

Artist: Salvador Dali

Title: The Persistence of Memory

Date: 1931

Location: Spain

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“Salvador Dalí frequently described his paintings as “hand painted dream photographs.” He based this seaside landscape on the cliffs in his home region of Catalonia, Spain. The ants and melting clocks are recognizable images that Dalí placed in an unfamiliar context or rendered in an unfamiliar way. The large central creature comprised of a deformed nose and eye was drawn from Dalí’s imagination, although it has frequently been interpreted as a self-portrait. Its long eyelashes seem insect-like; what may or may not be a tongue oozes from its nose like a fat snail from its shell.

Time is the theme here, from the melting watches to the decay implied by the swarming ants. Mastering what he called “the usual paralyzing tricks of eye-fooling,” Dalí 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.””

