CaixaForum Sevilla
24 October 2018 to 3 February 2019
The exhibition explores a fascinating period of this genius painter that began with *Atomic Leda*, a masterwork that is exceptionally travelling to CaixaForum Sevilla.

“The atomic explosion of August 6, 1945, shook me seismically. Thenceforth, the atom was my favourite food for thought. Many of the landscapes painted in this period express the great fear inspired in me by the announcement of that explosion.”

—Salvador Dalí

*Atomic Leda* is one of the paintings produced by Dalí under this new sign. Dalí was living with Gala at the time in the USA, where they had arrived in 1940 after fleeing from the Second World War. *Atomic Leda* displays the artist's concerns for the events of his era and, at the same time, condenses many of his particular interests: science, landscape, mythology and Gala, his partner, inspiration and muse. In the whole of his oeuvre, this painting represents the transition from his “atomic age” to his “nuclear mysticism period”. Dalí never lets go of *Atomic Leda* and in the 1970s decides to hang it in a pre-eminent place in his Theatre-Museum in Figueres. It can now be exceptionally seen in CaixaForum Sevilla thanks to the collaboration between "la Caixa” Foundation and Gala-Salvador Dalí Foundation to make *Atomic Dalí* possible in order to provide in-depth knowledge about one of Salvador Dalí’s masterworks.

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Sevilla, 23 October 2018: This morning, Elisa Durán, Deputy General Director of the “la Caixa” Banking Foundation; Montse Ager, Director of Dalí Museums; Moisés Roiz, Director of CaixaForum Sevilla, Carme Ruiz, curator of the exhibition and Head Curator of the Gala-Salvador Dalí Foundation, presented the exhibition Atomic Dalí.

The project is the result of collaboration between the “la Caixa” Foundation and Dalí Foundation. The collaboration commitment of these two institutions dates back many years. They have consequently jointly staged outstanding exhibitions over the past twenty years, such as Salvador Dalí. Family Album, Dalí and Magazines and one of two major exhibitions to commemorate the centenary of the birth of this artist from the Empordà: Dalí and Mass Culture, a show that still remains today the most visited in the history of CaixaForum Barcelona.

This new project represents another step forward in the historical understanding between these two institutions. Atomic Dalí takes an in-depth look at the oil painting Atomic Leda, which has been exceptionally moved from its usual home in the Treasure Room of the Dalí Theatre-Museum to travel to CaixaForum Sevilla.

The entire exhibition revolves around this work, which will be exhibited alone in a room by emulating its original location together with a series of pieces that will help to explain the fascinating history behind this painting. The exhibition includes 39 original works made up of paintings, preparatory sketches, photographs and documents, as well as reproductions (modern facsimiles and copies), audiovisual pieces, teaching aids, mediated activities and even an experiment.

Key transitional work from his “atomic age” to his “nuclear mysticism period”

Salvador Dalí and Gala were living in the USA in 1940 after having fled the Second World War. Between 1946 and 1947, the artist set up his studio near the city of Monterey (California), an ideal place to work that reminded him of
Cap de Creus and his much-missed Cadaqués. It is there that he paints *Atomic Leda*, a key work that marks a turning point in his career. At the same time, Dalí was shaken by the Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombs and this leaves an indelible mark on his work.

*Atomic Leda* displays the artist’s concerns for the events of his era and, at the same time, condenses many of his particular interests: science, landscape, mythology and Gala, his partner, inspiration and muse. In the whole of his oeuvre, this painting represents the transition from his “atomic age” to his “nuclear mysticism period”. He abandoned his paranoiac-critical method and embraced atomic physics while turning his attention to the Renaissance.

This return to the past became evident, on the one hand, through the subject he chose: the myth of Leda and the swan. On the other hand, his use of the golden ratio became habitual in his paintings from this period. To apply the teachings of Luca Pacioli’s treatise *De divina proportione* (On the Divine Proportion), Dalí consulted the mathematician Matila Ghyka, who helped him translate his visions onto the canvas.

