

# THE Salvador Dali

COLLECTORS BI-MONTHLY JOURNAL

FOR THE DALI AFICIONADO AND SERIOUS COLLECTOR

\* \* \* Now In Our 23rd Year \* \* \*


## Dalí *Mona Bismarck* Portrait Highlight of Sotheby's Feb. 5 Surrealist Art Sale

Dalí's *Portrait of Mrs. Harrison Williams* was commissioned from the artist in 1943. As the highlight of Sotheby's Surrealist Art sale in London on February 5, this oil on canvas was estimated at \$2,350,000 to \$3,130,000 and fetched a whopping \$3,570,000. Proceeds from the sale benefit the Mona Bismarck American Center for art and culture in Paris.

The work depicts Countess Mona Bismarck (1897-1983) who at the time of the portrait was married to Harrison Williams, one of the wealthiest men in America. After their 1926 marriage, she quickly became known as one of the most glamorous and beautiful women of her day, becoming the first American to be named "the best-dressed woman in the world" by fashion luminaries.

Dalí's dazzling depiction of the legendary Mona Bismarck is filled with classical allusions and Surrealist symbolism, making it one of the most ambitious pictures he had produced at that point in his career. The painting was executed three years following his arrival in New York after he and Gala fled Paris in 1940. Dali had been swiftly assimilated into the group of European Surrealists that coalesced in New York at the outbreak of World War II. Together with them, Dali mingled with many of Gotham's social elite, receiving from them prestigious commissions for works such as this portrait.

During the early 40s, Dali championed his paranoiac-critical method -- a method different from the Automatism of many of his fellow Surrealists. While they relied on unreflecting responses to stimuli and chance occurrences, Dali's approach was to consciously manipulate the imagery and subjects derived from self-induced hallucinations. These fantastical apparitions often took the form of recurring motifs in his work, such as the bowed head to the right of Mrs. Williams.

Oral legend has it that Dali first painted his subject nude, only clothing her when his original image met with her disapproval. He then clothed her in rags -- something of an irony for a woman whose fashion sense was such a significant aspect of her public persona. 



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# DALI TRAVEL: A Method in Madness

Excerpted from *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 2/2/2013, by Lance Richardson

**S**alvador Dalí once remarked that “the only difference between me and a madman is that I am not mad.” Try to follow the logic of that sentence as it folds back on itself: your head will explode into slithery fragments, but not before the clocks droop from the strain and you begin to hallucinate elephants with mosquito legs.

While it's easy to argue that surrealist art depends on dreams and imagination, even the great masters grew up somewhere; dreams don't spring from the void. This is my reasoning as I drive from Barcelona, determined to follow Dalí back to his roots by visiting three sites that make up a “Dalí triangle”: Figueres, Port Lligat and Pubol. “I have been made in these stones,” he said of his home. “Here I've shaped my personality, discovered my love, painted my work, built my house. I cannot separate myself from this sky, this sea, these rocks.”

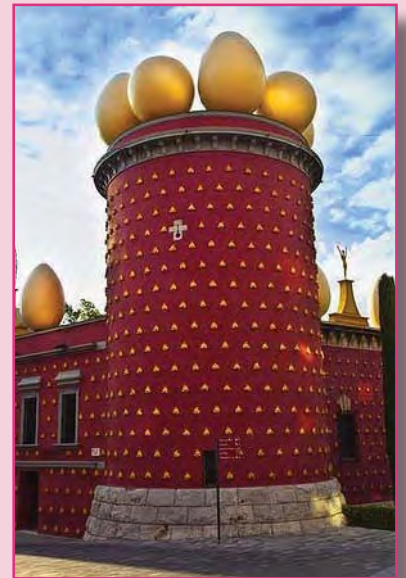
## Dalí at work: Figueres

Dalí was born in 1904 in Figueres, near the border of France. Years later, the mayor of Figueres tried to acquire a painting of the city's most famous son. Dalí would have none of it. “Where, if not in my own city, should the most extravagant and solid examples of my art remain?” he asked. Not one painting for Figueres, in other words, but a Dalí Theatre-Museum. In 1960, the artist bought the Municipal Theatre, a building destroyed by fire in the Spanish Civil War, turning it into the largest surrealist object in the world. First he painted the building maroon and stuck loaves of bread to the walls (they are made from plaster). He positioned giant eggs along the rampart and planted cypress trees out front.

