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A Home for Dali

By RONALD ALSOP

Beachwood, Ohio

A. Reynolds Morse has found a home for his multimillion-dollar Salvador Dali collection. The paintings, drawings and other creations will head south from this Cleveland suburb to St. Petersburg, Fla., where a Dali research institute is being established. St. Petersburg got in the running after James Martin, a local attorney, read an article on this page last January, describing Mr. Morse's futile efforts to give away his Dali collection—the world's largest. A key factor in the transaction is the state's contribution of \$2 million to the institute. Mr. Morse had been negotiating with Denver and the University of Texas but, he says, "Neither one did an iota of follow-up to get the collection."

U.S. Art World Dillydallies Over Dalis

By RONALD ALSOP

Benchwood, Ohio

A. Reynolds Morse, a machinery designer in this Cleveland suburb, is a bit disenchanted with the art world. At a time when a single modern painting can fetch \$300,000 to \$500,000 he can't find any takers for his multimillion dollar collection of Salvador Dali works. His offer seems more than reasonable. All a museum official need do is provide a permanent home and agree to keep the collection together, and Mr. Morse will hand over the collection free of charge.

But museums are giving Mr. Morse the cold shoulder because of his dictum that his Dali collection—the world's largest—be preserved intact. "I've been visiting museums like mad," Mr. Morse says, "but they all want to add conditions," granting them the power to lend the works or to sell them or not to exhibit them at all.

Mr. Morse and his wife, Eleanor, debated selling the collection themselves, but decided its value as a panoramic survey of Dali's career is too great to justify scattering it. "To get a complete idea of Dali, you have to go to Cleveland," asserts John Tancock, director of the department of Impressionists and modern painting and sculpture at Sotheby Parke Bernet Inc. "I can't think of any private collection of works by one artist as complete as this."

The collection consists of 95 oil paintings, 150 drawings and watercolors, more than 1,000 prints and other miscellaneous creations, ranging from neckties to jewelry to playing cards. Mr. Morse estimates its value between \$25 million and \$50 million.

The collection does not include the more widely reproduced Dalis—"The Persistence of Memory" or "The Last Supper," for example—but critics agree that it nevertheless contains some very significant paintings. (It spans much of Dali's career from 1918 to 1970, with works from the Spanish artist's little-known early period, when some Impressionist and cubist influences were evident, his surrealist phase during the 1930s and the later "classical" period.)

Although the Dali collection is unique in magnitude, other art collectors could encounter problems similar to Mr. Morse's if they want their treasures maintained according to their wishes after they die. Museums, however, may not be agreeable. "Donors are looked upon these days as a pain in the ass, just out for a big tax deduction," Mr. Morse complains.

While that may be an overstatement, a curator at the Art Institute of Chicago concedes that the trend is to avoid gifts that come with too many strings attached. "With space increasingly limited, museums are less in a position to make commitments to donors," Henry Hopkins, director of the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art says.

The 65-year-old Dali aficionado believes his collection could put a nondescript art museum on the map. Instead of being a showplace for "representative mediocri-

ty," he says, a smaller museum could establish a reputation by specializing in a single artist. Mr. Morse suspects the resistance to his giveaway plan is partly due to Dali himself. "The art establishment doesn't like the fact that they can't categorize him," Mr. Morse says. While many critics are impressed by Dali's surrealist period, some regard him as a clown and exhibitionist because of his show-biz antics.

Museum officials respond that no matter who the artist, such a vast collection would be a nuisance. "While Dali is certainly a well-known, important artist of the 20th Century, I can't conceive of a museum taking on the problem of finding so much exhibition and storage space for any modern artist," says Edward Henning, chief curator of modern art at the Cleveland Museum of Art. Mr. Morse says that if necessary he might be willing to pay for the upkeep.

Dali himself couldn't be reached for comment. He has spent time recently at the Pompidou Center in Paris, which is now showing a large retrospective of Dali's work.

Enrique Sabater, Dali's business representative, says, "The best place for the collection is the Dali museum in Figueras, Spain," where Dali was born in 1904. Out of the question, says Mr. Morse. The gift wouldn't be tax deductible and Figueras offers no security. "It's not an art museum," Mr. Morse says. "It's just an old theater that's become Dali's circus."

The Dali collection is on public display here, but it's clearly one of Cleveland's better-kept secrets, stowed away in an obscure industrial park in Beachwood, sharing the building that houses Mr. Morse's machinery company. Visitors must make appointments to view the collection. In permitting a museum within an industrial park, Beachwood officials insisted that the number of visitors at any one time be held to 100. Mr. Morse is the first to concede that the present set-up isn't very desirable. "It's a little too offbeat," he says. "After all, I'm a designer of machinery, not an art museum director."

The couple refuses to lend to other museums because they fear what condition their paintings would come back in. The Morses declined to make loans to the Pompidou's big Dali show after Mr. Morse sent his wife over to check out the place. She reported back that it is "a miserable place to show art," Mr. Morse says. "It's a circus, with people out front swallowing fire and all sorts of things. It's just the sort of place Dali loves, but it makes his collectors nervous."

A decision on the collection's future has now become imperative. Mr. Morse is moving his company to new quarters this summer, and there's no room for a museum at the rural site. Also concerned about advancing age, Mr. Morse would like to die knowing his collection is secure. He says he doesn't trust the judgment of his son or executors of his estate.

Mr. Morse wants to give the Dali collec-

tion more exposure in an established museum, preferably in a tourist area, which Cleveland, of course, doesn't qualify as. He is most interested in Denver, his home town, because he figures the city draws lots of travelers. Colorado officials, including the governor, are enthusiastic about getting the Dali museum, but nothing has been settled. He has also been in touch with the University of Texas in Austin and the Museum of Modern Art in San Francisco.

Museum officials will admit that they would like to get their hands on at least a few Dali favorites. "I'd love to go in and be able to select three or four works," says Mr. Henning of the Cleveland art museum. That irritates Mr. Morse, who says the Chicago Art Institute at one time would have liked the collection but would have sold about 60% of it for money, "to blow on other paintings."

Ironically, though attendance at Mr. Morse's Dali museum has been fair up to now, traffic has swelled since the news of its probable departure. "People are rushing out to see it now that they hear it's leaving," Mr. Morse says caustically.

Mr. Alsop is a member of the Journal's Cleveland bureau.