

NEWS RELEASE

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NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

WASHINGTON, March 22: David E. Finley, Director of the National Gallery of Art, announced today that the Gallery would place on view on March 31st at 3 p.m. the painting, The Sacrament of the Last Supper, the most recent major work by the Spanish artist, Salvador Dali. This important modern canvas has been lent to the National Gallery by Mr. Chester Dale, a Trustee and President of the Gallery. The painting will be shown with other twentieth century paintings on loan to the National Gallery from Mr. Dale's distinguished collection.

The new painting, over eight feet in length, has never been publicly shown or reproduced. It was the achievement of nine months of intense work by Dali, who sequestered himself in a remote village in Spain to work on what he considers to be his greatest masterpiece of religious art.

Speaking of the painting, Mr. Dali has said, "Contrary to the anecdotal and obscure conceptions in paintings on this same subject, I wanted to materialize the maximum of luminous and Pythagorean instantaneousness, based on the celestial communion of the number twelve: 12 hours of the day - 12 months of the year - the 12 pentagons of the dodecahedron - 12 signs of the Zodiac around the sun - the 12 apostles around Christ."

This painting will remain a testimonial to Dali's serious approach to the religious theme and is the culmination of a series of important religious paintings on which he has worked during the last eight years, starting with the Madonna of Port Lligat in the collection of the late Sir James Dunn, followed by the Christ of St. John of the Cross belonging to the museum in Glasgow, Scotland, and finally the Corpus Hypercubus, also known as The Crucifixion, which Mr. Chester Dale gave last year to the Metropolitan Museum in New York.

It is of special interest (and perhaps the sign of a trend) that an artist of such gifts as Salvador Dali should turn to religious themes as subjects for his recent works. This is true also of many other contemporary artists who are deriving inspiration from religious subjects as have the great artists of the past.

The scene of the Sacramental Supper has as its setting the landscape of Dali's Port Lligat. The composition of the picture - with its depiction of a transparent Christ forming the focus, in contrast to the realistically rendered figures of the disciples bowed in prayer around the table - is held together by the architectural form of the dodecahedron - the symbol in antiquity of the heavens - while the eye is drawn upwards to the evocation of Christ ascending to Heaven.

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