

THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART
11 WEST 53RD STREET, NEW YORK

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No. 2

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

NOTE: The Fifth Anniversary Exhibition will close Sunday, January 20. The Museum will be dark until Wednesday, January 30, when it will open to the public a Retrospective Exhibition of the works of Gaston Lachaise, one of the foremost living American sculptors, and an Exhibition of paintings by George Caleb Bingham (1811-1879), known as "The Missouri Artist."

Salvador Dali, noted Spanish painter, lectured on "Surrealist Paintings: Paranoiac Images" at the Museum of Modern Art, 11 West 53 Street, Friday evening, January 11. Mr. Dali, a Catalan by birth, is leader of the surrealist group in Paris. His lecture was given in French and translated by Mr. Julien Levy.

Mr. Dali illustrated his lecture with lantern slides showing work by Picasso in his surrealist phase, by Max Ernst, and other surrealists. He also showed slides of seventeenth-century engravings in which images appear similar to those in today's surrealist paintings, with the difference that the seventeenth-century artists introduced these images without being conscious of their significance. In modern surrealism the images drawn from the subconscious are painted consciously and realistically. Mr. Dali considers the seventeenth-century art shown in the engravings an unconscious anticipation of contemporary surrealism.

Mr. Dali said in part: "I find it perfectly natural when my friends and the general public pretend not to understand the meaning of my pictures. How would you expect anybody to understand the significance of my pictures when I myself, who have made them, I myself I regret to say do not understand them either. I must admit that I am the first to be surprised and often terrified by the extravagant images that I see appear with fatality on my canvas. In truth I am but the automaton which registers, without judgement and with all possible exactitude, the dictates of my subconscious, my dreams, the vnpagogical images and visions, my paranoiac hallucinations, and, in short, all those manifestations, concrete and irrational, of that sensational and obscure world discovered by Freud, which I don't for a moment doubt is one of the most important discoveries of our epoch.

reaching to the most profound and most vital roots of the human spirit. The fact that I myself at the moment of painting my pictures know nothing of their meaning is not to say that the images in question are without sense. On the contrary, their meaning is so profound, systematic, and complex, that they require an absolutely scientific interpretation. In short, the only way to reduce a surrealist picture to current terms would be to submit it to the most rigorous psychoanalysis. But such understanding of the picture is only scientifically accessible, and not in the least necessary for the public. On the contrary, the public must draw all its pleasure from the unlimited sources of mystery, enigma, and anguish that such images always offer the spectator, for they are addressed actually to each spectator's own subconscious, speak exactly the secret and symbolical language of the subconscious, which is to say that surrealist images are perfectly understood by that which is deepest in the spectator and make exactly the immediate poetic effect for which they are destined, even when the spectator consciously protests and believes that he has experienced no emotion whatsoever. To know just what effect a surrealist image has produced it would be necessary to subject the spectator to a long analysis, it would be necessary to know his dreams and all the modifications experienced by his psychic life after viewing a surrealist image. For on the conscious level he is always ready to defend himself against this kind of imagery by the well-known method of suppression.

"Actually all my ambition is to give to the subconscious world and the world of the imagination in general the same degree of importance, weight, and objectivity as is possessed by the actual world; that is to say - put the world of imagination and the real world on an equal plane of objectivity. This is the reason that in a way my things resemble the work of a madman. The only difference between myself and a madman is that I am not mad. That is to say that I do not confound the world of the imagination with the real world, altho I consider them both equally important and equally real."

Mr. Dali's lecture was well attended by members of the Museum and their friends. After the lecture the audience took the opportunity to view again the Fifth Anniversary Exhibition, which fills the four floors of the Museum. Two of the paintings hung in the Exhibition are by Dali. One of these, The Persistence of Memory, is a recent acquisition given the Museum by Mrs. Stanley Resor on the occasion of its fifth anniversary, November 1934.