# Surrealist Architecture: Dalí's 1958 Crisalida, San Francisco

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Exhibits at mid-century conventions of the American Medical Association were usually sober affairs. Besuited physicians browsed hand-painted illustrations of body parts and watched demonstrations of medical devices. Occasionally medical supplies companies invested in more spectacular displays: a highlight of the 1958 convention was a translucent domed pavilion, a walk-in scale model of a human cell.¹ Amidst the 285 didactic, commercially sponsored displays that year was a most extraordinary exhibit: a sixty-foot long chrysalis lying in an elevated corner of the convention hall (Figs. 1 and 2).² If you paused to look, you would notice that it was slowly breathing, sleepily inhaling and exhaling a few times each minute. The translucent white, silken cocoon revealed hints of a brightly colored pupae writhing through the growing pains of a massive metamorphosis. As you approached the cocoon, you would see security guards and smiling hosts who would invite you to approach the pupae cautiously from the rear.

What was it doing here? The monstrous creature should surely be in a zoo, the cocoon in a museum of natural history. If this were the first act of a Steven Spielberg movie, we would expect the creature to raucously tear out of its cocoon and wreak havoc as it careened into nearby San Francisco. The gothic horror of the imminent emergence of the winged megafauna was indeed part of the intended effect. Change, even change from a wriggling caterpillar into a beautiful butterfly, can be painful and frightening.

The exhibited chrysalis was no jurassic wonder, but the single completed architectural commission of Salvador Dalí, fabricated under the direction of René d'Aurisc and Viktor Harasty. Twenty-four air blowers hidden under the floor inflated and deflated two layers of parachute silk giving the impression of breath, though one reporter wrote that it "undulated like the pickup bag of mother's old-fashioned vacuum cleaner." Attached to a structural lattice between the two skins, one

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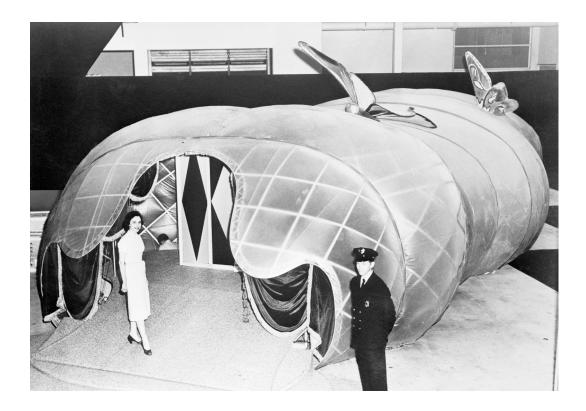


Fig. 1. "Crisalida,' a 60-foot walk through exhibit designed by Surrealist Salvador Dalí, depicts man's transformation from anxiety to tranquility." December 2, 1958. Bettmann Collection / Getty Images

hundred and sixteen colored lights brightened and dimmed in controlled sequences, simulating the appearance of the lustrous monster writhing within. After entering the *Crisalida* pavilion, the visitor walked in a straight line uphill, and on the inner walls was a scene of Dalí's symbolic language of tensed limbs, gaping holes, colloidal bubbles, blossoming flowers, and finally, emerging butterflies, an illustrated journey from anxiety to serenity.<sup>4</sup> This architecturalization of a chrysalis was therapeutic surrealist architecture.

The first section of this essay will examine Dalí's paranoiac-critical method. The well-known antagonism between Andre Breton's *passive* automatism and Dalí's *active* paranoiac-critical method is explained as an antagonism between constitutionalist and anti-constitutionalist theories of paranoia, each of which entailed a surrealist mode of production. The second section shows how these constitutionalist and anti-constitutionalist theories of paranoia were made visible in



Fig. 2. "Inside a 60-foot 'Crisalida,' created by Salvador Dali for the San Francisco Convention of the American Medical Association," June 23, 1958. Bettmann Collection / Getty Images

architecture. Within Dalí's oeuvre of surrealist architecture, *Crisalida* is at the end of three overlapping phases: edible architecture, the architecturalizing of Jean-François Millet's painting *L'Angelus*, and animal architecture. The conclusion reflects on the similarity between the *active* component of the paranoiac-critical method and certain curative practices in contemporary psychology.

### Emerging from Gestalt Theory

When *Mirador* newspaper columnist Joan Sacs wrote disparagingly about *La Femme Visible*, Dalí's first complete theorization of paranoiac art, Dalí forwarded a note to the critic suggesting some background reading: "Prinzhorn's book" and "all the recent strictly phenomenological German studies and analyses (against the constructionalist views)" of paranoia. Dalí's understanding of paranoia, embedded in the paranoiac-critical method, will be gleaned in this essay by attending directly to these recommended sources.

The Prinzhorn book that Dalí recommended was almost certainly his 1922 Bildnerei der Geisteskranken. Ein Beitrag zur Psychologie und Psychopatologie der Gestaltung, translated into English as Artistry of the Mentally Ill: a Contribution to the Psychology and Psychopathology of Configuration. Although Dalí seldom mentioned gestalt, it was a foundation of his surrealist technique and appeared at key moments in his theoretical work. A theory of design, configuration and arrangement, gestalt emerged from German psychology and psychoanalysis in the last decades of the nineteenth century. Gestalt psychology described the mind as possessing an innate organizing tendency and examined two specific cognitive events: the recognition of groups, and the recognition of whole objects from fragments. The gestalt theorists did not explain how the perceptual phenomena occurred, but described five principles: similarity, continuation, closure, proximity, and figure-ground relationships, which strongly influence the recognition of objects.

For Prinzhorn in *Artistry of the Mentally Ill*, these five principles were not operating indiscriminately, but at the service of unconscious desires. The five principles were stimulated by six urges: the urge to play, to interpret, to ornament, to order, to imitate, and the urge for symbolic significance. As one manifestation of the urge to play, Prinzhorn described doodling as an automatic process combined with active interpretation:

There is a psychological urge whereby 'every shape, no matter now undefined and unobjective, demands interpretation'... Only the individual stroke springs from a blind impulse, while the integration of the separate parts is guided by their author, no matter how inattentive he may be.<sup>7</sup>

This is the process, I contend, that underlay Dali's first surrealist paintings, *Honey is Sweeter than Blood, Apparatus and Hand,* and *Little Cinders.* These paintings were constructed in two distinct stages. First, a more or less skilfully painted landscape is completed. Next, fine brush marks are added to this landscape, bearing the appearance of improvization. In various places the brush marks in these early surrealist paintings resemble hairs, thin clouds or clumps of dirt. Where they are painted in small "v" shapes they appear as caricatured flies or birds; where they are grouped together they resemble tree branches, veins, or other organic forms. As groups of strokes accumulate in small areas, organic objects appear: faces, hands, rotting birds and donkeys, plants, breasts and genitals—the spontaneous, unconsciously motivated appearance of real objects during a process of passive automatism.

