

The Persistence of Memory

La persistencia de la memoria.

(Salvador Dali-1931)

Oil on canvas, 9 1/2 x 13"

Time is the theme here, from the melting watches to the decay implied by the swarming ants. The monstrous fleshy creature draped across the paintings center is an approximation of Dali's own face in profile. Mastering what he called "the usual paralyzing tricks of eye-fooling," Dali painted this work with "the most imperialist fury of precision," but only, he said, "to systematize confusion and thus to help discredit completely the world of reality." There is, however, a nod to the real: The distant golden cliffs are those on the coast of Catalonia, Dali's home.



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- The imagery of The Persistence of Time is often read as an illustration of Einstein's General Theory of Relativity, where gravity can be seen to distort time.
- The painting represents Dali's thoughts on softness and hardness, which was a theme of much of his work during that part of his life
- In 1931, Dali was twenty-seven and just starting to break through as an artist