

Serrano, 43,
Madrid.

Miss Fleur Cowles,
c/o Mrs. Tom Meyer,
A5 Albany,
London.

Dear Miss Cowles,

Thank you very much for your kind letter, dated 26h July, last. Your request, coming as it does from you, far from being an imposition I consider a great compliment and I comply with much pleasure.

I can answer, briefly, some of the questions you put to me, and a translation of a letter I wrote to Salvador Dali after several exchanges of opinion had been reported in the Press may help to answer your questions better than separately expressed views.

It had not come to my notice that Dali had written any works of poetry. I often discussed our contemporary with my great friend Garcia Lorca, who also knew him well, but I never heard him mention any poetical venture on the part of Dali. I have great respect for him as a writer, and it is undoubted that in his prose, as in the prose of most interesting writers there is often a poetical quality.

Though not necessarily influenced by Gaudi, there are certainly parallels in the work of Dali to be drawn between it and the great architecture of the former. This is to be considered natural in two Catalan artists, since modernism is so much a regional characteristic.

I wrote to Salvador Dali as follows:

"My esteemed Salvador Dali,

From my declarations to the Press recently published in the newspapers "Pueblo" and "Informaciones" of Madrid, a casual observer might think that I had gone too far in my views on your work and other activities. However I know that no harm can come to you from anything said publicly about you, whatever it might be. In your position any publicity is good publicity. My aim however was a direct and, I trust, noble aim. To persuade you to a more sincere approach in your painting.

A sense of duty impels me, should I observe a defect that has a remedy, to seek it, if it is in me, or urge it if it lies in others. I would even risk the offence given to others as long as I am certain that I act in good faith. In each of our souls there is something that is transcendental, which is can yet be easily marred by a lost sense of direction. It is our duty to regain it and help others to regain it. Every artist should be like scales in balance, in harmony, and careful to remain utterly true to himself. If the artistic output outweighs

the propaganda and publicity embroidered round it, well, but if the propagandistic urge outweighs the creative then there is little hope. I am not who to criticise your urge to exhaust the possibilities of propaganda, some so near scandalous. But as a friend who appreciates your genius in art, and your intelligence, I offer a warning.

Snobbery does not breed easily in Spain, whose qualities are strength, austerity and an innate resistance against novel and facile contrivances. The profound religious spirit of its people demands that sacred themes be treated with seriousness and absolute sincerity.

To follow a genius-like career is always interesting whatever its nature may be. But in a case where it is not a contrivance by which to earn a living but the most perfect condition in which to live, as in ours, let us be certain that we are conscious of our responsibility. Of what value is the superficial delight in a baroque and exhausting popularity compared with the satisfaction of authentic creative experience? However if your predominant instinct is towards these propagandistic essays, why not float an enterprise in publicity technique which could be something unique of its kind? No longer disguising it you could attain to a form of art with propaganda, otherwise a simple craft.

I speak in absolute sincerity and without a trace of irony. If you do not see your way open to the fulfilment of your more transcendental qualities, set up this Academy of Publicity I suggest, through which you could gain the fame deserved by an activity of defined limits and without mystic qualities, and the reward of a considerable income.

I notice as well in your propaganda you occupy considerable space to Pablo Picasso, to a point where it might appear an obsession. The campaign appears pointless for he has not acknowledged any of your overtures. Leave him alone! Your messages appear to be in the nature of an invitation but could also be construed as a machiavellian ruse. This magnanimous call can only heighten the grief of a banished man - a grief all the more bitter as this banishment was, and continues to be, self imposed. It would be interpreted by him as a taunt and serves only to close the door of his return which he can of his own free will open. The world is large, and even Spain is large enough for two painters!

I will end by repeating that if it is worth while to create a work with the essence of eternity, ephemeral vanities must be sacrificed to it, which would otherwise demand greater sacrifices still.

You have been most fortunate in life to find that privileged being, Gala, a luck on which I congratulate you. She has spurred you on with her inspired collaboration. Please convey to her my sincere admiration. Yrs Gregorio Prieto!

I trust this will answer some of your question.

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P.S. to Dali's "Picasso and Me"

Dali's attack on Picasso may have earned him reams of publicity (and amused thousands of ^{Madridenses} ~~Spaniards~~) as well as adding an unique document to the mounting literature by Dali against his Catalan compatriot, but it deeply distressed one of his old friends, Gregorio Prieto (1)

He was upset by the shocking self-exposure and titillation of the public. Dali embarrassed him. The orgy of publicity irritated him. And all of it moved him to action; he wrote two "Friendly dissensions" for two Madrid newspapers. Many other bitter exchanges of opinion were seen and heard. Prieto then wrote the following letter directly to his friend in explanation (he very kindly sent me a copy for publication):

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(1) Born 1897, Valpenas - famed, like Dali, for his "Mediterranean surrealism" based on classic forms, ruins etc. (often compared to Chirico's). His oil paintings known for their primitive harshness of colour. Considered one of Spain's leading contemporary artists.

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Yours,

GREGORIO PRIETO"

Prieto's suggestion that Dali "float an enterprise in publicity technique" is a brilliant one. Dali's ideas would not only turn any circus press agent green with envy, but even the more effete members of the public relations world. A Dali Academy of Publicity would have a waiting list for years

Fundación Gregorio Prieto