

Dali: Paranoia as Artistic Strategy

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Abstract

The connection between paranoia and the artistic imagination was established a long time ago. The mental alienation, in which the ancients saw as a divine favour or a punishment, and which, in other moments of art history, passed for magic, became subject of scientific analysis in the nineteenth century. Since then, the fascination seems to have been mutual. The ineffable character of artistic creation, the enigma of genius have often demanded the concepts, the instruments and the methodology of psychology and related sciences. Artists too have searched and found in it solutions to the problems of artistic production. In his own confrontation with the “irrational”, Salvador Dali drew the attention of his fellow surrealists to the poetic resources of the paranoiac delirium. By using the potential of “madness”, the painter questioned the ever moving borders between normality and the pathological. In this study, we attempt to identify the ensemble of principles of his paranoiac-critical method, its structuring into a coherent explanatory system, in relation to the doctrine of surrealist automatism promoted by de André Bréton, whose limits, Dali aimed to overcome.