

Guide

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Gala Dalí Castle

Púbol

DALÍ

—I give you a Gothic castle Gala.
—I accept on one condition,
that you only come to visit me
in the castle by invitation.
—I accept, since I accept in
principle all on condition there are
conditions. It is the same principle
of courtly love.



Dalí in his studio in Portlligat, 1971.



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The refuge of the visible woman

The castle of Púbol is the second side of what is called the Dalinian Triangle. In chronological order, this triangle is made up of, firstly, the painter's house in Portlligat; secondly, the castle of Púbol, for Gala, and where, on her death, the painter moved into until 1984; and third, the Dalí Theatre-Museum in Figueres, which was opened on the 28 of September 1974.

The castle of Púbol — a medieval building acquired in 1969, where Dalí undertook an overwhelming creative effort thinking of one person, Gala, and of one function, an appropriate place for the rest and refuge of his wife— delighted Gala, who especially loved the garden and the flowers, above all the roses, which reminded her of a garden in Crimea, where she had spent her summer holidays as a child. Gala frequented the castle, her space and refuge, between 1971 and 1980, usually in short stays during the summer, where she received some of her lovers.

Dalí's creative versatility, on the other hand, gave the architectural aspect of Púbol another reading and it is in this sense that we can highlight the condensed narrative that exists in this creation: it is not simply another place to live, it is not only an accumulation of objects —despite the fact that in very specific spaces there are—, the castle is a construction, reconstruction, where he wanted to give meaning to a space, and Gala, in this case, was an active part in finally providing a multiplicity of meanings to the castle, of intervening in the work, in a way that that this architecture interweaves in the biography of Dalí and Gala, and forms an inseparable part of the final stages of both figures.



Le Vogué de Salvador Dalí, "Numéro du cinquantième 1921/1971 réalisé par Salvador Dalí", Vogue, Paris, December 1971 - January 1972.

Some of the other keys for understanding this universe, austere yet beautiful, are provided by Dalí himself —in the special issue of *Vogue*— published in 1971 to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the French edition of the magazine— when he recounts how he took Gala to Púbol with her eyes blindfolded, offered the castle to her as a gift and immediately explains: "Gala took me by the hand and suddenly said to me: 'Thank you once again. I accept the castle of Púbol but on one condition: that you will only come to visit me at the castle by written invitation". This condition gratified, above all, my masochistic sentiments and thrilled me, Gala became the impregnable castle she had always been. Intimacy and, above all, familiarities, decrease passions. Sentimental rigour and distances, as the neurotic ceremony of courtly love shows, increases passion"¹. The image of Gala as impregnable castle was emblematised by Dalí in a photograph of a young Gala, on show in the castle library, over which he wrote "Tête a chateau (sic)".

¹ Translated from: DALÍ, Salvador, *Le point de vue de Dalí*, "Vogué: Numéro du cinquantième 1921/1971 réalisé par Salvador Dalí", *Vogue*, Paris, December 1971 - January 1972, p. [175].

Gala, the lady of the castle²

Gala, born Elena Ivanovna Diakonova, is the enigmatic and fascinating woman who today continues to attract and fascinate us due to the myth which to some extent, and with her silence, she herself has contributed to enlarge. We know about her from the testimonies of those who knew her and with whom she related to throughout her life; her childhood friends, the poetess Marina Ivanovna Tsvetaeva and her sister Anastasia, or Gala's own sister, Lidia. Also thanks to the poems, dedications and correspondence of her first husband³, the French poet Paul Éluard⁴, and of their friends, the poets René Crevel and Joë Bousquet, among others. At the same time, from 1929, we follow her footsteps at the hand of Salvador Dalí and her autographic writings, conserved in the Centre of Dalinian Studies. These reveal to us some of her childhood memories and her life in America alongside Dalí, where we discover her most secret and intimate feelings.