Not only is the Dalí Theatre-Museum a work of art in its own right, it contains some of the most recognisable pieces from Dalí's career. This is the best place to start a driving tour focused on the artist: it offers both an induction to his extravagance and a retrospective of his work, with everything from *Soft Self-Portrait with Fried Bacon* to the legendary *Atomic Leda* tucked somewhere in the fray.

After standing in an interminable queue - the museum is extremely popular - I step into an open courtyard converted from the burnt-out Municipal Theatre. here is a Cadillac with rain inside, because Dalí once got wet waiting for a taxi. Here are statues like expressive Oscars, arms upraised to the open sky. Just past a ramp, draped across the stage, is a giant mural of a figure with an embryo in its head. There is a picture of Beethoven created by throwing squids at a blank canvas. Above is an enormous glass dome modelled on the eye of a fly. The patron saint of Girona, Saint Narcis, chased away the invading French with a swarm of flies. Dalí loved them. They were “dressed”, he said, as if by Balenciaga.

Part of me finds the Dalí Museum exhausting. Like works by the modern artist Damien Hirst, the museum is a calculated spectacle designed to engage the masses. But Hirst famously encrusted a skull with diamonds: his vision is cynical and nihilistic. By contrast, there is a room in the Dalí Museum housing a heart encrusted with rubies. The heart beats. Dalí may have been a showman, aware of his reputation, but he was neither cynical nor nihilistic. The artist celebrated life - celebrated living - in all its absurd detail.



*“I do not paint a portrait to look like the subject. Rather does the subject grow to look like his portrait.”*



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## Dalí at home: Port Lligat

Dalí lived mostly in Port Lligat, a fishing village across the hill from Cadaques. It is a cloudless day as I drive to Dalí's house; it is like stepping from the stage of a theatre into his dressing room. Public viewings began at Port Lligat in 1997 when a foundation opened the Salvador Dalí House-Museum.

“I need the localism of Port Lligat like Raphael needed that of Urbino, to reach the universal along the path of what was private,” Dalí said. “One cannot understand my painting without knowing Port Lligat.”



Over a period of 40 years, Dali bought fishing huts, fusing them together in a rambling, labyrinthine structure with numerous floors and unusual spaces. A polar bear, adorned with necklaces, greets you at the front entrance and sets the tone for everything to come. "Is real," the guide tells me. "Is stuffed." And later: "The eagle, it is also stuffed."

"Stuffed" is an ideal adjective for the house in general, which is stuffed with exactly what you would expect from Dali. There is a model of a hydrogen atom, for example. A Greek statue wears the mesh helmet of a fencer near a giant cutout of a sea anemone. In the bedroom are bird cages and cricket cages (Dali liked their sound); the next room has collages of photographs of Dali meeting dignitaries such as Picasso and Walt Disney, and Dali on the cover of Time magazine.

There is also evidence of the artist at work, with brushes and turpentine scattered around the white sofa where he did much of his painting. "I cannot paint in any other place," he once claimed. "I need to be in Port Lligat, to see the sailors, the colour of the olive trees, and the bread, to feel the peace, the landscape."

Look closely at Port Lligat, with its blue Mediterranean Sea and pastel skies: The Spectre of Sex Appeal re-creates the rocky line of Cap de Creus, not far to the north. Dali's work, though random at first glance, was grounded in the specific world around him, its cypress trees and gently rocking fishing boats. Indeed, visiting this house gives unparalleled insight into the man behind the public mask: the man who didn't like children because they moved too much; who rarely had guests (there is no guest room); who was obsessed with life, surrounding himself with bouquets of immortal flowers. Even more than the Theatre-Museum, the house shows the interior mind made exterior.

### Dali in love: Pubol


Many of his thoughts were tied to Gala, his muse and beloved Russian wife from 1934. He signed paintings with his and her name. It was mostly with her blood that he painted his pictures, the artist once claimed, though he also defined an elegant woman as "a woman who despises you and has no hair under her arms". Dali had complicated attitudes towards women.