Breton had defined Surrealism as the method of inspired prophets: "pure psychic automatism, by which it is intended to express... the real process of thought... in the absence of all control exercised by reason and outside aesthetic or moral preoccupations." This definition gives sufficient freedom for spoken words

and poetry produced in tranced medium-like states, sketches and found-objects, but the process of crafting resemblance in oil painting, especially when the physical endurance of the finished painting is of concern, requires a large degree of reasoned premeditation and conscious control. Christian Zervos recognized this problem in surrealist theory in his 1928 *Cahiers d'Art* article on Surrealism:

There will be insurmountable obstacles to the physical execution of the pictorial work... But where I could admit to rigor for a poetic essay, it would be impossible in the design of a painted work. The elimination of a picture's most essential preconceived pictorial elements seems a chimera and race towards nothingness.<sup>9</sup>

Dalí's three pictures, *Honey is Sweeter than Blood, Apparatus and Hand*, and *Little Cinders*, can be read as direct challenges to Zervos' objection, by using Prinzhorn's method with oil paint. When Dalí wrote about painting these images, Prinzhorn's ordering urges are clear in his descriptions:

I saw passing before my wondering and ecstatic eyes infinite images which I could not localize precisely in time or space but which I knew with certainty that I had seen when I was little... it was easy for me to reproduce them in painting... I would limit myself to reproducing each of the images as scrupulously as it was possible for me to do according to the order and intensity of their impact, and following as a criterion and norm of their arrangement only the most automatic feelings that their sentimental proximity and linking would dictate. And, it goes without saying, there would be no intervention of my own personal taste. I would follow only my pleasure, my most uncontrollably biological desire.<sup>10</sup>

This is such a faithful expression of a surrealist method of painting that Dali would later act it out for photographers. The other manual techniques associated with surrealist images—frottage, collage, the exquisite corpse, and the lengthy and complex processes Dalí described for making surrealist objects—all explicitly separated the artist from prominent and conspicuous qualities of the object. Instead of delegating the form or the details or textures of the object to chance, I suggest that Dalí used a version of Prinzhorn's doodling to allow the unconscious mechanisms to rise to prominence.

There were however shortcomings to the acceptance of techniques within this theory. For many reasons, more than can be considered here—including that the surrealist journals that Breton edited included paintings by Giorgio de Chirico—after *Honey is Sweeter than Blood, Apparatus and Hand,* and *Little Cinders,* Dalí's

paintings would become more like de Chirico's, substituting the Italian colonnades with Catalan seasides. <sup>12</sup> Dalí abandoned the gestalt mode of surrealist production as a central, defining feature in favor of his paranoiac-critical method; it should not be a surprise, then, that while Dalí recommended that aspiring painters learn gestalt theory for "true configurations and individualized groups," the majority of his remarks on gestalt after 1929 are critical. <sup>13</sup> Dalí criticized gestalt's analytical limitations: it "does not possess the physical means permitting analysis nor even recording the human behaviour vis-à-vis structures and figures appearing objectively as physically delirious." <sup>14</sup>

Dalí did not entirely abandon the gestalt approach, and the loose, seemingly improvised brushstrokes cohering into forms are a feature that appears throughout his surrealist oeuvre, especially in the portraits of the 1940s and 1950s. What Dalí seems to have decided in his critique of the gestalt method was that another approach was necessary, one that indeed included a more, rather than less, skillfully painted landscape. Thereafter Dalí insisted that unconscious mechanisms need not be limited to expression in assemblages but instead, Surrealism "is found everywhere... since there is nothing that escapes at one moment or another the involuntary betrayals of subconscious mechanisms." Surrealism being "everywhere" sounds expansive and perhaps even universal, but the argument Dalí was making here is introspective, about the processes of paranoia; Surrealism is not in the outside world, it is built into perception. Precisely this point required Dalí to take an anti-constructionalist position on paranoia.

#### Paranoia and its Criticism

Returning to Dalí's recommended readings for *Mirador* columnist Joan Sacs, we turn next to "the recent strictly phenomenological German studies and analyses (against the constructionalist views)" of paranoia. The insistence that theories of paranoia be against the constructionalist views is key here, as it provides the theoretical backbone for Dalí's resistance to surrealist automatism and thereby the core of the paranoiac-critical method. Today's popular understanding of paranoia is not dissimilar from the one held in the 1920s. Based on early observations, as Jacques Lacan wrote in *Minotaure*, paranoia's symptoms "clinically manifest themselves through persecution mania." Yet actual persecution is only one of *many* possible manifestations of the paranoiac associations. Lacan defined paranoia in response to German psychologist Emil Kreaplin, the author most frequently referenced in Lacan's doctoral thesis. <sup>18</sup>

In the decades immediately prior to Surrealism's founding, the construct of psychopathological paranoia was, by contemporary standards, extraordinarily broad. At the time, half of all psychiatric hospital admissions in Germany were for paranoia. Kraeplin rediagnosed many paranoiacs with a new clinical construct, dementia praecox, which Eugen Beuler renamed schizophrenia a decade later. decade later.

Kreaplin thereby focused the clinical definition of paranoia to the "gradual development of a stable progressive system of delusions, without marked mental deterioration, clouding of consciousness, or disorder of thought, will, or conduct."<sup>21</sup> Both paranoia and schizophrenia were believed to originate from an organic cause, some illness of the physical constitution leading to "feeble-mindedness," hence, *constitutionalist* paranoia.<sup>22</sup>

Lacan's doctoral thesis questioned this belief, asking, is paranoia "a constitutional anomaly or a reactive deformation?" After analyzing the renowned cases, Lacan determined that paranoia was best conceptualized "as 'a mode of reaction' rather than as a developmental anomaly or an organic process." Notable for surrealist theory, Lacan pointed to paranoia's deeper psychological effect: paranoia altered a person's "elementary phenomena... [and] personal meaning." Paranoia thereby affects personality. Further, Lacan argued for a paranoiac structure to the ego, and that logical analysis itself is a form of "guided paranoia." Operating as an "associative engine," paranoia binds objects to their objective and subjective qualities. Continuing Lacan's theorization of paranoia as affecting "elementary phenomena," Dalí would argue that the "paranoiac phenomenon' (delirium of systematic interpretation) is consubstantial with the human phenomenon of sight." Paranoia influences what a paranoiac sees.