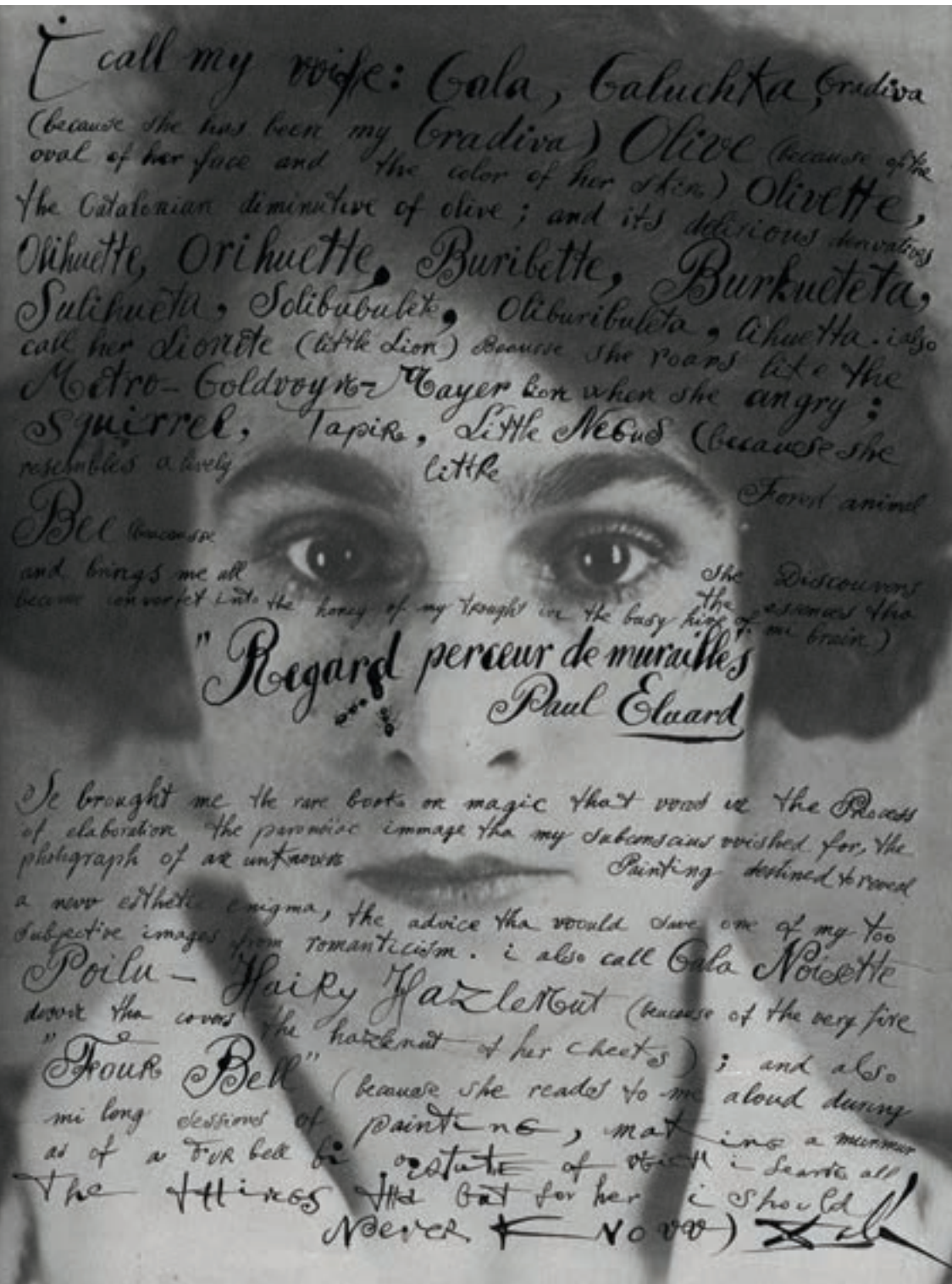
Gala was born in Kazan on the 18th of August 1894, she had two older brothers, Vadim and Nicolai, and a younger sister, Lidia. Her father died when she was just 10 years old, and her mother remarried a Moscow lawyer, Dimitri Illitch Gomberg —from whom Gala adopted the patronymic—, liberal bourgeois with whom Gala had a very good relationship. A brilliant student, she received her education in the M.G. Brukhonenko female institute in Moscow, where she shared classroom and friendship with the writer Anastasia Tsvetaeva and her sister, the poetess Marina Tsvetaeva. After completing her studies with a very high average mark and, through a decree of the Czar, she became qualified to work as a primary school teacher and to give classes from her home.