Nevertheless, the last stop on the Dali triangle takes me to Pubol, where a converted 11th century castle affirms his admiration for his older spouse. Having promised Gala a castle of her own, Dali bought her this one when she was 76. The castle at Pubol is a low-key affair compared with the Theatre in Figueres and Theatre-Museum at Port Lligat. The garden reminded Gala of Russia, though Dali adorned it with a dozen busts of the composer Wagner - and a vomiting codfish.

In one sense, the castle provides a final testament of the woman behind the man behind the artifice - there are artworks by Gala (a Jesus wrapped in tinfoil) and photographs of her laughing on the floor near her piano, socialising with younger men.

"Gala had started to explain to me in great detail the reasons for her desire and it occurred to me suddenly that she also had her inner world of desires and failures and she moved at her own pace between the poles of lucidity and madness." Dali sounds surprised to learn that his muse had musings of her own. Nevertheless, Gala remains largely elusive, a symbol swamped by the curios of the famous man she motivated. The day she died, Dali stopped work entirely. His final canvas sits in the drawing room, blank but for a black line like the cut in a violin.

Gala is buried in a crypt at Pubol alongside a horse's head, giraffe and the bust of a man. This is the most private of Dali's spaces, so it seems appropriate that the source of his inspiration should be laid to rest here. But though Dali built the crypt for two, an accident with fire drove him away in the final years of his life.

Dali died at Figueres, coming full circle. When you visit the Dali Theatre-Museum, look out for a large square in the floor. Dali is buried on the stage of his own creation. Perhaps this is perfect for an artist who once described himself as "eminently theatrical." 



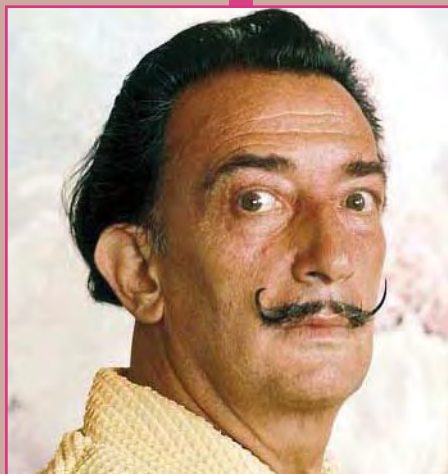
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## Dali Sold Blade of Grass to Yoko Ono for \$10K

Excerpted from *The Telegraph*, 12/3/2012, by Fiona Govan



Fearing that the widow of John Lennon might use it for occult purposes, the surrealist master Salvador Dali sent a blade of dried grass when she asked him for some hair. The story has come to light in recollections by Amanda Lear, a French singer, actress and model, who met Dali in the mid 1960s and remained close to him until his death at age 84 in 1989.

“Throughout his life, Dali could never resist the lure of a cheque,” Miss Lear, now in her 60s, told France’s *VSD* magazine. “Once he even sold a hair of his moustache to Yoko Ono. Well, almost.”

She went on to explain that “Dali thought that Yoko Ono was a witch and might use it in a spell. He didn’t want to send her a personal item, much less one of his hairs. So he sent me to the garden to find a dry blade of grass, and sent it off in a nice presentation box.

“The idiot paid 10,000 dollars for it,” Lear recalled. “It amused him to rip her off.”

## Thief Pleads Guilty to Snatching Dali Art

Excerpted from *The Daily Mail*, 2/27/2013

A Greek man seen stealing a \$150,000 Salvador Dali painting from a New York gallery has pleaded guilty in New York court. Phivos Istavrioglou stole the painting in June 2012 and mailed it back anonymously after seeing news coverage of the theft when he returned to Greece. He was lured back to the U.S. by an investigator posing as an art consultant who offered him a job at a neighboring Upper East Side gallery.

Istavrioglou arrived in New York’s JFK airport only to be met by police who promptly arrested him. He pled guilty of stealing *Cartel de Don Juan Tenorio* and agreed to a deal with authorities. The 29-year-old publicist turned art thief will pay \$9,100 in restitution and remain in the U.S. until he is formally sentenced March 12. He is expected to be deported to Greece. Even his lawyer said the theft was a stupid thing to do.

That he was eventually caught comes as little surprise as a number of distinct clues were left behind when he went into the gallery, lifted the painting off the wall, put it in a plastic shopping bag and walked out. Upon learning that authorities had distributed security photos of him that were seen worldwide, Istavrioglou took the \$150,000 work out of its frame. He then rolled it up in a cardboard tube -- “in a manner befitting a college dorm poster” -- and mailed it back to New York without a return address, said prosecutor Jordon Arnold.