**Technical analysis of the work**

The study conducted for the exhibition *Atomic Dalí* reveals how Dalí had left behind youthful experimentation and surrealist militancy to construct a new conception of his art. This transformation was based on nuclear physics and combined his religious feelings with advances related to nuclear fission and fusion.

When Salvador Dalí presented *Atomic Leda* for the first time at the Bignou Gallery in New York on 25 November 1947, he declared that this painting would be his first masterwork. In addition, in an extraordinary act, Dalí exhibited the unfinished painting, thus enabling those interested to study his work technique as well as his book/manual for artists, *50 Secrets of Magic Craftsmanship*, which was about to be published. All this manifested his willingness to express his deep interest in technical and painting procedures in the style of the great Renaissance classic painters.

His Monterey studio had to have good natural lighting, a comfortable armchair and the necessary tools for painting. The painter surrounded himself with objects and images that often served as models or inspiration, be they a
reproduction of a Raphael painting stuck to the mast of his easel or a stuffed swan for *Atomic Leda*.

Dalí carried out a thorough preparatory work process, consisting of sketches, drafts, photographs, tracings, studies and preliminary drawings. The initial idea that he had in mind, Gala-Leda, was transformed into a quick, energetic sketch or into precious drawings or studies of a specific area that the artist later developed in detail, such as the pedestal or the face, which he treated with a vast wealth of technical resources. The painter also used photography, either as a reminder of the model —Gala posing as *Leda*— or to record the evolution of the drawings that would make up the final painting.

The technical study of *Atomic Leda* reveals that the artist applied the layers of paint on the canvas by following his own instructions written in *50 Secrets of Magic Craftsmanship*. Following meticulous creative work processes in the traditional style, Dalí spared no effort or time in discovering the most suitable materials and painting techniques, which displayed his respect for technique and craft and his concern for the longevity of his pieces. Perhaps he was seeking immortality through his work?

![Detail of Atomic Leda as seen through various types of light](image)

**Fully immersed in the work**

In order to fully understand the many ramifications of the main work and its context, the exhibition uses various museum strategies, such as audiovisual pieces, visual information panels, manipulable elements and even a scientific experiment.

The four audiovisual pieces immerse us in the before and after of the work’s conception —both in the historical moment and in Dalí’s career— and it also looks
at other aspects that obsessed the artist, such as the golden ratio or atomic physics.

Thus, for example, in the room dedicated to Dalí’s relationship with science (“Dalí and atomic physics”), the texts help us to understand the relationship between atomic physics and phenomena such as force fields with the work *Atomic Leda*, in which all the elements seem to be floating. The room reproduces this phenomenon by an experiment that shows elements such as those in the painting actually floating (using an electro-magnet-activated force-field system).

Another later room explains how Dalí emulated classic painters by applying the golden ratio in composing his work. Panels with visual examples, a video and manipulable devices help visitors to understand this concept. This same room also shows visitors how the myth of Leda and the swan is a classic theme of painting by using a series of works reproduced in a giant book.

Exhibition-related activities and catalogue

The exhibition is completed with activities aimed at all types of audiences, ranging from a lecture by the show’s curator to specific visits for the general public, families, schools, etc. The exhibition catalogue also includes texts by Isidro Fainé, the President of the "la Caixa" Banking Foundation; and Jordi Mercader, the President of the Dalí Foundation; as well as by Carme Ruiz, the exhibition’s curator; Irene Civil, Head of Conservation and Restoration at the Dalí Foundation; Bea Crespo, Lucia Moní, Fiona Mata and Clara Silvestre, Coordinators of the Centre for Dalinian Studies at the same institution; Josep Perelló, physicist, and Enric Ucelay, historian.

The catalogue was designed by Àlex Gifreu. Other promotional and informational material has also been produced, such as two audiovisual capsules by DocDoc Films and Nueve Ojos, which form part of the exhibition’s content and will be available on the website of "la Caixa” Foundation/CaixaForum Sevilla.