Where Dalí did his reading on paranoia is not known exactly, as he mentions no texts nor authors other than Lacan's doctoral thesis. One line of investigation is the similarity of terminology: Dalí seldom used the word "confusion" in his description of paranoia but rather "delirium," specifically, a delirium of interpretation. Hence he defines paranoia as a "delirium of interpretative association involving a systematic structure." Dalí may have borrowed "delirium" from Louis Aragon's 1926 surrealist novel Le Paysan de Paris. But he very likely saw Sebastien Gasch's November 1929 newspaper article, "The recent works of Salvador Dalí," which quoted a paragraph of Dromard and Antheaume's 1908 book Poesie Et Folie: essai de psychologie et de critique, which, connecting paranoia to artistic talent, described paranoia as a "systematised delirium based on interpretations." However, the most likely source of Dali's views is Paul Sérieux and Joseph Capgras's 1909 book Les folies saisonnates, Le délire d'interprétation, whose views of paranoia appear more or less mirrored in La Femme Visible. The Interprétation is this manner:

Paranoia uses the external world in order to assert its dominating idea, and has the disturbing characteristic of making others accept this idea's reality. The reality of the external world is used for illustration and proof, and so comes to serve the reality of the mind.<sup>33</sup>

Everyone uses the external world, more or less, to justify their ideas, but when paranoia is considered unhealthy, it is a misdirected aspect of a normal psychological

function. To easily imagine one's ordinary paranoiac capacity, consider the following situation: you see a silver coin on the timber hallway floor, and recognize that it is the same as one belonging to your beloved. When you pick it up, the first thing to draw your attention is the familiar denomination. As you hold the coin, light shines off its sides revealing a fragment of a fingerprint, a dozen short lines of the physical signature of your beloved.

With a little rational skepticism, we may understand that since many coins look very similar and are effectively identical, it is plausible that the coin belongs to someone else, yet nonetheless the sequence of associations are able to generate psychological, emotional and physical responses. This example illustrates how in a relatively common situation (one charged with affection), an overly specific set of causes can be assigned to general features. This illustrates two ideas about paranoiac perception: that we construct our ideas from fragments, and that aphoristically, we see what we want to see. This is not to suggest that you were consciously looking for your beloved's coin, but that unconsciously—or in Sigmund Freud's more precise terminology, preconsciously—a coin is an object that we have been taught to recognize, and consequently, desire to recognize.

There is however a bias that emerges with describing paranoia in a written example. A sentence locates the fragments of an idea in a sequence. Readers logically associate the fragments and sequentially construct the idea. That sequence conveys the impression that paranoia too is a sequence of constructed associations. Whether or not this is true was long debated, constructionalists on one side, anti-constructionalists on the other. Dalí, in line with Sérieux and Capgras' position in *Les folies saisonnates*, and with Lacan, opposed constructionalism.<sup>34</sup> The core principles of paranoia are common, "systematized delusions, minimal hallucinations, chronic course of illness, and prominent ideas of reference." The difference between the two sides is rather subtle; it relates to the first word, "systematized," to which Dalí would always add, *already*.

In the anti-constructionalist theory that Dalí advocated in La Femme Visible, paranoiac phenomena—in the above example, the fingerprint and the identity of its creator—appear simultaneously, they are already systematized. The psychological distance implied in the sequential observation "a coin on which you see your beloved's fingerprint" is misleading; hence a clearer term would flatten the sequence into a synthesized phenomenon: "your beloved's coin." This association is not some wishful thinking. When Lacan wrote about paranoia in the 1933 issue of Minotaure, he was sure to be clear: the "fundamental traits of paranoiac experience exclude from ethico-rational thought all definable phenomenological freedom in imaginative creation." On this point Dalí too was especially clear. In his essay in the same 1933 issue of Minotaure, "New General Considerations Regarding the Mechanism of the Paranoiac Phenomenon from the Surrealist Point of View," Dalí wrote that "the paranoiac phenomenon, contrary to the general ideas of constitutionalist theories,

would be in itself *already* a systematized delirium."<sup>37</sup> Hence, the coin is your beloved's in the same way that its color is silver. One does not typically see a coin, and then see that it is silver; it is not sequentially constructed, or if it is, this sequence is unconscious, and hence it is *a silver coin*. Neither consciously constructed, nor freely imaginatively assembled, paranoiac phenomena are *encountered*.<sup>38</sup>

With this background, Dalí's final comments from the 1970s about anti-constitutionalist and anti-constructionalist paranoia should be somewhat clear: "Psychiatry, before Lacan, committed a vulgar error... claiming that the systemization of paranoiac delirium developed 'after the fact' and that this phenomenon was to be considered as a case of 'reasoning madness.' Lacan showed the contrary to be true: the delirium itself is a systemization. It is born systematic, an active element determined to orient reality around its line of force." <sup>39</sup>

The difference between constitutionalist and anti-constitutionalist theories of paranoia for Surrealism corresponded, and are relevant, to methods of artistic production. Breton's explicit preference was for artworks that were not pre-conceived, and that were encountered within a process of production: hence automatic writing, exquisite corpses, and collage, all of which are gestalt assemblies. This idea is present in Dalí's early surrealist images and in many other works including the laborious architectural assemblages of Ferdinand Cheval's *Palais Idéal* and Kurt Schwitters' *Merzbau*. Dalí contended that the expression of unconscious mechanisms that Breton sought occurred in the act of perception itself, and that artistic work could proceed by encountering an objectively delirious subject, and fabricating later. This is certainly what is needed for architecture. Architects are not adepts of trance nor of automatism; architects make plans.

Now that we have examined the anti-constructionalist, anti-constitutionalist paranoia that lives within the paranoiac critical method, and how this enables surrealist objects to be professionally fabricated rather than produced in some remote manner, we have established the general surrealist theory operating in the *Crisalida*. Next we review Dalí's work in architecture leading up to the *Crisalida* to show the building as a continuation of many existing themes and motifs, before returning to paranoia and reflecting on the phenomena of a therapeutic surrealist architecture.

