



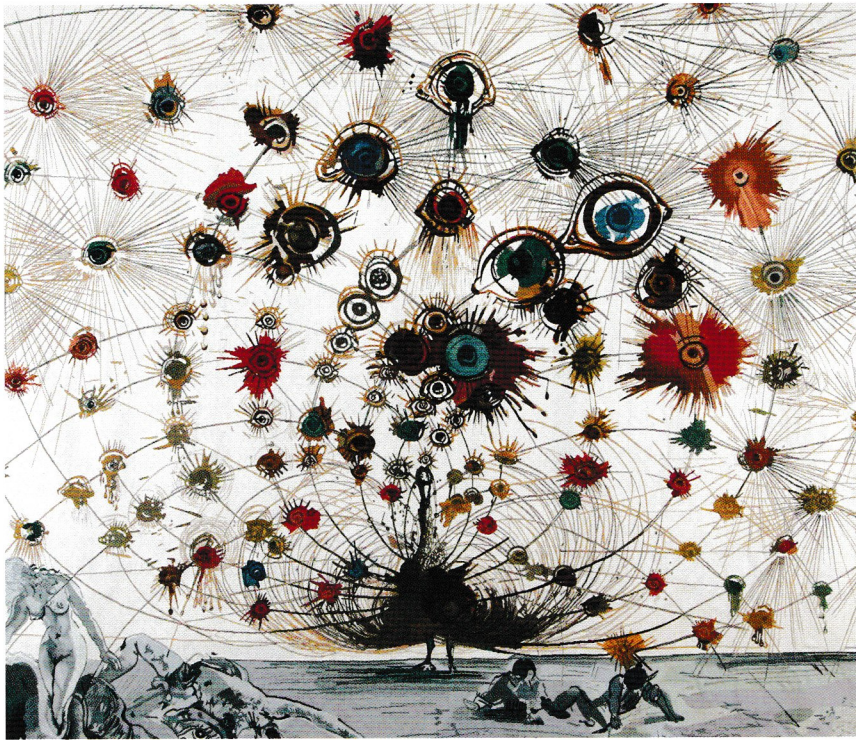
ART REPUBLIK HAS A SURREAL MEETING WITH CHRISTINE ARGILLET. BY NADYA WANG

Flights of Fancy

A wonderful selection of drawings, etchings, porcelain plates and tapestries by surrealist artist Salvador Dali could be seen at REDSEA Gallery at Dempsey, Singapore. The works are brought by Christine Argillet, the manager of the Pierre Argillet Collection started by her father, who published 200 of Dali's etchings in a span of 30 years beginning from the 1940s.

Argillet herself spent most of her childhood and teenage years in the company of Dali, and has wonderful memories of the artist as a beloved family friend. This is the second time Argillet is working with Chris Churcher, owner of REDSEA Gallery, to show Dali's work in Singapore, following a chance meeting at one of her exhibitions in the United States that led to their first collaborative exhibition in Singapore in 2014. "I was very happy to meet somebody from Singapore because my goal is to present the collection where it has not been presented," says Argillet.





This page, from left to right: Argus, 1963, Salvador Dalí; The Old Hippy, 1969, Salvador Dalí. All images: All Rights Reserved Christine Argillet, copyright 2016.

Facing page, from top left to right: Salvador Dalí and Christine Argillet; Salvador Dalí with Argus tapestry at the Argillet Museum, France, 1973.



Some of the etchings in the exhibition are from the whimsical 'Hippies Suite', which includes 11 works with such differing subjects as 'Nude with Garter' (1969) and 'The Old Hippy' (1969). Argillet reveals that Dalí was intrigued by the photographs that her father brought back from his travels in India in the late 1960s, and wanted to represent the prevailing 'Make Love, Not War' atmosphere at the time, as well as the spirituality of people in the East in the varied works in the series.


There are also etchings that are part of the 'Mythologie Suite', made up of 16 pieces, and published between 1963 and 1965, in which Dalí brings to life Greek mythologies, such as 'Narcissus' (1965), 'Leda and Swan' (1964) and 'Athena' (1965). Colours deftly convey the stories at hand. In 'Theseus and Minotaurus' (1964), a bold swathe of brown encircles Theseus, the mythical king of Athens and the part-man part-bull Minotaur, giving visuality to their battle. Another example is 'Pegasus' (1964), the mythical winged stallion, in which the swirls of blue in an otherwise black-and-white print allude to the graceful flight of the mythical creature.

A special treat at the exhibition are two original master copper plates for the works 'Old Faust' (1968) and 'Sator' (1968), each printed in editions of 150, from the 'Faust' series, in which Dalí interpreted

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's dramatic poem in 21 images. The exhibited plates have been inked to show the inscribed images more clearly. To make copper plates for fine art printmaking, an acid-resistant material is used to coat the metal plate, and the artist carves directly on the copper plate by scratching away at the acid-resistant coating. The plate is then put in acid to deepen the indentations that the artist has made. To print, the inked image on the plate is then transferred to a piece of paper through a press. The paper is first made damp so that it is malleable enough to fit into the indentations to absorb ink. Argillet pointed out two diagonal lines at the bottom left corner of the exhibited copper plates made to indicate that the print run is complete so that any further etchings that might be made with the plates would not be recognised as an original limited-edition piece.

An interesting work revealing Dalí's fondness for experimentation with different media is 'Argus' (1963), which appears in two forms in the exhibition: an etching and a tapestry. Argillet explains that Dalí engaged artisans in Aubusson to hand weave some of his etchings into tapestries in the early 1970s, with 13 tapestries created altogether over a period of two and a half years.

Aside from having his works adapted to tapestries, Dalí also had them made into porcelain plates. In 1973, he commissioned Raynaud, a renowned porcelain maker in Limoges to create these. 'Bleu de four', a technique unique to the region, was used to create plates with deep blue backgrounds that set off the delicate gold lines making up the images. Available at the exhibition are six of these plates which run in editions of 2000 each.

The influence of Pablo Picasso is also seen in the exhibition. With the 'Surrealistic Bullfight' series of seven etchings published between 1966 and 1977, Dalí reworked seven pieces from Picasso's 'Tauromaquia' series of 26 etchings. These works are some of Argillet's favourites. Growing up with the works of Dalí, she continues to see the works with fresh eyes every time she brings them to exhibition. "People often come to the shows and point out something that I have never detailed in my mind," says Argillet. "Rediscovering works that I know very well is one of the most beautiful things about what I do." 

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