaut or Aragon (owner of suitcase-loads of ties and cravats).[9] Evidence for the early group's female participants shows Simone Breton, Mick Soupault and especially Gala Éluard (future Gala Dalí) dressed with elegance and an eye on the latest styles, even given their limited circumstances, which meant clothes usually came from dressmakers rather than couture houses. It turns out that Breton, always portrayed as an austere, rigid personality, liked his suits green; how does this character sketch stand up to Germaine Everling's description of a road trip in 1922 for which he donned a squirrel-fur cloak (borrowed from Doucet) and a leather flying helmet, clutching a stuffed armadillo?[10]

This dynamic accelerates in the 1930s, above all thanks to the great expansion in Surrealism's so-far mostly male circles, including recruits with strong fashion interests. In earlier years Claude Cahun had written a regular fashion column (as had the artist Valentine Hugo) and, from the late 1920s, created texts, photographs and collages merging art, identity and performance. Méret Oppenheim's playful designs for jewellery and accessories connected closely with her work as an artist, while a little further away from the main group, Leonor Fini's self-fashioning and use of costume and masks explored the interactions between creativity and persona.[11] Abroad, Surrealist artists such as Toyen, Eileen Agar and Greta Knutson all forged connections to fashion contexts in their work and everyday lives. And into this environment, from soon after his entry into the Surrealist group in Paris in 1929, came the magnetic energy of Dalí, whose personal flair soon boosted the movement's public profile. Dalí's particular attention to the relevance of fashion, steered no doubt by the extensive knowledge of his lover Gala since the days of her marriage to the poet Paul Éluard, would both help promote this highly visible theme in Surrealist activity and forge direct collaborative links to the fashion industry.[12]

From the outset, Dalí's interest in fashion encompassed themes connecting it to Surrealism's concerns: the body, gender and identity, pushing the limits of what was permissible and gathered around the artist's complex enquiry into sexuality. Previous generations of Surrealist artists, notably Giorgio de Chirico with his anonymous mannequins (a theme revisited in the 1938 International Surrealist Exhibition), or Max Ernst, whose collage novels turned characters from nineteenth-century book illustrations into hybrid, perverse figures, had challenged the image of the body with physical and psychic deformations. Published in 1930, Cahun's autobiographical text *Cancelled Confessions* was interspersed with collages made with their lover Marcel Moore, using fragmented photographs of Cahun's re-staged identities, with dizzying variations of the self and human form. Photographers aligned with Surrealism in the 1930s, such as Man Ray, Dora Maar or Jacques-André Boiffard, displayed the body as melting, uncanny or grotesque. For Dalí in particular, the works of this decade offered a troubling confusion between clothes and the body: hair fused into garments (*Gradiva Rediscovers the Anthropomorphic Ruins (Retrospective Fantasy)*, *c.* 1931–1932, [P281]), costumes made from the landscapes of their wearer's reveries (*Portrait of Paul Éluard*, 1929, [P233]), or skin stretched into swathes of fabric (*Daddy Longlegs of the Evening – Hope!*,[13] 1940, [P493]). Dalí's

5. Man Ray, *Self Portrait*, Bloomsbury, London, 1988, pp. 100–115; Claude Miglietti *et al.*, *Man Ray et la Mode*, Réunion des musées nationaux, Paris, 2019.
6. André Breton, *Lettres à Jacques Doucet*, Gallimard, Paris, 2016; he library Breton and Aragon helped establish continues to be a leading research archive for the French avant-garde.
7. André Breton, *op. cit.*, pp. 11, 14, 26 and 96.
8. Louis Aragon, *Le Paysan de Paris*, Gallimard, Paris, 1926.
9. Krzysztof Fijalkowski, *op. cit.*, pp. 17–24.
10. Germaine Everling, *L'Anneau de Saturne*, Fayard, Paris, 1970, p. 161.
11. Andrea Kollnitz, *Becoming Leonor Fini: Theatrical Self-Performances between Art and Life*, Bloomsbury, London, 2025.
12. On Gala and fashion, see the multiple references in Paul Éluard, *Lettres à Gala 1924–1948*, Gallimard, Paris, 1984.
13. Editor's note: The full title of this work is *Daddy Longlegs of the Evening - Hope! (including: soft aeroplane vomited by a cannon, ants, victory born of a broken wing, violoncello in white mastic and an angel who weeps).*



Salvador Dalí, *Object Functioning Symbolically*, 1931

morphologies of male and female bodies drew them into malleable forms with wildly exaggerated features, slippery psychic personages from dreams.

The Paris fashion world of the late 1920s and early 1930s, meanwhile, was hardly as daring or provocative, but women's silhouettes and styles had also been questioning the possibilities of the body and identity, from the sporting or garçonne look of the années folles, with its 'masculine' vocabulary, bobbed hair and slender lines, to the return of a more 'feminine' look in the 1930s – curves, exaggerated shoulders, extravagant hats and dramatic poses.[14] It seems likely, as Valerie Steele argues, that the rise of women designers such as Chanel, Schiaparelli, Madeleine Vionnet or Jeanne Lanvin brought both bold innovations to this era and a personal knowledge of the needs and wishes of their female clients.[15]

As is clear from the heightened eroticism of Surrealist writings and images in the 1930s, what was driving this evasion and contortion of the body was its expanded perceptions of beauty, enigma and desire. Breton's book *Mad Love* (1937) pursues the fleeting signals and encounters of a world criss-crossed with threads of longing, crystallised into the aesthetics of a 'convulsive beauty' made from the convergence of impossible oppositions: 'veiled-erotic, fixed-explosive, magic-circumstantial'.[16] Decoding the fateful meeting with his future wife Jacqueline Lamba, these shifts were read in the tiniest of signals: 'Because you are unique, for me you cannot fail to always be an other, another you. Through the diversity of those inconceivable flowers over there, it is you ever-changing whom I love in a red blouse, naked, in a grey blouse'.[17] Obsessed by change and surprise, by a modernity of quotations, costume and seduction, the Paris fashion industry of the 1930s also seemed driven by a search for profane love, tilting its models towards a perverse availability: witness Man Ray's photograph in the Surrealist-aligned journal *Minotaure* of Sonia Colmer wearing a shimmering evening gown by Madeleine Vionnet, a character from a fairy tale reclining not on a chaise longue but a luxuriously padded wheelbarrow by Óscar Domínguez.[18] *Minotaure* had already published Tristan Tzara's essay 'On a Certain Automatism of Taste', illustrated by Man Ray's photographs of Schiaparelli's latest hats, exploring the 'automatic' yet deliberate way consumers express and flaunt unconscious symbolism in that 'marvellous world of the most repressed sexual representations in the human psychic structure […] tied to a strange law of obsolescence and opposition, of continual mobility, verified by acceptance or rejected by the masses and called fashion'.[19]

With Dalí, for whom an anxious, mobile sexuality powers the artworks of this decade, what seems at stake is the transformation of daily materiality – particularly the charged signals of fashion – by a hypersensitised subjectivity. This is especially in focus in the crossovers staged in Dalí's experiments with the Surrealist object from 1931 onwards, an enquiry specifically framed as a non-artistic activity and thus available as a bridge to other contexts such as design. His collaborative game of *Symbolically Functioning Objects* (1931) asked participants to assemble combinations of found objects for interpretation, just as an analyst could seek the latent content of a patient's dream.[20] That for Dalí the hidden motivations were invariably sexual in nature is no surprise, but what's noticeable is how many fashion-related items were drawn into play: a pair of gloves (Hugo); make-up accessories (Gala); and, for Dalí's own assemblage, a woman's bright red shoe, mounted on a scaffold enabling sugar lumps with pictures of more shoes to be dipped into a beaker of milk. If the fetish qualities here are blatant, what is equally alluring is the implication that all apparel parades this loaded double meaning. Self-portrait photographs by Dalí at his home in Cadaqués around 1932 show him posing solemnly with a shoe on his head, anticipating his later *Shoe Hat* design for Schiaparelli. Other projects like the 'thinking machine' *The Aphrodisiac Jacket* (1936) [0E25], a shirt and an advert for a brassiere enclosed in a man's smoking jacket studded with glasses of peppermint liqueur, equally suggest the idea of fashion as an array of symbolic objects to be donned so as to spark dormant ideas: a costume for the multiple, unrestrained roles of the self.[21]

'I take no notice of the meaningless moments of my life', Breton had proclaimed in the *Manifesto of Surrealism* (1924).[22] For Dalí, it is fashion that promises an everyday life divested of pointless instants, with its banal temporality and hidden meanings provoked into motion. Certainly, as Dalí and Gala established their networks of Surrealists, patrons and the media, this sense of the transformative potential of fashion is visible in the way they perform their self-image as a power couple. Photographs of them by Brassaï in 1932–1933, at home in casual but impeccable attire (a shirt and tie, a dark and striped sleeveless dress), or by Man Ray in 1936 (heavy fur coat, buttoned-up coat and cloche hat respectively), suggest that, even with slender finances, their attire acted as an exchangeable garb with which to project ideas.[23] Garments measure their external relationships, too, as when Dalí acquired a sequinned cape but sent the bill to his unsuspecting friend and patron, Edward James.[24] And if nothing else, Dalí's own forays into fashion design meant that Gala's wardrobe would never again have to cut corners.[25]

Dalí's celebrated collaboration with Schiaparelli – worldwide the most innovative couturier of this era – was an encounter waiting to happen: not simply because she was already a part of the inner circle of gatekeepers for the spectacular visibility of Surrealism in the late 1930s, or that she had already been experimenting with 'symbolically functioning' motifs in her designs, but above all because, in so doing, her garments called attention to themselves as *fashion*, as a self-consciously performative act in which not only might designing clothes approach the status of art: so might wearing them.[26] Whatever the reservations of many Surrealists about the industry and its clientele, in this respect the relationship cements the wider Surrealist principle that any activity is legitimate – only those activities are legitimate – that prolongs the poetic and psychic interactions between the self and the world. Just as Oppenheim's celebrated Surrealist object *Fur Cup, Saucer and Spoon* of 1936 had its origin in the fur-covered bracelets she had also designed for Schiaparelli, Dalí's collaboration with her fashion house helped to cement and problematise a dialogue between design and art practice to make the onlooker ask: aren't garments, adornments, for both maker and wearer, a creative medium like any other? The intersection of ever-changing styles and the 'modes' of a manner of living and behaving at a particular moment link 1920s and 1930s Surrealism to the shifting modernity of its times as epitomised by fashion, including a relation to history and the future, in the most vivid and immediate way.

14. Valerie Steele, *op. cit.*, chapter 12.
15. *Ibid.*, p. 253 ff.
16. André Breton, *L'Amour fou*, Gallimard, Paris, 1937, p. 26.
17. *Ibid.*, *op. cit.*, p. 119.
18. Claude Miglietti, *Man Ray et la Mode*, *op. cit.*, p. 46.
19. Tristan Tzara, 'D'un certain automatisme du goût', *Minotaure*, no. 3–4, December 1933, pp. 81–84 (esp. p. 82).
20. Salvador Dalí, 'Objets surréalistes', *Le Surréalisme au service de la Révolution*, no. 3–4, December 1931, pp. 16–17.
21. Salvador Dalí, *Retrospective 1920-1980*, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, 1979, p. 31; Salvador Dalí, 'Honneur à l'objet', *Cahiers d'art*, vol. 11, nos. 1–2, 1936.
22. André Breton, *Manifestes du surréalisme*, Gallimard, Paris, 1969, p. 19.
23. For these images and Dalí's investment in his portrait photographs, see William Jeffett, *Dalí Doubled – From Surrealism to the Self: A New Critical View of Dalí*, The Dalí Museum, St Petersburg (Florida), 2010, p. 192.
24. Meryle Secrest, *Elsa Schiaparelli: A Biography*, Penguin, London, 2014, p. 169.
25. On the Dalís' finances in the 1930s, see Salvador Dalí, *The Secret Life of Salvador Dalí*, Vision Press, London, 1968, pp. 292–293. Gala had previously preferred Chanel, but Dalí's work with Schiaparelli meant that she would now wear her clothes instead: Dominique Bona, *Une Vie de Gala*, Flammarion, Paris, 2017, p. 140; Meryle Secrest, *op. cit.*, pp. 144–147.
26. Valerie Steele, *op. cit.*, pp. 245, 248.

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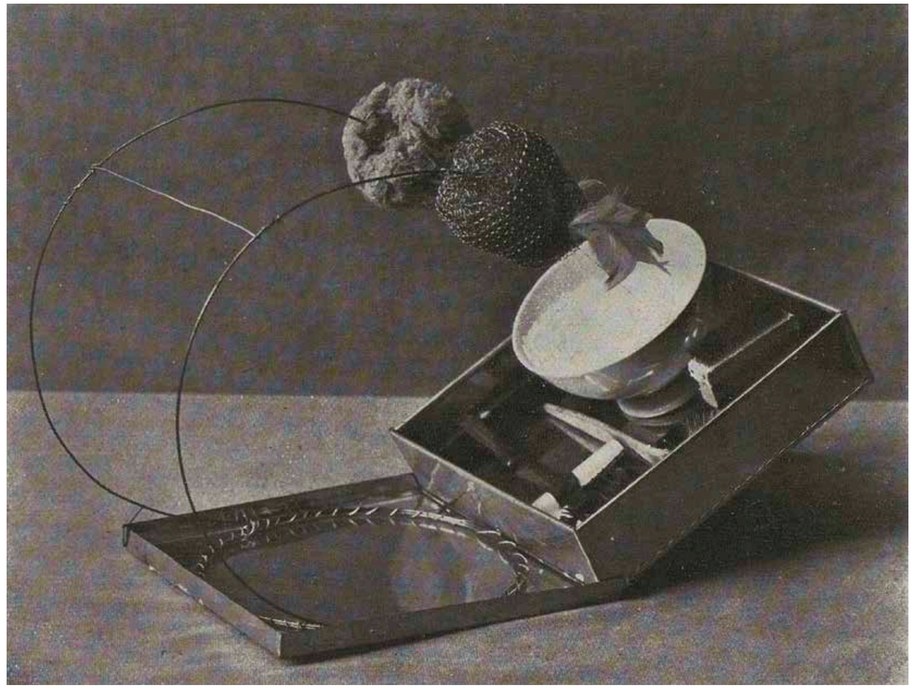
Gala, *Object Functioning Symbolically*, 1931



Man Ray, Model wearing evening gown by Vionnet and Oscar Dominguez Brouette, 1937



The Origin of Self-Representation

Agustín Fernández Mallo

Agustín Fernández Mallo has published twenty-three books in the genres of novel, poetry and non-fiction. His work has been recognised with the European Literature Prize, the English PEN Award and the Eugenio Trías Essay Prize; he was a finalist for the Anagrama Essay Award and won the Cercador Prize for best foreign book published in the United States, and the Biblioteca Breve Prize, among other distinctions. His work is translated into fifteen languages. His most recent publications include *Madre de corazón atómico* (Seix Barral, 2024) and *El ángel de la Inteligencia Artificial* (Galaxia Gutenberg, 2026), his last book.

Adult human beings are nothing more than foetuses who have reached sexual maturity, and it is precisely our *foetalness* that leads us to continuously adapt ourselves to our environment. Also, our identities, which are in constant construction, are articulated according to external response and adjusted by means of tools such as self-image and fashion, through a sensory channel similar to those we open when contemplating a work of art: a 'paranormal' channel derived from the subtraction of one or more of our six senses, like Salvador Dalí's 'negative hallucinations'.

Primates that don't grow up

We'll begin by affirming something that appears strange, but is true: the human adult is, actually, an adult foetus. Yes, you and I, no matter how old we are, are nothing more than human foetuses who have reached sexual maturity.

It was around 1927 when the anatomist Lodewijk Bolk put forth a theory of human primate evolution called *neoteny*, which describes how the development of an organism can slow down to the point that, when it arrives at adulthood, it maintains important aspects of the foetal and childhood stages. This theory – which, it should be noted, seems like it was dreamed up by the mind of an artist – has been studied and endorsed by such prominent palaeontologists as Stephen Jay Gould and evolutionary embryologists like Gavin de Beer.

What Bolk's inquiry sought to resolve was why the human adult seems less like an adult than the highly developed foetus of a non-human primate. Because, for some time, several researchers had been observing something that, because we see it every day, we don't even really notice: that the physiognomy and features of human adults look like those of an adult who has retained the appearance of a foetus. This assertion is supported by numerous studies in the field of comparative anatomy: what in non-human primates is a transitory morphological state that corresponds to gestation and, at most, the first few months of life outside the uterus – their exosomatic life – is in our lives, in the life of humans, prolonged throughout our lives, until our deaths. In other words: a baby monkey's appearance shifts rapidly to take on the features of an adult monkey, while in a human newborn that process takes many years and, in fact, doesn't vary much throughout their lifespan. This theory was put forth by Bolk and recently supported by others such as S. J. Gould: when the internal and physiological characteristics are analysed, we see that the process through which we reach adulthood is never fully completed. Bolk literally says: 'The human is an ape foetus that has become sexually mature', a being whose anatomical evolution has stalled in the physiologically infantile phase of a monkey.