### Dalí's Surreal Architecture 1. Edible Architecture

With the example of Art Nouveau, Dalí made the claim that buildings could be surreal not because of their method of production—like the assemblages of the *Merzbau* and *Palais Ideal*—but because of the unconscious reactions they provoked, by the hungers they roused. The first paragraph of Dalí's 1933 essay "De la beauté terrifiante et comestible de l'architecture Art Nouveau" is curiously devoted to a facial expression, to the mild and slightly disgusting smile provoked by Art Nouveau. Dalí interprets this involuntary facial contraction as a "repression-defence" in

response to Art Nouveau, arousing a "great 'primal hunger."

The arousal of primal hunger was one of the surrealist artistic virtues. Edibility, especially when associated with a rare delicacy, was high praise from Dalí; the Surrealists were "caviar." Dalí described the two apartment buildings Antoni Gaudí renovated on Barcelona's Passeig de Gracias as "edible houses, the first and only eroticized buildings, whose existence gives proof of a 'formation' that is urgent and needful for the amorous imagination: to be really and truly able to eat the object of desire." Photographs of Gaudí's ornamental details with complementary captions illustrate the essay, "soft gates of calf's liver," and balustrade details that declare: "eat me."

The facial expression Dalí noted in "De la beauté terrifiante et comestible de l'architecture Art Nouveau" is the same one that Dalí assigns to Le Corbusier—the modernist architect who "gave indigestion to thousands of young architects and artists"—when Dalí announced that Gaudí was a great architect. <sup>44</sup> Dalí first wrote this anecdote about meeting Le Corbusier in 1956, for his booklet *Les cocus du vieil art moderne*. The title's direct translation, *Cuckolds of the old modern art*, was too risqué for American audiences and changed to *Dalí on modern art* when it was published in English the following November. The booklet was written and published to coincide with the "Antoni Gaudí" exhibition at New York's Museum of Modern Art, and was very close to the time when the *Crisalida* commission was awarded, and thus documents an important insight into Dalí's view on architecture at the time.

According to Dalí's anecdote, after he had announced his admiration for the joyfulness of Gaudí's architecture, Le Corbusier did not speak, and instead he gave a "repression-defense"—he made the face of someone "swallowing gall," that same unhappy sour swallow that a guilty person makes when they fear they may be uncovered, or when a person's body acts in the devouring manner of possessive lover but their morality, their super-ego, does not permit such desires to be expressed; a bodily rush of pleasure neutralized and poisoned by an admixture of panic and shame. The implication here, I suggest, is that the "masochistic" Le Corbusier repressed the pleasure that Gaudí provoked. Dalí's long fascination with masochistic architectures was coupled with a desire for an architecture of hedonism.

### Dalí's Surreal Architecture 2. Architectural Forms of Millet's Angelus

In illustrations and paintings, the association of architecture with the body was Dalí's most frequent motif.<sup>45</sup> The most examples stem from Dalí's long obsession with Jean-Francois Millet's 1880 painting *L'Angelus*, about which Dalí wrote a book long interpretation.<sup>46</sup> For Dalí, the painting represented an archetypal, sado-masochistic relationship. Two standing figures, not touching, communicate unconscious sexual intent. The man reduces himself, hunched over, and places his hat over his groin to conceal his erection. The woman takes on the image of a praying mantis, the predatory lover who murders her partner and finally eats him.

The woman is enormously large in Archaeological Reminiscence of Millet's 'Angelus,' the man showing signs of purity. The woman is bent over in The Architectonic Angelus of Millet holding a spike at the man's throat should he venture any closer to her, producing a moment that unifies impending sexual satisfaction with impending death. Dalí described the skyscrapers of New York as giant Angeluses of Millet, ready to devour each other:

Each evening the skyscrapers of New York assume anthropomorphic shapes of multiple gigantic Millet's Angeluses... motionless, and ready to perform the sexual act and devour one another... It is the sanguinary desire that illuminates them and makes all the central heating and the central poetry circulate within their ferruginous bone structure.<sup>47</sup>

Dalí associated the hunched posture of the female figures on the right side with an insect known as the praying mantis, whose large forelegs have the appearance of praying hands, and procreates such that the male is eaten alive by the female immediately after copulation.<sup>48</sup> The architectural Angeluses are the more developed versions of two smaller and more hastily produced images where the first and second themes overlap. *House for Erotomaniacs*, and *Surrealist Architecture*, painted in the early 1930s, once again mirror the two-figure composition, the figures, with long thin protuberances, are not touching, and are formally accommodated by the other figure, terminating with spoons; along the back of one figure are two eggs, all motifs of edibility.

House for Erotomaniacs, an idea Dalí mentioned in "De la beauté terrifiante et comestible de l'architecture Art Nouveau," includes an elaboration of ornamental objects on the masculine side, the fossilized car, the leaping horse, the violin; and only the masochistic violin and purity holes on the female side. <sup>49</sup> This architectural sketch returned to Dalí's mind decades later. In 1970, after Le Corbusier had died, Dalí wrote again of his opposition to Le Corbusier's L'Esprit Nouveau era architecture.

In the ignominious conception of Le Corbusier, 'A house is a machine to inhabit.' Dalí offers in opposition 'Houses for Erotomanes,' not to inhabit but to live in and even, with the permission of Monsieur Le Corbusier, to dream in, and even to rave in.<sup>50</sup>

The *House for Erotomaniacs*, and Dalí's comments about it decades later, point again to the hedonistic, erotic and passionate aspects of life that Dalí finds absent in Le Corbusier's work and that Dalí increasingly sought from architecture. By the time of the *Crisalida*, the idea of surrealist buildings for the accommodations of deep, often shameful and repressed desires, intersected with the desire for rebirth, resurrection,

reincarnation, metamorphosis, and insect-like people. Dalí had mused about the chrysalis that the caterpillar used to metamorphose into a butterfly for many years, most explicitly in a short film script, called *The Soul* completed some time in the decade before *Crisalida*. As Elliott H. King reported, "*The Soul* was to visually materialise Saint Teresa of Avila's metaphor for the self that must die to become one with Christ, just as a silkworm 'dies' to become a beautiful white butterfly."<sup>51</sup>

### Dalí's Surreal Architecture 3. Animal Buildings

Although Dalí often used pairs of human bodies to depict architectural ideas—a *New York Times* reporter wrote, "Mr. Dalí… thinks… that sooner or later he will produce some flexible skyscrapers" but these ideas remained unachieved. Dalí's more advanced architectural projects do not use the human body, but rather those of animals. The organic forms and underwater themes of Dalí's 1939 *Dream of Venus* Pavilion gave some indication of Dalí's architectural intentions, but Dalí disavowed the project after he lost control of its production. The *Dream of Venus* Pavilion lacks the coherence of later architectural works, and it was nearly twenty years before he took another architectural commission.

