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In Philadelphia, Dallying With Dali

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WHAT: "Salvador Dali" at the Philadelphia Museum of Art.**WHEN:** Now through May 15.**ADMISSION:** Adults, \$20; seniors, students and teens ages 13 to 18, \$17; children ages 5 to 12, \$10 (includes a free audio tour). Tickets must be purchased for a specific date and time. Discounted tickets (\$15) are available for the 3 and 3:30 p.m. time slots on weekdays through the end of March.**WHY GO:** The country's first Dali retrospective in 60 years, this large-scale exhibition amasses some 200 works from the flamboyantly mustachioed master whose name has become synonymous with surrealism. At the core of the show are 150 of the painter's colorfully strange and troubling canvases -- which he sometimes called "hand-painted dream photographs" -- covering the entire scope of his career.

The exhibit also showcases Dali's forays into sculpture, home decor, set design and film. Gathered from four continents, the pieces include many works never exhibited in the United States.

DON'T MISS . . . "The Weaning of Furniture, Nutrition" (1934), a cryptic autobiographical work depicting Dali's childhood nurse -- whose face is hidden and whose hollowed-out back leaves her body a mere cavity -- on the shores of the painter's native coastal Spain. The grotesquely tortured figures and disembodied anatomical parts in "Soft Construction With Boiled Beans (Premonition of Civil War)" (1936) engage the charged political climate of Spain in the 1930s and prefigure Picasso's "Guernica," painted on the same subject the following year.

With the paradoxically titled "Still Life-Fast Moving" (1956), Dali offers a clever update of a traditional Flemish still-life painting, depicting a floating tide of objects in which nothing stays still and the very ideas of order and beauty are challenged.

EXTRAS: Confused? To help make sense of Dali's often inscrutable creations, consider a museum lecture. "The Conquest of the Irrational: Salvador Dali and the Limits of Surrealism" (Feb. 25, 8 p.m., \$20) discusses Dali's ideas in context with those of his fellow surrealist artists, and his tricky relationships with these contemporaries. "Soft Furniture and Delirious Architecture: Salvador Dali and Design" (April 8, 6:30 p.m., \$8) will help shed light on the finer points of Dali's lobster telephones and lip-shape sofas (both featured in the exhibit).

To familiarize yourself with one of surrealism's key precursors -- the irreverent, anti-establishment dadaist movement -- go to the museum's exemplary Marcel Duchamp collection, which the museum says is the world's most extensive Duchamp holding. The famous "Nude Descending a Staircase (No. 2)" (1912) and "The Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors, Even (The Large Glass)" (1915-23) are just two of the works by the dadaist poster boy who gained fame by mounting a urinal in a gallery and declaring it art.

PACKAGES: Area hotels are rolling out package deals in partnership with the "Salvador Dali" show. For \$169, the

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historic Latham Hotel (135 S. 17th St., 215-563-7474, <http://www.lathamhotel.com/>) offers two tickets, a night's lodging and breakfast for two. The ritzy Rittenhouse Hotel (210 W. Rittenhouse Square, 800-635-1042, <http://www.rittenhousehotel.com/>) also has a package that includes two "Dali" tickets, a room and breakfast for two, along with such extras as a welcome gift, a shoeshine and free health club access. Rates start at \$325 per night for a double.

GETTING THERE: Drive time to Philadelphia is about 2 1/2 hours. Amtrak passengers purchasing an adult full-fare ticket to Philly can get 50 percent off a companion ticket. To book, go to <http://www.amtrak.com/> or call 800-USA-RAIL and use promotion code V755. With the promotion, the round-trip fare for two adults is \$144 for unreserved coach seats on the regional train, which takes two hours.

INFO: Philadelphia Museum of Art, Benjamin Franklin Parkway at 26th Street, 215-763-8100, <http://www.philamuseum.org/>.

-- Seth Sherwood

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