Her passion for reading, which she would cultivate from an early age and throughout her life, is due to a great extent to her mother. Due to her delicate state of health, she had to spend long periods of time in convalescence. It was in 1912, when her family decided to admit her to the sanatorium of Clavadel, in Davos, Switzerland, where she met the young poet Eugène Grindel, who would be known with the name of Paul Éluard. Their age and the passion for literature and poetry united them. In 1914 they were both given clean bills of health, Gala returned to Russia and Éluard enlisted on the front line, but before that they had become engaged. The outbreak of the First

² This question was extensively analysed in the catalogue: AGUER, Montse; DE DIEGO, Estrella, *Gala. Album*. Distribucions d'Art Surrealista, Figueres, 2007. And more recently in the catalogue: CRESPO, Bea, SILVESTRE, Clara, "Gala: The Chronology", in DE DIEGO, Estrella, *Gala Salvador Dalí. A Room of One's Own in Púbol*, Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya (MNAC), Barcelona, 2018.

³ Published in ÉLUARD, Paul, *Lettres à Gala: 1924-1948*, Gallimard, Paris, 1984.

⁴ Pseudonym with which the writer and poet Eugène Grindel was known. After taking part in the First World War, he came into contact with other writers such as André Breton, Tristan Tzara or Louis Aragon, with whom he became an active member of several avant-garde movements, especially Dadaism and Surrealism. Among his main writings we can highlight: *Le Devoir et l'Inquiétude* (1917), *Capitale de la douleur* (1926), *L'Immaculée Conception*, with André Breton (1930), *Cours naturel* (1938), *Poésie et Vérité* (1942) or *Les Sentiers et les Routes de la poésie* (1954).



Le Vogue de Salvador Dalí, "Numéro du cinquantenaire 1921/1971 réalisé par Salvador Dalí", Vogue, Paris, December 1971 - January 1972.



THE CASTLE

Of what is known as the Dalinian Triangle, the castle of Púbol is the most austere place associated with Gala and related above all with the final creative stage of the artist. It is the place that Dalí offered to his lady, where he pays homage, a place of isolation, melancholy, of Proust-like airs, of the search for a lost world, of subjective projection.

Dalí refers to the castle in his written work. It is interesting to see how in 1973 in *Comment on devient Dalí (The Unspeakable Confessions of Salvador Dalí)* he presents it as a continuation of Portlligat —precisely through the Round or Oval room, Gala’s place—, understood as a place destined for his lady and to an amorous ideal. This association is made very clear in the following paragraph:

“Everything there celebrates the cult of Gala, even to the round bedroom, with its perfect echo, that crowns the complex of buildings and is like the dome of this Gala-ctic cathedral; and when I go through this house, I am looking at myself, living my own concentricity. I love its Mauresque severity. I had to give Gala a setting more solemnly worthy of our love. That is why I gave her the twelfth-century castle in which she reigns, and which I shall not speak of, for I have meant her to be its absolute sovereign to the point that I go there only when invited by her own hand”²⁰.

And in the abovementioned article for the special issue of *Vogue* he adds: “Since my surrealist period, I have signed my best paintings: Gala Salvador Dalí. You do not have to be Sartre to state that the name is the person, but you do have to be Dalí to state that the super-person, the superman of Nietzsche and the Dalinian superwoman are his castle”²¹.

