

ART

# Salvador Dalí's iconic painting of Christ returns to Spain

The Christ of Saint John of the Cross will be exhibited in his home town in Catalonia

NEW

[Isambard Wilkinson, Madrid](#)

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Salvador Dalí in his studio in Port Lligat with his painting 1951 painting Christ of St John on the Cross

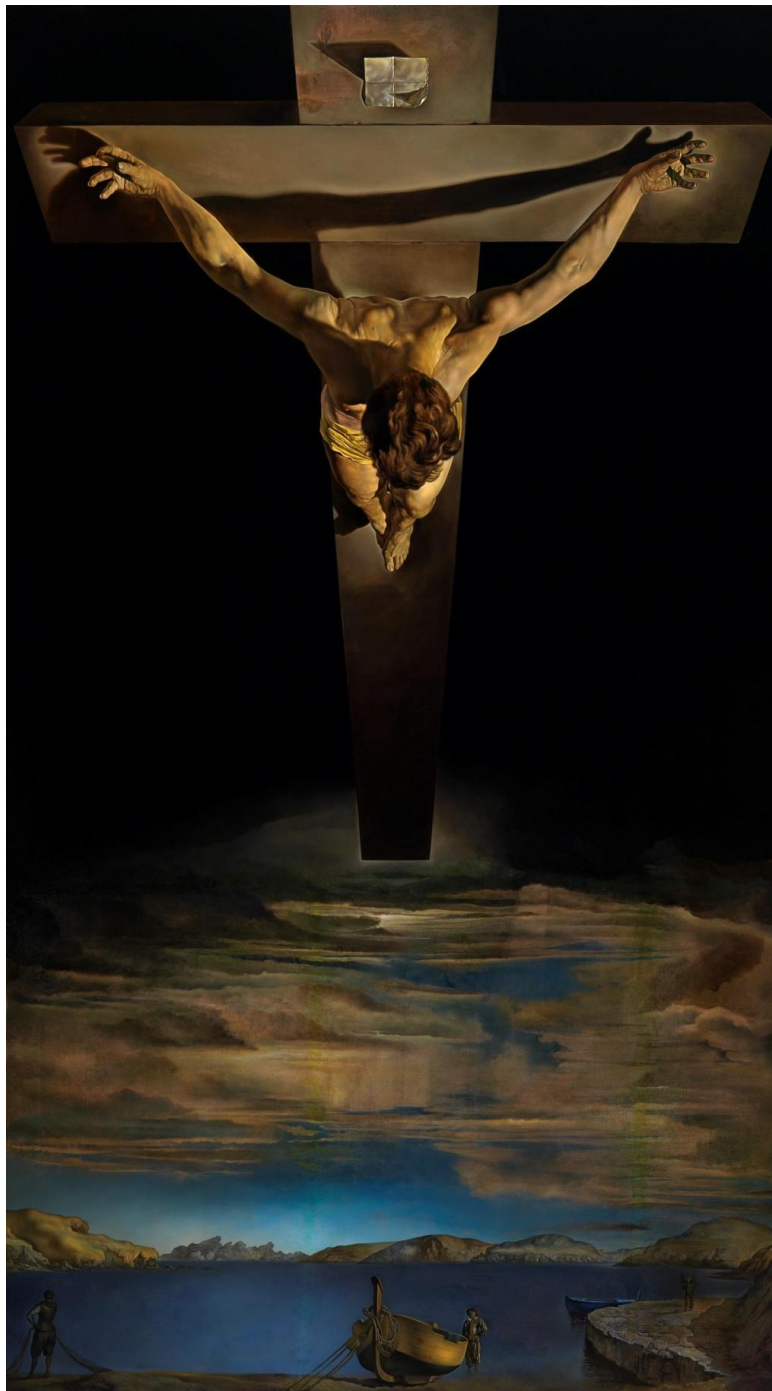
DANIEL FARSON/GETTY IMAGES

Salvador Dalí's most famous religious work will return from Glasgow to Spain for the first time since 1952 as the star attraction of a historic exhibition.

Dalí's Christ of St John of the Cross, an unusual depiction of the Crucifixion seen from on high, will be exhibited in his home town of Figueres for the first time from November until the end of April.

The exhibition, which was supposed to take place in 2020 but was delayed due to the pandemic, was made possible after an agreement between the artist's foundation and Glasgow's city council, which owns it. It will be exhibited at the giant egg-topped Dalí Theatre and Museum, where the artist was buried under a stage after his death in 1989.

The exhibition will revolve around the painting and its mysterious creative process. "It will be a reconstruction of the history of this great painting. Many things are already known. Some are unprecedented," Montserrat Aguer, the museum director, told El País. "I think the exhibition is going to be like those good documentaries in which only when the elements are arranged do we understand the story in depth."



The painting depicts Christ on the Cross above Port Lligat with a backdrop representing the Sea of Galilee

KELVINGROVE ART GALLERY AND MUSEUM/PA

Inspired by a painting of the Crucifixion attributed to Saint John of the Cross, the 16th-century Spanish mystic, the painting depicts Christ on the Cross floating above the bay of Port Lligat, a boat, a fisherman and a backdrop representing the Sea of Galilee. Dalí wrote that he had a [“cosmic dream”](#) in which the image represented the “nucleus of the atom” and the unity of the universe, an allusion to platonic thought.

Aguer said: “The Christ is the work that links two [of Dalí’s] creative periods and at the same time serves as a transition.” The painting helped the artist to achieve fame in Spain. Aguer added that with his works on religious themes, Dalí also sought to be received by the Pope, a whim he harboured at the time. Contemporary Spanish critics

attacked the work as non-religious because Christ appears without the crown of thorns, nails and wound to his side.

Dalí created the painting, estimated to be worth £60 million, in the summer of 1951 at Port Lligat in Catalonia. Its purchase by Glasgow the following year caused a public outcry as many believed the £8,200 cost was too high. The work is now the star attraction at Glasgow's [Kelvingrove Art Gallery and Museum](#). The city has earned tens of thousands of pounds from it over the years in copyright royalties.

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