New York police detectives lifted fingerprints from the shipment that matched one from a juice bottle that they say Istavrioglou shoplifted last year from a Whole Foods market, giving them a name, said Police Commissioner Raymond Kelly.

On top of that, he was caught on surveillance footage at the gallery, meaning that authorities had his picture the entire time they were looking for him. The moment Istavrioglou walked out of the Upper East Side gallery last summer with the Dali watercolor and onto Fifth Avenue, he ‘was scared and couldn’t believe what a stupid thing he did,’ according to court documents.

“It was almost surreal how this theft was committed -- a thief is accused of putting a valuable Salvador Dali drawing into a shopping bag in the middle of the afternoon, in full view of surveillance cameras,” District Attorney Cyrus R. Vance Jr. said. While speaking to detectives that afternoon, court papers say, he “indicated he knew the theft would catch up to him and wants to make (the) situation right.”



*Cartel de Don Juan Tenorio*

“Begin by drawing and painting like the old masters; after that do as you like -- you will always be respected.”

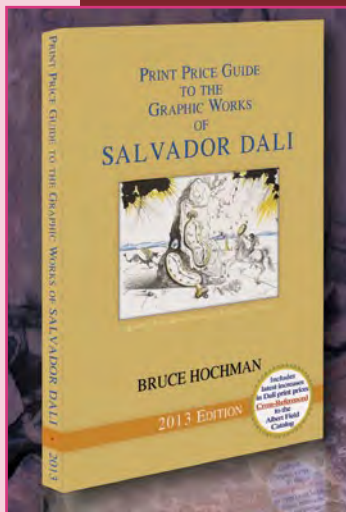


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## Dali Universe Exhibit in Florence

**T**his exhibit is organized by the Foundation for Art and Culture, whose main goal is to make Salvador Dalí's work known to the general public. The exhibit is open through May 25, 2013.

As host city to *The Dalí Universe* exhibit, Florence, Italy will be graced by more than 100 works by the Catalan Master. If you have never been to Figueres or visited another museum where Dalí's works dominate, creating a surrealist reality, this is definitely a unique opportunity to learn about even the lesser known aspects of the great artist's work. Indeed, the Florence show presents rarely exhibited collections that exemplify the broad diversity of the artist's production, such as bronze sculptures, surrealist furniture, and fascinating objects made of glass and gold.

Moreover, Dalí's less recognized activity as an illustrator is highlighted. See many literary texts, both contemporary and classical ones, as rendered by Dalí from his surrealist perspective. 

*"The day that people begin to study my work seriously, they will see that my painting is like an iceberg of which only a tenth of its volume is visible."*

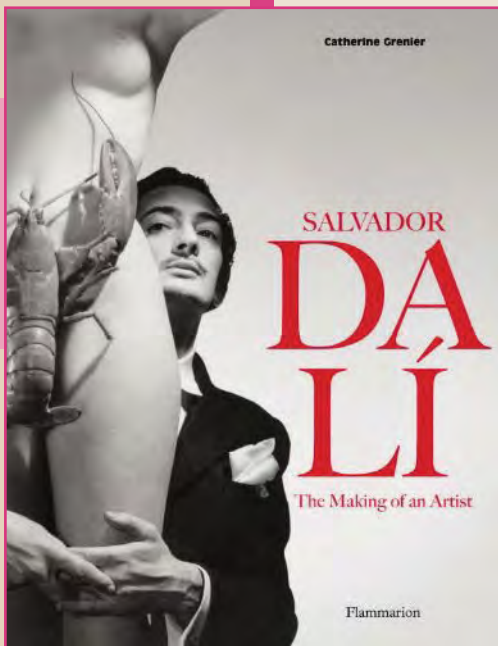


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## Salvador Dalí: The Making of an Artist