There are no other mammals who grow slower than we do, and not for nothing. In another field of study, anthropologist Desmond Morris wondered why we're constantly seeking happiness, creating an anxiety for states of grace that sometimes keeps us from living in harmony with our material surroundings, and he linked that search for perpetually pleasurable sensations – like feeling protected and loved – with neoteny. Another consequence of neoteny is that our brain has great plasticity and is strikingly adaptable to environments for a much longer time than other species, in which such adaptability ends a few months or years after birth.

We are intelligent because we need each other

In view of this, humans live in that permanent state of childhood or *foetalness*, an evolutionary immaturity that, paradoxically, is what's responsible for our brain being much more flexible than the brains of other species, favouring the superior, complex intelligence that has made us evolve into the dominant species.

Self-observation is never separate from outside observation; hence fashion and how we reveal ourselves to the rest of the world share a fundamental ambivalence about how to define what it means to reveal ourselves to the world: we go along with a trend, a style and, in that moment, we make it a statistical and collective fact; but, on the other hand, we are constantly trying to maintain the irreducibility of an absolute me that we fantasise about, a unique identity that somehow distinguishes itself from the fashionable mass.

So it isn't actually a disadvantage. This explains the notable difference that exists between human societies and those of other primates, the radical and qualitative differences that separate us from them. For example: humans' constant *foetalness* forces us to take care of our newborns for significantly longer than other primates, who abandon their offspring much sooner, and forever. We are always foetuses; because of that we not only need the prolonged care of our progenitors but, when they are no longer alive, we construct our own insertion into large social hubs – large networks of cooperation – for safety. Cities, work communities, groups of friends, even the development of the sciences and the arts and, ultimately, our interest in creating disciplines such as anthropology, are manifestations of this: the construction of a complex structure that we call human community developed outside the individual itself. And this complex *human community* can only be managed through political models, in other words, statistical models: massive data sets and all the other methods that speak to us as the group we are. That use of statistics – and nothing else – is the origin of politics, and because of that politics turns out to be something ontological, uniquely ours.

Following this thread, it then becomes clear that human language, complex language, metaphorical language is a product of this *delay* in our individual evolution; this permanent foetal state we find ourselves in and which defines us must be compensated for by extremely complex social – political, aesthetic – and, with that, linguistic development. The compensation for our physiological evolutionary immaturity is a rare evolutionary complexity that we call *human civilisation*, which, in turn, could only have – because of its inherent delay – invented a tool so powerful and decisive for survival as complex language; in other words, metaphorical language. This perpetual state of immaturity can also explain why the adult human puts its own species in danger to the point of possible destruction or self-destruction, something no other animal species does. Because children lack a clear awareness of the future, they do not have a sense of time, nor, as a result, the true measure of death. Well, we can certainly admit that we 'adult human foetuses' sometimes also struggle to fully assimilate all that. Furthermore, only this endemic immaturity can explain why, since we evolved into *sapiens*, we've aspired to create higher beings, gods, sects and systems of thought in which to pour all our problems so they will be solved for us, even when those systems have ended up holding sway over us. That is also the case of the recent advent of artificial intelligences, which are merely the nth indicator of our ancestral and innate anxiety to be dominated by creations – in this case, of a technological nature – that outpace us, such as in Shelley's magnificent novel, when the monster says to Doctor Frankenstein: 'You are my creator, but I am your master;—obey!'

The origin of self-representation

That said, we can now assert that this perpetual human foetal state and need for caretaking throughout our lives also explains the importance we give to our social presentation, to how our community characterises and classifies us, and to how each of us feels about its judgments and sanctions, which make us modify our individual identity, creating strategies to construct a *self*. Indeed, it is this essential, ontological system of reference that leads to the emergence of phenomena such as self-image, self-representation, the different roles that we take on, and our adoption of certain trends. As such, it is clear that – first of all – the existence of an absolute and perfectly defined identity is impossible, since a fixed identity is always a hallucination of the ego; identity can only be a pact between the subject and their environment. Furthermore, it is a dynamic pact that shifts over time. This is why identity is a statistical concept: it is an *average* that is more or less weighted, established between the subject and their community – or between two or more neighbouring communities in the case of group identities. This fact has become radicalised with our online identities, which we all have based on the data that we, consciously or unconsciously, give for free to game platforms and market agents. True *statistical identity*: I have no doubt that there are many other *mes* doing things behind my back online, mes I have never met and never will, true parallel identities that are nothing like me or my *modus vivendi*, but which, paradoxically, are also me: they have my name, my photograph, my features; they have been built with my data.

Be that as it may, self-observation is never separate from outside observation; hence fashion and how we reveal ourselves to the rest of the world share a fundamental ambivalence about how to define what it means to reveal ourselves to the world: we go along with a trend, a style, and, in that moment, we make it a statistical and collective fact; but, on the other hand, we are constantly trying to maintain the irreducibility of an absolute me that we fantasise about, a unique identity that somehow distinguishes itself from the fashionable mass. So, fashion is always simultaneously being inside and being outside a statistical average. A perpetual state of searching, of action and retraction. And we could deem that irreducibility of ours (to which only the subject has access) the *fifth wall* of a stage, in the sense that we construct a stage – or, more precisely, an intimate sub-stage – paradoxically in order not to be seen by anyone except each of us ourselves, a theatre whose central performance must remain forever hidden: a stage lost to the world. So, the core of that which we call *fashion* deals with a performance developed on a stage that, by its very definition, can never have an audience.

An evanescent essence

We usually speak of *humans* as if there were something common to all of us. If we look closely, there isn't a *human model* per se, as no human is intrinsically human. Each human is radically different, lacks a reference, has no fixed essence nor specific vocation. The human is an object created without a model. As such, each one, according to their whims, needs or fancy, models their body, their psyche, their face and their habitat. That is why Linnaeus, the first modern taxonomist of living beings, when unable to find a fixed place to situate us in the natural world, placed humans in the same box as 'animals similar to man'.

Indeed, we are not natural. That is why we create objects called *societies*, in which those beings born without a model must be sculpted, submitted to a process of branding and tutelage by a determined culture. The difference between the human and the animal is so profound that, in the classification within the animal kingdom, there is no exact place for *sapiens*: sometimes we are minerals; other times vegetables; other times, fish, plants or insects; vertebrates and invertebrates, all that and more. We are always *something else*. From this blurry identity derives our imagination – fantasy, after all – and that is why we have created infinite ways to represent ourselves. Animals, trees and rocks do not fantasise in that way, they do not seek out their essence because, unlike us, *they themselves are already an essence*. A text titled *The Human Face*, by Antonin Artaud, comes to our aid in illustrating this: 'The human face is an empty force, a field of death. […] Which means that the human face has not yet found its face […] for the thousands and thousands of years in fact that the human face has been speaking and breathing one somehow still has the impression that it has not yet started to say what it is and what it knows.'

Were an inherently human essence to exist, it would be some sort of *soft essence*. Indeed, until Darwin's theories, the essences of things were inferred from Plato, according to whom the variations observed in things were merely accidental, transitory, circumstantial, and what was supposedly true were *essences*, which were necessarily invariable, that things and humans had within them. It was Darwin who completely overturned that when he said that the essence, if it existed, would certainly be derived from those changing aspects, from a *dynamic* that lives in things and makes them evolve. Thus, Plato's old, fixed essences were relegated to the realm of metaphysical abstraction as fanciful substances. In fact, no one goes out onto the street and meets up with a neighbour's essence, or with the pavement's or a scooter's essence. This shift is reinforced by a multitude of epistemologists and scientists, as Ilya Prigogine says: 'Nature is indeed related to the creation of unpredictable novelty where the possible is richer than the real.'

We then ask ourselves what could be considered an *essence*, without betraying the concept, yet compatible with Darwin's dynamic theory. The answer comes from an unexpected place: statistics (again). Specifically, it is a mathematical magnitude: the *statistical average*. In our system of the world, statistical averages are the closest thing we have to some sort of essential substance. *Statistical averages* gather and extract a generalisation, a sort of swaddling that avoids accidents and the details of each particular case, which is why we can speak of the 'average human' or the 'average car' or the 'average salary', etc. The statistical average today has reached a pinnacle with what's called big data, strangely refined by 'personalised abstraction', an apparent contradiction that is the source both of its powerful novelty as well as the suspicion and astonishment it evokes in us. What we want to bring to light here is that each individual's identity when processed as big data is a kind of new essence of each individual. Not an essence in the Platonic sense, nor exactly an essence in the sense of the classic statistical average, but an essence in the twenty-first-century style, in the style of artificial intelligence; an essence that is extremely changing, peripatetic and, often, invisible to its own subject. Somehow, this confirms what we have said: there is no such thing as a 'human model', humans are not human, they can't be, each human is radically different, lacks any references, has no fixed or well-defined essence. A such, we are talking about a new *episteme*, a new form of *self-representation* both to the world and to one's self.

This perpetual human foetal state and need for caretaking throughout our lives also explains the importance we give to our social presentation, to how our community characterises and classifies us, and to how each of us feels about its judgments and sanctions, which make us modify our individual identity, creating strategies to construct a *self*. Indeed, it is this essential, ontological system of reference that leads to the emergence of phenomena such as self-image, self-representation, the different roles that we take on and our adoption of certain trends.

The paranormal channel

Let us think now, for a moment, about our six senses. They are, above all, a tool for defending ourselves from dangers and possible predators in our surroundings – our hearing warns us of an approaching crocodile; our sense of smell alerts us to rotting food – and that is why we feel vulnerable if we lose use of one of them. But if we ask ourselves what a work of fiction is, or what an art piece is, we realise that these are objects from which we have eliminated some sensory channel: cinema eliminates taste, smell, touch; painting, all that plus hearing; literature – the most radical case in all of the arts – eliminates all the senses and implements its fiction through sight, yes, but codified in an algebra of signs that are letters, syntax. In effect, all of the existing arts, in other words, all of the world's techniques of representation, possess the characteristic of eliminating some of our corporal sensory channels; that is precisely why they are representations of the world and not the world in its entirety. They are *art* precisely because they carry out a task of *subtraction* of some part of the world, and it is in that subtraction that their power resides.

Our idea here is very clear: when spectators view a work of art, in order to be able to experience it, what they do is spontaneously invent a personal sensory channel that glosses over the consequences of those lacking senses. Because, when lacking one or more of their senses with which to perceive and complete what is before them, spectators feel momentarily lost, afraid or flustered, so they need to create a new channel of perception, *ad hoc* and unprecedented, to fill that gap and 'complete' what they are seeing. This new sense that is created *ad hoc*, that new sensory channel that lasts as long as the aesthetic experience does, is what we are here calling the *paranormal channel*. We don't mean 'paranormal' in the most common sense of the word in the so-called 'occult sciences', but rather in the sense that transpires in the artistic experience: when the interaction between artwork and spectator generates a comprehensive sensation that can only occur through a channel that works to replace the bodily senses that are missing. In that amalgam of what is there and what is lacking, we cannot explain how a new sense emerges – this paranormal channel that we cannot see or track – nor can we explain how it vanishes just as it appeared.

What we are ultimately pondering, the question that truly interests us here, is if *self-representation*, fashion and the way we reveal ourselves to the world is also a kind of art – as they certainly are in an aesthetic sense – then that self-representation must be subject to the same principle of *subtraction* of our senses and, therefore, to the necessary creation of a paranormal channel through which such public exposure will be experienced by our environment, be that local or global. So, through what paranormal channel do we perceive self-representation, social exposure and fashion? That is a question we don't know the answer to; we have the components, but we can't imagine the final composition. It is in moments like this when, for such leaps of imagination, we miss the presence of a titan of exact fantasy, of precise and pertinent fantasy, that was Salvador Dalí.

We no longer have him among us as an artist and writer but his legacy is still very much alive. I am reminded of one of the Dalinian experiences that, from his vast collection of oblique and luminous visions, most impressed me. He recounts, in his peculiar autobiography, *The Secret Life of Salvador Dalí*, that one sunny November day, walking through New York with a large loaf of bread under his arm – as he had been for days throughout the entire city – when crossing the street in front of the Hotel Waldorf Astoria, inexplicably, he slipped, the bread went flying and he hit the pavement hard. After being helped up by a policeman and searching all over for the bread, he found that it had disappeared. This disappearance of the bread was physically impossible: it should have been there somewhere, visible to all, but it wasn't. Our artist limped off, leaving the bread – and the absence of the bread – behind. The anecdote resonated in his head to such an extent that he coined a brilliant, poetic and intellectually productive concept, *negative hallucinations*, consisting of a state of perception in which a hallucination, instead of adding things to the world, takes them away, *subtracts* them. In Dalí's words: 'This became the point of departure for a very important discovery which I decided to communicate to the Sorbonne in Paris under the evocative name of *The Invisible Bread*. In this paper I presented and explained the phenomenon of sudden invisibility of certain objects, a kind of negative hallucination, much more frequent than true hallucinations, but very difficult to recognize because of its amnesic character'.[1]

So, our hypothesis is the following: if, as we earlier indicated, what we call an experience of art is the perception of an event through a 'paranormal channel', in other words an event to which we have suppressed communication through some of our senses while leaving other senses intact, then the Dalinian *negative hallucination*, that strange and anomalous situation in which, in a given spatial-temporal framework, some things are *subtracted* and others remain as they were, could be the way in which that which we call *fashion and self-representation to the world* manifest in our bodies and in social representation, a kind of aesthetic experience that, necessarily, in order to exist must invoke, on the part of all the agents and actors involved, some kind of 'active subtraction', a subtraction that gives rise to something that is greater than the parts in play, a subtraction that, in and of itself, is a negative hallucination.

1. Salvador Dalí, *The Secret Life of Salvador Dalí*, Dial Press, New York, 1942, p. 336.

Rhinoceros Shoes and Other Prophecies

On the fashion system, the power of design, and identity as disguise

Noelia Collado

Noelia Collado is a journalist and communications and fashion specialist with extensive editorial experience. She worked as Fashion Features Director at *S Moda*, part of *El País* newspaper, and is currently Content Director Spain at The Bicester Collection, where she leads the content strategy for La Roca Village and Las Rozas Village.

The internal driving force behind fashion trends moves in two directions: belonging and escape. The geometry of this formula has gradually changed: what began on a vertical outline, in which the elites marked the path, the middle classes imitated it while the lower classes aspired to, shifted instead to 'bubble up' from various subcultures, and into today's circular model, in which the upper classes are no longer distinguished by being more formal but rather for being more authentically informal. The movement has inverted and accelerated at a vertiginous pace through algorithms that process millions of images from social networks to detect trends before they are even established as such. Spontaneity, if it ever existed as a pure phenomenon, has long since become a managed illusion. And Gala and Salvador Dalí were true masters in the management of their own identities as a brand.

In 1957, when the world hadn't yet completely assimilated Dior's *New Look*, Salvador Dalí published his predictions about the future of fashion in *Nugget* magazine. Among them was this one: shoes in the shape of a rhinoceros snout, with accordion heels that made music as you walked. A *boutade*, some would say. A calculated provocation, others would say. But Dalí wasn't joking. Or not just joking. What he was doing, with the precision of someone who'd spent decades observing how the system works, was pointing out something that *serious* fashion discourse could not yet articulate: that footwear is not footwear, that clothing is not clothing, and that the border between the body that dresses itself and the world around that body is, in the best-case scenario, a negotiable convention.

Almost seventy years later, his prediction has still not been literally fulfilled. But in the symbolic sense it is fulfilled every day. The streets are noisy. The way we dress emits signals, constructs hierarchies, declares affiliations. Every wardrobe choice is a position. Fashion is a social catalyst in every sense, not only on runways, but also in closets, even the closets of those who consider themselves anti-fashion, because that itself is already a position. Those who believe they don't participate in the system are also participating. Silence is also a sign.

The question that Dalí was posing with his noisy shoes is, deep down, the same question that sociologists, philosophers, and designers have been pursuing for more than a century: how does something become fashionable? Who decides that? Is there still spontaneity, or is everything a planned choreography simply disguised as chaos?

I
The system has rules.
The first one is that no one admits to them

In 1904, Georg Simmel published an essay in *The International Quarterly* that remains the most lucid assessment of the phenomenon. Fashion, he wrote, 'is the imitation of a given example and satisfies the demand for social adaptation' yet, paradoxically, since it is constantly changing, it differentiates one time from another and one social stratum from another. The impulse is in constant tension: we dress to belong and to escape, at the same time. To say 'I'm like you' and 'I'm different from you' in the same motion. It's a game of mirrors that's never-ending because it can have no end: as soon as a trend is made public, it loses its reason for existing and gives way to the next one.

Sociologist Pierre Bourdieu formulated it with a precision that borders on cynicism: 'The implicit law of the field is dissension: fashion is the ultimate fashion, the ultimate difference. A badge of class (in all the senses of the term) is removed when it loses its distinctive character, that is, when it is publicized.' Fashion does not progress, it flees. Always from the same place, from itself. What was exclusive yesterday is accessible today and, as such, no longer fashionable. The system needs inequality in order to function.

