Examination Of The Art Object: Salvador Dali’s Persistence Of Memory

Part I - Selection of the Art Object:

The work I have selected for this portion of the course requirement is Salvador Dali’s “Persistence of Memory”

Part II - Identification of the Art Object:

Please list the following information regarding your newly chosen work of art:

1. Title of the Work: Persistence of Memory
2. Artist/School: Salvador Dali
3. Year or Time Period Completed: 1931
4. Medium/Technique/Process: Oil on canvas
5. Size (inches or centimeters): 9 1/2 x 13' (24.1 x 33 cm) canvas
6. Where produced/found: Port Lligat, Figueras
7. Where located/housed now: currently located in the Museum of Modern Art in New York

Part III - Objective Description of the Art Object's Subject Matter:

The clocks are the main focus in the painting, as they are “drooping” from the tree branch which is located on top of the table. Some sort of lifeless object is seen lying on the sand. Two eggs are in the distance by the water’s edge. Lifeless tree on top of a desk or table. Cliffs are seen in the background.

Part IV - Examination of the Art Object's Medium/Technique/Process Used:

Identify the medium: Oil on canvas

oil painting gives off rich colors effects, tonal depth and expressive brushwork on a flat surface. “The brushstroke can be opaque or transparent, uniformly thick or textured, or thin and smooth. Prior to the 19th century, oil painting consisted of the application of many layers of color mixed with varnish, which was followed by a coat of varnish. Since the early 19th century, the oil technique has consisted mainly of the application of colors alia prima on a clean ground or over a layer of underpainting. Varnish is rarely used.”

Part V - Examination of the Art Object's Composition (Its Form Organization):

1. Identify and describe a specific incidence of each Art Element found in

the art object's composition from the list found below:

- Line: painting contains thin lines with the exception of the mountains and some features on the white figure lying on the ground. The mountain lines make the mountains look rough. On the figure on the ground, the eyelashes consist of thicker lines and longer lines. If you look at the watches, you are able to read the numbers on them with the width of the lines that Dali used for them. The lines on the platform in the background are symmetric.
- Shape: The blue platform is a three-dimensional rectangle and so is the brown cube that is located in front of it. The shape of the clocks give the idea of flimsiness. “This painting is three-dimensional, geometric, and abstract, and does not stick to all traditional shapes or forms.”
- Space: The space in the painting would be the distance between all of the objects, in my option. There is space between the animal on the ground and the brown table. There is great space between the cliffs in the background from the rest of the objects in the painting as well.
- Color and Light:The colors are mostly dark but mostly warm as well. The warm colors are a lot of yellow, gold, black, and brown. The brown cube varies from light to dark. Yellow is seen in the cliffs. There are some cool colors seen in the watches such as silver, gold and bronze. Another cool color is the blue platform.
- Texture: The blue platform looks like a smooth surface inside of a rough wooden box-like box. The tree figure looks coarse. The brown table/desk with the two clocks on it looks like a smooth wooden surface.The gold pocket watch looks melted.
- Pattern: I don’t notice any pattern in this painting.
- Time and Motion: time and motion in this painting would be surrealism. I also get an impression of a “slow motion” feel when I look at it, due to the drooping clocks and the lifeless animal lying on the ground.

2. At the end of this set of paragraphs identify any Art Elements that you think is not found or used in the art object's composition.

-I believe all the elements are used in the piece.

3. Identify and describe a specific incidence of each Art Principle used in the art object's composition from the list found below:

- Balance: Dali uses dark and light colors to balance all of the objects. If split down the center, the left side would feel heavier than the right due to more objects and activity going on.
- Emphasis and Focal Point: The focal point in my opinion would be the melting clocks or the dead animal on the ground. The clocks really catch my attention because they are unusual and make you question their existence in the painting.
- Scale and Proportion: Objects are evenly placed, drawing most attention to the clocks. The one clock on the desk is bigger than the other two and the creature on the ground (which is assumed to be a self-portrait of Dali) is the largest thing in the painting.
- Repetition and Rhythm: The clocks are repetitive throughout the painting, all taking the same melting shape. Also the color of brown and blue/grey is repetitive as well. There are different shades of brown/blue/grey used throughout the painting.

- Unity and Variety: Different shapes and textures are shown along with different shading. Dark colors are used but also evenly mixed with warm colors as well.

4. At the end of this set of paragraphs identify any Art Principles that you think is not found or used in the art object's composition.

I think all art principles are used in this piece.

Part VI - The Art Object's Historical Data of Its Culture and Time Period:

1. Present an overview of the current social, economic, ideological, religious and political structure or activities that impacts on the art object itself.

