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Mr. Greco

English III

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The core of humanity

In the New York Times' article "Sonny Rollins: Art Never Dies," Sonny Rollins, a saxophonist and jazz musician, claims that the same ideas and themes are present in all artwork, even through generations of artists and changing times. As new artists draw inspiration from previous works and artists, they will inevitably inspire future artists to create, showing that no one artwork or idea belongs to just one person. He asserts that art is meaningful because it goes beyond materialistic human creations and delves into authentic human emotions. Salvador Dalí's artworks—namely, *The Persistence of Memory*, *The Temptation of St. Anthony*, and *Tuna Fishing*—support Rollins's belief that although time, religion, and accomplishment are all social structures, emotion is what truly connects humanity.



Fig. 1 Dalí, Salvador: *The Persistence of Memory*. 1931. *Encyclopædia Britannica*.
<https://www.britannica.com/art/Surrealism/Surrealist-techniques>

In *The Persistence of Memory* (Fig 1), Dalí asserts that time is an impermanent human construct. A beach landscape is depicted with cliffs in the background, and in the foreground, there is a box with a barren tree growing out of it and clocks that seem to be melting surrounding the box. Knowing that Dalí was heavily inspired by Sigmund Freud's ideas about the subconscious, as well as the title of the piece, it is clear that the blank landscape represents the mind as it has deteriorated over time. The clocks further this idea as they are melted over other objects, which gives the feeling of being exhausted, perhaps as a result of time waring on the conscious and subconscious minds. The implied texture throughout the painting is smoothness, as every surface appears smooth to the touch. This smoothness demonstrates as the mind ages, memories start to develop gaps, and detail is lost. The distorted forms of the clocks represent the fluidity of time. Art that communicates deep truths transcend time, and through the clocks, Dalí communicates that time, a human creation, will not last forever; it will die along with humans. The death of both time and humanity is suggested by the space between the foreground and background creating an open expanse with a bright, sunny horizon. The dark ground leading to the shining sky creates a landscape that is similar to a classic description of heaven, "the light at the end of a tunnel" Blue and yellow are seen throughout the piece; blue in the clock's faces, the water, and the sky, and yellow in the mountains, water, and sky. These colors unite not only this piece, but many of Dalí's paintings, as these two colors repeat in much of his artwork.



Fig 2. Dalí, Salvador. *The Temptation of St. Anthony*. 1946. Sessions College
<https://www.sessions.edu/notes-on-design/art-in-motion-surrealism/>

Another of Dalí's pieces that reiterates the transcendence of art is *The Temptation of St. Anthony* (fig 2). The piece, which depicts a parade of animals holding elegant, enticing objects, and St. Anthony kneeling on the floor holding up a cross, uses dark colors to create a vignette, and bright blues and yellows to emphasize a golden palace on the back of an elephant. After finding the palace, which contains a nude female body inside of it, the viewer's focus shifts to the proportions of the animals. The legs of the animals are many times the size of St. Anthony in the corner, and are as skinny as those of insects. Much of the painting is empty space, and the legs of the elephants and horse fill this space, providing leading lines that point to the "temptations" St. Anthony is experiencing: the golden palace and nude women. The clear use of religion in the piece is an example of art being connected to all of history, because religion, too, has existed for as long as human societies have existed, and has always been a source of inspiration for artists.



(i can't find a reliable source!)

The meditative rose?

Tuna Fishing depicts a bloodbath of men hunting and killing tuna fish with nets, spears, and knives. The men, painted in gold, are depicted as if they are overcoming a great challenge, and are basking in the glory of it. Glory, a distinctly human experience, is the central feeling present in this piece, as the men painted in bright yellow contrast with the deep blue background. The painting combines techniques from various art movements, instead of Dalí's usual surreal style, creating more abstract shapes and forms. While many of Dalí's works are dominated by yellow alongside bright blues, this piece is mainly composed of a dark blue with only the men killing the tuna in bright yellow. The yellow being a minority compared to the rest of the painting shows that although the men are powerful in this moment, nature will inevitably outlive humanity, and their glory is temporary.

Dalí's art communicates deep feelings and themes, each relating to the fleeting nature of humanity in the grand scheme of history. Time, religion, and glory are all unique to the human

experience on Earth, and are each major causes of both peace and war, community and destruction.

Just as Rollins says, by commenting on each of these materialistic human values, Dalí's art cuts to the core of humanity, across generations, and through changing political and social states of our world.

Works Cited

Rollins, Sonny. "Sonny Rollins: Art Never Dies." *The New York Times*, *The New York Times*, 18 May 2020, www.nytimes.com/2020/05/18/opinion/sonny-rollins-art.html.

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