For decades, that movement was strictly vertical: haute couture dictated, the middle class imitated, the lower classes aspired. The diagram, called trickle-down, was as predictable as it was comfortable for those on top. But the twentieth-century gradually eroded it. The vanguard of the twenties and thirties introduced the

> Women's shoes patterned along the contours of rhinoceros snouts will be equipped with heels like accordions and containing built-in springs attached to noise – or music-making devices. Thus there will be not only a 'new look' in footwear, but a 'new sound', with saucy or lilting melodies to brighten the streets.
>
> —Salvador Dalí, *Nugget*, 1957

street as a source. The punk of the seventies turned repudiation into an aesthetic language. The hip-hop of the eighties and nineties showed that culture without access to the dominant codes could create its own and force the industry to copy them. Fashions, observed Valerie Steele in *Fifty Years of Fashion*, no longer trickle down, instead 'they usually "bubble up" from various subcultures'.

Today, the hierarchy is circular. Miuccia Prada and Demna Gvasalia have for years been adopting anti-fashion aesthetics as an exercise in ironic luxury: truckers' hats, utilitarian workwear, deliberate ugliness. The upper classes are no longer distinguished by being more formal but rather for being more *authentically* informal. The movement has inverted and accelerated at a vertiginous pace through algorithms that process millions of images from social networks to detect trends before they are even established as such. Spontaneity, if it ever existed as a pure phenomenon, has long since become a managed illusion.

And yet the illusion is necessary. The market can't admit that trends are by design; it needs them to seem like they've been discovered. Barthes pointed this out in *The Fashion System* (1967) with the coldness of a surgeon: the 'ideology of Fashion' fulfils the function of giving fashion a 'natural' appearance, so readers are not consuming a system of signs but rather ideas, images and values 'suspended in the penumbra of a language which is uncertain'. Fashion, he stated that fashion signified the world or itself. Its sign is completely arbitrary, elaborated without any predictable criteria, but must seem inevitable, logical, natural. 'There are mistakes in language and faults in fashion'. Those who don't know how to dress have not broken an aesthetic rule: they've made a grammatical error.

Thus the circle closes: fashion pretends not to be a language while functioning exactly like one. Its rules are tyrannical. Its arbitrariness, absolute. And the industry that sustains it invests astronomical amounts in maintaining this fiction.

II
Prediction as subversion. Or Dalí knew it

In 1974, Bourdieu gave a lecture on fashion, pointing out that his interest in the subject originated from its condition as 'unworthy of intellectuals'. Thirty years earlier, Dalí had already solved the problem in a different way: if fashion was unworthy of intellectuals, it was the perfect place for a Surrealist. Provocation taken into a territory no one took seriously. A Trojan horse in the closet.

His collaboration with Elsa Schiaparelli, begun in the mid-thirties, was an experiment whose consequences we are still gauging today. Schiaparelli was not a conventional designer. She didn't consider design a profession, but more like a very difficult and frustrating art, because as soon as a dress is born, it has already become a thing of the past. An attitude that linked her more with the Surrealist conception of time – that present which is already past in the moment it is named – than the commercial logic of her era. And in that shared territory, Dalí found a language that his painting alone could not speak.

The most celebrated results of their collaboration are well known. The *Lobster Dress* of 1937: long, of white organza, sleeveless, with a red lobster painted by Dalí on the skirt. For him, lobsters were not crustaceans: they were the female sexual organs, an instrument of castration, desire and its dangers in a single figure. On the dress, the lobster is located right over the genitals. Wallis Simpson wore it for a photo session published in *Vogue* in May 1937 and was accused of erotic frivolity. The dress had done exactly what it set out to do: speak of what could not be said any other way, in the language that the social body was willing to listen to. Lobster as manifesto.

The *Shoe Hat* from the same collection completed the operation: a high-heeled shoe on the head, the world turned upside down, function emptied of meaning until the meaninglessness becomes the only possible meaning. 'Surrealism is destructive' wrote Dalí, 'but it destroys only what it considers to be shackles limiting our vision'.

Saying that these pieces influenced the fashion that followed them is an understatement. What they did was demonstrate that haute couture could be the place where the unconscious dressed itself. That dressmaking could operate as psychoanalysis: bringing to the surface that which the social body needs to deny. When the Schiaparelli house, under the creative direction of Daniel Roseberry, presented large lobster necklaces on the runway for its 2024 spring-summer collection, it wasn't nostalgia. It was the confirmation that some images have a life no system of trends can control.

Hannah Crawforth, in her analysis of Dalí's presence in *Vogue* during the thirties and forties, suggested a reading that illuminates all of this: Dalí's incursion into fashion was not a betrayal of Surrealism, but its most coherent expression. The fashion magazine – argues Crawforth – is in itself a Surrealist act: it predicts the future while documenting the past, making its contents necessarily obsolete as soon as they exist in print. She called this contradiction 'prophetic nostalgia'. Dalí understood this before anyone: the magazine that sets trends always speaks of a present that is already past. Just like his soft watches.

III
The uniform as artwork. Dalí and Gala

'The uniform is essential in order to conquer. Throughout my life, the occasions are very rare that I have abased myself to civilian clothes. I am always dressed in the uniform of Dalí'.

This direct, almost military, confession, says it all about Salvador Dalí's relationship to fashion. It wasn't vanity. It was method. The impossible moustache, the cane, the cape: they weren't accessories, they were elements of a system of signs as deliberate as any painting. 'Each morning, on awakening, I experience a supreme joy that I discover for the first time today: to be Salvador Dalí'. Dressing was the first creative act of the day. His body, the first canvas.

This understanding of attire as constructing one's identity – not as a reflection of it, but as the condition that makes it possible – was the territory Dalí shared with Gala in the most intimate way. Because Gala also knew this. Perhaps Gala knew it first.

Elena Ivanovna Diakonova arrived in the Paris of the vanguards in the early twentieth-century as a woman who already understood fashion as a form of expression and self-discovery aside from conventions. She wasn't vain. She was strategic. The difference is fundamental: vanity looks inward, toward one's own image; strategy looks outward, to make an effect. Gala chose androgyny when it was neither comfortable nor commercial. She adopted male codes, as Chanel would do, not as an act of mimicry but as an act of appropriation. The female dandy of Surrealist Paris.

In 1929, in Cadaqués, she shed her previous life (or second skin) to show her bare back to Dalí. The foundational image: a body that chooses what to show and what to keep hidden. From that moment on, Gala would reinvent herself as many times as necessary. Muse for Paul Éluard's verses. Canvas for Dalí's paintings. Madonna, Galatea and Gradiva. Performer in New York salons, where Room 1610 at the St. Regis Hotel became a stage each winter. Collector of the designs of Arthur Falkenstein, Oleg Cassini, Howard Greer. In each city, in each period, a different second skin. She decided how she wanted to show herself to the world, dressed as muse, wife, performer, agent. Active, always active. Never simply dressed.

What makes Gala extraordinary in this context is not the quality of her wardrobe; although her personal collection, which includes pieces by Dior and Schiaparelli alongside equally expressive clothes with no label, could certainly inspire its own essay. What makes her extraordinary is that she lived, decades before the language to describe it existed, what we today call personal branding. The deliberate construction of a public image as an aesthetic and strategic project. Without Instagram. Without marketing consultants. Her only instrument was her body, with its gaze that knew exactly what it wanted to communicate.

Valerie Steele, director of the Museum at the Fashion Institute of Technology in New York, wrote that fashion is 'a deep surface' that 'communicates our unconscious desires and anxieties, with none of us fully aware of the messages we send'. Gala was the exception. Gala was completely conscious. And that made her, in the eyes of her time, unsettling. 'Too artificial to be pleasant', said Peggy Guggenheim. As if artificialness was a defect and not a skill. As if the deliberate construction of identity was less authentic than spontaneity, which, as we already know, is not that spontaneous.

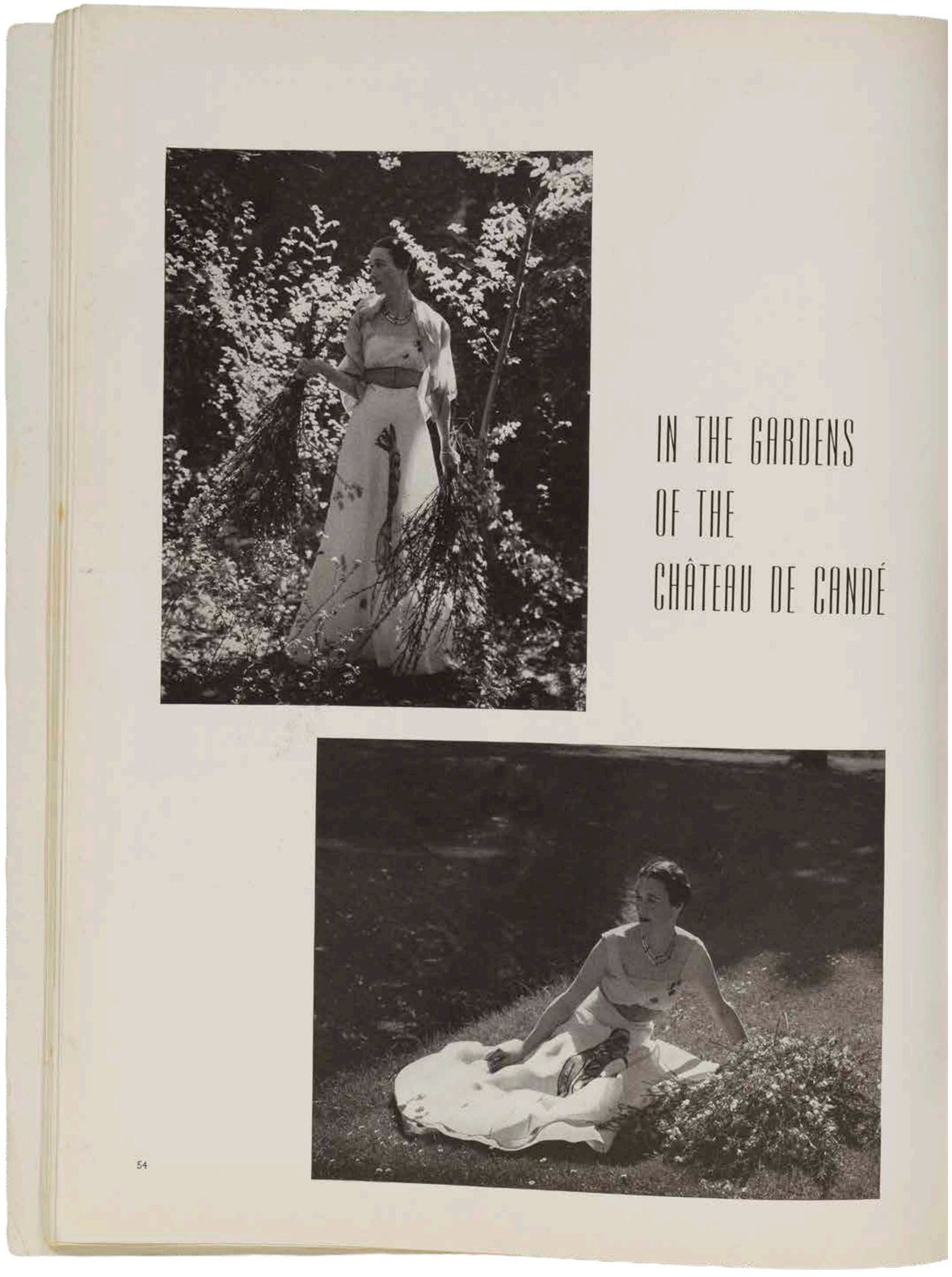
IV
The circuit and its return

Does the creative circuit return to its source? Can reinterpretations by an audience inspire new creations? The short answer is yes. The long answer is that it has always been true, although the industry was very slow to acknowledge it.

In 1970 Paul Blumberg called this the status float phenomenon: the tendency for innovation to flow upwards. African-American culture in music and fashion in the first half of the twentieth-century is the oldest and most plundered example. Punk in the seventies. Streetwear in the nineties. Thrifting as a practice born of necessity that ended up as a luxury trend. Today, the data is indisputable: an analysis of 2025 indicates that social platforms have halved the time it takes for trends to be adopted upwards from below, compared to the pre-digital era. Brands monitor



Unknown author, Gala, 1935-1937



Wallis Simpson wearing the *Lobster Dress*, designed by Salvador Dalí and Elsa Schiaparelli in *Vogue*, 1937, photographs by Cecil Beaton

‘The uniform is essential in order to conquer. Throughout my life, the occasions are very rare that I have abased myself to civilian clothes. I am always dressed in the uniform of Dalí’. This direct, almost military, confession, says it all about Salvador Dalí’s relationship to fashion. It wasn’t vanity. It was method. The impossible moustache, the cane, the cape: they weren’t accessories, they were elements of a system of signs as deliberate as any painting. ‘Each morning, on awakening, I experience a supreme joy that I discover for the first time today: to be Salvador Dalí’. Dressing was the first creative act of the day. His body, the first canvas. This understanding of attire as constructing one’s identity – not as a reflection of it, but as the condition that makes it possible – was the territory Dalí shared with Gala in the most intimate way. Because Gala also understood this. Perhaps Gala understood it first.

hashtags. Algorithms detect signs before the human eye processes them.

But there is something more interesting than the speed of this cycle: its nature. Because what flows back upwards is not just a shape or a colour; it is an attitude, a gesture, a way of wearing clothing that no trend laboratory can manufacture. What travels upwards is what Bourdieu would call *habitus* made visible: the incorporated attitudes, the posture, the body language that a social class or subculture develops over years and that haute couture can only cite, never originate.

Dalí understood that from the beginning. ‘The constant tragedy of life is fashion’, he said. He collaborated with Schiaparelli to prove that the idea of dressing oneself, the idea of disguising oneself, was merely the consequence of the traumatic experience of birth, which is the strongest of all the traumas that a human being can experience, since it is the first. As the first separation from the world and first attempt to return to it from a body that already is, from that moment, a cultural body.

The circuit always returns to its source. The question is who has the power to name it. Who can turn an anonymous gesture into a trend, a trend into a signature, a signature into capital. Who, in the end has ‘the power to define objects as rare by means of their signature’, in Bourdieu’s words.

Dalí also had that. Not because he was a designer – he wasn’t – but because he understood that, in fashion, as in art, as in public life, the signature is the most political act possible. ‘I am Surrealism!’ he declared. He wore a Dalí uniform. Gala wore a Gala uniform. And the noise they made as they walked required no springs or accordions.

V
Coda. The shoes that still do not exist

In 2026, when algorithms predict the future with a precision that would have scandalised every futurologist of the past century, when trends last mere weeks before being replaced by the next wave, when spontaneity is the most carefully manufactured product on the market, Dalí’s prediction about the rhinoceros shoes sounds less like raving and more like a diagnosis.

Not because they are going to be made – although, in the era of 3D printing and wearables, we shouldn’t rule anything out – but because what Dalí predicted was not a form but a function: clothing that makes noise. Fashion that cannot be ignored. Attire that turns the body into a transmitter. In a world saturated with images, where invisibility is the only truly inaccessible luxury, this Dalinian provocation turns out to be, once again, the most sensible response.

Simmel said that fashion differentiates one time from another. Barthes said that its signs are tyrannical and arbitrary but must seem natural. Bourdieu said that fashion is the final difference, that which languishes when it is publicised. Valerie Steele said it is a deep surface. Elsa Schiaparelli said that a dress belongs to the past the moment it is born.

Dalí said it was the constant tragedy of life. And then he put on his uniform and went out onto the street.

Oriol Maspons, Salvador Dalí and Gala in the oval room of their house in Portlligat, 1961



Self-Portrait of a Restless Matter

Miriam Ponsa

Miriam Ponsa is a Catalan clothing designer who founded her eponymous brand in 2000. She is known for her conceptual fashion rooted in memory, place and craftsmanship. Her collections have received numerous awards, such as the 2019 Bages Cultural Prize and the 2020 *Creu de Sant Jordi* (Cross of Sant Jordi) for her contributions to the renovation and innovation of textile design and fashion in Catalonia.

The way Miriam Ponsa's workshop is run is inseparable from her way of being in and thinking about the world. Concepts such as sustainability, inclusivity, and respect for materials and craftsmanship are essential to her creative project, which is inspired by family tradition and is blazing a trail towards a more conscious and considered future. Like Gala and Salvador Dalí, for Miriam Ponsa fashion is a vehicle for thought, memory and identity, in which the pieces never become outdated, but rather evolve, transform and accrue meaning over time.

Miriam Ponsa, *The Silk Road* collection, Fall/Winter 2019–2020



The Catalan word *moda* comes from the Latin *modus*, meaning way, norm, rule, time, melody and rhythm. The word first appeared in 1696 with the meaning 'way of living', like the English 'mode', and is now most often used to mean 'fashion'. Creative research at Miriam Ponsa is born of a need to express my experiences, passions and dreams through art. Our collections tell a story, a history; they draw characters and transport them to the brand's universe, which unfolds like a notebook filled with thoughts, sketches, fabrics and colours, forming a visual diary for each collection.