- Social: the Provisional Government forced its resignation in October of 1931. Then after the Provisional Government, the governments of the Left Republicans and Socialists, ruled from October 1931 and then were elected out in November 1933. The Republicans and the Roman Catholics ruled from November 1933 to February 1936 until the Popular Front was elected in February 1936 until the military uprising of July 1936
- Economic: Civilians formed “juntas” -also known as committees. The committees were based on financial demands. “Military Defence Committees were concerned about military officers in Spain over their loss of buying power of their salaries and also concerned about their colleagues who had been fighting in Morocco which delayed their rise to hierarchy.” In 1917 the defence military forced the collapse of two consecutive governments.” King of Spain, Alfonso XIII, (1886-1941) realized Colonists would not allow the normal operation of the legislative bodies as long as the Conservatives and Liberals continued to govern. This brought to an end two major party systems.
- Ideological: In April 1931 a Provisional Government was formed by Republicans of all political slants as well as socialists and nationalists. Dali became a part of the surrealist movement.
- Political structure or activities:

2. Present an overview of the technological or scientific activities that has some bearing on the art object itself.

Dali joined the surrealist movement in 1929. He was very invested in subconscious art. He enjoyed painting while being in a self-holocionation state. Dali referred to this as his ‘“paranoiac-critical method.” The melting watches look like an expression of the subconscious. “Some have suggested that the watches refer to Albert Einstein’s general theory of relativity.”

Part VII - The Art Object's Auto/Biographical Data of the Artist/School:

1. Provide an auto/biographical sketch of the artist or school that specifically leads up to the art object itself.

In 1910, Dali enrolled at the Hispano-French School of the Immaculate Conception in Figueres. After he finished school, he then spent his time at the Molí de la Torre estate which was run by a family of artists. It was here where he learned Impressionism through one of the owners. He then began his secondary schooling at the Marist Brothers' school. He attended Juan Núñez's classes at the Municipal Drawing School in Figueres.

2. Discuss the specific cultural context (music, theater, literature) in which the art object was produced.

In 1931 during the Surrealist Movement, Dali's painting "The Persistence of Memory" was created. Dali explained that "Surrealism is destructive but it destroys only what it considers to be shackles limiting our vision. When Dalí painted The Persistence of Memory, his artistic practice was guided by the peculiar "paranoiac-critical method." Developed by the artist in 1930, the technique relies on self-induced paranoia and hallucinations to facilitate a work of art. This method was particularly instrumental in the creation of Dalí's "hand-painted dream photographs," a collection of works that are stylistically rooted in realism yet unrealistic in subject matter."

3. Explain the art object's place in the history of art in terms of its art movement or historical era:

In 1931 during the surrealists movement, artists explored ideas of automatism and self-consciousness in their work. This movement challenges dreams and perceptions. The Persistence of Memory was guided by the "paranoiac-critical method" which is a technique that relies on self-induced paranoia and hallucinations to facilitate a work of art. "While the actual inspiration behind the scene is up for debate (art historians recall Einstein's theory; Dalí comically mentioned Camembert cheese), the odd iconography of the painting is characteristic of the Surrealist movement."

Part VIII - Your Interpretation of the Art Object's Content (your critical judgment):

1. Describe the artist's intention and to what degree does the art object communicate it? The art object describes the artist's intention because Dali took hallucinations during the time it was painted, which would describe the melting clocks. It depicts a dream state
2. Has the artist used the medium, technique or process sensitively in relation to the above? Yes, I think that Dali used the correct medium and technique sensitively in the Persistence of memory. Although he was experimenting with hallucinations at the time, you would expect the colors to be vivid and bright. The colors aren't too bright and pretty dull and warm, but I still think that he used the proper technique for the painting, especially considering the time period he was painting it.
3. How does it make you feel and think? Why? The colors of the painting give me a calm feeling because it's not a real busy painting. There's not too much going on in it that it overwhelms you. The melting clocks also give me a calm feeling as do the warm colors. It also makes you think what was going on in Dalis mind when he painted the dead creature in the middle of it and the ants on top of the stopwatch.
4. How does it relate to you in relation to the world or universe as a whole? It relates to me

because I really like interesting paintings such as this one. I enjoy looking at artwork and trying to figure out what the artist's intentions were while painting it. It also gives me a sense of calmness because of the warm colors used throughout it. It's not too bright or too colorful to make my eyes hurt.

5. In what ways does it remind you of other art objects seen or studied in this course? Honesty, it does not remind me of many of the objects studied in this course because it's such a bizarre painting. Dali had such a crazy imagination and that is why I like him as an artist and why I chose to do this project on him because he is very different from a lot of artists, especially in today's world.