In the first half of 1957, an American magazine asked Dalí to make a series of predictions about the future of art and culture. About architecture, Dalí said there will be "a reaction against rigid rectilinear architecture... Buildings of the future will be soft and pliable... they will change form constantly according to changes in atmospheric pressure and temperatures." More than half a century later, this still sounds like distant dream, but this was not a prediction but rather a description of buildings he had already designed, one of which would be completed within a year. In March of 1957, Dalí had been commissioned by Spanish entrepreneur Cesar Balsa to design a nightclub for his then under-construction El Presidente Hotel in Acapulco, Mexico. In June, Dalí sent Balsa his design "with a tongue-incheek attitude." The nightclub's bar was planned to imitate the "movements of the stomach of an octopus." The nightclub was conceived as a thirty-five foot high sea urchin, held forty feet off the ground by four insect legs and a central seashell that contained walkway and elevator, all seemingly being pulled out of the ocean by 140-foot tall giraffes made from "local rocks, the roughest and varied."

The Architectural Forum reported in November of 1957 that the renowned Felix Candela was working on the engineering details, strongly indicating the design might come to fruition.<sup>58</sup> A conservative, anonymous Architectural Forum critic, doubtless an unshakable admirer of Le Corbusier, was exceptionally critical of the design. Brutally mocking its childish originality with inappropriate condescension, the critic commented that the sketch designs were not completed architectural drawings. In May 1958, newspapers reported the difficulty of building it: "a year has now passed and Balsa can't find anyone to tackle the project." By this time, however, Dalí's second architectural project, the Crisalida, was already under construction. 60

Wallace Laboratories, the pharmaceutical company that marketed the tranquilizer Miltown, commissioned Dalí to design a pavilion for the American Medical Association's annual convention, to be held in San Francisco in July. Dalí produced a description and three watercolors, allowing artist René d'Aurisc and engineer Viktor Harasty, to build his sixty-foot design titled *Crisalida*.<sup>61</sup> Dalí wrote,

The outer structure of Miltown is that of a chrysalis, maximum symbol of the "vital nirvana" which paves the way for the dazzling dawn of the butterfly, in its turn the symbol of the human soul. Inside, organic forms appear in forced perspective sowing the Surrealist pattern of harmonious life. The first figure, by its tormented colloidal roots, portrays human anxiety. The second symbolises the chrysalis on its way to being transformed, a metamorphosis directed toward a harmonious tranquility which "hatches" into the third image—the flowery headed maiden, true butterfly of tranquility.<sup>62</sup>

The passage through the building-creature was designed to reproduce and induce the effect of liberation from the suffering associated with colloidal phantoms. Dalí described "the gradual transformation of a faceless, Surrealistic 'human' from mental turmoil to peace and tranquility."<sup>63</sup> The flowery headed maidens who had appeared in Dalí's paintings from the mid-1930s symbolized cosmic, automatic vegetal life, an embodiment of a benign id.<sup>64</sup>

The pavilion was constructed from "thirteen wooden ribs criss-crossed with steel lattice" with one hundred and sixteen lights attached to the structure. This frame was wrapped inside and out with translucent white parachute silk. The *Crisalida* was equipped with twenty-four motors powering air blowers that enabled the building to breathe and writhe, inhaling for five seconds and exhaling for fifteen seconds, changing color, shape, and moving with atmospheric pressure, as "predicted."

Built in the months immediately after the Museum of Modern Art's Gaudí exhibition and Dalí's recovery from an appendix operation, Dalí might have supervised its construction in Queens, New York, but he did not travel to San Francisco to see the completed building.<sup>68</sup> Each summer, whenever possible, Dalí did not travel west from New York, but east, back to his home in Catalonia.

Dalí understood the analogy of the chrysalis personally, telling reporters at the time that a key ingredient to his creativity was to disappear from public life for long periods each year, and in isolation, to produce his art. Back home in Port Lligat a few months after the convention, Dalí told a reporter,

Every year Dalí disappears... remains in seclusion in the most tranquil of spots. California... Monterey... or here, perhaps the most tranquil place in the world. After nine months of complete seclusion my life becomes a chrysalis. This is heaven... peace... nirvana.<sup>69</sup>

### Towards Paranoiac Surrealist Therapy

The theme of metamorphosis and resurrection implied by the appearance of the chrysalis, and the therapeutic theme in the uphill sequence of interior decorations, the translucent, glowing, breathing walls, give *Crisalida* unique architectural qualities. These living, moving walls redeployed in Marcel Duchamp's exhibition in 1959, and Dalí's retrospective at the Centre Pompidou in 1979. As a singular coherent object, it may be the first anti-constructionalist paranoiac public architecture project. In comparison to the constructionalist surrealist architecture of the *Merzbau* and the *Palais Ideal*, the *Crisalida* has a strongly bounded haecceity; it is so clearly an idea that was built, a building that conceals itself as a living creature, that it unambiguously acknowledges its origin in anti-constructionalist paranoia, though that origin has been obscured by the passing of time.

When Kraeplin began his work in the last years of the nineteenth century, paranoia was a very broad category: the alignments between artistry and paranoia made at the time referred to a far broader conception of paranoia than we have today. Though Kraeplin was the leading voice around paranoia in twentieth century psychology, there were many differing voices; both textbooks and the changing DSM show that the clinical construct of paranoia has been unstable. One hundred and twenty years later, Kenneth S. Kendler wrote for *Schizophrenia Bulletin* that the "criteria for paranoia/delusional disorder do not well reflect the symptoms and signs frequently reported by historical experts. We still use paranoid in conversation, it is used today in clinical psychology, and it was discussed by the Surrealists, but these are three different paranoias.