Our artisanal process is intimately tied to our desire to showcase the ancestral trades, traditions and techniques we want to protect and utilise. Our collections speak of the women who make them: migrants, weavers, workers, exiles…

I try to construct a universe of my own where textiles are language, memory and action. From the roots of the traditional trade to my more experimental designs, I maintain a constant dialogue between the handiwork and the thought, between the material and the idea.

The value of the land and its people is always present and forms part of the brand's production network. We work shoulder to shoulder with our neighbours, small artisanal textile workshops with extensive experience in the sector. We have collaborated with the same workshops for more than twenty years, using a formula based on trust and respect. Experience has taught us that finding common ground is not always easy, but perseverance tends to work in the long run.

To understand what local production means, we learn from the example of nature's ecosystem, where thousands of small, mutually interdependent organisms cohabit, enriching each other in order to survive. These organisms work with those in their immediate surroundings; they have no need to go searching for them in distant places.

The value of producing locally also opens a door for new generations and allows us to understand the workshops we work with; many of them are centuries old and have accumulated highly valuable experience. I believe that specialisation is also a way of leaving a legacy that speaks of a history of effort and work that should not be underestimated; future generations can undoubtedly learn from both the accomplishments and the mistakes.

A creative dialogue with materials

I come from a family with a long textile tradition, and I assert my claim on this past as a form of cultural resistance. My brother and I are the fourth generation in our family's textile business. In 1886, my great-grandmother bought the building where we currently work – in Manresa, near the Cardener River – and led the technological transition by introducing electricity to power the looms, which had previously been purely manual. At that time, textile workers were unionised, and the Bages region specialised in ribbons, cord and laces. I settled into this space after studying fashion design in Barcelona and Winchester (England). My childhood memories of the building are linked to the scent of oil and the 'noise' of the looms that are still a part of my day-to-day life. The space in question functioned as a textile factory for nearly one hundred years, until I was about ten years old. Later, it lay dormant until I established my studio-workshop there, and I came across all sorts of old textile fixtures, cord-making machines, dismantled looms, and all kinds of remnants of cords, ribbons and laces.

The family textile legacy led me to establish a creative dialogue with the materials: particularly ribbon and cord. I work with them in all their possible forms and variants: interwoven, assembled on a manual loom, woven with the *jarapa* technique, with macramé, with Spanish knot, etc. Materials are my language, and I best express myself through them.

Experimentation with other materials like latex, wool, polypropylene and linen is the perfect excuse to work with a manual loom, unspin them, felt them

and mix them polyamorously with other materials. For me, the artisanal process is completely free, not established by any norms or conditions. The results are always unexpected because creative windows open during the process, altering it.

Being able to continue working artisanally is a celebration of our trade and the value of persistence. I like to look at the past in order to project towards the future, to continue weaving with conviction, since creation can be – and must be – also an act of activism.

Miriam Ponsa, *I Have a Dream collection*, Spring/Summer 2019



Fashion's identity and emotional durability

When we think about fashion and culture, we may believe they are not linked, but our attire is a reflection of society: it very quickly situates us in a particular period and geography. It forms part of our identity and places us in our surroundings. Fashion, in its widest sense, is a choice – or, better said, a regulatory mechanism of choices. It is like a mirror frozen in time, or a portrait.

Clothing also serves to control collectives and identify them at a glance. Social trends are intimately linked to clothing and help create an identity.

In that sense, Dalí was precocious in his understanding of the power of the image. His moustache, his capes, canes and extravagant suits created an unmistakeable visual identity. His attire allowed him to become a living work of art that was recognised the world over.

As a key figure in Surrealism, Dalí also brought the principles of that movement – absurdity, dreams, provocation – to his way of dressing. His attire became another medium for breaking with conventional reality and creating impact. Dalí not only painted and wrote; he behaved as if constantly on stage. In public appearances, photographs or films such as *Autoportrait mou de Salvador Dalí* by Jean-Christophe Averty, his attire formed part of a performative action. His dressed body was part of the artwork: a combination of painting, action, image and symbol that went far beyond the canvas.

His wardrobe was a tool to capture the attention of the media and the public. In an era without social media, Dalí was already a master of personal branding; he knew that his dressed image could generate discussion, controversy and fascination.

In the case of Gala Dalí, her wardrobe took on even greater significance. Together, the couple created a shared, almost theatrical, iconography, in which the pieces – often reused – reinforce their mythic and timeless aura.

Gala and Dalí practiced a form of sustainability rooted in continuity, reinterpretation and the symbolic charge of clothing, an idea that is fully aligned with the spirit that moves us as creators.

Sustainability is not merely a question of materials and processes, but a conscious relationship with the piece: extending its useful life, imbuing it with meaning and shunning the ephemeral logic of fast fashion. This gaze connects directly with Gala's repeated use of many pieces by designers of the period, such as her dress by Jean Dessès. Far from being a garment worn on a single occasion, the dress became an identifying symbol that reappeared in different contexts, accruing layers of meaning.

Reutilisation of one's wardrobe is not only practical, but also narrative: every time Gala wore the dress by Jean Dessès – such as in the film *Autoportrait mou de Salvador Dalí* – it took on new significance and new symbolic readings. That fits with a contemporary vision of sustainability that cultivates the emotional durability of attire.

The jewel dresses by Daniel Roseberry for Schiaparelli are a fusion of textile and object, of fashion and art. This reinforces the value of the pieces as unique objects worthy of being conserved and reworn. As such, they share the values of craftsmanship: exclusivity, quality and permanence.

Dalí also constantly drew on tradition and myth. A piece transcends the fashion of the moment and becomes an almost 'immortal' element, as suggested by the scene of their birth from an egg. This idea of immortality connects to the approach of real sustainability: creating pieces that endure, both physically and symbolically.

Dalí and Gala use wardrobe as an extension of their Surrealist imaginary: each piece forms part of a staging, of a symbolic narrative or of an artistic action. Similarly, we conceive each collection as a project

Gala and Dalí practiced a form of sustainability rooted in continuity, reinterpretation and the symbolic charge of clothing, an idea that is fully aligned with the spirit that moves Miriam Ponsa as a creator.

with a discourse (historical memory, craft, territory) in which the pieces communicate ideas.

I wanted to highlight Dalí's collaborations with Elsa Schiaparelli, which led to the famous *Lobster Dress* and *Shoe Hat*. These pieces consolidated the idea that fashion could be a space of radical artistic experimentation. Sartorial rebellion, by decontextualising the object, is also an ironic and humorous language that feels particularly necessary today – a very intelligent way of decoding the established canons.

I share with Dalí and Gala the notion of fashion as a vehicle for thought, memory and identity: the pieces never become outdated, but rather evolve, transform and accrue meaning over time.

Ethics through aesthetics

The fashion proposals that lead to change are bold, respectful and inclusive, and they open doors to dialogue and reflection.

Coco Chanel took into consideration the needs of the women of her time and she brought fashion closer to everyday life. She freed women from corsets and offered a whole range of comfortable and elegant pieces. Her legacy remains current and enduring.

We are currently living through a rather extreme political and social moment, and this is reflected in artistic tendencies. Oppression, injustice, fear, disillusionment and the lack of values are fertile terrain for new, ground-breaking ideas – ideas of change that are necessary to transform society. Music, painting, photography, fashion and every artistic discipline are free and yet subject to this reality and, like in a pressure cooker, they explode in the form of art.

Our creative project places ethics alongside aesthetics. Our brand's values and manifesto emerged organically and inextricably, their origins as indistinguishable as the chicken and the egg. Our manifesto is open and autobiographical, made up of lived experiences. We can only explain something once we have lived it. Our collections are a visual diary of my experiences, thoughts, reflections and dreams. Each collection is the sum of creative exercises that treat fashion as a human cartography, in which the body moves through territories; the routes reveal inequalities and the pieces become a testimony of movement, resistance and survival.

Many collections were designed while travelling – *Mule Women*, *The Balkan Route*, *The Silk Road*, *Aral Sea*; in them I recreated the characters I had the opportunity to see and spend time living with. I used techniques, forms and colours that represent them. In these collections the itinerary is not a tourist one, but rather one of necessity, survival and vital exchange. A recurring idea appears across several collections: the body that bears load, that journeys and resists. These collections are almost social maps; they speak of forced migration, globalisation, exchanges and ecological disaster. The pieces are reminiscent of baggage as protection and incumbrance, their volumes suggesting displacement and shifts. The materials are resistant and utilitarian.

In other collections I have been able to express my most intimate feelings during moments of personal transformation, such as the births of my son and my daughter. The collections dedicated to them, *coR* and *Bruna*, are experimental exercises with latex, used to represent physical fluids and the umbilical cord. These exercises have helped me explore the transformation of the body through materials, in this case latex, which is commonly used in sculpture and capable of creating very interesting textures.

The collections *The Golden Crop* (on the theme of beekeeping), *Transhumance*, *Sherpa*, *Raiers* (River Rafters), *Sea Women*, and *Rice Harvest*, among others, are creative exercises that focus on tradition and culture, seeking to draw attention to undervalued or forgotten trades. They highlight workers' bodies and aspire to dignify manual labour. These collections are also a critique of exploitation and the production system, arising from reflections on capitalism and globalisation.

Some collections, such as *Exile*, *The Salt March* and *I Have a Dream*, work with the idea of refuge, protection and vulnerability. They centre the body and evoke a sense of intimacy and retreat. The designs were born from empathy with situations of fragility; they speak of resilience, community and collective action. The pieces are meant to show how social movements can transform reality. We created protections and armour through craftsmanship, seeking to convey a message of non-violent struggle and social change. The artisanal process in these collections was also a refuge for me and helped me protect myself from noise and darkness.

With the collection *Muses*, we wanted to break with the preconceived classical idea of the 'muse' – a woman who inspires but does not create, who is the object of another's gaze – in order to transform the muse into an active woman with her own voice and capacity for creation. Female empowerment pushed us to move away from the official platform, exchanging the standard runway for a more intimate and personal one. The variety of non-professional people who walked this runway was a true revelation and a form of real empowerment. We were able to engage with diversity, cultural inclusivity, and gender from a place of respect and freedom, as the collection deserved.

Impact on the planet

My most recent collection, titled *REDUCE*, presented in runway format at the Roba Amiga-Solidança textile selection plant in Sant Just Desvern, aims to draw attention to a small part of the textile waste we generate in our region. The collection shows the true cost of this waste, revealing to the public the 'hidden face' of consumption and generating a direct and intentionally uncomfortable impact. The visual potency of the alternative runway, covered with compressed textile bales, led to an educational and critical experience, prompting more questions than answers.

I suppose there are many different paths – and others that will emerge – to reverse or halt the impact of the textile industry on the environment. I have hope in the coming generations, who will surely know how to use technology to try to make a better world. But right now we are facing a climate emergency provoked by a lack of values, which is driving us headlong into a very complex reality. Starting more than two decades ago – with globalisation – textile manufacturing began to be exported to countries with cheaper labour forces and opaque working conditions, enabling many textile companies to shift their production to these labour 'paradises' without accepting any responsibility for the harm caused on both a social and an environmental scale.

The fashion industry has a devastating impact on the planet, and the most vulnerable workers in the fashion system often run a disproportionate risk of experiencing its effects firsthand. Throughout the entire supply chain, natural resources are extracted, habitats are exploited, toxic emissions are produced, water is polluted and waste products are disposed of carelessly.

The fast fashion model is creating an excess of production – what we call overproduction – driven by low costs subsidised by unfair wages that do not allow workers a decent life. This overproduction, in itself, does not meet the necessary minimums in any sense. It is also the result of profiting from meagre salaries that are only viable when tens of thousands of pieces are made from repetitions of the same pattern. This production must be quick, the quicker the better: that is one of the keys to the excessive supply of new clothing in physical stores and now, especially, online.

Reflection and self-critique form part of our DNA and we also strive to constantly improve. In that sense, we have set ourselves the task of doing something to attempt to reverse overproduction and make-to-stock production. As such, for the last five years we have been working with the preorder model: we offer four collections a year that can only be bought to order, and we produce only the pieces that have been ordered. We need a few weeks to make them and, once they are finished, we send them to the customers or they come into our workshop to pick them up. This model helps to raise consciousness and encourages thoughtful consumption. Thanks to online sales we can reach many more people; the major change has been primarily in production and timeframes, but also in customer service, to which we devote a great deal of effort. Every decision entails some sacrifice, and in our case we chose to give up physical stores. It was not an easy decision, but it was the right one to make the preorder model coherent and genuine.

The future of the fashion industry clearly points towards a profound change of model, because the current system – particularly fast fashion – is socially and environmentally difficult to sustain. While there is not just one possible future, there will likely be very well-defined tendencies. Among them, a more sustainable fashion will be inevitable: the industry is moving towards designs meant to last a long time, the use of recycled and low-impact materials and the reduction of mass production.

In every discussion of ethical and sustainable fashion, the subject of a circular economy arises: converting textile waste into a resource. Reusing pieces, repairing, recycling and giving new life to existing materials will become increasingly imperative. Consumers will be ever more aware of the importance of transparency from fashion brands and will want to know who is making their clothes and how. Most likely, this demand will lead many brands to adopt far greater openness.

A change in consumption is predicted as well: less impulse buying and more awareness. This will undoubtedly lead to a greater second-hand market and buyers choosing higher-quality pieces.

Perhaps the most important change will come through technology: digital design and 3D patterns, artificial intelligence for reducing waste, virtual fashion – through social media and videogames – and programmes and apps that will help us to be more efficient. More and stricter environmental laws are expected, controlling textile waste and demanding greater accountability from brands. Finally, I hope that sustainability ceases to be optional.

Reutilisation of one's wardrobe is not only practical but also narrative: every time Gala wore the dress by Jean Dessès, it took on new significance and new symbolic readings. That fits with a contemporary vision of sustainability that cultivates the emotional durability of fashion.



Miriam Ponsa, *Rice Harvest* collection, Spring/Summer 2017

DALÍ, CHRONICLER OF FASHION

SCHIAPARELLI

All my life I have been preoccupied with shoes, which I have utilized in several surrealist objects and pictures, to the point of making a kind of divinity of them. In 1936 I went so far as to put shoes on heads; and Elsa Schiaparelli created a hat after my idea. Daisy Fellowes appeared in Venice with this shoe-hat on her head. The shoe, in fact, appears to me to be the object most charged with realistic virtues as opposed to musical objects which I have always tried to represent as demolished, crushed, soft-cellos of rotten meat, etc. One of my latest pictures represents a pair of shoes. I spent two long months copying them from a model, and I worked over them with the same love and the same objectivity as Raphael painting a Madonna. It is therefore extremely instructive to observe how in an improvised lie, produced in ultra-anecdotic circumstances, I anticipated the formulation of a durable and integrated philosophic platform, which was only to become consolidated with time.

—*The Secret Life of Salvador Dalí*, 1942

Nothing is in fact more tragic and vain than fashion, and just as for an intelligence of the first order, like my own, the war of 1914 was fetishistically represented by Mademoiselle Chanel, the war which was soon to break out and which was going to liquidate the post-war revolutions was symbolized, not by the surrealist polemics in the café on the Place Blanche, or by the suicide of my great friend Rene Crevel, but by the dressmaking establishment which Elsa Schiaparelli was about to open on the Place Vendôme. Here new morphological phenomena occurred; here the essence of things was to become; transubstantiated; here the tongues of fire of the Holy Ghost of Dalí were going to descend. And (since unfortunately I am always right) the German troops were to swoop down on Biarritz, just a few years later, camouflaged in the Schiaparelli and Dalí manner, wearing cynical and mimetic costumes, with branches of leaves freshly torn from the soil of France bursting from their sandy animal hair like the Nordic buds of a crucified Daphne. But the soul and the biology of the Schiaparelli establishment was Bettina Bergery, one of the women of Paris most highly endowed with fantasy. She exactly resembled a praying mantis, and she knew it. Bettina and Roussie Sert (nee Princess Mdivani), fairy skeletons of sveltest poetry, with Chanel *France de France*, head the procession of those who continue in spite of separations and death to be my best friends.

—*The Secret Life of Salvador Dalí*, 1942

The tragic constant of human life is fashion, and that is why I have always enjoyed collaborating with Mademoiselle Chanel and Mademoiselle Schiaparelli, precisely to show that the idea of dressing, the idea of disguising oneself, was nothing more than the consequence of the trauma of birth.

—*Autoportrait mou de Salvador Dalí*, directed by Jean-Christophe Averty, 1966



Eric Schaal, Salvador Dalí and Gala, the latter wearing a jacket from Schiaparelli's Fall/Winter 1936 Haute Couture collection, 1937

CHANEL

But her originality was the opposite of mine. I have always either shamelessly ‘exhibited’ my ideas, or else hidden them with a refined Jesuitical hypocrisy. Not she: she does not exhibit them, nor does she hide them. She dresses them. The sense of clothes had in her a biological significance of self-modesty of a mortal and fatal violence. What Ludwig II of Bavaria dresses Chanel must have designed to ‘dress’, for formal occasions and for street-wear, the young and hard bitterness of her unavowed sentiments! Her sense of fashion and of costume was ‘tragic’ — as in others it is ‘cynical’. Above all Chanel was the being possessing the best dressed ‘body and soul’ on earth.

