

## THE ART OF BEER We All Scream for Chilli Beers

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On May 2, 2012, Sotheby's auctioned one of the most famous works of art in the world. *The Scream* by Edvard Munch (1863-1944) is widely acknowledged as one of the 10 most recognizable paintings...ever. Indeed, some believe it is the second most recognizable; the *Mona Lisa* being the only painting more widely known.

The object of the recent Sotheby's auction was a pastel of *The Scream* completed in 1895. It is one of four versions of *The Scream*. One other pastel and two paintings are in the possession of galleries, while the pastel that was auctioned is the only version in private hands. What all of this means, of course, is that this version of *The Scream*, being the most famous artwork that can ever come up for sale, is the ultimate trophy for a billionaire art collector. Not surprisingly, the ultimate sale price exceeded pre-auction estimates by selling for a jaw-dropping price of \$119.9 million. This is the highest price ever achieved by a work of art at auction.

Munch ([edvard-munch.com](http://edvard-munch.com)) was born in a small Norwegian town and died in Oslo. Without doubt, he is Norway's most famous painter, almost exclusively because of one work. Munch lived a tragic life with many



family members suffering untimely deaths or mental illness. Not surprisingly, this affected Munch and negative emotions are evident in many of his works. Munch himself said, "Disease, insanity, and death were the angels that attended my cradle, and since then have followed me throughout my life."

*The Scream* is a very raw piece. It is representational, in the sense that the viewer can easily identify the main subject as a human being, another couple, the fence, the sky and other elements of the painting, but the painting is also abstract, in that the painting is not at all life-like. Instead, the strength of the piece lies not so much in the quality of its imagery, but in the emotional response it provokes. Perhaps no other famous work of art illustrates how abstraction can add emotion to an image; a realistic image of a man screaming would not have had nearly the same impact as *The Scream* does.

The angst in this image brings to mind the first time I tried a chilli beer, Cave Creek Chilli Beer. At the time, the beer was brewed in Arizona, though it is now brewed under licence in Mexico. I must confess that my tolerance for culinary heat is limited, but Cave Creek Chilli was unpalatable to me. It went down the drain.

Since then, I have had more tolerable chilli beers. San Luis Valley Brewing Co., a brewpub in Alamosa, CO, brews Valle Cliente with Hatch chillies. The heat of the chillies grows and just when you think it will be too much, it begins to fade. Similarly, Steamworks, of Durango, CO, brews Prescribed Burn with a number of different chillies. This beer has a wonderful chilli flavor before the heat emerges. It also has a pleasant smokiness.

Other chilli beers use chillies merely as accent. Samuel Adams The Vixen Chocolate Chilli Bock, for example, is brewed with roasted chipotle peppers and has only a light presence of chilli spice. Rogue Chipotle Ale, as the name implies, is flavored with roasted chipotle peppers and features a sharp pepper smokiness rather than pure heat. Even Dogfish Head, in re-creating a beer from over 3,000 years ago, was able to incorporate ancho chillies in its recipe. The spice here is pleasant and not overpowering – no screaming results from drinking these beers. ♦♦♦