EXHIBITION AREAS

His studio
Dali arrived at the Monterey Peninsula (California) in 1941. Between 1946 and 1947, he set up his studio near the city of Monterey in a quiet, pleasant and ideal place to work. In addition to *Atomic Leda*, he painted the works for his next exhibition in New York there. Dalí feels very
comfortable in this area, as it reminds him of Cap de Creus and his much-missed Cadaqués. In many of the paintings from this period, the landscape of the Californian coastline reminds us of landscape of Portlligat. Dalí had various studios throughout his life and, according to him, these had to have good natural lighting, a comfortable armchair and the necessary tools for painting. The painter surrounded himself with objects and images that often served as models or inspiration, be they a reproduction of a Raphael painting stuck to the mast of his easel or a stuffed swan for Atomic Leda.

His work process
His work process also follows a methodology: the idea he had in mind, Gala-Leda, was transformed into a quick, energetic sketch or into precious studies that are often followed by others of a specific area that the artist developed in detail, in this case the pedestal. The painter also used photography, either as a reminder of the model—Gala posing as Leda— or to record the evolution of the drawings that would make up the final painting.

Towards Atomic Leda
Dali exhibited twice at the Bignou Gallery in New York. During his second solo exhibition, in 1947, he voluntarily presented his still unfinished Atomic Leda: “I have begun the first, Atomic Leda, which I am exhibiting while it is still in progress, thus enabling those interested in my technique to study the development of this work coinciding with the publication of my book 50 Secrets of Magic Craftsmanship.” The artist wanted to display his work to the general public, as confirmed by the second and last issue of Dalí News, a newspaper he personally edited devoted exclusively to his activities.

Gala
Gala is one of the cornerstones of Atomic Leda. Dalí met her in 1929, when she became his partner, wife and muse. Gala played the role of a tenacious, inseparable and attentive collaborator, as well as being his main source of inspiration, given that she embodied the representation of femininity in a real or idealised manner. Gala was also the couple’s financial manager and Dalí’s main dealer. An occasional writer and editor, she was also an artist without any work. Dalí signed many works by putting his wife’s name before his own, thus merging both into a whole.

The couple kept many photographs of openings, visits and social appointments that provide us with information about their public life. They also kept personal images of their daily lives and created others to be expressly used in the studio. This area shows how Dalí used some of these to represent his muse as the main protagonist, as a secondary character or as a semi-hidden figure in his work.

Dali and atomic physics
Science is one of the main themes of Atomic Leda. Dalí became interested in the scientific world as a teenager and it became an inspiring, fertile and productive element for him in both the artistic and philosophical fields. The paradigm shift that revolutionised physics at the beginning of the 20th century exerted a great influence on Dalí. During the surrealist period, it led him to the paranoiac-critical method of interpreting reality, in which he combined his knowledge of physics with others based on Freudian psychoanalysis. He later linked his painting directly to the theories of atomic structure. Atomic Leda is an excellent example of this: everything floats in it, everything is in suspension, just like electrons around an atomic nucleus.
To become a classic painter
When Dalí painted Atomic Leda, he was at the end of a process of change that began in the 1940s through which he wanted to emulate classic painters without abandoning the subjects that stimulated him. He therefore abandoned his paranoiac-critical method and embraced atomic physics while shifting his gaze towards the Renaissance. This return to the past became evident, on the one hand, through the subject he chose: the myth of Leda and the swan, already treated by great Renaissance masters such as Leonardo da Vinci and Michelangelo. On the other hand, his use of the golden ratio became habitual in his paintings from this period. To apply the teachings of Luca Pacioli’s treatise *De divina proportione* (On the Divine Proportion), Dalí consulted the mathematician Matila Ghyka, who helped him translate his visions onto the canvas. Because his destiny from now on would be to become a classic painter.