—*The Secret Life of Salvador Dalí*, 1942

No. 5 was to Coco Chanel what my mustache was to my character. We met again as two legendary companions, and she told me all the latest Parisian gossip.

—*The Unspeakable Confessions of Salvador Dalí*, 1973

Coco Chanel considered herself an artist and spoke of herself in the third person: ‘She took the English masculine and made it feminine. All her life, all she did was change men’s clothing into women’s: jackets, hair, neckties, wrists. Coco Chanel always dressed like the strong independent male she had dreamed of being. She set women free because she had suffered too long from not being free herself. Showing what so-called meaningless fashions can sometimes be due to!’.

—*The Unspeakable Confessions of Salvador Dalí*, 1973

I think Coco Chanel gave her friendship not to beings but to entities. I was *genius* as Diaghilev was *dance* and Coco was *fashion*. She liked herself very much and talked about herself tirelessly.

—*The Unspeakable Confessions of Salvador Dalí*, 1973

Georges and Fernand Detaille, Salvador Dalí and Gala at Gabrielle Chanel's villa La Pausa in Roquebrune, 1938

DIOR

Dior was one of the first people in Paris to concern himself with the sale of my 'unsellable' surrealist paintings. He even sold to an enormously wealthy shoe manufacturer a painting showing a wetnurse sitting absent-mindedly on a beach, balancing on her head, with the same absent-mindedness, a feminine shoe from which emerged a grilled lamb chop. Meeting again after so many years, we kissed each other affectionately, and then, looking him up and down, I exclaimed, 'Well, tell me how things have been going with you?' And Dior answered, 'The same as with you – great success!'

—'Lyon's daily Dali', *c.* 1947

I presume the reader of this column is asking himself, or will ask within two or three days, 'What's Dali's opinion of the Dior styles? He is for short skirts or for long?' Well, I 'm in favor of the long skirts, because they give woman a greater mystery.

—'Lyon's daily Dali', *c.* 1947

The kingdom of fashion

The terrifying morphological anatomies of the feminine figures of the 1937–1939 Dali have been proved prophetic by the triumph of Christian Dior's concept of feminine beauty, especially in the importance given to the hipbones and derrieres, and the return of the corset to fashion.

—*Dalí News*, vol. 1, no. 2, 25 November 1947

After the war of 1914, women's fashion was revolutionised to make it practical and wearable. Today, my friend Christian Dior is doing the opposite: he has just presented, in his collection, a dozen dresses which he himself calls 'unwearable dresses', and they are, moreover, the most expensive in his collection.

—'Le monde d'hier', *c.* 1949

In 1930 I designed outfits inspired by the 1900 period, which Dior's New Look has revived in 1948!

—'Quoi de neuf dans cinq ans?', *c.* 1950

I have known Christian Dior ever since 1930, when we made the rounds of Paris in pursuit of a mutual floral passion, realized in the objets d'*Art Noveau* of 1900 – which everyone then despised, and which the most fashionable ladies have since been forced to display upon their very exquisite bodies. Now I feel a period coming for leaf-women, stick-women, autumnal-wood-women. For owl-women who will also be butterflies, and butterflies that will also be rocks. Women who will disappear into the trees, who will disintegrate on a patch of moss, and whose silhouette will be of thorns tender as roses – roses transparent as a Lalique dragonfly wing. Mystical roses. [...]

—'Salvador Dali's mimicry in nature', *Flair Annual*, 1953

I had asked Christian Dior to make me a disguise as a seven-meter-tall giant so I could look down on everyone else. The city was in transports, and my success so great that, twenty years later, I still dream of it some nights. [...]

—*The Unspeakable Confessions of Salvador Dalí*, 1973

[...] I would like to pay tribute to the first Dalinians. These were Gala and Paul Elouard, it was they who discovered and introduced me to Breton, saying: 'This one has talent.' They persuaded him. The second was the Viscount of Noailles, the first person who bought a terribly obscene surrealist painting which was difficult to describe. The third was Christian Dior, he wasn't famous then. He was wearing a bowler hat and carrying a fine umbrella with a little painting of Dalí under his arm, trying to persuade everybody that the painting isn't bad. And besides, he sold it. [...]

—'Gala, Velázquez and the Golden Fleece', *Vogue*, no. 597, Paris, June-July 1979



Oriol Maspons and Julio Ubiña, Gala and Salvador Dalí in the Milky Way at Portlligat wearing the Beistegui Ball costumes designed by Dior, 1960

RABANNE

From a prophetic point of view, I think the same as my friend Paco Rabanne. [...] With Paco, Manitas and the divine Dalí, we represent nothing less than the spiritual empire of Spain. [...]

—*Bouton rouge*, broadcast on 16 April 1967

I consider Paco Rabanne to be the first couturier today to reactualize all the dreams of the Middle Ages.

—*Permis la nuit*, broadcast on 21 April 1967

For the same price, I propose to deck with flags the public monuments of certain cities in displays realized by artists who, like Paco Rabane, are capable of celebrating the arrival of the millennium of Aquarius.

—'My Cultural Revolution', 1968



Oriol Maspons and Julio Ubiña. Elsa Peretti, Salvador Dalí and Natasha Gounkevich wearing Paco Rabanne's *Unwearable Dresses* in the courtyard of the house in Portlligat. 1966

DANIEL ROSEBERRY

On the occasion of the publication of this issue devoted to art and fashion, DALÍ NEWS asked Daniel Roseberry, who today embodies the spirit of Maison Schiaparelli, about the enduring bond between the genius of Salvador Dalí and the celebrated fashion house, a relationship that was particularly close in its early years.

DALÍ NEWS

How does Surrealism of the 1930s connect to the house of Schiaparelli today?

DANIEL ROSEBERRY

What is so poignant and powerful about the story of this house is that it was dormant for so long. In that way, we picked up the heritage and the DNA of Surrealism right where Elsa left off. André Breton, the French writer, theorist and key architect of the Surrealist movement, believed that Surrealism deals with the space between things: between the real and the unreal, being awake and dreaming, fantasy and reality. Surrealism as a concept in fashion was also dormant when I started here six years ago. It was such a different landscape. No one was doing Surrealism in couture or jewellery or on the red carpet. That it is now being embraced is a testament to both the elasticity of the brand and to the timeless contribution that Elsa has made to the fashion conversation.

Daniel Roseberry is the Creative Director of Maison Schiaparelli.



Schiaparelli by Daniel Roseberry, Dress, Fall/Winter 2022 Haute Couture collection, Embroidery Baqué Molinié

Guo Pei

Beyond Attire: Haute Couture as Prophetic Vision Akin to the Surrealist Spirit

Guo Pei is considered the first couturier in China, renowned for fusing her Asian heritage with the craftsmanship of Western haute couture. Her creations have been exhibited in some of the foremost cultural institutions around the world, including the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, the Victoria and Albert Museum in London, and the Musée des Arts Décoratifs in Paris. A distinguished member of the Fédération de la Haute Couture et de la Mode, she was included in *Time* magazine's list of the 100 most influential people in the world in 2016. Also among her numerous distinctions are first prize for the design of the ceremonial attire for the Beijing Olympic Games, the *French Ordre des Arts et des Lettres*, and the *Le Chiavi della Città* award given by the city of Florence.

Millais's *Ophelia* dissolves life into a tapestry of flowers and elevates death onto an eternal poetic stage to which all beings must return; Dalí's Surrealist brushstrokes free him from the restrictions of reality, question the limits of the subconscious and predict the future horizons of the human mind. Similarly, my haute couture creations have never been defined as attire for the real world but rather, like all of Dalí's work – painting, sculpture, and installations – are understood as a purely Surrealist artistic practice that defies all worldly logic, aspires to spiritual eternity and prefigures the aesthetic of the future. My work, stripped of all practical function, becomes an autonomous artistic sculpture, a figurative projection of its creator's spiritual universe and, above all, a profound dialogue with the Surrealist civilisation that transcends time and space.

The essence of fashion has never been based on following the cycle of trends dictated by the changing seasons, nor on serving as a material vehicle for the satisfaction of quotidian needs. In my opinion, haute couture represents one of the supreme art forms, a creative path to free oneself from the chains of reality and reach spiritual freedom. Clothing, in the mundane sense, is conditioned by the body and the context, and carries out a function. However, my haute couture creations have transgressed those restrictions from the very start: they do not need to adapt to the true ergonomics of the body, nor be governed by the aesthetic canons of the day to day, much less attend to functionality; their sole mission is to capture the definitive reflections of their creator about the world, life, the spirit and the future. Just like Dalí's artwork, my work has never reproduced reality, instead rebelling against it, rising up in oneiric representation and future prophecy. While Dalí used Surrealist art to dismantle the dimensions of reality and bring to light the truths of the unconscious, I use haute couture to deconstruct the boundaries of clothing and construct a Surrealist spiritual space suited to the Asian context. Despite our having taken different paths, we pursue the same objective: freeing ourselves from reality and reaching an eternal spiritual plane.

My artistic work, structured around a mysterious natural universe, represents the maximum expression of my Surrealist conception of creation and a paradigmatic example of how fashion moves away from its function as attire to become pure art. The work completely subverts the creative logic of traditional clothing; it no longer takes the body as a reference, but instead exists as an independent artistic sculpture. The vegetal forms that unfold to surround it break with the inherent boundaries between the flat and the three-dimensional, between the body and space, and create an immersive natural environment that blurs the limits between art and nature, between fashion and sculpture. The floral textures predominating in the work do not reproduce real flowers and plants but rather artistically reconstruct the vitality of nature; they are images of life that manifest in an oneiric landscape and do not reference real botanical forms. The black bird in that landscape does not represent a real living being but instead embodies a spiritual symbol, a messenger who leads us to a deeper spiritual dimension. The work in its entirety shows a Surrealist artistic construction that does not belong to the real world nor to any mundane need such as dressing, but rather remains faithful only to the spiritual expression of art itself. The central axis that my work articulates is the idea that haute couture is not clothing, but art that transcends reality; a spiritual creation that shares tradition with Dalí's art and points towards the future.

The primary influence of the Surrealist aesthetic on my art consists in having given me the creative freedom to transgress all realist norms, which has allowed me to completely escape the prevailing framework of the fashion design sector and adopt the perspective of a pure artist. Dalí devoted his entire life to breaking the chains of reason, logic and reality. The melting clocks, the suspended objects and the enigmatic worlds captured in his work represent a rebellion against the real order, an exploration of the unconscious, dreams and the unknown. His creative spirit completely redefined my perception of art and helped me to understand that true art is always above reality and transcends time; its value does not reside in reproducing the present but in foretelling the future and questioning eternity. Surrealism is not merely an accessory element taken from Western art as a complement to my creative system, but rather the central language with which I deconstruct clothing and reconfigure art. I have ceased to feel subject to the realist logic of fabrics, patterns and craftsmanship; instead, I use imagination as a paintbrush and fashion as a canvas to combine principles of Asian philosophy – such as the principle of harmony between humans and nature, and reflections on life and death – with Surrealism's oneiric narrative and exploration of consciousness, so that each piece of haute couture ends up transforming into a Surrealist doorway into the spiritual world. In my creations, the mysterious natural universe is not a real environment, but an oneiric projection; the images of life are not imitations of reality, but spiritual symbols, and my work as a whole constructs a Surrealist spiritual space untethered from the real dimension, in accordance with the Dalinian aspiration of transcending the real and reaching eternity.

Gala, eternal muse of Dalí, transcended her identity as a real character to become a definitive symbol of Surrealist art, by means of her soul transcending her body and her spirit reaching eternity. She became the spiritual centre of Dalí's work; the spiritual link uniting reality and dreams, our world with the great beyond, and conferring Dalí's art with a profound spiritual timelessness. In my creative philosophy, haute couture represents my 'muse and soul'; it condenses all the reflections on art, life and the future that I have accrued over my forty-year career, and constitutes the exteriorisation and prolongation of my spiritual world. I have always believed that true artistic creation emerges from the symbiosis between the artist's soul and their work, a process in which the spirit achieves eternity through art. This work of Surrealist haute couture represents the materialisation of my soul; it embodies my desire to transcend the real world, my eternal aspiration for freedom of the mind, and my definitive prophecy on the aesthetic of the future. Just as Gala made possible the eternity of Dalí's artwork, my work captures my artistic conviction: to free creativity from the restrictions of reality, making it a timeless vehicle that dialogues with eternity and finds its profound resonance with the pillars of Surrealism.

Dalí devised a visionary 'prophecy of the future'; he considered art's primary mission to be freeing itself from the restrictions of the period, surpassing the borders of consciousness, and pointing out to humanity the direction of the spiritual future through originality and imagination. He declared that true art is superior to any media discourse and any existing artistic production, and that it possesses an eternal and timeless vitality. A review of the contemporary fashion sector shows that the rapid succession of trends, utilitarian commercial creation and aesthetic homogenisation have largely reduced fashion to a simple instrument of consumerism, stripping it of its spiritual core and its futuristic value. However, my haute couture creations have always put into practice the prophesising that is present in Dalí's work: I refuse to submit to the commercial logic of the real world, I refuse to yield to mundane aesthetic trends; artistic purity has always been my driving force; haute couture as spiritual art that transcends reality and points to the future. This work, inspired by the natural universe, was hand-embroidered over months. Each texture and each image was created with the sole objective of expressing spirituality, and with no intention to serve as clothing in real life. The value of my work is not found in recognition from the current market but rather, as Surrealist art, it offers new possibilities for the future of the art of fashion: it shows that fashion can be separated from the essence of clothing to become an artistic form that captures the spirit and foretells the future. That is precisely the most important resonance of Dalí's prophecy in the realm of fashion.

The unifying thread that has always run through the ideal of art – from the natural poetics of Millais's *Ophelia* to the mysterious spiritual universe of Dalí's Surrealism, to my own work – consists of rejecting the definitions imposed by reality and transgressing the mundane to reach eternity. While Western classical art deals with life and death from a poetic perspective and Surrealism deconstructs reality through dreams, my work is born from Chinese philosophy and uses haute couture as a vehicle to achieve an Asian interpretation of Surrealism and an elevation of the artistic dimension. My haute couture creations have never been reduced to a binary juxtaposition of Western and Eastern art, but rather I construct an Asian Surrealist language from an artistic perspective that transcends reality, so that the art of fashion has both the imagination of Western Surrealism and the spiritual profundity of Asian philosophy. The primary meaning of art lies in creating an infinite spiritual eternity in a finite real world. Just as Dalí prophesised, with his brush, a future in which art transcends reality, I use haute couture to allow fashion to transform into spiritual art. This work, inspired by a mysterious universe, is my figurative interpretation of the creative concept of 'haute couture as Surrealist art', as well as a spiritual conversation I maintain with Dalí, Gala and the entire Surrealist universe beyond the frontiers of time and civilisation. For me, haute couture has never been about clothing: it is an art separate from reality, a prophecy pointed towards the future, an eternal vehicle of the human spiritual world. That is my deepest and most definitive interpretation of fashion.



Guo Pei, *Alternate Universe*, Fall/Winter 2019 Haute Couture collection

Ruven Afanador

Magical Surrealism

Ruven Afanador is a Colombian-American photographer who lives in New York. He is known for his fashion photographs and celebrity portraits, as well as his acclaimed monographs that include *Torero*, *Sombra*, *Mil Besos*, *Ángel Gitano* and *Hijas del Agua*.

The conversation between fashion and art, particularly European Surrealism and Latin American magical realism, is a fundamental part of what inspires my images, in which – sometimes like a dance and other times like theatre – I tell stories that are born from a place beyond my mind, that which Surrealism called 'pure psychic automatism' and others now recognise as the unconscious.

I was born in Colombia and, from a very young age, I felt an enormous curiosity for the world around me; a universe in which magic was always present, both due to the nature of my country and the tenderness of my mother and sisters, who taught me, with their actions, the power of beauty and the many ways to extol and communicate it.

I remember being very young, mesmerised while watching a photographer illuminate an image with brushes and chemicals as I dreamed of constructing my own images, and I devoured the fashion photographs and the beauty contests in the newspapers and magazines and everything in my reach. I was comprehending that the creation of impactful and eloquent aesthetic images is a process in which when to press the shutter is just one of a long chain of decisions, and, once grown up, I identified, with immense admiration, that deep decision-making, detail by detail, in the works of Salvador Domingo Felipe Jacinto Dalí i Domènech.

Both fashion and art are mechanisms of expression, of communicating a particular way of seeing the world.

Just as makeup reflects the personality of the individual wearing it, the choices made behind and in front of the camera tell a story and, in the best cases, raise questions, offer a glimpse of the future...

These are certainties I've confirmed over years of experience, but I must admit that they became fundamental pillars of my creative work thanks to the Spanish aesthetic, which – with its singular fashion, dance, music and rituals, particularly in the world of bullfighting and flamenco – captivated me. With a passion that deepened my ties to the universe of Dalí, a creator who made his roots enter into dialogue with the world, in a wide range of profound ways.

