

**Dalí, Salvador** (1904-1989), Spanish painter, writer, and member of the surrealist movement. He was born in Figueras, Catalonia, and educated at the School of Fine Arts, Madrid. After 1929 he espoused surrealism, although the leaders of the movement later denounced Dalí as overly commercial. Dalí's paintings from this period depict dream imagery and everyday objects in unexpected forms, such as the famous limp watches in *The Persistence of Memory* (1931, Museum of Modern Art, New York City). Dalí moved to the United States in 1940, where he remained until 1948. His later paintings, often on religious themes, are more classical in style. They include *Crucifixion* (1954, Metropolitan Museum, New York City) and *The Sacrament of the Last Supper* (1955, National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.).

Dalí's paintings are characterized by meticulous draftsmanship and realistic detail, with brilliant colors heightened by transparent glazes. Dalí designed and produced surrealist films, illustrated books, handcrafted jewelry, and created theatrical sets and costumes. Among his writings are ballet scenarios and several books, including *The Secret Life of Salvador Dalí* (1942) and *Journal d'urgence* (1964; *Diary of a Genius*, 1965).

Artist, born in Figueras, NE Spain. After studying at the Academy of Fine Arts, Madrid, he moved to Paris and joined the Surrealists (1928), becoming one of the principal figures of the movement. His study of abnormal psychology and dream symbolism led him to represent 'paranoiac' objects in landscapes remembered from his Spanish boyhood. In 1940 he settled in the USA, became a Catholic, and devoted his art to symbolic religious paintings. He wrote *The Secret Life of Salvador Dalí* (1942), and collaborated with Luis Buñuel in the Surrealist films *Un Chien andalou* (1928, An Andalusian Dog), and *L'Age d'or* (1930, The Golden Age). One of his best-known paintings is 'The Persistence of Memory' (known as 'The Limp Watches', 1931, Museum of Modern Art, New York City).

*The Persistence of Memory* is aptly named, for the scene is indelibly memorable. Hard objects become inexplicably limp in this bleak and infinite dreamscape, while metal attracts ants like rotting flesh. Mastering what he called "the usual paralyzing tricks of eye-fooling," Dalí painted with what he called "the most imperialist fury of precision," but only, he said, "to systematize confusion and thus to help discredit completely the world of reality." It is the classical Surrealist ambition, yet some literal reality is included too: the distant golden cliffs are the coast of Catalonia, Dalí's home.

Those limp watches are as soft as overripe cheese—indeed "the camembert of time," in Dalí's phrase. Here time must lose all meaning. Permanence goes with it: ants, a common theme in Dalí's work, represent decay, particularly when they attack a gold watch, and become grotesquely organic. The monstrous fleshy creature draped across the painting's center is at once alien and familiar: an approximation of Dalí's own face in profile, its long eyelashes seem disturbingly insectlike or even sexual, as does what may or may not be a tongue oozing from its nose like a fat snail.

The year before this picture was painted, Dalí formulated his "paranoiac-critical method," cultivating self-induced psychotic hallucinations in order to create art. "The difference between a madman and me," he said, "is that I am not mad."