



DALI ON THE BEACH



PHILLY FAVE

No question about it: Philadelphia's favorite food is the cheese-steak, and Jim's Steaks (400 South St.; 215-928-1911) is the most popular place in town for these tasty hometown treats.

Salvador Dali (1904-1989) is not just one of the few artists to claim two museums devoted solely to his work; he actually designed one and visited the other. Both museums are near water: one on Spain's Costa Brava, the other in St. Petersburg, Florida. Both are jampacked with Dali's work. The resemblance ends there.

The Dali-designed Teatre Museu Dali in Figueras, Spain, his birthplace, exemplifies the surrealist influence the controversial artist alternately denied and embraced. At this pink birthday cake of a building, giant eggs perch on the tower, bread loaves dot the sides, mannequins dance across the roof, and a geodesic dome bulges into the sky beside the traditional church that hosted Dali's christening and funeral. Inside, the madness continues. Strangely juxtaposed images fill every space of this fun house.

Not so with Florida's Salvador Dali Museum, which was founded by Reynolds and Eleanor Morse. These longtime friends of Dali and his Russian-born wife, Gala, decided not to "out-Dali Dali." Consequently, the boxy white building, on an upscale boat basin, resembles the warehouse it had been until 1982, when the Morses filled it with "the world's most comprehensive collection" of works by the self-proclaimed genius-madman: 1,300 graphics, nearly 100 original oils, 100 watercolors and drawings, and many sculptures and objects of art. Although only a portion of the collection can be displayed at any one time, there's plenty to keep a visitor intrigued.

Entry is through the museum gift shop, befitting the memory of the publicity-seeking painter. A visitor can purchase a melting-watch doormat, a CD that interprets Dali's art through electronic music, or surrealistic jewelry. The items may be bizarre, yet the presentation is quite traditional.

In the next room, the mood changes. Although Dali's art lines the walls in an orderly sequence, his uniqueness overwhelms. The Morses believe Dali's work speaks for itself, and the voice is unmistakable.

The exhibit begins with *Nature Morte Vivant*, a still life suggesting an atomic-age influence. It continues with double-image paintings, holograms, interactive computer exhibits, and seven of Dali's masterworks. Beginning October 6, the museum will display its entire collection of oil paintings for the first time in an exhibit called "Dali under the Sun: World Premier of the Florida Collection."

When the Morses chose St. Petersburg, Dali's wife said, "Good, because that is where I was born!" Now she stars in a photographic exhibit, "Galuchka: Dali's Russian Muse."

Dali would smile through his mustache.

The Salvador Dali Museum, 1000 Third St. South, St. Petersburg, Florida; (813) 823-3767. Open Monday through Saturday from 9:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. and Sunday from noon to 5:30 p.m. General admission is \$6, with reduced rates for seniors, students, and groups.

— Jo Morello