I manifest that way of seeing the world in this piece, in homage to Dalí, establishing a dialogue between the lighting and framing with fashion, performance, styling and the sculptural pieces by the American artist Ray Smith, as part of an aesthetic ritual I share here with gratitude, as a contemporary visual artist who is nourished daily by drinking at the powerful spring that is the world of the quintessential Surrealist.

Dalí, an alchemist of the image, was nourished by fashion, philosophy, art, music, dance, culinary art, biology and history, and he created works that are passageways into a universe led by intuition where beauty is key; into a choreography that can unsettle... and make one reflect; where the borders between the magical and the everyday disappear, expanding our senses, which is the highest objective I have set for myself with my artistic project.

Ruven Afanador, *Fue solo un instante cuando soñé que crecía como un gigante*, New York, 2026



Albert Serra

The Key to Reading Is Always a Fiction

In 2006, Serra wrote, directed and produced his debut feature film *Honour of the Knights*, which premiered at the Directors' Fortnight, Cannes 2006. Since then, all his films have premiered at Cannes except *Story of My Death*, which won the Golden Leopard in Locarno in 2013. His major filmography includes *Birdsong* (2009), *Lord Worked Wonders in Me* (2011), *The Death of Louis XIV* (2016, Prix Jean Vigo), *Liberté* (2019, Special Jury Prize in 'Un Certain Regard' at Cannes) and *Pacifiction* (Louis Delluc Prize and two César prizes). In 2023, his documentary about a star bullfighter in Spain, *Afternoons of Solitude*, won the Golden Shell at the San Sebastian Film Festival and the Goya Prize for best documentary. He is currently working on his new feature film *Out Of This World*.

Curiously, the influence of Salvador Dalí was very important to my understanding of how to construct the characters in my films, for two key reasons. The first was determining that the Dalí 'persona', which everyone said was different from the real Dalí, was very difficult to define objectively; in other words, the limits between where this supposed character constantly being performed ended and where the 'truth' of the person began were extremely diffuse – in most cases impossible to establish. That gave me the idea that this ambiguity was more fascinating than a clear alternation between person and persona. Furthermore, the ambiguity brought out another dimension: that of the actor, who is the person with the violent vanity of feeling observed and, as such, with the need to control his or her own image to be selfishly used for their own benefit. This need for control creates an additional tension that sharpens the actor's perception, makes it more incisive and more lucid in order to leverage the latent desires of others. At the same time, I realised that, as soon as anyone is captured by a camera, they automatically become a 'character'; in other words, they are always read as a fiction, an artificial construction of the person placing themselves in a scene. Therefore, there was no need to load this performance with previously established meanings, since our gaze onto this fictional content automatically generates them in real time; all that is needed is a certain degree of pressure for the person now converted in actor by the camera's gaze to generate sufficient energy to make the character emerge, always emerging from the inanity and anaesthesia of quotidian life. The second reason, discovered in Dalí's television appearances, was his curious emanation: both an extreme spontaneity that was genuinely innocent (he always listened to his interlocutor and responded to the question – a great acting talent!) and an extreme pompous artificiality, in his gestures, in his way of speaking, in the implausible mix of the anecdotal and the categorical, etc. Also in his peculiar way of dressing, always artificially sincere and at the same time naturally tongue-in-cheek. This impossible combination in real time came to symbolise an ideal for me, and I set about studying how to recreate it in other circumstances, with actors who did not come by it as naturally as the genius of Figueres. The simplest way I found was a methodology for destroying any possibility of the actor controlling their image and, as such, making them very vulnerable and thus innocent again. Using three cameras pointed from different angles during very long takes was already a way to create that defencelessness, because no one can maintain full control over their body and mind for long enough periods of time to know exactly what they are presenting to three cameras. Mental fatigue – the loss of all hope of control – leads to innocence. Furthermore, I added a lack of communication with the actors, and an absolute lack of moral respect for who they are and for cinema as an artistic form generally. This attitude allowed me to shamelessly place them in impossible and implausible artistic situations and to shirk responsibility for their suffering over their creative impotence. However, as we have seen, all images with sufficient energy become fictional – iconic even – regardless of the absurdity or artificiality of the context in which they were created. Thus we achieved the squaring of the circle: extreme spontaneity and artifice combined with absolute naturalness, thanks to the inimitable example of the unique and incomparable Salvador Dalí.

Albert Serra, From the work *Singularity* for Documenta 13 in Kassel



‘Our high-heeled guitar uses Dalí’s same impulse and reroutes it through post-punk, pop and feminist performance: a weaponised accessory that is at once shoe, sculpture, instrument and joke’

An interview with Chicks on Speed

Chicks on Speed (CoS) is the feminist art collective co-founded in Munich in 1997 by Alex Murray-Leslie and Melissa Logan. Their practice unfolds across electronic pop, critical costume, body-centric musical instrument design, ARTivism and telematic and streamart performance. Current core members include Kathi Glas (critical costume maker and SEWTEXT practitioner), Unnur Andrea Einarsdóttir (Icelandic visual artist and pop music producer), artist philosopher Sophia Efstathiou, drag activist Kangela Tromokratisch and next-generation fine art students Tor-Ada Solberg and Mimmi Feuer. Alex Murray-Leslie, lead artistic architect of CoS and Professor of Digital Performance at the Trondheim Academy of Fine Art, NTNU, Norway, is a pioneer of computer-enhanced footwear as a site of feminist audiovisual inquiry; her artistic research into shoe-based musical instruments for pole dance and aerial performance extends CoS’s foundational *Objektinstrument* methodology into new choreographic and sonic territories.

Much more than just a music group, they are a completely multidisciplinary ‘art band’ with their fingers on the pulse of the present. Engaging with artificial intelligence and new technologies, fashion experimentation, philosophy, feminist, drag, and queer publications, and forms of community creation, for thirty years Chicks on Speed have been hoisting the avant-garde flag, heirs to the Dadaist and Surrealist movements. The clearest evidence of this are their ready-made musical instruments, like the ‘high-heeled guitar’.

Alex Murray-Leslie and Anat Ben-David performing ‘Girl Monster’ with the *E-Shoe*, wearing Peggy Noland catsuits, 2006



DALÍ NEWS

Many Surrealists, from André Breton to dissident figures within the movement, persistently upheld the ambition of erasing the distinction between art and life. Your practice likewise dissolves boundaries between artistic production, activism, and lifestyle. Could your work be understood as a continuation of the ideal of ‘total art’?

CHICKS ON SPEED

From the beginning, my artistic research, together with the solo artistic practices of all members, has unfolded into a giant synthesizer and channels of Chicks on Speed (CoS); where our experimental practices in performance intelligence and DIY technologies are the over-arching shared project. Physical, hybrid streamart and telematic performance interweave with critical costume, music, analogue/digital, pop-sloganeering, applied philosophy and research as interdependent processes affecting each other in improvised, real time. Over almost thirty years, each polymorphic element of performance, screenprinted textile garment, movement and body-centric musical instruments has added layers to this shared, cross-cultural language, like a pluridimensional collage made up of samples that constantly respond to the outside and rework the inside in 360-degree thinking (Artistic Intelligence).

Looking at the current fractiousness of global politics and the challenges facing our world, each new iteration of CoS builds fresh parts in response to these shifting societal pressures and atmospheres, so that the whole project functions as a form of ongoing live research. This live research will also begin to transcend the original line-up, as the knowings are passed on to NEXTGEN Chicks on Speed, through a process of live castings, a group of clones will take over the CoS *Gesamtkunstwerk* way of being and doing action in the world, enabling new group encounters and collaborations, unbordering, trans-generational, glitching and amplifying Chicks on Speed’s shared strategies into the next century, further imagining and translating the work until new beautiful universes begin to emerge for everyone.

What co-founding member Melissa Logan, lifelong collaborators Kathi Glas, Anat Ben-David and Tina Frank and I crafted on and off stage in the early 2000s is still present as bedrock in our performances, transformed aesthetic form, but it is continually re-voiced like we are also links in a long queer-feminist chain with new collaborators including ORLAN, Leslie Johnson, Sophia Efstathiou, Unnur Andrea, art students from Trondheim Academy of Fine Art: Tor-Ada Solberg, Sofia Reznichenko, Mimmi Feuer and Greek drag activist Kangela Tromokratisch. Together we keep building on those foundations, playing the shoe-instruments with different gestures and filter banks, recycling textiles and costumes, so that the work grows as a durational, non-linear, sustainable composition rather than a series of isolated strands. In Chicks on Speed, this has always meant that being an ‘art band’ is more than a pop musical experiment; it is also an art collective, a fashion lab, a publishing platform to nurture queer, drag and feminist artist attitudes and oeuvres, and a community-based experiment in how to live and work together over a long period of time.

There is definitely the drive to continue dissolving the clear distinction between art and life, but I understand this less as a romantic slogan and more as an everyday method of responding to the present. I see art as having the capacity to enable change for a better world: if everyone can be an artist, everyone can learn from artistic intelligence methods, imagine different narratives away from the current nostalgic loop and the rise of fascism and begin to shift how we live together. As we all learn to harness artistic intelligence and use its methods, we can evoke wild art collective change.

In that sense, each new collaborator is also a kind of Chicks on Speed ‘clone’ or echo, carrying the language into their own body and practice while changing it from the inside.

DN

Dada embraced absurdity, while Surrealism often explored fragmented identities, masks, and doubles. In your performances, identities also appear modular and mutable, and your work has been associated with these movements. Do you see this as a conscious dialogue with those avant-gardes, or rather as a response shaped by the post-internet cultural context?

CoS

I see it as both a conscious, unconscious dialogue with Dada/Surrealism and Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven is a key link between those histories and what we make. For me, Dada, Surrealism, the Situationists and Fluxus



E-Shoe by Chicks on Speed (Alex Murray-Leslie) & Max Kibardin (electronics by Alex Posada, findings by Mark Monzo & Alex Murray-Leslie), kindly supported by Craft Australia and hangarcorp, 2012., photograph by Gilmar Ribeiro

were the first movements that really mattered, they have always been the structural warp and weft for our work and figuring out an avantgarde of the now is part of our mistress-plan. Surrealism feels newly urgent in a time of rising fascism, when many forms of art are suppressed and political/free speech is punished or silenced. This kind of policing means that some activism needs to be embedded in materials, masked personas, beats in a song played at differential speeds, to avoid the tracking algorithms; to confuse, refuse and use carefully crafted metaphors, rather than shouted at in an obvious way, which in some countries can mean life or death.

Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven is particularly important to us because she shows how this can be done at the level of language and object simultaneously. Long before the canonical readymades, she was already treating found objects, DIY-fashioning and poetry as a holistic artistic practice, using short, sharp phrases, collage and 'poetic junk' to envelop complex, layered meanings. In a way, we have taken her strategies into pop music: we use slogans, cut-up phrases and short word-combinations inside our songs as a kind of linguistic readymade, something that looks simple and fun on the surface but is carrying layers of reference, over-identification and critique. The pop song becomes a ready-made structure to subvert and to use for artistic research, something Sophia Efstathiou and I termed the 'research song' this year, just as Elsa used the poem as a laboratory for thought, sexuality and resistance.

Visually, there are strong affinities too. Elsa's theatricalised alter-egos, her use of found materials, headpieces as counter-monuments, gender-nonconforming silhouettes, anticipates our own interest in popsurrealist costuming: faux-pas colour combos, juxtaposing screen printed, patterned textiles, ready-made objects turned into tools for queer-drag-feminist performance (like our high-heeled shoe guitar) and body-sculptural outfits that refuse to be practical and make you move in an awkward way. When we step on stage in these critical costumes, adorned with musical shoes and chroma-streamart backdrops that feel almost dreamlike, speculative buildings of other worlds, we love to be in that free space, to bring thoughtful and challenging co-work and joy to all on stage and our spectators, who aren't just there to passively watch, but are co-makers, who finish the pieces. In this way we are not only echoing Surrealist imaginaries; we are also inhabiting that space of the 'living readymade' that Elsa pioneered: the body as collage, the outfit as manifesto, the performance as a moving sculpture.

At the same time, our identities are shaped by the postinternet context in ways Elsa and the historical Surrealists could never fully anticipate. Our modular, shifting, masked personas, moving in between liminal spaces between art band, research group, fashion label and ARTivist branch, are constantly produced across screens, livestreams and cross-mediums. The masks and doubles are not only theatrical devices; they're also responses to a culture where we are permanently profiled, archived and algorithmically sorted. So when we play with fragmentation, avatars and alter-egos, we are in dialogue with Dada and Surrealism, but we are also talking back to techno-capitalism: showing how identities can be remixed on our own terms rather than only through corporate big-tech interfaces.

All of this happens against the backdrop of very concrete violence: genocides, border regimes, the 'slow violence' of climate collapse. Like Surrealists working under authoritarian regimes, we use utopia logics, messy juxtapositions, funology and symbolic objects to keep critique moving in hostile environments. I think here of artists in Lebanon, Egypt, Palestine, Iran and across West Asia who have long used 'steganography' embedding irony, allegory and surreal everyday images to talk through censorship and oppression, about imperialist wars, evil regimes and occupation in ways that (g)local audiences can read, communicate information through, but are harder to police. I think of here peer artists like Abosahar's rough, 'trobby' soundscapes built from cheap, stressed gear and distorted folk references, that also operate as political noise, amplifying the chaos and precarity produced by these same regimes while smuggling subversive energies onto Cairo dancefloors. Also, the work of artists like polymath AATMA, Mohammad Bayesteh, Mohamed A. Gawad and our own turn to surreal strategies, whether in musical shoes, *Objektinstruments* or music videos, is part of our bigger toolbox and in solidarity with oppressed peoples in Gaza, Palestine, Lebanon, Iran, Afghanistan and everywhere, and against the militaryindustrial complex.

So I would say: yes, our work is in deliberate dialogue with those historical avantgardes (to re-invent them), and especially with someone like Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven, but that dialogue is being crafted through the lenses of post-internet life, ARTivism and contemporary struggles. The pop song, the costume and the surreal image become places where those histories and our present multi-crises are superposed, different 'realities' that overlap, clash, learn from and generate new imaginaries, thought experiments, becomings for how to live and act in solidarity, in community now.

DN

In addition to hybridising art, music, and technology, your performances incorporate other disciplines, such as fashion. What role does fashion play in your artistic identity? What initially seemed rooted in punk aesthetics has, over time, led you to collaborate with highly visible and mainstream designers such as Karl Lagerfeld, albeit in often fortuitous or ironic ways. Could you reflect on that trajectory and on how you understand the relationship between fashion and your work today? What place does it occupy now?

CoS

Fashion has always been part of our artistic identity and over time it shifted from 'looking punk' to using clothes as a research tool and a surface for language. In the group, Kathi Glas' work as critical costume builder and performance artist is central: through her SEWTEXT tactic she literally 'sews text', high contrasting images and slogans into garments and appliqué textile works, whether a slogan or the face of Francesca Albanese, so that fashion becomes a wearable interface for ARTivism.

Working with Karl Lagerfeld was so formative for me, because it completely questioned how I understood authorship, branding and collaboration. On the outside he was the 'face' of the Chanel house, but inside the studio we saw an incredibly skilled and talented collective at work: hair-cutters, craftspeople, imagemakers, music stylists, all comaking this socalled singular vision. Spending time in his secret studio behind the bookshop L7 in Paris, working on our *Fashion Rule*s record cover and the 'The Music Looks Better With You' story for *V Magazine*, we realised that the mythology of the lonely genius wasn't the reality of this lively, exciting, creative, interdependent ecosystem.

'Dada, Surrealism, the Situationists and Fluxus were the first movements that really mattered, they have always been the structural warp and weft for our work and figuring out an avantgarde of the now is part of our mistress-plan. Surrealism feels newly urgent in a time of rising fascism, when many forms of art are suppressed and political/free speech is punished or silenced. This kind of policing means that some activism needs to be embedded in materials, masked personas, beats in a song played at differential speeds, to avoid the tracking algorithms; to confuse, refuse and use carefully crafted metaphors, rather than shouted at in an obvious way, which in some countries can mean life or death'.

That experience went directly into Chicks on Speed: the idea of the art collective as an expanded studio, where pop music, fashion, graphics and performance are made together in real time where different skills are valued equally, and where we consciously play with the surface of our 'band as brand' while showing that behind it there is always a group of amazing people making things happen together, through generosity, sharing and caring in the creative act.

DN

In the 'future prediction' published in *Nugget* magazine, Salvador Dalí imagined musical high-heeled shoes made from rhinoceros horn. The similarity between that idea and your 'high heeled guitar', created in connection with the song 'We Don't Play Guitars' (2003), is striking. How do you understand the relationship between Dalí's imagined instrument and your own?

