

The day the world bade farewell to Dalí

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On 23 January 1989, **Salvador Domingo Felipe Jacinto Dalí Domènech**, the Marquis of Púbol, died of a heart attack. The world of art lost a master, and the little town of **Figueras** lost the man that had made it famous throughout the world.

Peculiar, ingenious, bizarre, greatly loved or detested, Dalí was as much a star in life as he was in death. On the day of his funeral, the whole of Figueras bade a last, moving, farewell to the artist, while television cameras and lenses from all over the world captured the event. Among them, the only Italian photographers were **Franco Aresi**, from Varese, and **Franco Garbin**, from Gallarate, who were there, somewhat by chance.

How did you come to be in Figueras?

Franco Garbin. I was in Barcellona for a fashion shoot, when I learnt of the death of Dalí. Figueras wasn't very far, and, on my day off, I decided to go and see what was going on; in the meantime, I had spoken with Franco Aresi, who was in Camargue.

What do you remember of that day?

Franco Aresi. There were so many people, it looked like the whole town had come out to pay their respects to the master. The air we breathed was one of great participation, not only sad faces, but people crying with despair. The emotions were spontaneous.

Your photos were not published, were they?

F.A. That's true, no newspaper has ever published them. For reasons of work, we came back to Italy a few days later, when the Italian newspapers had purchased photo reportages from the foreign agencies. Times were different, there were no Internet points, where you could send the photos, and we still used films, not digital cameras.

What happened during the ceremony?

F.G. The coffin passed through the whole town, between two stern crowds, and reached the Basilica where the funeral ceremony was held; then the procession accompanied the coffin to its resting place, the Museum where Dalí had said he wished to be buried. The atmosphere was extremely surreal, with the guards wearing clothes designed by the artist, the authorities in typical Catalan dress and the ordinary people in very peculiar garb.

On that occasion, luck played an important role.

F.A. In photography, luck does have an important part to play. In order to be in the right place at the right time, it doesn't take only a spirit of initiative, but also luck, of course.

What relationship is there between a photograph and time?

F.A. First of all, you have to define what a photograph is, and distinguish it from an image. In my opinion, a photograph is that instant in which you manage to freeze a moment without a great deal of alteration. In contrast, an image is the final result of a process, where the flavour of history is lost. This is why I never touch up my photos.

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