To review the salient points about paranoia, in these century-old journals of psychoanalytic theory, there were two contrary descriptions of paranoiac ideation, called constitutionalist or constructionalist and anti-constitutionalist or anti-constructionalist. For the constitutionalists and constructionalists, paranoiac delirium was assembled logically in a sequence of steps that were irrational, to be sure, but were built up over a series of observations—like forensic homicide detectives linking together seemingly inconsequential evidential details to uncover the choreography of a murder. But whereas the forensic detectives uncover an obscured reality, a paranoid person effectively talks themselves into a confused mess. Paranoia is thereby understood as a "reasoning madness" often arising from a weak psychological constitution unable to correct itself. When Breton wrote somewhat adversarially about Dalí's work in "The Dalí Case" he relied on Kraepelin's constitutionalist definition of paranoia. Since constructionalist paranoia is assembled more or less consciously, it can also be consciously amped up. For Breton,

Dalí was a bit mad, sure, but he was also faking it, hamming it up for the amusement of his audience. This claim was not untrue, since as Dalí noted, "I always behave like an actor... it is a methodological vice."<sup>76</sup>

For an anti-constitutionalist like Dalí and today's contemporary psychologists, the objects of paranoiac delirium appear already fully formed to the paranoiac person. The cure for this kind of paranoia is more subtle; the paranoiac cannot be so easily reasoned out of their conclusions with a talking therapy since they are formed unconsciously and embedded in perception. Therapeutic treatments today for delimitating shame and phobias are a combination of cognitive-behavioral therapy, which focuses on the emotional responses coming from the subconscious, and possibly calming anxiolytic medication, an updated version of Miltown. Cognitive behavioral therapy and the necessity of conscious intention and engagement resembles Dalí's paranoiac critical method, where a complex, consciously orchestrated technique is used in the service of depicting the concrete irrational subject. Since it involved slow, laborious, and conscious examinations of paranoiac objects and materializations of unconscious fears, the paranoiac critical method may have operated therapeutically, wherever the fortuitous assembly of correct problems arose. Research into this kind of art therapy has shown positive results in resolving shame and trauma, subjects upon which Dalí focused.<sup>77</sup> Some types of confusion often get resolved by approaching a subject and observing it patiently. Other confusions are philosophical or existential enigmas without resolution, which are art's universal themes: the beauty of death, existential space-time anguish, and bodily appetite.

The notion of therapeutic Surrealism in its historical context is, however, questionable. David Macey, in *Lacan in Contexts*, wrote that Breton surely knew that Alfred Binet and Pierre Janet "used automatic writing as a therapeutic method long before Breton transformed it into an *ars poetica*," yet it remains true "that French Surrealism had little or no real interest in the therapeutic potential of psychoanalysis." A therapeutic approach does not even accord with Dalí's aim, stated in the *Minotaure* essay cited above, "to discredit the world of reality." But Dalí's reference to reality points to a varying concept that shifts from the anti-realism he shared with Breton to a realist ontology that was fleshed out in *The Conquest of the Irrational.* Therefore this drive to *discredit reality* has an ambivalent meaning. It seems rather that Dalinian surrealism discredits part of reality for the purpose of expanding it. Nonetheless, designed in Dalí's Classical period, *Crisalida* gave form to the anguish of time, expressed through mythical themes of rebirth and transformation which can be regenerative and life-affirming.

Since the therapeutic efficacy of the paranoiac critical method on certain phobias and paranoiac symptoms depends on the environment under which these examinations occurred, it is impossible now to confirm it unequivocally. The similarity to cognitive behavioral therapy is remarkable and portends further

avenues of research on Surrealism in art therapy. What is certain is the therapeutic conception of the *Crisalida*. One of the least known examples of surrealist architecture and Dalí's only completed architectural commission, the giant cocoon was designed to theatricalize the therapeutic experience as rebirth. Lost to history and engaging both conscious and unconscious, the *Crisalida* marked a fleeting instance of anti-constructionalist surrealist architecture that also aimed to be mythic, simultaneously temporary and eternal.

- 1 Anonymous, "Tranquil pills stir up doctors," *Business Week*, (June 28, 1958): 29; collection Gala-Dalí Foundation.
- 2 Anonymous, "To Nirvana with Miltown", *Time (New York)*, (July 1, 1958): 60; collection Gala-Dalí Foundation.
- 3 Anonymous, "Pass the Miltown, Salvador," *Architectural Forum (New York)*, (August 31, 1958); collection Gala-Dalí Foundation.
- 4 Anonymous, "'Tranquil' invention by Dalí," *Inquirer (Philadelphia)*, (May 31, 1959); collection Gala-Dalí Foundation.
- 5 Meredith Etherington-Smith, *The Persistence of Memory A Biography of Dalí* (New York: Random House, 1992), 164, quoting a letter dated early 1933 in Rafael Santos Torroella, *Salvador Dalí*, *Corresponsal de J. V. Foix, 1932-1936* (Barcelona: Editorial Mediterrania, 1986), 63.
- 6 The centrality of gestalt in Dalí's work, as perceived at the time, is evident in Stefan Zweig's July 18, 1936 letter to Sigmund Freud that Dalí painted his portraits "from memory, and from his inner 'Gestaltung": Etherington-Smith, *The Persistence of Memory*, 234, quoting *Letters of Sigmund Freud*, 1873-1939, Ed. Ernst L. Freud (London: Hogarth Press, 1961).
- 7 Hans Prinzhorn, Artistry of the mentally ill: a contribution to the psychology and psychopathology of configuration (New York: Springer-Verlag, 1972/1922), 16-17. The dual passive-active condition outlines here is an obvious precursor to Dalí's paranoiac critical method.
- 8 André Breton, What Is Surrealism? (London: Faber & Faber, 1936), 59.
- 9 Christian Zervos, "Du Phénomène Surréalists," *Cahiers D'Art (Paris)*, 3, (1928): 113. This problem had been noted earlier than Zervos, as Breton noted, "It has been said that there could not be a Surrealist painting," Andre Breton, «Le Surréalisme et la peinture,» *La Révolution Surréaliste*, 4, (1925):
- 27. At the time, Zervos was new on the Parisian art scene. He had started *Cahiers d'Art* and a gallery with the same name two years earlier. In 1928, when Dalí read Zervos' article, Zervos had very recently wrote and published a book on Raoul Dufy. This would not have impressed Dalí. Zervos' recognition of the problem of Surrealist painting, combined with his relatively minimal coverage of Dalí's work in *Cahiers d'Art*, may have been received by Dalí as the voice of a nay-sayer.
- 10 Salvador Dalí, The Secret Life of Salvador Dalí (New York: Dial Press, 1942), 237.
- 11 A similar process of spontaneously following deeper unspoken urges towards spectacular ends were the two surrealist architecture projects, Ferdinand Cheval's *Palais Idéal*, and Kurt Schwitters' *Merzbau*.
- 12 La Révolution surréaliste 1924-1929; Le Surréalisme au service de la révolution, 1930 1933; Minotaure, 1933 1939.
- 13 Salvador Dalí, 50 Secrets of Magical Craftsmanship (New York: Dial Press, 1948), 178.
- 14 Salvador Dalí, The Conquest of the Irrational (New York: Julien Levy, 1935), 22.
- 15 Felix Fanés, Salvador Dalí-The Construction of the Image 1925-1930 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), 202. Dalí describes the transformation of a normal painted object into a Surreal one in painting by de Chirico. Salvador Dalí, "The Object as Revealed in Surrealist Experiment," This Quarter (Paris) 5, 1 (1932): 205.
- 16 Etherington-Smith, *The Persistence of Memory*, 164, quoting a letter dated early 1933 in Rafael Santos Torroella, *Salvador Dalí, Corresponsal de J. V. Foix*, 63.
- 17 Jacques Lacan, "Le problème du style et la conception psychiatrique des expériences paranoïaques," *Minotaure*, 1 (1933): 68.
- 18 Thomas Lepoutre, Madeira Manoel L., Guerin Nicolas, "The Lacanian Concept of Paranoia: An Historical Perspective," *Frontiers in Psychology*, 8 (2017): 1564.
- 19 Ian Dowbiggin, "Delusional Diagnosis? The History of Paranoia as a Disease Concept in the Modern Era," *History of Psychiatry* 11.41 (2000): 44.
- 20 Lepoutre, et al., "The Lacanian Concept of Paranoia: An Historical Perspective," 2.
- 21 Emil Kraepelin, Clinical Psychiatry: A Textbook for Students and Physicians (New York, Macmillan

