

Comparative study

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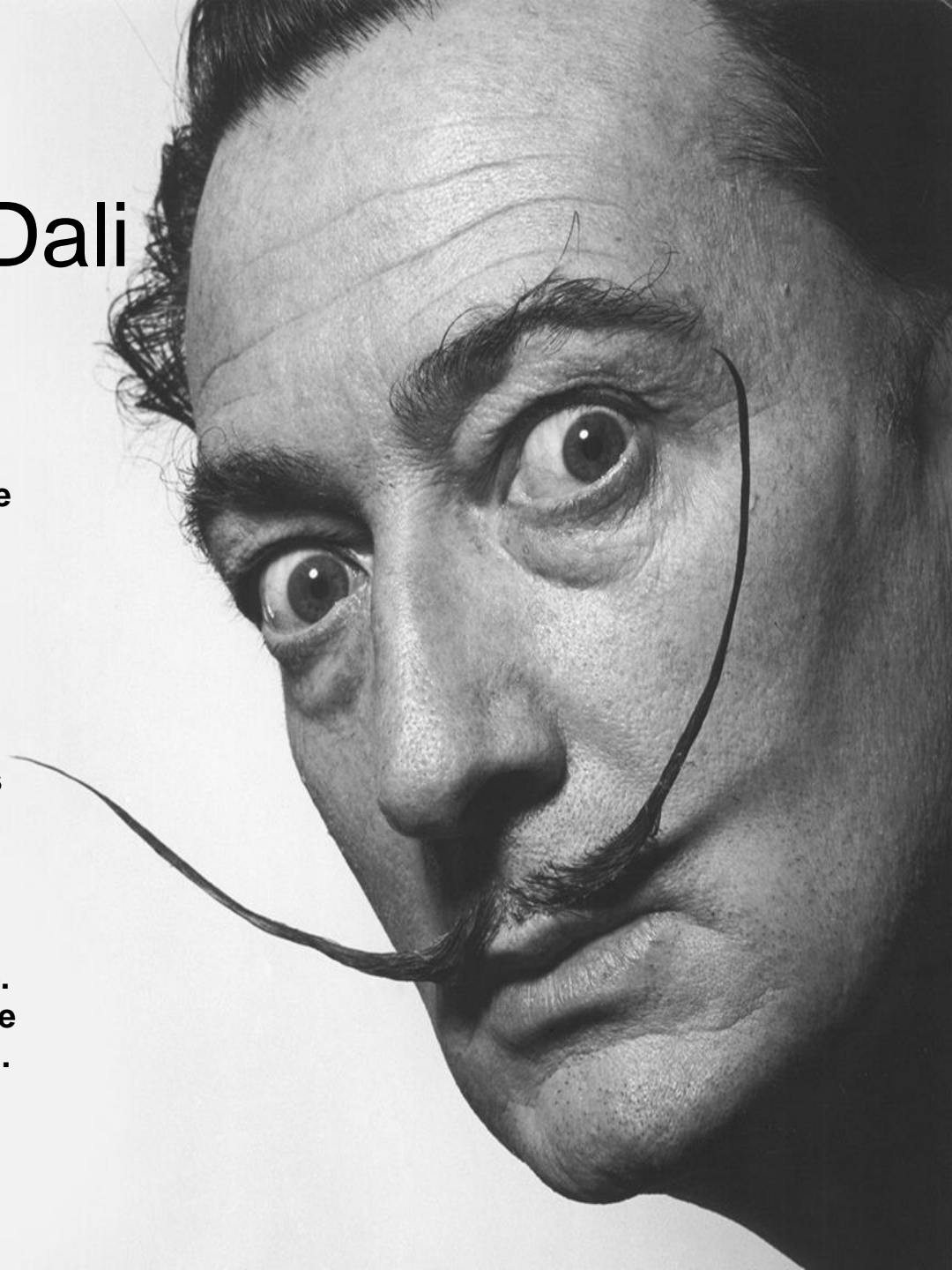
Introduction

My comparative study looks at the ways to express within surrealism artworks in the background of different time and cultures. I have seen some traditional surrealism artworks such as Dali's <the persistence of memory>. Recently, I also noticed at some new born surrealism artists' work in eastern countries. There are differences and similarities in between and these are what I am interested in. Hence, my goal is to explore the associations and imparities then state my discovery.