The castle of Púbol is, therefore, a very significant spot in Dalinian creation: a continuation of Portlligat with its own personality. It is Dalí’s gift to Gala, his lady, to whom he renders vassalage, and to which he cannot enter without her written permission. In this sense the autograph text by Dalí, “Le chateau de Gala, la Gala du chateau (sic)”, in the book by Jean-Charles Pichon, *L’Homme et les dieux*, is illustrative²². Dalí, in which the artist refers to Gala and the castle:

“—I give you a Gothic castle Gala.
—I accept on one condition, that you only come to visit me in the castle by invitation’
—I accept, since I accept in principle all on condition there are conditions.
It is the same principle of courtly love”.

²⁰ DALÍ, Salvador; PARINAUD, André. *The Unspeakable Confessions of Salvador Dalí*. New York, William Morrow and Company, Inc., 1976, p. 272.

²¹ *Cit. supra.*, n. 1, p. [173].

²² PICHON, Jean-Charles. *L’Homme et les dieux*, Robert Laffont, Paris, 1969.

The architectural whole of the castle of Púbol is made up of the current parish church, the fortified farmhouse-palace surrounded by a walled garden and the adjoining building known as the *Tithe*, a basement. Around it are crowded together the houses protected by the remains of the medieval wall, and, framing the whole complex, the stream, with its characteristic plant life, where the leading figures are the poplars (which the village's name, Púbol, comes from) and other trees suited to a humid ecosystem. All this completes this icon of Empordà medieval village, where we can still find remains of the early walled precinct or numerous architectural vestiges from the time of maximum splendour of the barony, at the end of the 14th and early 15th centuries. On several occasions Dalí presents this complex in both his pictorial and written work.

We get our first perception of the castle on climbing the current Carrer Gala Dalí, from where we see the west wall of the farmhouse, protected by the battlements of the *Tithe* area and the remains of the machicolation that must have protected the main entrance. The cobbled street leads us to the main entrance, where we discover a small square, formerly a cemetery,

presided over by the Gothic church, and bordered to the north by the remains of the town walls —a section that was broken up by the residents themselves— and to the south, by the walls of Gala's private rooms. Precisely on one of these walls of the castle we can still discover a cavity with the remains, as popular legend goes, of three skulls of some bandits put to death and exposed to public ridicule.

Now before the main façade, the words of Dalí narrated by Emilio Puignau, constructor and friend of the artist's, make the painter's desires clearer to us: "(...) I have seen something sublime on the façade: not only is it cracked, but a burr forms in the crack that gives the impression that a cataclysm had occurred here, an earthquake; that a part held firm and the other part separated and tumbled. Therefore, this must not be touched, it must be left just as it is"²³.

²³ Translated from: Puignau, Emilio, *Vivències amb Salvador Dalí*, Juventud, Barcelona, 1995, p. 107-108.





THE COAT OF ARMS ROOM

The first floor of the castle was the area of residence, and both the entrance door, at the end of the stone stairway, and a large window, on the same side, now reveal a sumptuousness that is not perceived on the outside walls. The historian Joan Badia i Homs wrote a detailed description of these two openings that explain part of the genealogical history of the castle. Of the “Renaissance window divided into four”²⁸ he says that “the base of the mullions and columns have motifs in relief; in the upper angles each of the corbels represent lions and the lower ones, dragons”²⁹. The door features a large emblem in bas-relief added in the 16th century: “It is framed by two false columns crowned by pinnacles with floral motifs, among them an arcade of arris enhanced by a cross. In the lower part of each column there are two curious reliefs: they aim to represent ribbons with tassels. The coat of arms, in the centre, is inclined towards the left and belongs to the Requesens-Corbera³⁰ (matched: the crow on one side and four consoles on the other). Above there is a warrior’s helmet from which four ribbons hang, and above everything a rampant lion that grips a bunch, perhaps, of spears”³¹.