Beautiful New Dali Book Just Released -- Now Available via Amazon

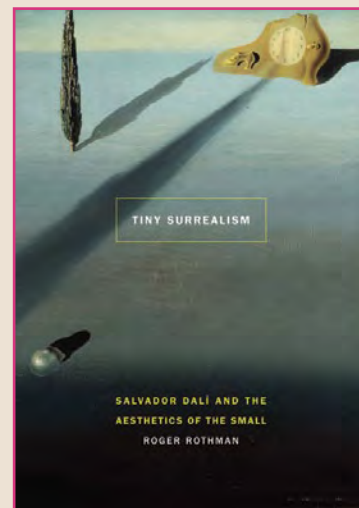
This new 280-page Dali monograph from French publisher Flammarion is written by Catherine Grenier, who is also the chief curator of the Centre Pompidou in Paris. This extensive volume uncovers Dalí's influences, artistic development, and legacy, offering unprecedented access inside the world of the man behind the mustache. Through astute analysis of Dalí's work and how the events of his time converged with his drive to become a legend, this volume examines one of the most significant contributors to twentieth-century art.

Though recognized primarily as a painter, Dalí experimented with a range of media. This comprehensive review includes the literature, photography, film, and sculpture that influenced and was created by Dalí throughout his career, from paintings such as *The Persistence of Memory*, to the icons of the surrealist movement such as the *Mae West Lips Sofa* and the *Lobster Telephone*, to short film collaborations with Luis Buñuel. Grenier offers insight into this undisputed genius, charting Dalí's progression as an artist and controversial public figure, and demonstrating his influence on contemporary artists such as Warhol, Koons, and Murakami. 

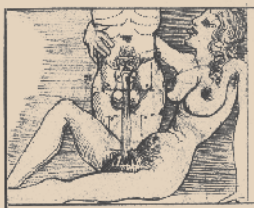
## Tiny Surrealism by Roger Rothman


Brilliant New Salvador Dalí Treatise -- Now Available via Amazon

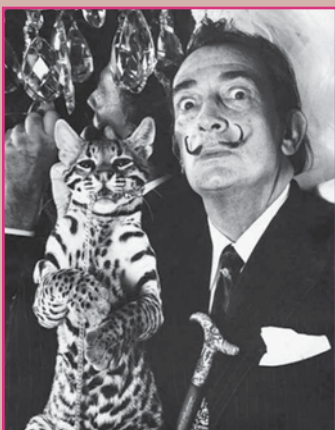
Although one of the most popular artists of the twentieth century, Salvador Dalí has typically been considered no more than peripheral to the dominant practices of modernism. Roger Rothman's *Tiny Surrealism* argues that this marginal position itself should be examined as a coherent response to modernism. It demonstrates how Dalí's practice was in fact organized around the logic of the small and the inconsequential and considers in this context Dalí's identification not only with the literally small (ants, sewing needles, breadcrumbs, blackheads, etc.) but also with the metaphorically small (the trivial, the weak, the superficial, and the anachronistic).




"It is not necessary  
for the public to know  
whether I am joking  
or whether I am  
serious, just as it is  
not necessary for me  
to know it myself."



In addition to addressing Dalí's imagery, *Tiny Surrealism* demonstrates that the logic of the minor and the marginal was a fundamental factor in Dalí's adherence to the techniques of miniaturist illusionism; long derided as antimodernist and kitsch, Dalí's style was itself a strategy of the small aimed at subverting the dominant values of modern painting. Dalí constructed his practice as a parasite on the body of modernism: a small but potentially virulent intruder. Because Dalí was a prolific and complex writer, Rothman makes extensive use of Dalí's writings, both his public pronouncements and private correspondence. By attending to the peculiarities of Dalí's technique and examining overlooked aspects of his writings, *Tiny Surrealism* is the first study to detail his deliberate subversion of modernist orthodoxies. 



For a time in the 1960s Dalí ocelot Babou was seen to accompany him, on a leash and stone studded collar, almost everywhere he went. One of the most popular accounts of Dalí and Babou is that of the painter bringing the wild cat into a Manhattan restaurant and tethering it to his table, causing great alarm to a fellow diner. To appease the woman's fear, Dalí told her that Babou was nothing more than a normal cat which he had "painted over in an op art design." Babou lived the high life both at home and abroad -- author Suzanne White describes seeing the cat stalking about "on a silken settee located in front of a carved marble fireplace" in Dalí's living room, while famous images exist of the artist and his pet aboard the luxury ocean liner the *SS France*. 