The golden ratio
The preparatory sketches of Atomic Leda show the main figure inscribed in a five-pointed star and pentagon. These geometrical figures have the particularity of maintaining a golden relationship between their dimensions and are therefore considered especially beautiful: harmonious, balanced and naturally proportioned. This ratio, discovered in classical antiquity and developed in the Renaissance by the mathematician Luca Pacioli (whose book *De divina proportione* Dalí recommended to novice painters as essential reading), was applied to art and architecture in order to bring works closer to divine perfection and instil them with a mystical charge, which is why Dalí returned to it in his Leda.

Nuclear mysticism
By the time Dalí painted Atomic Leda and other works from the same period, he had already left behind youthful experimentation and surrealist militancy. Nuclear physics was at the root of this transformation. Immediately afterwards, he began his “nuclear mysticism period”, in which he combined his religious feelings with advances related to nuclear fission and fusion. His paintings therefore portrayed Madonnas and other spiritual symbols combined with subatomic particles in motion. As was usually the case, Dalí used writing to set forth his new approaches. His *Mystical Manifesto* is the first of many texts that illustrate this new artistic shift.
EXHIBITION-RELATED ACTIVITIES

FOR THE GENERAL PUBLIC

LECTURE BY THE EXHIBITION’S CURATOR
WEDNESDAY 24 OCTOBER 2018

Delivered by Carme Ruiz González, Head Curator of the Gala-Salvador Dalí Foundation and formerly Coordinator of the Centre for Dalinian Studies in Figueres. Linked to the Gala-Salvador Dalí Foundation since 1993, Carmen Ruiz has participated in symposia, written texts for catalogues and thoroughly explored the work of this genius from the Empordà. One of the most important projects she has coordinated is The Catalogue Raisonné of Paintings by Salvador Dalí 1910-1983.

To what extent can a single work represent the turning point in the career of an artist like Dalí? Dalí was shaken in the aftermath of the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and this became the driving force behind many of the works he painted during his American period. This exhibition takes a profound look at Atomic Leda, the painting that best represents Dalí’s shift from his “atomic age” to his “nuclear mysticism period”.

GUIDED TOURS
Monday, Thursday and Saturday at 7pm
Tuesday and Friday at 12pm
Friday and Sunday at 6pm
Sunday at 1pm

Special hours:
- No tours as the centre is closed on 25 December, 1 and 6 January
- No tours on Monday, 24 and 31 December or Saturday, 5 January

COFFEE AND CONVERSATION
A relaxed tour that further explores the subjects or aspects that most interest visitors as led by a mediator. Impressions of the exhibition will be shared at the end of the tour in a participatory conversation accompanied by a cup of coffee (or similar). Wednesday at 5pm

GUIDED TOURS FOR GROUPS
Prior booking and more information by calling 955 657 634 or writing to rcaixaforumsevilla@magmacultura.net. Also available in English, French and Italian.
FOR SCHOOL STUDENTS

GUIDED TOURS OF THE EXHIBITION
29 OCTOBER 2018 TO 1 FEBRUARY 2019

Arranged times. Duration: 1 h. From upper secondary school (ESO) to sixth-form (Bachillerato) students.

DYNAMIC TOURS OF THE EXHIBITION
29 OCTOBER 2018 TO 1 FEBRUARY 2019

Arranged times. Duration: 1 h and 30 minutes. From third grade primary school to upper secondary school (ESO) students.

FOR FAMILIES

FAMILY TOURS
Join a tour specially designed for families that includes the exhibition and participatory activities within the exhibition space. The tours are led by a mediator and based on one of the exhibition’s main themes as developed around the displayed works.
Saturday at 1pm and 6pm / Sunday at 12pm
Press Dossier

ATOMIC DALÍ

24 October 2018 to 3 February 2019

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Open every day
Monday to Sunday from 10am to 8pm

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Monday to Sunday from 9am to 8pm

www.obrasociallacaixa.org

Prices
Free entry for "la Caixa" customers
Ticket price for non-customers of "la Caixa": €4 (includes entry to all exhibitions)
Free entry for children under 16

Ticket Sales
CaixaForum.com/agenda
Tickets also available at CaixaForum during opening hours

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