

Introduction

In the United States, there are approximately 1,472 museums (<http://www.museumca.org/usa/alphas.html>). Although attendance rates have a history of being somewhat static, the release of the blockbuster film “A Night at the Museum” has resulted in a significant increase in attendance at many museums, nation wide. In fact, the American Museum of Natural History reported a 20% increase in attendance within the first 10 days of the film’s release (*The Toronto Star*, February 25, 2007). As a result, museums are placing an emphasis on educational programs designed for children and adolescents. The significance of these educational programs is two fold. First, given the current state of the educational system in the United States, many art programs are being phased out of public schools. Unfortunately, this results in many students losing an appreciation and interest in the arts. Therefore, museum-based educational programs afford students an opportunity to learn art skills as well as develop an admiration for the humanities, history, and art. Second, museum based educational programs teach students skills that they may not learn in other settings as well as reinforce traits that are essential for learning. For example, one of the goals of many museum educational programs is to increase self confidence, self-esteem, and critical thinking skills in their participants (e.g., San Diego Maritime Museum; Rock and Roll Hall of Fame Museum; and Miami Museum of Science and Planetarium). As part of many programs, children and adolescents gain an intimate knowledge of the art pieces and are afforded the opportunity to teach others what they have learned. In addition, students of the art programs learn skills related to research and critical thinking that are missing in many educational programs in public schools. Further, research has demonstrated that art programs have positive effects on student self-esteem and learning (Gabhainn, Mullally, Donovan, & Sammon, 2001; Gardner, Fox, Knowles, & Jeffrey, 1996).

The purpose of this paper is to provide a description of the Salvador Dalí Museum and its Junior Docent Program. In addition, data from a survey completed by the children and adolescents participating in the program and their parents will be presented. Finally, future plans for research and program modification will be discussed.

Dalí Museum History

The Salvador Dalí Institute, Inc. was incorporated on June 28, 1980. The Salvador Dalí Museum opened on March 7, 1982.

The Salvador Dalí Museum is the permanent home of a retrospective collection of works, spanning the years 1914 to 1980, by Spanish artist Salvador Dalí. The collection is comprised of 95 oil paintings, over 150 watercolors and drawings, plus graphics, photos, sculptures, a variety of *objets d'art*, and a library of 5,000 books, periodicals, documents and films on Dalí and Surrealism. The works were diligently assembled over a 40-year period by Cleveland industrialist, A. Reynolds Morse, and his wife, Eleanor, who were personal friends of Salvador and Gala Dalí.

From 1971 to 1980, the collection was housed in a wing of the Morses' office building, IMS Company, in Beachwood, Ohio. In 1979 the couple began a search for a permanent home for their invaluable collection, and--realizing that the collection had grown into a panorama of Dalí's entire career--they stipulated that the collection remain intact.

An article in the January 18, 1980, issue of the *Wall Street Journal* titled, "U. S. Art World Dillydallies Over Dalís," caught the eye of St. Petersburg attorney, James W. Martin. Martin quickly organized a dynamic group of community leaders and city officials who undertook the task of capturing this important collection for Florida and St. Petersburg. The Dalí Task Force approached city and state officials to secure initial funding, receiving immediate enthusiasm and support from all levels.

The Morses, impressed by the solidarity of the support offered from the Governor's office, the Florida Legislature, city officials and private citizens, agreed to the selection of St. Petersburg as the permanent home of their single-artist collection. The 1980 Florida Legislature appropriated \$2 million for renovation of an existing marine storage warehouse on downtown Bayboro Harbor. They also agreed to provide \$1 million in operating support, which was paid over the first six years of the Museum's operation. By November 1980 the collection had arrived in St. Petersburg. The Museum officially opened on March 7, 1982.

Since its opening, the Museum has attracted visitors from around the world. Annual attendance has increased to approximately 205,000 in 2006. Approximately 40% of paid attendance comes from states outside Florida and 20% from other countries, making the Dalí Museum one of the most popular cultural attractions in Florida for out-of-state and foreign visitors. Through its support of the Dalí Museum, the State of Florida has secured a valuable asset which will benefit both the quality of life and the economy of the state of Florida for years to come.

The Museum expanded in 1988 to include Raymond James Community Room with exhibition space and a concrete, hurricane-proof vault to protect the collection; the Albert Field Library, named after Dalí's archivist who has irrevocably pledged his collection to the Museum; a conference room, and additional offices.

Today, as in the past, the Museum's mission is to enhance the recognition of Salvador Dalí as one of the 20th Century's greatest artists and to preserve the priceless collection of his works. At no other place in the world is there a more revealing accumulation of the artist's varied projects than in St. Petersburg, Florida, at the Dalí Museum.

The Dalí Museum Junior Docent Program

The Dalí Junior Docent Program is a summer student program offered to children 9 to 13 years of age. The Junior Docents are trained in a one-week mini docent class where they receive