- 1899/1915), p. 423.
- 22 Catherine Clément, The Lives and Legends of Jacques Lacan (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983), 57.
- 23 Jacques Lacan, 1932/1975, De la psychose paranoïaque dans ses rapports avec la personnalité (Paris: Éditions du seuil), 6.
- 24 Lepoutre, et al., "The Lacanian Concept of Paranoia: An Historical Perspective," 2; Olga Cox-Cameron, "Lacan's doctoral thesis: turbulent preface or founding legend?" *Psychoanalytische Perspectieven* 41/42 (2000), 19-20.
- 25 Lepoutre, et al., 3.
- 26 Lepoutre, et al., 2.
- 27 S. Dalí, The Conquest of the Irrational, 18; J. Lacan, De la psychose paranoïaque dans ses rapports avec la personnalité, 25.
- 28 S. Dalí, Dalí, Dalí! (New York, Julien Levy Gallery, 1939), n.p.
- 29 Dalí, The Conquest of the Irrational, 15.
- 30 Louis Aragon, Paris Peasant, translated by Simon W. Taylor (London: Picador 1971), 23.
- 31 Sebastia Gasch, "The recent obres Salvador Dalí," *Publicitat*, (16 November 1929): 5; quoting Gabriel Dromard and Alexander Antheaume, *Poesie Et Folie: essai de psychologie et de critique* (Paris: O. Doin, 1908), 36, 258; collection Gala-Dalí Foundation.
- 32 Jeremy Stubbs, "The Dalí Breton Honeymoon: Hallucination, Interpretation, High and Low Ecstasies," in Hank Hine, William Jeffett & Kelly Reynolds, eds., Persistence and Memory: Critical Perspectives on Dalí at the Centennial (Milan: Bompiani, 2004), 17-20; and Astrid Ruffa, "Dalí, Photographe De La Pensée Irrationnelle," Études Photographiques, 22, 2008. Also: P. Sérieux & J.Capgras, Les folies saisonnates. Le délire d'interprétation, (Paris: Alcan, 1909). The line of attribution is not certain because the phrase was in relatively common usage within psychology. Augmenting Stubbs' observations, the 1907 edition of Journal de Psychologie normal et Pathologique, included ten instances of the expression: Journal de Psychologie normal et Pathologique, eds. Pierre Janet and George Dumas, (Paris: Felix Alcan, 1907), 193, 196, 225, 228, 275, 453, 544, 562, 563. The alignment between paranoiac delirium and artistic sensibility is mentioned here too: "Mechanical interpretation, when it exists, is therefore only one element in the midst of many others. The evocations which have been mentioned are always confused; as they become more precise, the aesthetic feeling diminishes until it disappears and leaves nothing but a pure intellectual state," J. Rogues de Forsac, "Psychology and the rapport between logic and the aesthetic," 275.
- 33 Salvador Dalí, La Femme Visible (Paris: Éditions surrealists, 1930), 12.
- 34 Clément, The Lives and Legends of Jacques Lacan, 57.
- 35 Kenneth S. Kendler, "The Clinical Features of Paranoia in the 20th Century and Their Representation in Diagnostic Criteria From DSM-III Through DSM-5," *Schizophrenia Bulletin* 43, 2 (2017): 332.
- 36 Lacan, "The Problem of Style," 68.
- 37 Salvador Dalí, "Nouvelles considérations générales sur le mécanisme du phénomène paranoïaque du point de vue surréaliste," *Minotaure*, 1, (June 1933): 65-67, author's emphasis.
- 38 Robert Lubar, "Dalí and Modernism: Vision and Its Representation," *Dalí: The Salvador Dalí Museum Collection* (St. Petersburg, FL: Salvador Dalí Foundation, 1991), 9-19, quoting a letter from Dalí to Sebastian Gasch, dated 1929.
- 39 Salvador Dali, The Unspeakable Confessions of Salvador Dali, (Paris: Creation Books, 1973), 149.
- 40 Neil Spiller, Architecture & Surrealism (London: Thames & Hudson, 2016), 11, 24.
- 41 Dalí, The Conquest of the Irrational, 10.
- 42 Salvador Dalí, "De la beauté terrifiante et comestible de l'architecture modern' style," *Minotaure*, 3-4, (December 1933): 76.
- 43 Ibid.