CoS

It was so amazing to see Dalí's conceptual footwear! I think of Dalí's rhinoceros-heeled shoes and our high-heeled guitar less as a direct quote and more as a kind of *rememory* two moments where surreal speculation solidifies into an instrument that can exist in the world. Dalí's imagined shoe condenses desire, danger and 'divine geometry' into a single impossible object, while our high-heeled guitar for 'We Don't Play Guitars' uses that same impulse and reroutes it through post-punk, pop and feminist performance: a weaponised accessory that is at once shoe, sculpture, instrument and joke. In that sense the relationship is not linear influence but shared method, using a hybrid, absurd object to disturb how music, bodies and gender are supposed to fit together and the guitar-heel becomes a way of listening back to histories like Dalí's while actively reshaping how they live, and sound, in the present.

DN

Beyond the high-heeled guitar, you have created other instruments or sonic sculptures (*Objektinstruments*) that have become a hallmark of your practice. Could you tell us which ones you consider most representative and how they came into being?

CoS

The same logic continues in my Computer Enhanced Footwear (CEF) research, where the design of footbased instruments can't be disentangled from the scenes, bodies and hybrid worlds of Chicks on Speed and collaborators that activate them. The first shoeinstrument was the High-Heeled Shoe Guitar (2003), which was made out of necessity, to confront the macho rock-guitar solo and serve as bodycentric tools of empowerment when we performed our song 'We Don't Play Guitars'.

In my PhD, this grew into a whole taxonomy of *Objektinstruments* and CEF prototypes, from preprototype BipedShoes to the different generations of Computer Enhanced Footwear for areal dance (they don't work on the ground) all treating the shoe as both prop and interface, a way to 'demake' the high heel and re-inscribe it as a foot-centric feminist audiovisual instrument for the feet. For example, CEF Prototype 1 placed wireless sensors in a 3D-printed heel attached to a Bruno Magli/Max Kibardin-designed upper, so that aerial foot gestures could control FM-synthesised sound in real time, while later versions extended into pole-dancing shoes for a trans-pole dancer Marla Bendini, underwater experiments and stretch-sensor toe socks, always testing how choreographed sound, costume and gesture can converge in a theatrical *Gesamtkunstwerk*.

DN

Your work has consistently combined irony, critique, and rebellion, as seen in albums such as *Utopia* (2014) and the more recent *Heartopia* (2025). In the video for the track 'Synthesize', from the latter, footage of the war in Gaza taken from news broadcasts unfolds beneath the rhythms of highly danceable electronic music. How would you describe this particular mode of critique that you employ?

CoS

Our mode of critique in 'Synthesize' comes from placing pop music and institutional language in the same frame, while refusing to resolve the tension between them. 'Synthesize' was written by Melissa and me with Christopher Just and Armageddon Turk. The song's central slogan, 'beautiful, sustainable, together', is quoted directly from the language of the New European Bauhaus, a phrase intended to embody the EU's visionary, community-driven values. The song asks what these values mean, and what Europe might become: in the spirit of philosopher Rosi Braidotti's post-national thinking, it considers the possibility of a post-national Europe.[1]

'Beautiful, sustainable, together' can no longer be heard as innocent decorative pop; it began to sound like the slogan of a two-faced society and one that needs to face up to itself, like an invitation for Europe to imagine and shape a new future, one that is interdependent, inclusive, and open to everyone and all cultures. The track's hook, taken from the New European Bauhaus, becomes a kind of linguistic ouroboros: a loop in which a progressive slogan turns back on itself, questions its own conditions and transforms into a call for action.

I met Saif Abukeshek and I was one of many artists, doctors, lawyers and social actors who joined the Global March to Gaza (now Global Movement to Gaza), which culminated in Cairo and was intended as a march to the Rafah border with aid and to pressure Egypt and other governments to end the blockade and the ongoing genocide against the people of Gaza, Palestine. After that mission I continued to work with the Global Sumud Flotilla group and supported the first flotilla mission with my colleagues Susan Abdallah and Bassam Hussein. Much of the footage in the 'Synthesize' video comes from this context: material from comrades on the boats, my own documentation from Cairo when the Egyptian police stopped us moving from Aresh checkpoint and effectively shut down the march, alongside footage I gained permission to use from social media platforms, like from the artist Seun Kuti.

Setting these images against the critical pop sloganeering of the electronic track is not about making atrocity 'cool'; it is about refusing the comfort of separation. The beat invites you in to listen and at the same time the images insist on looking and taking a stance on the violence and complicity perpetrated. It could be described as an aestheticethical stance, a refusal to flatten complex lives into consumable positions and a commitment to seeing, even when institutions (whether the EU or the art world, etc.) would prefer that we look away. The track's hook, taken from the New European Bauhaus, becomes a kind of ouroboros of language, a loop where a progressive slogan eats itself, exposing the gap between branding and action.

I also understand this mode of critique through surrealist traditions that link artistic metaphors and resistance. There is a long history of artists using humour, satire and pop forms to resist fascism and authoritarianism: laughing in the face of power, teasing out the absurdity of propaganda (bands like Laibach, for example, or the inflatable performers that were taking on ICE in Mineapolis), using catchy phrases to sneak critical content into everyday life. Our pop structures, hooks and documentary filmic sampling work in that lineage. We try to think with images (Busch, 2026), treating them not as decoration but as tiny acts of ARTivism: visual propositions that carry analysis, memory and dissent into public space, where they can quietly unsettle. They are not there to anaesthetise, but to open people up, to make space for difficult images and conversations in environments (cross-media feeds, playlists and festivals) where political content is often shadow-banned and censored.

So I would describe our mode of critique as an insistence on keeping complexity intact: using the tools of pop, fun, rhythm, beauty, fashion to carry uncomfortable, complex meanings and using the seemingly fun medium of pop music to connect those truths to real struggles on the ground. It is a way of saying that pop music and resistance are not opposites, and that dancing with others can be part of a serious, unscripted culture of refusal.

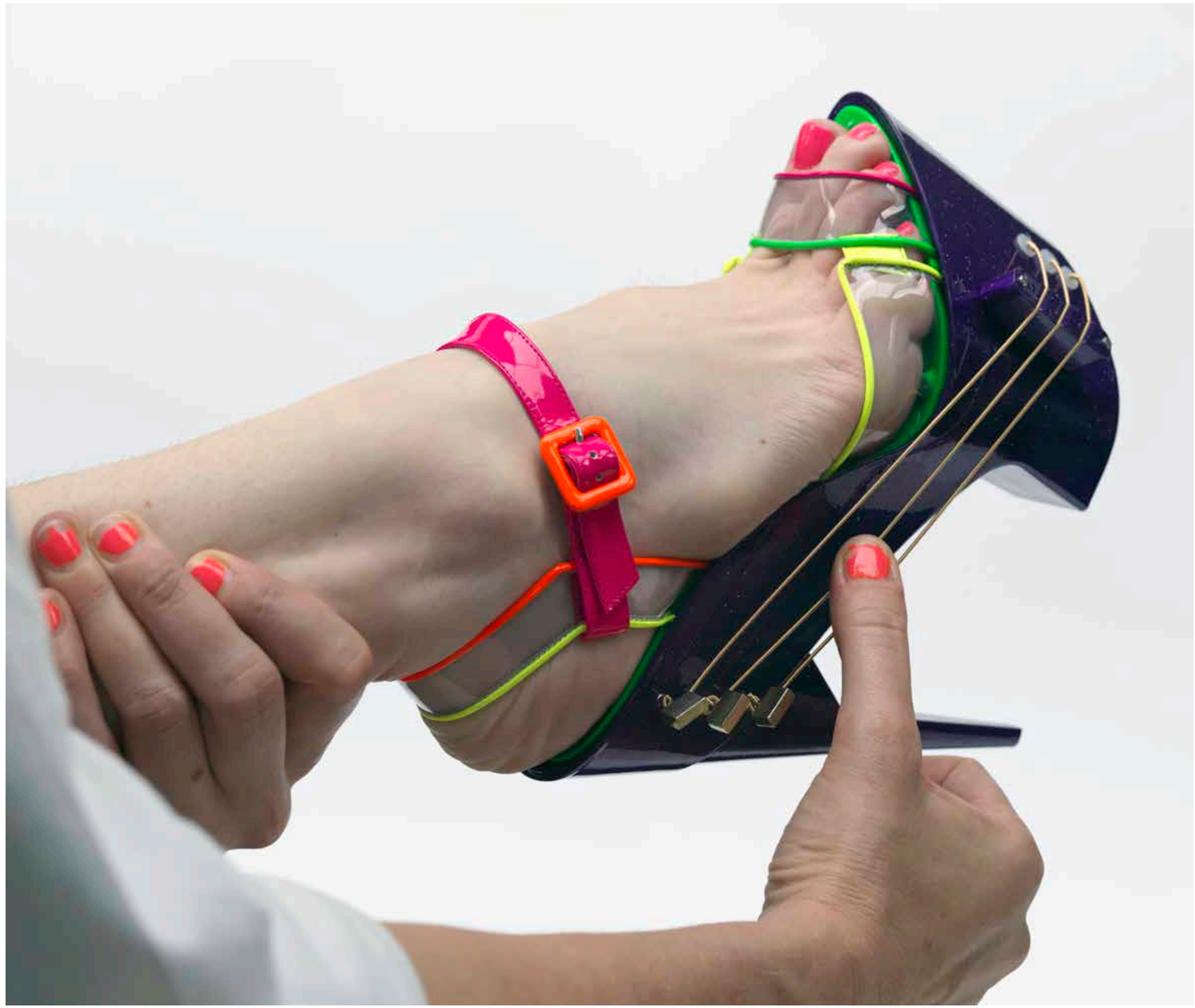
DN

Some Surrealist artists, such as Salvador Dalí, eventually became media figures. You likewise engage with self-mythologisation and pop culture. In what ways does this strategy function as a form of institutional critique, and in what ways might it also be read as a mode of adaptation or survival within cultural capitalism?

CoS

We've always used selfmythologisation as a way to show how pop identities are manufactured while also hacking those mechanisms for our own subversive survival. Seeing Dalí on a game show or spray painting a costume to show how the intestines work in such a theatricality and cheeky intelligence was formative for me, it showed how an artist can turn mass media itself into a performance, just as strongly as the tactics of bands like The KLF, whose 'manual' we quite literally treated as a blueprint. In that sense, Chicks on Speed was built as a kind of scripted myth from the start: a 'fake band' assembled from logos, outfits, staged interviews and later records, using the 'band as brand' both as institutional critique and as a pragmatic toolkit to navigate, and survive inside cultural capitalism whilst 'selling out' or not.

1. Rosi Braidotti, *Post-Nationalism*, Berggruen Press, 2026.



E-Shoe by Chicks on Speed (Alex Murray-Leslie) & Max Kibardin (electronics by Alex Posada, findings by Mark Monzo & Alex Murray-Leslie), kindly supported by Craft Australia and hangar.org, 2012, photograph by Gilmar Ribeiro

'Working with Karl Lagerfeld completely questioned how I understood authorship, branding and collaboration. On the outside he was the "face" of the Chanel house, but inside the studio we saw an incredibly skilled and talented collective at work. That experience went directly into Chicks on Speed: the idea of the art collective as an expanded studio, where pop music, fashion, graphics and performance are made together in real time where different skills are valued equally, and where we consciously play with the surface of our "band as brand" while showing that behind it there is always a group of amazing people making things happen together, through generosity, sharing and caring in the creative act'.

The Skeleton in the Closet

Rosalind McKever

Dr Rosalind McKever is Curator of Paintings and Drawings at the V&A and a specialist in modern European art. At the V&A, her exhibitions include 'Schiaparelli: Fashion Becomes Art' (2026) and 'Fashioning Masculinities: The Art of Menswear' (2022). She has also written the book *Vanessa Bell: Modern Living* (Thames and Hudson, 2025). She has held fellowships at the National Gallery, London, and the Metropolitan Museum of Art of New York.

According to Salvador Dalí, a 'new morphological phenomenon' took place in Elsa Schiaparelli's atelier: the transubstantiation of the essence of things through fashion design. But what happens when these works of art, such as the iconic *Skeleton Dress* the pair created in 1938, enter a museum collection rather than a wardrobe? Rosalind McKever, curator of 'Schiaparelli: Fashion Becomes Art' (V&A), explains in this article how the transformative power of garments is not only preserved but amplified and projected into the future, as the museum becomes a vast showcase with its own very particular qualities.

When reflecting on the events of 1935, his disinterest in politics and 'mania for wearing elegant clothes', Dalí's thoughts turned to the new Paris premises of couturier Elsa Schiaparelli. Bringing together her couture salon and her 'Schiap Shop' boutique, 21 Place Vendôme became renowned for its eye-catching window displays. These starred Schiaparelli's wooden, articulated mascots-cum-mannequins, Pascal and Pascaline, playfully posed by Bettina Bergery, who had introduced Dalí to Schiaparelli. Dalí, who himself dressed a window of New York department store Bonwit Teller in full Surrealist style in 1936, was only too aware of the transformational potential of fashion and its display. In his autobiography, he continued: 'Here [at Schiaparelli] new morphological phenomena occurred; here the essence of things was to become transubstantiated; here the tongues of fire of the Holy Ghost of Dalí were going to descend.'[1]

Fashion was a point of fascination for Dalí and many artists and writers of his generation precisely for its capacity to change the wearer, outside and in. The metamorphic quality of Schiaparelli's clothes also struck their mutual friend and collaborator, the poet, playwright and artist Jean Cocteau. Writing in *Harper's Bazaar* in 1937, Cocteau caricatured Schiaparelli's atelier as 'a devil's laboratory', adding: 'Women who go there fall into a trap, and come out masked, disguised, deformed or reformed, according to Schiaparelli's whim.'[2] Both Cocteau and Dalí wanted in. With Schiaparelli they produced garments with anamorphic embroideries and *trompe l'oeil* prints; they transformed eyes into brooches and telephone dials into makeup compacts.

Dalí worked with Schiaparelli on the fantastical summer 1938 Schiaparelli collection themed around the circus and presented as a dazzling spectacle. Together they created the Skeleton dress, with padded, quilted bones pressing through black crêpe, its visible zips at side and shoulder drawing the fabric tight to the skin. With hindsight Dalí could see the shadow of war cast over these years, yet his drawing for the dress is anything but macabre. Beneath the ink drawing of skeletons posing like fashion models reads a cheery inscription: 'Chère Elsa, I like this idea of bones on the outside enormously.'

The woman who zipped herself into this skin-tight dress was the American actor Ruth Ford, who appeared in both Hollywood films and on Broadway, and whose Schiaparelli garments were – like those of Gala Dalí – funded by British patron Edward James. She was one of a clique of actors and performers who favoured Schiaparelli, which included Mae West, Marlene Dietrich, Katharine Hepburn and Joséphine Baker. Whether dressing for the stage, the set or the street, these women were finely attuned to the power of clothing for presenting and transforming themselves.

The same rang true for Surrealists who dressed in Schiaparelli, including Italo-Argentinian artist Leonor Fini and the Argentinian-British artist Eileen Agar. The latter recalled: 'The Surrealist women, whether painters or not, […] were elegant and dressed with

> Nothing is in fact more tragic and vain than fashion, and […] the war which was soon to break out and which was going to liquidate the post-war revolutions was symbolized, not by the surrealist polemics in the café on the Place Blanche, […] but by the dressmaking establishment which Elsa Schiaparelli was about to open on the Place Vendôme.
>
> —Salvador Dalí, *The Secret Life of Salvador Dalí*, 1942

View of the exhibition 'Fashion: An Anthology by Cecil Beaton' held at the V&A Museum, London, 1971



1. Salvador Dalí, *The Secret Life of Salvador Dalí*, Dial Press, New York, 1942, p. 340.

2. Jean Cocteau, 'From Worth to Alix', *Harper's Bazaar*, vol. 70, no. 2693, March 1937, pp. 128–129, 143, 172; p. 172.

panache, caring about clothes and their surroundings, however strange the interiors. […] The juxtaposition by us of a Schiaparelli dress with outrageous behaviour or conversation was simply carrying the beliefs of Surrealism into public existence.'[3]

If Surrealist women embraced fashion, and especially Schiaparelli, many surrealist men felt and feared its lure. André Breton identified the modern mannequin as an example of the marvellous, and thus of the beautiful, in his 1924 *Manifesto of Surrealism*, but lashed out against Surrealists with sartorial impulses. The poet and novelist Louis Aragon, whose dandiacal tendencies manifested in his ownership of 2000 ties, and who aided his partner, writer Elsa Triolet, with the promotion of her jewellery designs for Schiaparelli, was highly attuned to fashion's pull. In *The Libertine*, also published in 1924, he observed 'We notice new dresses and old ones. Our eyes grow accustomed to looking at dress trimmings. Bit by bit our minds stop thinking about anything which hasn't to do with fashionable materials. We become adept at grasping the essence of an object, what makes it fashionable. We register new ideas about wearing clothes. There you are. Oh, we're proud machines!'.[4]

The sensibility towards the temporality of fashion, distinguishing the new from the old, would make fashion essential to the wider modernist project of making art for a new age. Fashion is exquisitely sensitive to the clock and calendar, the daily cycle of daywear to evening, the seasonal loops of Spring/Summer and Fall/Winter. To be fashionable is to be of the moment, and already passing out of it, already on the verge of being last season, last year, last decade. Giorgio Agamben has characterised fashion as a perpetual existence at the ungraspable threshold between the not-yet and the no-more.[5] The artistic avant-gardes likewise traded on novelty, contemporaneity, and the subject of dress preoccupied the Futurists in Milan and Rome, the Dadas in Berlin, Cologne and New York, the Orphists in Paris and the Bloomsberries in London.

