

THE ART OF BEER

A Surreal Concoction

By **DON TSE**

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I recently checked something off my bucket list; I finally visited the Dali Museum in St. Petersburg, FL (thedali.org). The Dali Museum is home to the world's greatest collection of Salvador Dali's work, amassed over 45 years by American collectors A. Reynolds Morse and Eleanor Morse. Even the museum that Dali himself established in Figueres, Spain (salvador-dali.org) does not have a collection as impressive as the 96 original oil paintings, over 100 watercolors and drawings and over 1,300 other pieces owned by the Dali Museum in St. Petersburg.

Salvador Dali (1904-1989) was Spain's most famous painter, made so because of his highly imaginative surrealist paintings. He was highly prolific, was unapologetic in his pursuit of commercial success and had a long career, so he produced an enormous body of work. Every respectable modern art museum in the world includes at least one of his works in their collections.

Although Dali is most famous for his surrealist work, he was a highly skilled painter and could paint anything. Early in his career, he

Painted classical portraits and still lifes that could rival those of Renaissance painters. Later, he painted cubist works of merit equal to those of Pablo Picasso and Georges Braque.

This unparalleled skill was fundamental to his surrealist paintings being recognizable as surrealist. Ironically, Dali's ability to paint realistically was fundamental to his ability to paint surrealistically. It is only because of the skill behind the paintings that we, as viewers, are able to recognize the surreal objects, such as melting clocks or elephants with ludicrously long legs, as such. Otherwise, we would merely think of them as poorly painted clocks and elephants.

This thought came to mind shortly after my St. Petersburg trip, when I was sampling Brooklyn Brewery's latest Brewmaster's Reserve creation, The Concoction (which had previously been named "The Tonic" until the regulators got involved). The Concoction (brooklynbrewery.com/brooklyn-beers/brewmasters-reserve/the-concoction) is intended to taste like a cocktail known as The Penicillin which is made from peaty Scotch, ginger-infused honey and lemon juice.

The Concoction imitates The Penicillin by using (amongst other

things) peat-smoked malt, dried lemon peel, ginger, wildflower honey and Sicilian lemon juice. The aromas of the beer are lightly fruity and gently floral, though these are accompanied by a strong phenolic aroma. The flavor starts phenolic, but this is followed by ginger and flowers. There is a lemon-like tartness throughout.

Not having read about The Concoction before I tried it, I was surprised by the combination of flavors. I wasn't entirely sure that the beer wasn't infected. But then I remembered the skill of Brooklyn Brewery's brewmaster, Garrett Oliver, and recognized that, like a Dali melting clock, The Concoction could not have been a poorly brewed beer, but the intent of a highly-skilled brewer. The Concoction can only be enjoyed with knowledge that the incongruous combination of flavors is intentional.

The Concoction is a surreal beer. While the combination of flavors might be unfamiliar, they are intentional; the beer is not poorly made. Like all art, there will be those who love The Concoction and those who do not. But all must appreciate the skill it took to make it. ♦ ♦ ♦