- 44 Salvador Dalí, *Dalí on Modern Art* (New York: Dover, 1957), 29-31; Dalí and Parinaud, *The Unspeakable Confessions of Salvador Dalí*, 242.
- 45 See Juan Antonio Ramírez, Edificios-cuerpo Cuerpo humano y arquitectura: analogías, metáforas, derivaciones (Madrid: Siruela, 2003), 48-50.
- 46 Salvador Dalí, Le mythe tragique de l'Angélus de Millet: "Interprétation paranoïaque-critique," (Paris: Jean-Jacques Pauvert, 1963).
- 47 Salvador Dali, "New York Salutes Me!" *Spain,* (May 23, 1941). This has been explored in Rem Koolhaas, *Delirious New York* (New York: Monacelli Press, 1997).
- 48 Dalí, Le mythe tragique de l'Angélus de Millet.
- 49 "Each time I wish to approach purity, I see the sky through the flesh." Salvador Dalí, Recent Paintings by Salvador Dalí exhibition catalogue (New York: Bignou Gallery, 1945), unpaged, exhibition catalogue no.4.
- 50 Salvador Dalí, "The Cylindrical Monarchy of Guimard," *Arts Magazine*, 44, 5, (1970): 42-43. Dalí introduced the house for erotomaniacs in Dalí, "De la beauté terrifiante et comestible de l'architecture modern' style," 76.
- 51 Elliott H. King, Dalí, Surrealism and Cinema (UK: Kamera, 2007), 112.
- 52 Anonymous "Surrealists' Art is Puzzle no more," New York Times, (January 10, 1935), 21.
- 53 Dalí, Secret Life, 376-77.
- 54 *Nugget* magazine, June 1957, reprinted in: Montse Aguer, et al. *Dalí Mass Culture* (Barcelona: Fundación "la Caixa", 2004), 29-30.
- 55 Anonymous, "Unique night club to open next door to el presidente," *Desconegut (Sin Poblacion)*, (December 31, 1957); collection Gala-Dalí Foundation.
  56 Ibid.
- 57 Anonymous, "Designed by Dali. Nightmarish touch given night club" Republic (Phoenix, Arizona) (March 9, 1958); collection Gala-Dalí Foundation. Also, Anonymous, "Good Nait Dalí," Architectural Forum (Chicago), (November 30, 1957), 171.
- 58 Anonymous, "Good Nait Dali", 171. Ada Louis Huxtable, misrepresenting the project, wrote that Dali's project was a "giant snail snail drawn by giraffes proposed by Salvador Dali for a Mexican resort has been pronounced practicable by Felix Candela, the eminent and respectable engineer." Ada Louis Huxtable, "Four model buildings under museum review," *Times (New York)* (February 15, 1959), reprinted in: Ada Louis Huxtable, *On Architecture: Collected reflections on a century of change* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2010), 234. Two decades later, Candela would collaborate with Emilio Pérez Piñero on the dome of Dalí's theater museum.
- 59 John Abney, "Who'll Build Club Designed by Dalí?" Mercury (San Jose, California), (May 16, 1958); collection Gala-Dalí Foundation.
- 60 The Acapulco hotel would eventually have a Dalí bar, reported to be "unremarkable... black and bright leather and wrought iron." A photograph on one wall of "uncertain figures and scenes," apparently a gift from Dalí: Walter Stovall, "Acapulco Vacationers Find Sun Sets Pace," *Vindicator (Youngstown, Ohio)*, (February 9, 1966); collection Gala-Dalí Foundation.
- 61 Ira Henry Freeman, "Dali gives a view of tranquility," *Times (New York)*, (June 5, 1958); collection Gala-Dalí Foundation.
- 62 Salvador Dalí, Crisalida (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Wallace Laboratories, 1958), unpaged.
- 63 Allen Shoenfield, "Dalí and Tranquillisers," News (Detroit, Michigan), (July 7, 1958); collection Gala-Dalí Foundation.
- 64 "Dalí explains 'Crisalida'," c. 1958, *Interview with Edward St John, NBC*, Gala-Dalí Archive, no. 38899. Dalí once spoke of a similar project, "a womb-like room," for a psychiatrist in Vienna: Meyer Levin, "Inside Art: 'I am the only one who combines all' Dalí," *Patriot Ledger (Qunicy, Massachusetts)*, (June 2, 1959); collection Gala-Dalí Foundation.
- 65 Shoenfield, "Dalí and Tranquillisers."

- 66 Anonymous, "To Nirvana with Miltown," 60; Anonymous, "Pass the miltown, Salvador." Shoenfield and several other authors described the wrapping fabric as plastic.
- 67 Edith J. Cahill, "60-foot Worm by Dalí Has Psychiatric Turn," World Telegram & Sun (New York), 4 June 1958; collection Gala-Dalí Foundation.
- 68 Freeman, "Dali gives a view of tranquility."
- 69 "Dalí explains 'Crisalida," Interview with Edward St John.
- 70 Ian Dowbiggin, "Delusional Diagnosis? The History of Paranoia as a Disease Concept in the Modern Era," *History of Psychiatry* 11.41 (2000): 44.
- 71 Kenneth S. Kendler, "The Clinical Features of Paranoia in the 20th Century and Their Representation in Diagnostic Criteria From DSM-III Through DSM-5," *Schizophrenia Bulletin* 43, 2 (2017): 332–343.
- 72 Ibid.
- 73 Also known as constitutionalist and anti-constitutionalist; Dalí used both terms. Dalí, "Nouvelles considérations générales," 65; and Dalí, Secret Life, 27-28.
- 74 Dalí, "Nouvelles considérations générales," 65-67.
- 75 André Breton, Surrealism and Painting (Paris: Gallimard, 1965), 130.
- 76 Manuel del Arco, Dalí in the Nude (Florida: Salvador Dali Museum, 1984), 85-88.
- 77 Karin Schouten et al. "The Effectiveness of Art Therapy in the Treatment of Traumatized Adults: A Systematic Review on Art Therapy and Trauma," *Trauma, Violence, & Abuse* 16: 2 (April 2015): 220–228. Terry Pifalo, "Jogging the Cogs: Trauma-Focused Art Therapy and Cognitive Behavioral Therapy with Sexually Abused Children," *Art Therapy* 24: 4 (January 2007): 170–175.
- 78 David Macey, Lacan in Contexts (London: Verso, 1988), 51, 61.
- 79 Dalí, "Nouvelles considérations générales," 65.
- 80 Simon Weir and Jason Dibbs, "The Ontographic Turn From Cubism to the Surrealist Object," *Open Philosophy* 2: 1 (2019): 384–398.