



Roni Rabner looks at a Rene Magritte painting that is reflected on a glass table, Tuesday, Feb. 10, 2009, at the Cincinnati Art Museum in Cincinnati. The surrealist and dada art exhibition from Israel featuring works by Salvador Dali, Pablo Picasso, Man Ray, Marcel Duchamp and Magritte is making its only American stop in Ohio before going to Finland and Denmark. (AP Photo/AI Behrman)



Dada and surrealist masterpieces make US stop

By LISA CORNWELL – 22 hours ago

CINCINNATI (AP) — Mona Lisa with a mustache and goatee. A white porcelain urinal.

Pieces that once shocked the art world highlight a new exhibition featuring dada and surrealist masterpieces challenging the perception of what is real.

The works by artists such as Salvador Dali, Pablo Picasso and Man Ray will make their only U.S. appearance at the Cincinnati Art Museum beginning Sunday.

The collection surveys two of the most significant art movements of the 20th century through more than 200 works including paintings, sculptures, collages, photographs and film drawn from the Israel Museum in Jerusalem.

"We really wanted to share this wealth of material as broadly as possible, and bringing it to the American Midwest seemed like a wonderful way to give it new exposure," James Snyder, director of the Israel Museum, said. "This is the first time that we have sent such an extensive display of dada and surrealist holdings in a single exhibition."

The exhibition traces surrealism beginning with its roots in the avant-garde dada movement that began in 1916 in response to the devastation of World War I.

Dada artists, blaming society for the horrors of the war, rejected Victorian values and traditional expectations of art through absurd and provocative images such as Marcel Duchamp's "Fountain." The porcelain urinal he submitted under that title to an artists' exhibit shocked the art world in 1917.

Visitors can also view Duchamp's version of Leonardo da Vinci's "Mona Lisa" with a mustache and goatee, Ray's flatiron with a row of nails stuck to the bottom, and Kurt Schwitters' collages composed of randomly found fragments of paper and ticket stubs.

Surrealism, which emerged in the 1920s, challenged accepted ideas and juxtaposed realistic images with illusion, dreams and the subconscious.

Rene Magritte's "The Castle of the Pyrenees" depicting a huge boulder hovering above dark ocean waves highlights the exhibition's surrealist work.

"It's given to you in the mechanics of realistic painting but with a mystery attached," said Benedict Leca, curator of European painting, sculpture, and drawings at the Cincinnati museum. "It looks like a boulder with a castle on top, but what is it doing floating in mid-air?"

That and other surrealist dreamscapes — or landscapes of the mind — challenge the viewer's perception of reality, Leca said.

Even the design of the exhibition in Cincinnati is intended to create a dreamlike effect. Theatrical scrims — gauzy fabric panels — encase some of the objects and create a sense of looking through a mist.

Some of the objects in the exhibition are considered erotic, including Ray's photographs of the nude female body and his "Observatory Time — The Lovers" showing a giant pair of female lips floating over a painted landscape. Hans Bellmer's "The Half-Doll" is a sculpture of strangely assembled body parts evocative of a female doll.

"This exhibition shows an art of strange and miraculous things that spark the imagination," said Aaron Betsky, director of the Cincinnati museum. "Walking into it is almost like walking into a waking dream."