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# AUCTION NEWS



**Yang i Yin Empordanesos (top left)**

Oil on canvas, 1934

Estimated: \$809,850 - \$1,133,790

**Sold: \$1,880,880** at Christie's London  
February 6, 2013



**Study for Head of the Virgin (top right)**

Gouache & pencil on panel, 1951-52

Estimated: \$80,990 - \$113,380

**Sold: \$546,240** at Christie's London  
February 6, 2013



**Breathing Pneumatic Armchair (2nd left)**

Watercolor, gouache, pen, collage on paper, 1975

Estimated: \$129,580 - \$194,360

**Sold: \$186,670** at Christie's London  
February 7, 2013



**Le Roi-Soleil (2nd right)**

Watercolor, gouache, pen & ink on paper, 1971

Estimated: \$97,180 - \$129,580

**Sold: \$254,700** at Sotheby's London  
February 6, 2013



**Reloj Floral (3rd left)**

Watercolor, gouache, collage on paper, 1973

Estimated: \$113,380 - \$161,970

**Sold: \$274,130** at Christies London  
February 7, 2013



**Cervantes (3rd right)**

Gouache on card, signed, 1975

Estimated: \$64,790 - \$97,180

**Sold: \$108,920** at Christie's London  
February 7, 2013



**Space Venus (bottom left)**

Bronze sculpture, 1977-84

Estimated: \$113,380 - \$145,770

**Sold: \$507,370** at Sotheby's London  
February 6, 2013



**Dali "Thumb" Chess Set (bottom right)**

Silver, gold & silver plated

Estimated: \$16,197 - \$24,295

**Sold: \$44,541** at Christie's London  
February 8, 2013

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# EVENTS & EXHIBITIONS



## Centre Pompidou

19 Rue du Renard, Paris 75191, France

**Salvador Dali** -- Through March 25, 2013

More than 200 works. Among the iconic pieces exhibited are *The Persistence of Memory* (1931); *Le Grand Masturbateur* (1929); *Le spectre du Sex Appeal* (1934); *L'Énigme sans Fin* (1938) – plus 100 works on paper, objects, projects for stage and screen, films, photographs, clips from television programs that reflect the intense activity of the showman that Dali was. CLICK <http://www.centrepompidou.fr/Pompidou/accueil.nsf/tunnel?OpenForm> for complete information online or telephone +33 (0)1 44 78 12 33



## SUNY, College at Brockport, Tower Fine Arts Center Gallery

180 Holley St., Brockport, New York 14420

**Salvador Dali: Dante's Divine Comedy** -- Through March 16, then March 25-29, 2013

Complete series of Dali's 100 *Divine Comedy* prints. Telephone 585-395-2805 or for complete information online CLICK <http://www.brockport.edu/finearts/calendar.html#February>



## The Medici Riccardi Palace

Via Camillo Cavour 1, Florence, Italy

**The Dali Universe - Florence Italy Exhibit** -- Through May 25, 2013

More than 100 works, including bronze sculpture, surrealist furniture, objects made of glass and gold. Dali as illustrator is highlighted: included in the exhibit see many literary texts, contemporary and classical, revised from a surrealist perspective. (See related article p.5 this issue of the SDCBJ.) Telephone 02 893 68 922 or for complete info online CLICK <http://www.thedaliuniverse.com>



## The Salvador Dali Museum

One Dali Blvd., St. Petersburg, Florida 33701

**Royal Inheritance: Dali Spanish National Collection** -- Through March 31, 2013

Begins with four paintings from 1918-24. Continues with experiments in abstraction and perception, including 3-D paintings. In *Las Meninas* (1975-76), Velázquez' painting gets stereoscopic interpretation. *Composition* (1928) reveals Dali's obsession with the Spanish Anti-Art movement. *Portrait of Gala with Turban* (1939) is an arresting portrait. *A Propos of the "Treatise on Cubic Form" by Juan de Herrera* (1960) issues from Dali's Nuclear Mysticism. Works from 1983 reveal influence of René Thom's "catastrophe" theory and Dali's fascination with aesthetic form.

**Much Ado about Shakespeare** -- Through April 28, 2013

The museum is exhibiting 31 Dali works inspired by the works of William Shakespeare and two Shakespearean books illustrated by Dali: *Macbeth* and *As You Like It*. This exhibition, drawn from the museum's collection, is curated by Joan Kropf. Telephone 727-823-3767 or for complete information online CLICK <http://thedali.org/exhibits/current.php>