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Title of project: A Structure for Galacidalacidesoxyribose Nucleic Acid: A Study of the Double Helix in the Art of Salvador Dali

Abstract:

Galacidalacidesoxyribonucleicacid from 1963 an oil-on-canvas masterwork by Salvador Dali. Subtitled "Homage to Crick and Watson," the painting is known for its DNA iconography, using the double helix to represent continuity of life contrasted against an image of cubic salt crystals representing destruction of it. In his artistic lifetime, Dali reacted to multiple scientific discoveries, including relativity, atomic, and catastrophe theories, as well as historical events marked by application of technology, and these not only influenced his art but sometimes directly appeared in it. In particular, he employed the image of the double helix in nine paintings. We have studied the paintings of what we call the Dali-DNA Collection and have placed them in the context of science history and Dali biography. Our findings suggest that Dali's appreciation of the double helix as a symbol of life was perhaps greater than that of the contemporary scientific community, and his reverence for its complexity resulted in direct iconographic employment rather than assimilation of accepted ideas and forms. His assertion that the double helix "is the only structure linking man to God" anticipated that of genomics pioneer Francis Collins, who in 2007 described the human genome as "the language of God."