Fashion's unique combination of temporal and gendered experience captured the attention of British writer Virginia Woolf. In 1927, the very year Schiaparelli started her fashion house, Woolf published 'The New Dress'. This short story, written in the shadow of her novel *Mrs Dalloway*, which concerns a woman's self-consciousness about attending a party wearing a new, yet old-fashioned, dress. The previous year a photograph of Woolf had appeared wearing her mother's dress in the *Vogue*; she knew exactly what she was writing about. In her diary, Woolf had given the name 'frock consciousness' to how our clothing can affect our feelings, and vice versa.[6] This idea permeates Woolf's writing of this period, most of all, *Orlando*. A novel styled as a biography, Orlando follows the life of an aristocratic British poet from the sixteenth-century to 1928, the year Woolf published the book. Throughout the story, Orlando unwittingly skips a century in their sleep; they update their wardrobe to the fashions of the day. 'Vain trifles as they seem, clothes have, they say, more important offices than merely to keep us warm. They change our view of the world and the world's view of us.' The gendered experience of dress is central to the book. Halfway through, Orlando awakes to discover 'he was a woman.' The resulting change in wardrobe impacts Orlando's behaviour and place in society. As Woolf puts it, and as Schiaparelli well knew: 'the clothes wear us, not we them'.[7]

Yet how can Dalí's 'morphological phenomena' and Woolf's 'frock consciousness' survive when fashion enters the art museum? Can the *Skeleton Dress* continue to live without the fleshly body beneath to feel the quilted ribs against their own, and the consciousness to experience the thrill of stepping out in the latest Schiaparelli? It is fifty years since Ruth Ford donated numerous pieces to the V&A, the largest gift of Schiaparelli garments and accessories from a single client. Her presence, and that of other wearers and clients, is manifested in 'Schiaparelli: Fashion Becomes Art' through the labels but necessarily remains phantasmic.[8]

In the museum, the transubstantiation happens in the textile conservation and costume mounting studio. Here the garments transition from lying flat in a tissue-paper-lined garment box to perpendicular on a bespoke mannequin. Each figure is shaped to suit the couture garment's interior form. As Schiaparelli herself declared in her own *Twelve Commandments for Women*, 'Never fit the dress to the body, but train the body to fit the dress.'[9] Softly padded underpinnings support the garment. In the case of the *Skeleton Dress*, it emerges from its cardboard coffin, ready for its quilted exoskeleton to be supported by another beneath. This work is staunchly invisible, deliberately drawing attention to the detailing. While today the *Skeleton Dress* is shown on a simple black mannequin with a featureless head, when it first went on display at the V&A, the mounting was not so minimalist. In Cecil Beaton's 1971 exhibition 'Fashion: An Anthology', the Schiaparelli garments were posed in a rocky Dalí-dreamscape painted by Patrick D. Stackhouse. For the Skeleton dress, the mannequin's head was an animal skull with twisting horns, with a Schiaparelli doll-sized hat – also donated by Ford – perched atop. This tongue-in-cheek stagecraft references both the garment's sartorial skeleton and the extraordinary window displays created in Place Vendôme and those by Dalí.

Entering the museum showcase, the mannequin raised onto a plinth and placed behind a gleaming sheet of glass, in some ways returns the garment to the metamorphic potential it held in the shop window as the sample model which would be remade to the client's proportions. Here the consciousnesses impacted by these garments are those of the visitors. Walking around a fashion exhibition, one hears the same exchanges as in front of a boutique. 'Which do you want to wear? I am not sure I could pull that one off. This one would look great on you!' Yet this is a more fantastical relationship with the clothes than gazing through the glass while window shopping. Transported away from the street itself, no longer exposed to the elements and noise,

3. Eileen Agar, *A Look at My Life*, Methuen, London, 1988, p. 120.
4. Louis Aragon, *The Libertine*, Calder Publications, London, 1987, pp. 164, 173–175 and 181. See also Krzysztof Fijalkowski, 'Fashion in the Formative Years of Parisian Surrealism: the Dress of Time, the Dress of Space', *Journal of Surrealism and the Americas*, 12:1, 2021, pp. 6–32.
5. Giorgio Agamben, 'What is the Contemporary?'. In *What Is an Apparatus? and Other Essays*, De Gruyter, Berlin, 2020, p. 48.
6. Virginia Woolf, *The Diary of Virginia Woolf*, 5 vols, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, New York, 1977–1984, vol. 3, p. 12.
7. *Ibid.*
8. On Schiaparelli's work with Dalí, her clients and work with actors on- and off-stage, see *Schiaparelli: Fashion Becomes Art*, V&A, London, 2026.
9. Elsa Schiaparelli, *Shocking Life: The Autobiography of Elsa Schiaparelli*, V&A, London, 2018, p. 226.

Salvador Dalí and Elsa Schiaparelli, *Skeleton Dress*, Summer 1938, *Le Cirque* collection



While today the Skeleton Dress is shown on a simple black mannequin with a featureless head, when it first went on display at the V&A, the mounting was not so minimalist. In Cecil Beaton's 1971 exhibition 'Fashion: An Anthology', the Schiaparelli garments were posed in a rocky Dalí-dreamscape painted by Patrick Stackhouse. For the *Skeleton Dress*, the mannequin's head was an animal skull with twisting horns, with a Schiaparelli doll-sized hat perched atop. This tongue-in-cheek stagecraft references both the garment's sartorial skeleton and the extraordinary window displays created in Place Vendôme and those by Dalí.

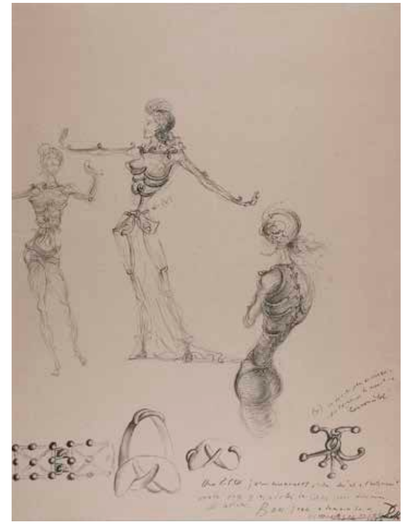
the exhibition creates otherworldly conditions. Low lighting needed to preserve textiles focuses the eyes, and the soundscape lures other senses. At the museum, no credit card can overcome the barrier between the would-be wearer and the desired garment, and yet, freed from the practical concerns of sizing and affordability, the visitor can project not only how they would look in a garment, but how they would feel.

This feeling, this fantasy is not, crucially and paradoxically, one of fashionability. Nor is it Woolf's frock consciousness of wearing a dress from another age. The museum, whether through temporary exhibition or permanent collection, fundamentally alters fashion's temporality. It plucks fashion from its relentless contemporaneity and reveals, even facilitates, its longer loops of revival, quotation and nostalgia. Even a swift transition from catwalk to museum collection means that the look has already been succeeded by several others. The moment of its maximum charge – the shock of newness, the electricity of the runway, the immediate desire it provoked – has passed. The garment arrives in the museum already posthumous, already historical; its veil of transience is traded for a mantle of permanence.

Preservation might seem to consign a once-fashionable garment to the past tense, to stagnate in a storage facility or a showcase a garment designed to move on the body and an industry built on constant transformation. The museum provides fashion with a third space: neither the intimate realm of the wardrobe nor the commercial circuits of the runway and boutique. Here, fashion's embodiment, temporality and consciousness are transformed with the future in mind. In the permanent collection, fashion is held not as relic but as possibility: each detail painstakingly preserved for later generations, for future designers, future wearers, future acts of becoming. Preservation, then, does not arrest fashion in time so much as prepare it for recurrence.

The *Skeleton Dress* is reborn with every viewing. This is in part intrinsic to a future-coded garment which acts as a *memento mori*, anticipating both the death of the wearer and, as Dalí perceived, the violence of the coming war. Its afterlife proves fashion's strange temporal elasticity. Elsa Schiaparelli's exoskeletons again rose to the surface in the house of Schiaparelli's Haute Couture Spring/Summer 2024 collection, designed by Creative Director Daniel Roseberry. At 'Schiaparelli: Fashion Becomes Art' this recurrence is implied in the exhibition's very structure: the visitor encounters the Skeleton dress as the first object in the show, and meets her again in a déjà vu moment halfway through, before her younger sister, the Daniel Roseberry *Skeleton Dress* worn by Dua Lipa, closes out the finale.

Skeletons abounded on the red carpet for the 2026 *Fashion is Art* Met Gala celebrating the opening of the 'Costume Art' exhibition at the Metropolitan Museum of Art's Costume Institute. The exhibition itself pairs garments with artworks, especially sculpture, to reveal the inherent relationship between clothing and the body. The clothed body is a subject found across the museum's millennia of artistic holdings, and as every visitor brings their own living example to the exhibition, 'Costume Art', like 'Schiaparelli: Fashion Becomes Art', is indicative of an embodied, affective understanding of fashion's power. This has been increasingly evident in museum exhibitions since the exhibitions 'Alexander McQueen: Savage Beauty' staged at the Met and the V&A which harnessed the otherworldly quality of McQueen's designs to create an immersive, transformative visitor experience. Indeed, a shift in emphasis onto the wearers, and the way clothing models identity, has been central to many recent exhibitions at these institutions and elsewhere, from the Met's 'Camp: Notes on Fashion' (2019) and 'Superfine: Tailoring Black Style' (2025), to the V&A's 'Frida Kahlo: Making Her Self Up' (2018) to 'Fashioning Masculinities: The Art of Menswear' (2022). The success of these exhibitions has been in their appeal to the public's 'frock consciousness', and the skeleton will not go back into the closet.



Salvador Dalí, *The Skeleton Woman*, *c.* 1938

My Battle. My Participation and My Position in the Surrealist Revolution. ‘Surrealist Object’ Versus ‘Narrated Dream’. Critical-Paranoiac Activity Versus Automatism

Salvador Dalí

Salvador Dalí, *The Secret Life of Salvador Dalí*, Dial Press, New York, 1942, pp. 312–314.

[...] I was determined to carry out and transform into reality my slogan of the ‘surrealist object’ – the irrational object, the object with a symbolic function – which I set up against narrated dreams, automatic writing, etc. And to achieve this I decided to create the fashion of surrealist objects. The surrealist object is one that is absolutely useless from the practical and rational point of view, created wholly for the purpose of materializing in a fetishistic way, with the maximum of tangible reality, ideas and fantasies having a delirious character. The existence and circulation of this kind of mad object began to compete so violently with the useful and practical object that one would have thought one was witnessing a regular fight of blood-crazed cocks, from which the reality of the normal object frequently emerged with a good many of its feathers savagely torn out. The apartments in Paris that were vulnerable to surrealism soon became cluttered with this kind of object, disconcerting at first glance, but by virtue of which people were no longer limited to talking about their phobias, manias, feelings and desires, but could now touch them, manipulate and operate them with their own hands. And, remembering that the landscape is a ‘state of the soul’, these people were now able to stroke the naked body of another truth of Catholic essence, which had sprung from my well – that the object is a ‘state of grace’.

The vogue of surrealist objects[1] discredited and buried the one which had preceded it, the period called ‘of dreams’. Nothing now appeared more boring, more out of place and anachronistic, than to relate one’s dreams or to write fantastic and incongruous tales at the automatic dictate of the unconscious. The surrealist object had created a new need of reality. People no longer wanted to hear the ‘potential marvelous’ talked about. They wanted to touch the ‘marvelous’ with their hands, see it with their eyes, and have proof of it in reality. Living and decapitated figures, beings formed of the most diverse zoological and botanical juxtapositions, the Martian and abysmal landscapes of the subconscious, and flying viscera persecuting decahedrons in flames already at this time appeared intolerably monotonous, exorbitantly and anachronistically romantic. The surrealists of Central Europe, the Japanese, and the latecomers of all nations took hold of these facile formulae of the never seen in order to astonish their fellow-citizens. This kind of fantasy, combined with a certain sense of fashion, could also become a rich field for the effective decoration of up-to-date shops that know their business.

With the surrealist object I thus killed elementary surrealist painting, and modern painting in general.

1. One of the most typical Surrealist objects was the cup, saucer and spoon made of fur imagined by Méret Oppenheim, which is now in the possession of the Museum of Modern Art in New York.

Philippe Halsman
Salvador Dalí with Rhinoceros
1956

In 1956 Salvador Dalí, the subject most frequently photographed by Halsman, had an obsession with mathematics and mysticism, and the interconnection of the two. Always dissecting reality with his 'paranoiac-critical' method, he discovered the same sacred geometric spiral was apparent in a rhino's horn as in Vermeer's painting, *The Lacemaker*. Dalí was invited on CBS' *Morning Show* to present his findings, and Halsman, who collaborated with Dalí over the course of 37 years, was backstage to document the unfolding event. There were many props on hand to illustrate Dalí's theories, including the rhino pictured, 20 cauliflowers nailed to boards in Fibonacci spirals, and enlargements of microscopic photos of nature illustrating the same spiral. In the case of this one photograph, both artists had found obsessions to direct their creative energies into: Dalí's unfolding spiral research, and Halsman's favorite spiral-mustached muse.



Philippe Halsman was born in Riga, Latvia, in 1906. He moved to Paris in 1930, where he began his career as a photographer. In 1940, fleeing the Nazi regime, he emigrated with his family to New York. After years of dedication, his career took off in the early 1940s, with prestigious advertising awards, his first 101 covers for *Life* magazine, and his initial meeting with Salvador Dalí. Their 37-year collaboration and friendship would give rise to some of the most iconic Surrealist photographs of the twentieth-century, such as *Dalí Atomicus* and *In Voluptate Mors*. Known as the 'star maker', Halsman was famous for his iconic portraits of celebrities and political figures, who appeared on the covers of the biggest magazines in the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s. Today, Halsman's work continues to be shown around the world and is held in many major museum collections.

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Philippe Halsman, *Salvador Dalí with Rhinoceros*, 1956
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© Salvador Dalí, Fundació Gala-Salvador Dalí, Figueres, 2026

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© Chicks on Speed, 2006

Chicks on Speed
E-Shoe by Chicks on Speed (Alex Murray-Leslie) & Max Kibardin (electronics by Alex Posada, findings by Mark Monzo & Alex Murray-Leslie), kindly supported by Craft Australia and hangar.org, 2012 (p. 60; p. 63)
Gilmar Ribeiro © Chicks on Speed, 2012

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© Arxiu fotogràfic Oriol Maspons, VEGAP, Girona, 2026

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© Man Ray 2015 Trust, VEGAP, Girona, 2026

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Archivo Fundació-Gala Salvador Dalí
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Eric Schaal © Fundació Gala-Salvador Dalí, Figueres, 2026

Georges and Fernand Detaille
Salvador Dalí and Gala at Gabrielle Chanel's villa La Pausa in Roquebrune, 1938 (p. 43)
Archive Fundació Gala-Salvador Dalí

Oriol Maspons and Julio Ubiña
Gala and Salvador Dalí in the Milky Way at Portlligat wearing the Beistegui Ball costumes designed by Dior, 1960 (p. 45)
Elsa Peretti, Salvador Dalí and Natasha Gounkevich wearing Paco Rabanne's *Unwearable Dresses* in the courtyard of the house in Portlligat, 1966 (p. 47)
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View of the exhibition 'Fashion: An Anthology by Cecil Beaton' held at the V&A Museum, London, 1971 (p. 65)
Courtesy of Victoria & Albert Museum

Regarding the image of Salvador Dalí and Gala
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The design of this publication is based on the two issues of DALÍ NEWS from the first era, published in New York on 20 November 1945 and 25 November 1947, respectively.



In 1957, the American magazine *Nugget* commissioned Salvador Dalí to create a series of 'illustrated predictions' about inventions that, in his view, were destined to be realised in the future. One of these were the 'musical rhinoceros shoes', which served as the inspiration for this second monograph of the second period of DALÍ NEWS. Below these lines is a reproduction of the original publication from 30 April 1957.



The works of Salvador Dalí are always identified by a number from the Catalogue Raisonné of Sculpture, which refers to the *Catalogue Raisonné of Sculpture and Three-dimensional Work by Salvador Dalí* and from the Catalogue Raisonné of Paintings, which refers to the *Catalogue Raisonné of Paintings by Salvador Dalí (1910–1983)*, available on the website of the Fundació Gala-Salvador Dalí (https://catalogues.salvador-dali.org/catalogues/en/catalogue-raisonne-sculpture/ and https://catalogues.salvador-dali.org/catalogues/en/catalogue-raisonne-paintings/).

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I have had creative dreams all night. In one of them, I invented a complete dress collection.

—Salvador Dalí, *Diary of a genius*, 1964



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