The Persistence Of Memory By Salvador Dali: Rhetorical Analysis

Time is a construct, there are never-ending timelines of events occurring at the exact moment in time, therefore leaving a feeling of hopelessness to all that attempt to defy it. The Persistence of Memory, by Salvador Dali, symbolizes the battle between time and memories. Horrible memories the mind wishes to forget, along with the beautiful memories held onto--never to escape. This piece represents the memories you wish to forget, thinking time is your ally, when it’s been causing the pain all along. The use of color both light and dark paints pictures in the eyes of the observer, making them look back on old times both good and bad. Many objects with peculiar shapes are scattered throughout, each and everyone has a meaning, perhaps the cloth draped over the rock represents the memories of someone dear, cast into the abyss and awaiting time to carry the burden of their memory away forever. What is soon realized is a watched pot never boils, similar as to a memory that is always thought back on won’t disappear with time.

Emotion is conveyed in endless ways throughout art, bright vibrant scenes seemingly blooming off of the canvas, to dark, gloomy strokes of sadness and despair. Dali’s choice of color on this painting is away from the bright lights and euphoric colors instead flooded halfway with the dark mysterious shadow pushing back against the light. This depiction of the memories stored within the conscience are not pleasant, the beloved memories of a loved one are consumed into the black fog to represent the fact that those memories will never leave you, and sadness will follow suit. The mountain scene in the background represents better times ahead, an undiscovered, bright and hopeful future full of opportunity and most importantly, faith to leave those thoughts behind. Dali wanted the distant background for almost an instant feeling of hope and confidence to escape the bad memories plaguing once pleasant memories. The method he uses to depict these emotions is through very radiant colors, a soft gold tint over a clear blue and white sky glowing in the distance. These are very different emotions being conveyed through color and lighting, Dali's positioning with the black fog to the bottom right of the foreground juxtaposing the bright mountains and clear sky towards the top of the background signifying hope through difficult times.

Through the eerie feeling of the piece, Dali leaves much for the viewer to decipher with many strange shapes. Pocket watches are seen covering the left side, taking a step away from the traditional round shape to now appearing as if they are melted. This represents the distortion of time itself, as these unpleasant memories are not under the burden of time. Lacking the ability to forget traumatic experiences easily will result in constant reminiscing of the event, never letting the thoughts leave your mind for as long as you live. The emotion this brings is very dismal yet inspiring, refuse to let the recollection of miserable times make you dread the times to come. The canvas is bursting with abnormal shapes, but Dali purposely places the woman-like figure in the middle. As it appears to be receding into the rest of the landscape, it signifies the slight fading of the memory. The mind often remembers the most pleasant aspects of a positive memory and in this case, the woman's eye is the only fully formed shape in the cloak. The only memory of her still retained is her eyes, the detail Dali focused our attention to by its odd shape and centralized location. With the many convoluted shapes that are included in the painting, the very defined block shape objects found on the left side seem very out of the

ordinary. It seems as if the world around this painting is being built before your eyes. As the brain is always learning and absorbing new information every second, it is expected that new memories will develop as well. These block-like objects signify the literal construction of a new memory, or rather, a memory seemingly updating itself to the current version of what the subject thinks he/she remembers.

All in all, Salvador Dali used an amazing combination of shapes, colors, and lighting to convey excellent emotion to the observer. Dali used lighting and color to nearly split the canvas in half with a very beautiful mountain scene peaking in the background, to a dark billowing cloud of sorrow swallowing up the foreground. The colors used in the background were joyful and inviting, away from the brown and black abomination consuming the rest of the piece. The commonly used phrase “A picture is worth a thousand words” (Fred R. Barnard) is overlooked in some cases, especially if the picture at first glance appears very bland with little meaning. Artists intentionally leave bleak meanings in their art as a way for the many observers to interpret the piece naturally. With each and every person having different memories and life experiences, the message they receive from the art is their own. Dali used this to his advantage in this painting, as it could easily be interpreted differently by each person that ever laid their eyes on it.