

The Face Of War by Salvador Dali

This painting is a skull-like head surrounded by long hissing snakes. Each skeleton has a skeleton within it so the head is full of infinite death. This is a symbol of mass murders and concentration camps. This painting was painted in the United States, where Dali was to live for eight years and reach the pinnacle of his worldly fame and success.

Dali was a Spaniard born on 11 May 1904 in the little village of Cadaques. Dali came from a middle class family. Dali's parents had wealthy cultivated friends who encouraged young Dali's wonderful talent. At seventeen Dali's mother died and he left home to study art at the San Fernando Academy in Madrid, here he became close friends with two other students who also became famous: 20th century poet 'Federico Garcia Lorca' and director 'Luis Bunuel'. Dali was considered a rebel by the academy authorities because of the clothes he wore and his style of painting. He was also suspended for a year for being accused of insubordination.

In the summer of 1929 Dali had an affair with Gala Eluard and they got married in 1958. Gala became Dali's muse, he also used her as a model in many of his paintings and she even saved him from a serious mental crisis. Once married Gala became very greedy and encouraged him to commercialise, but she also often made his art seem less important than it really was. Gala died in 1982 and Dali was crushed by this, but he was also partly to blame. Dali sadly died on the 29 January 1989 at the age of eighty-five, he is buried in his native Catalan town of Figueras in the Dali Museum.

I have chosen this particular Dali painting to write about because I thought it was eye catching and a bit different to his other paintings. Usually Dali paintings have many things happening in them or have hidden depths, but 'The Face Of War' is quite straight forward.

The eyes and the mouth spaces have skull shapes within them. This is symbolising infinite death. The skulls get smaller and smaller in the eye spaces but not in the mouth space. Each skull has a different expression. The mouth of the skull in the right eye space has a skull, which looks like it is screaming. The same skull has an even smaller skull in its right eye, but it is too small to make out its expression. The skull inside the left eye space has most of its left cheek torn away.

The long hissing snakes in the painting are brown and look like they're wooden, you can see the tails of two snakes heading into the left eye socket.

There is a handprint in the bottom left corner. The handprint looks incomplete, as there is no print of the middle part of the hand. I'm unsure of what the purpose of this is, if it has one, but it could symbolise a left over handprint of some of the innocent people who were slaughtered at war.

All the colours in this painting are earth colours; they are yellow and brown but the sky behind the skull-like head has a tint of blue in it. The tone on the skull-like head helps show up facial features and expressions, so you can see that it is frowning. The skulls in the right eye socket are much more lightly toned than the other skulls.

Dali is a well-known artist famous for his unique style of painting, he was a very talented artist and he must have had a very active imagination to come up with such peculiar paintings.