Salvador Dalí. Project for the decoration of the ceiling of the Coat of Arms room, ca. 1969.

On entering this room, just like entering the Palace of the Wind hall in the Theatre-Museum of Figueres, visitors are surprised and amazed. On the ceiling, a large painting covers the entire vaulting. On the opposite wall, there is an item of furniture and some chairs lined with white fabric, with bows in the style of the Dior label, like the costumes that are in the Theatre-Museum that the Dalí couple wore for the Charles de Beistegui bal in Venice, and which Pierre Cardin remembered in all detail on his visit to the Dalinian triangle. The furniture is adorned as if it was an altar and features a pair of five-armed candelabras worked in silver with their respective white candles and a wooden sculpture, the work of Salvador Dalí, of a Christ on

the cross supported by crouton bread.

²⁸ Translated from: BADIA I HOMS, Joan. *L'arquitectura medieval de l'Empordà*, Vol. I. Girona, Diputació de Girona, 1977, p. 307.

²⁹ *Ib.*

³⁰ The coat of arms mentioned is a combination of two noble families who owned the castle. On the right appears the crow, symbol of the Corbera, which is also found over the door of the church, and on the left, the heraldry of the Requesens represented in the 1st and 4th quadrants by four *pals de gules* (equivalent to red) over a golden field, and in the 2nd and 3rd quadrants, by three golden towers over a field of azure (dark blue). Josep M. Marquès identifies the ribbon with tassels with Sança, who was the widow of Gispert de Campllong in 1400. (PITXOT, Antoni; PLAYÀ, Josep, *Gala Dalí's Castle: The Road to Púbol*, Fundació Gala-Salvador Dalí, Escudo de Oro, Figueres, Barcelona, 1997, p. 20).

³¹ *Cit. supra.*, n. 28, p. 307.



THE RED ROOM

We go through a small door that leads us to a room where red is the predominant colour. A horseshoe, symbol of luck, placed over the threshold of the door, welcomes us to the room reserved, in Gala's time, for guests at the castle.

Of an austere character, like the rest of the castle, with a beautiful canopied bed, we find few ornaments: there are, of course, the eternal flowers on the ceiling, an etching by the painter and a painting-lamp with an image of the guardian angel. However, on the wall opposite the bed, we find on a shelf presented as a display cabinet an accumulation (remember that Dalí always said that one had to work by accumulation and never by selection) of diverse objects: curious bottles of spirits, one of them a reproduction of the Sagrada Familia by Antoni Gaudí, for Bodegas y Destilerías Agustín Bofill of Badalona, the other two a bullfighter and a manola, a typical woman from Madrid (like those found in the swimming pool area of the house at Portlligat) of the Nogueras Comas company in Barcelona. A ceramic charioteer, a tortoise that is also a reception bell; a couple of sweethearts; two porcelain ashtrays, a dish with hazelnuts, of ceramic, and a soft toy squirrel. Diverse religious images and, above all these objects, a sculpture *Clock hanger* (1971), made with *pâte de verre*. This is a very rare and old glassmaking technique that dates back more than 3,500 years. The current process involves the fusion of glass and the reproduction of forms by means of the method of lost-wax casting, a very different



Salvador Dalí. *Darius swears he would hang Alexander...*, 1973.

method to the traditional technique of glassblowing⁴³. In 1878 the Daum family took over a glassmaking factory in Nancy, France, where they developed this art and made it famous across the world. Another generation of the Daum family took control of production and in 1970 decided to introduce *pâte de verre* and invited a series of famous sculptors, designers and glass craftsmen to design special limited editions for the company. Salvador Dalí was the first, creating among others, the object we can admire in this display cabinet.

⁴³ *Col·lecció completa de les escultures en pâte de verre de Salvador Dalí*, Dau al Set, Barcelona, 1981.



THE “GALAS” OF GALA ROOM

From the guest room and along a corridor where the stairs are that lead to the upper floor, we reach the space of The “Galas” of Gala. This floor of the castle had never had an exact use and, when in 1982 the works that Dalí had deposited in the United States were repatriated, it became an improvised storeroom.

