

THE GRAPHIC WORK OF SALVADOR DALÍ

The graphic work of Dalí deserves our special attention. From various sources we know that Dalí practised diverse graphic skills at the Municipal School for Graphic Techniques in Barcelona at a young age. Collectors have always valued his drypoints on copper and etchings, works that were all printed in limited, numbered editions and signed by the master himself.

Being cultivated and refined, Dalí had taken great interest in literature and in the world of old masters and engravers. Generally, artists do not limit themselves to one skill or medium, but use various graphic and artistic techniques in order to express their content. Intimate imaginary and fantastic – or even provocative - subjects evidently require a great number of diverse technical ways of expression.

Dalí drew on a large range of graphic techniques in a masterly way. During his life he illustrated perhaps a hundred works, inspired by well-known literary and historical matter, by using all kinds of graphic techniques. Among his best-known work is the illustration of Georges Hugnet's book 'Onan' (1934), which is an etching in which Dalí used provocative images for the first time. Dalí explained in a footnote that this engraving was the result of his 'graphisme automatique': 'A spasmo-graphism, drawn by the left hand while with the other I masturbated until I drew blood and felt bone within the bitter cup of pleasure'

In 1933 Dalí met the Swiss editor Albert Skira in Picasso's studio. Picasso suggested that Skira employ Dalí in order to illustrate the 'Songs of Maldoror' by Lautréamont. This book was published in 1934 and is seen as one of Dalí's masterworks. The story was written by the French Isidore Ducasse, who was born in Montevideo (Uruguay) in 1846, using the title of 'Count of Lautréamont' as a pseudonym. The work consists of a series of songs which evoke unusual, frightening and extravagant events, written in a style full of animation and excess. The few critics who reviewed this book interpreted it as an expression of a disturbed mind. Only since 1918 did some young poets begin to appreciate Lautréamont's erudition and use of often comic imagery.

A lot of publications followed. The French used to call these 'Editions Illustrées' (Illustrated Editions). They created opportunities for the artist to show his talents and sense of the surreal in order to interpret literary themes in an oneiric, fetishist and at times alchemist way by means of signs, images and colour.

Dalí often added shades of colour to his graphic work, along with suggestive forms that matched his very personal and unique style. Poussin said: “Colours in painting seduce both the eye and the painted beauty, very much like lines of poetry seduce the ear”.

Dalí applied very refined techniques in his graphic work and developed his own creative inspiration, expressing the best of himself in the images that he used. These images have charmed people all over the world and thus Dalí's work has always remained fashionable, both in international museums and in collections of the most exigent private collectors.

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