



Christine Argillet and Dali

A Surreal World

The iconic works of Salvador Dali return to **REDSEA Gallery** this September, in the form of a selection of Dali's etchings and drawings from the Pierre Argillet Collection, as well as porcelain works and tapestries previously unseen in Singapore. Here, **CHRISTINE ARGILLET**, daughter of renowned art collector and Dali confidante Pierre Argillet, tells us what it was like knowing Dali, the impact he had on her and what we can expect from this exclusive exhibition.



You knew Salvador Dali from a young age. How would you describe him?

Salvador Dali was a charming and elegant man, and a most humble and genuinely sweet person. In public, he would create an eccentric persona to attract attention, but in private, he was very simple. He had a great sense of humour and would constantly tell serious things behind a caricatural mask. He had no children but yet had a kind of fascination towards children's candid and genuine views and reactions. He would entertain me by giving me cherry candies to throw behind

fishermen's backs at the shore, and show me how he could move his moustache using chemical reactions.

In his daily life, Dali was a workaholic, very much immersed in his projects with my father. When he wasn't busy with his paintings, he spoke with many people from all works of life – from discussions about DNA research with scientists to talks with bankers about preparing the longest baguette in the world to be carried along the streets of Paris. Often, these people would come together to mingle at his hotel. However, he still found time to meet us and we always had a fun time.



"Bullfight with Parrots" from the Surrealist Bullfight series

What attracted your father to Surrealist artworks, particularly Dali's pieces?

My father was captivated by the immense artistic talent of Dali and also by his ability to envision the world around him in a new way, every day. They had long discussions on literature and art, resulting in a collaboration of nearly 50 years. They created 200 etchings together – the largest collection of original etchings by Dali.

How did your father and Dali influence you, particularly in the way you view and collect art?

They were both able to make things happen, no matter how difficult. They had total freedom of thought, and had fun doing their work. This inspired me to be surprised by life, and look at the world differently as often as possible.

My father collected art as naturally as people walk in the morning. As a child, the paintings that came home were like foreign visitors that I would get to know by silently chatting with them. Today, I have continued this way of collecting art when the pieces silently speak to me. It has given me a sense of freedom that I consider to be very precious.

What are your favourite works exhibited in the collection?

My favourites would be those that remind me of the moments Dali used

unusual tools. He was capable of using any tool to create. There are several pieces that I like very much for their refreshing vision, but also for their humour. The *Surrealist Bullfight* series speaks to me particularly, as Dali did not like bullfights and, for this reason, transformed the bull into himself, and the audience into animals.

What are some of these unusual tools you've mentioned?

Dali was especially creative and would experiment with all kinds of tools and materials for his artwork – roulettes, scissors, nails, fire, diamond and ruby styluses and even a hairbrush. Once, I remember him asking my mother for her lipstick, and from that he created a magnificent drawing for *The Hippies* series. One day, he found a dead octopus on the Mediterranean shore in front of his home. He immersed it in acid and placed it on a copper plate to leave an imprint, creating the "Medusa" from the Mythology series that will be on display at the REDSEA Gallery exhibition.

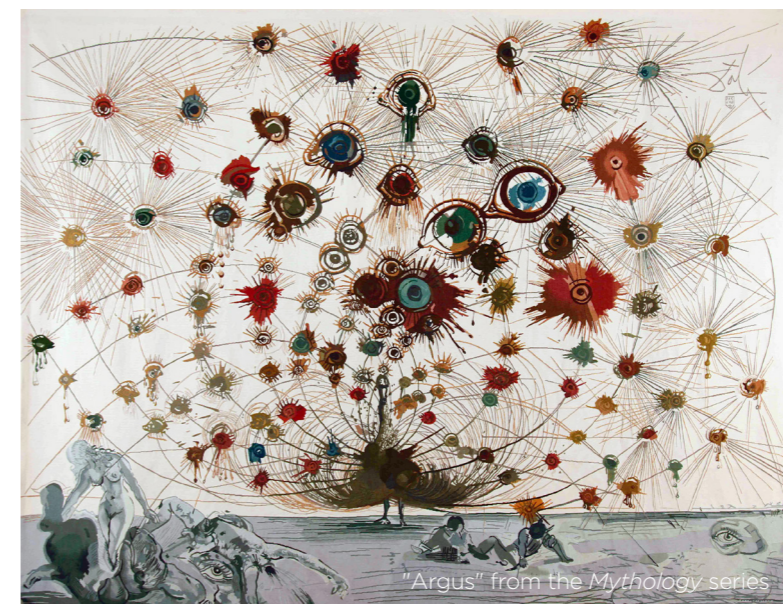
Why do you think Dali remains such an icon in today's art world?

Dali had an exceptional imagination and was able to translate the Surrealist idea of "dream" in an extraordinary way. His techniques were as good as those of the Renaissance artists and he successfully paved the way for Warhol and many other artists who recognised that they would never have been what they had become without Dali.

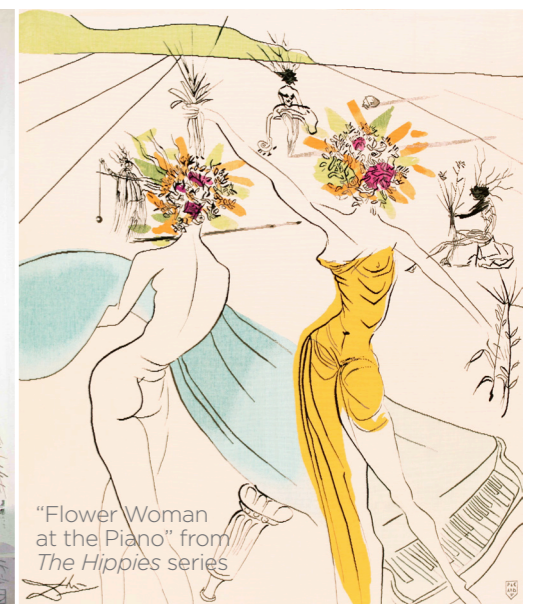
What should we look out for in the exhibition?

The etching techniques of Dali are fabulous, close to that of Rembrandt or Goya. For the first time ever, two of the actual copper plates Dali used to create the etchings will be on show. Also, look forward to a lot of humour in a renewed vision brought by the Surrealist Dream. There are also a few rare watercolours and Aubusson tapestries. I hope that viewers will love the works, the stories behind them, and the relations to Dali's unusual daily life. *æ*

See Salvador Dali & Pierre Argillet: Thirty Years of Collaboration from 10 September to 5 October at REDSEA Gallery, #01-10 Dempsey Hill, Block 9 Dempsey Road. 6732 6711 | redseagallery.com



"Argus" from the Mythology series



"Flower Woman at the Piano" from the Hippies series