

Visiting Dalí in Venice, Italy

Travel Notes & Photos by E. J. Campfield & Linda Bost Campfield

We like visiting Dalí anywhere we can find it in our travels. The Guggenheim museum in Venice is home to two Dalí paintings. *Birth of Liquid Desires* is the better known one -- an appropriate work for Venice we thought, given that the city is all about water.



It was even a rainy day (and a Monday, no less) the morning we left the NH Rio Novo Hotel, umbrella in hand, and strolled the Venice waterways to the Guggenheim, fronting on the famed Grand Canal. As the story goes, Gala sold *Birth of Liquid Desires* to Peggy Guggenheim personally. It has remained in the collection ever since.



Birth of Liquid Desires (1932)

It is certainly an impressive collection, among Italy's finest, housed at the Palazzo Venier dei Leoni where Peggy Guggenheim lived. It's one of the most visited destinations in Venice. Our visit was during the autumn shoulder season, well past summer peak. But the small exhibit rooms and corridors were none the less gorged with tourists, impatiently filing through. There was little opportunity to simply stand and take in the works at a comfortable viewing distance without feeling pressed in on and rushed by other visitors. Most evinced little grasp or appreciation of the extraordinary art they were hurriedly gawking at.



Woman Sleeping in a Landscape (1931)

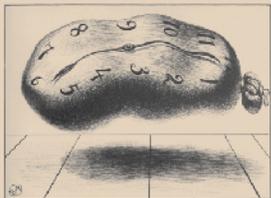
This shallow awareness seemed to include some museum staffers too, as we were misdirected twice when we asked about the Dalí paintings. A better-informed young docent finally told us that *Birth of Liquid Desires* was not there, but out on loan to another exhibit, somewhere in France she thought. We did locate the other Dalí painting during our misdirected wanderings -- a smaller untitled work casually called *Woman Sleeping in a Landscape*. We were able to spend just a few moments enjoying it as we were swept past it with the throng.

Birth of Liquid Desires (1932, oil & collage on canvas) we knew was a fairly large painting, some 38 x 44 inches. The flower-headed woman at its center represents the artist's wife and muse Gala, whom Dalí married against the wishes of his family. They are symbolized by other figures in the artwork.

Woman Sleeping in a Landscape (1931, oil on canvas) was one of the artist's notably smaller-scale works of his early Surrealist period, measuring only about 14 x 11 inches. It's just slightly larger than Dalí's surprisingly small *The Persistence of Memory* from the same year.

We left the Guggenheim with our *Liquid Desires* quest unrequited. But not our desire for authentic gelato, one of Italy's greatest little pleasures! That we indulged fully on our damp walk back to the NH Hotel. ☺

"The symbol of the limp watches, like all of my symbols, has many meanings -- though I never know what they mean when I first use them."



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