

SALVADOR DALI

Introduction to the artist:

Salvador Dalí was a Spanish surrealism artist born in 1904. His dad was also named Salvador, and was a middle-class lawyer, and Dalí's biggest fan was his mother, Felipa, who greatly encouraged his love for art. His brother, another Salvador, died 9 months before he was born. This death haunted him throughout his whole life, so he spoke about him in his writing and even created an artwork called *My Dead Brother* in 1963, sharing an image of him with his parents before Dalí was born.

When Dalí was young, he was greatly influenced by impressionism and renaissance art styles, which then introduced him into Cubism. When he was in his mid 20s, he started moving towards surrealism, which led him to create the well-known painting; '*The Persistence of Memory*', as well as many other pieces.

Dalí loved painting, drawing, sculpting and printmaking especially. He then became known for his surreal art, which is described as ridiculous paintings of dreams and exploring the unconscious. Most of the artwork depicted in this period were not real objects and scenes were made up.

The Persistence of Memory
1931



This artwork was painted on an oil canvas in Port Lligat, Figueras, during the first summer he was there.

Art Analysis- Elements and Principles

The first thing I noticed when looking at this painting is how Dali contrasted the warm and cool colours together which created a perfectly neutral composition. He uses really soft lines throughout the whole piece which even though the painting looks fake, he makes it look organic and almost normal. Even the sharp edges of what looks like a step at the bottom left, have been painted so softly but he used shadows to depict the sharpness of the object. The pale colour pallet of this painting makes it extremely calm and comforting, which fights against the disturbing feeling that the unusual objects give off, showing a dreamlike aesthetic. Dali also used a very dark tone to present shadow in the bottom half of the painting which makes it look a lot more realistic than it actually is. The melting clocks create an optical illusion and a sense of movement in the painting, which gives off an unsettling vibe. We also get that feeling from the unnamed white figure in the centre, which appears to have eyelashes, making it look extremely human like. The colours and the composition also create harmony and represent a balance.

Materials, Techniques and Processes

Most of Dali's artworks were oil paintings, especially when he explored surrealism as using oil paint was extremely common during that era of art. In *The Persistence of Memory*, the landscape seems to have been painted first, which includes the sky, water and dirt. The mountain in the top right corner looks like it's been added afterwards to make it stand out against the soft sky. He used a flat brush to create most of the landscape, and you can easily see that the horizon is made up of thick, straight brush strokes, which is what creates the soft feeling. Dali added the objects over the top of the artwork which make them seem to float amongst the scenes. These objects, the clocks, tree, table and the unusual figure all sit above the landscape which makes them a lot more defined. This is also supported by the round brush Dali used to create the soft edges and curves of each of the dream-like objects. The oil medium he used, which is a unique combination with the methods that he's known to use in other paintings, extends the depth of the colours to create a soft texture that flows throughout the whole painting.

Historical and Cultural Context

Dali's artwork *The Persistence of Memory*, was created at the peak of the Surrealist Movement in the early 1930s. At this time, Spain had just begun a civil war, which impacted European art, especially the surrealist movement. The world around them was in distress, and Spanish born artists like Picasso and Dali had the chance to create a different reality in their artwork. As I explained briefly at the start, Surrealism is an art movement that captures dream-like features and imaginative scenes, which started around the same time and the same places as the wars. The twisted reality this art movement creates shows how the war distorted each persons' perspective on the real world. Dali depicts the war in his artwork as violent and bizarre, which is easily seen through the multiple twisted realities he creates in almost each one of his artworks.

Self Reflection

To conclude, I think Surrealism is the perfect example of the Cesar A. Cruz quote; “Art should comfort the disturbed and disturb the comfortable”. As I stated before that *The Persistence of Memory* gives off both feelings, depending on the viewers state of mind. I particularly love this type of artwork, as the second reality comforts me, and gives me a different perspective on how I view the world. It’s also an escape from my current mind set, as I got to explore an imaginative place while I annotated this artwork. Surprising as it is, I actually never knew about the Spanish civil war, so this assignment allowed me to learn a lot about it and also piece together the meaning of the Surrealist art movement, and where it came from. Overall, I really enjoyed researching Dali and his art, as I got to reach into the life of an artist I’ve never really spoken or learned about before.

Bibliography

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