Its new uses were decided by the Fundació Gala-Salvador Dalí, with a rehabilitation undertaken by the team led by the architect Oriol Clos. A new space was created, which has a magnificent large window with Gothic capitals, different from the rest of the castle in order to be able to show the public The “Galas” of Gala: some of the haute couture dresses, worn by Gala in some of her public appearances. With the background music of *Tristan and Isolde* by Wagner (the same that Dalí wanted for his Theatre-Museum), the visitor can contemplate Gala’s dresses duly restored and in the best conditions of conservation.



Horst. P. Horst. Photography reproduced in the article “Madame Salvador Dalí”, *Vogue*, New York, 01/06/1943.

Since 2017, as well as Gala's dresses, this space houses and shows some of the original works that were found before in other rooms in the castle. For conservation purposes, the Fundació Gala-Salvador Dalí has brought them together in this room accompanied by a screen with photographs of the rooms where they were originally. Here we can also appreciate a greenish sofa, in the form of lips, similar to the one we can admire in the Mae West room of the Dalí Theatre-Museum in Figueres.

Moving on, we come to the first display cabinet used for the temporary showing of works, objects and clothing by Salvador Dalí and Gala with the aim of presenting the incursions of the artist into the sphere of fashion and design. This new use of the space, promoted by the Fundació Gala-Salvador Dalí in 2018, aims to offer the public Dalí's contribution to fashion, through his collaborations with outstanding designers and textile companies. The first temporary exhibition housed in this space is *Gala, Dalí, Elsa Schiaparelli* in 2018.



Dresses with patterns designed by Salvador Dalí.



The "Galas" of Gala room.

THE GARDEN

We now go through the imposing entrance of the south façade of the building, from 1798, and we come to a small avenue of plane trees that starts on the eastern wall of the garden, by which Gala arrived at the castle with the Cadillac or orange Datsun.

We should remember that Dalí referred to the garden in his work, even alluding to the widespread idea that the Empordà county is a garden. In his creative work he also referred to water, the fountain, poetry, and the ideals of peace and nature. He very often provided a utopian vision.

The avenue of plane trees is an element that articulates the fortified building with the garden, structured from a main central path and two side paths that distribute the space into two sectors, each of them organised from hedges from the old French-style garden, from the time of the Barons of Púbol, with reminiscences of a rural Catalan garden of axial symmetry, an early structure that Dalí, while conserving it, gave an Italian style in the way it became overwhelmed by the plants that Dalí chose at the time — cypresses, fruit trees, lilacs, rosebay, jasmine and honeysuckle. We should not forget that shortly before discovering the castle Salvador Dalí had been fascinated by the Baroque magic of the gardens of Bomarzo, near Rome. Walking along any of the three paths that the garden outlines we gradually discover the different types of vegetation, and the sculptural and architectural elements, with which Salvador Dalí decorated the different spaces bordered by the hedges. The three paths lead us to the private space of the swimming pool.

The east path, the shadiest, runs between the flower beds and the outside wall which, crowned by prickly pears in 1983 to maintain the painter's privacy increased its height. From the barons' horses' drinking trough and the small rosebay copse, just at the entrance to the path, one can appreciate the false perspective that affects the visitor's sight in the sculptural

reproduction of the *Esquiline Venus* (117-138 AD), currently kept in the Musei Capitolini in Rome. Salvador Dalí loved false perspectives, and the one that interested him most was that of the Palazzo Spada in Rome — famous for the false perspective achieved by Francesco Borromini, a Baroque architect—, where at a crossing there are three real dimensions and one fictitious one that shows more illusion of depth. Once again it involves deceiving the senses to escape from the duality of reality and fiction. In the case of this “corridor” of the castle, the artist played with the straight line of



Salvador Dalí. Project for the garden of Púbol, ca. 1970.