Cultural context - Dali

Salvador Dali (1904 – 1989) is a Spanish artist famous of his surrealism artwork. He is thought as one of the 3 most representative artists in 20th century (the other two are Picasso and Matisse.)

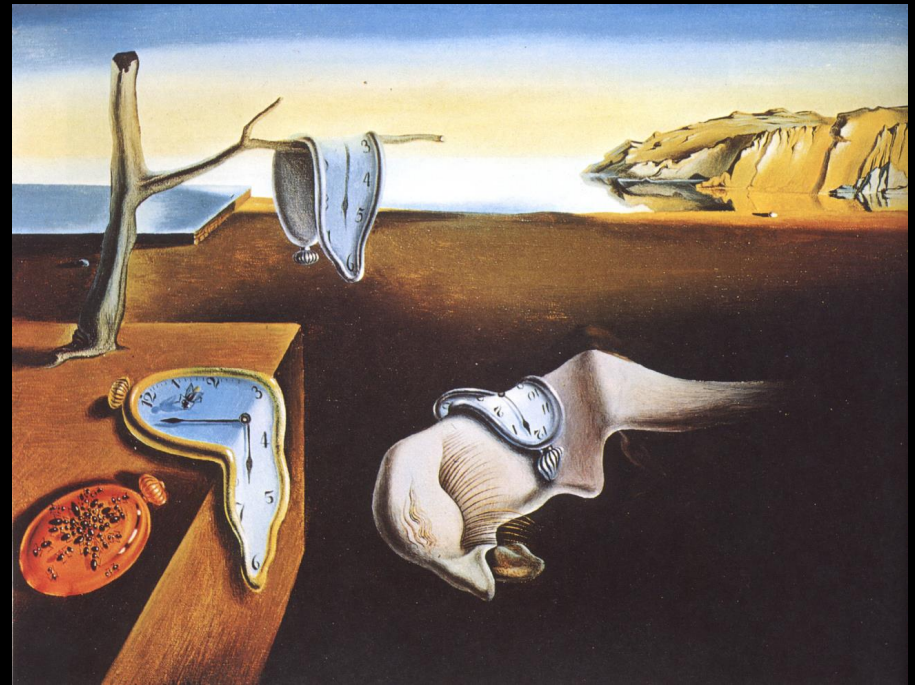
Dali is a talented artist with incredible imagination. His work shows a shocking surrealism style inspired by dreams. He perfectly mixed strange sceneries in dreams and skills influenced by renaissance artists together. From Dali's artwork, his personality can characters can be clearly read. Additionally, Dali's art also connected with film, sculpture and photography at his time which promoted the art development in Europe. One his artwork most known work is <the persistence of memory> finished in 1931.



Formal response to work

This oil painting describes a simple scenery in dawn. The distant ocean lays in the background. On the right side, there are rock –like objects in a far distance as well. In this artwork, scenery in dreams, enlarged space and different objects are connected with a random form. Also, there are several layers or stages in the painting. On the first stage in the left, there is a possibly wooden object which looks like a table. On the table-like object, there are two clocks and an incomplete tree. The tree only has one single branch without leaves. The biggest clock shows a soft property and a fly falls from it down to the edge of the table. The small one seems to be a closed pocket clock with many ants moving on it. The third clock is hung on the tree and it is also soft. In the center of the painting, a shape which is similar to a soft head is shown. Its neck sinks in the darkness and a huge nose can be easily noticed.

On the face, the eyes with long eye lash are closed and the tongue is out of the mouth. It feels like that the owner of the face falls asleep on the beach. Dali hung the fourth clock on this head. It is also soft as it is melting and disappearing. All these elements are covered by a desert or beach liked background. Everything besides the sea is surrounded by mountains. At the end, the colors of the painting are balanced by the sky and the sea.



<the persistence of memory>

Salvador Dali

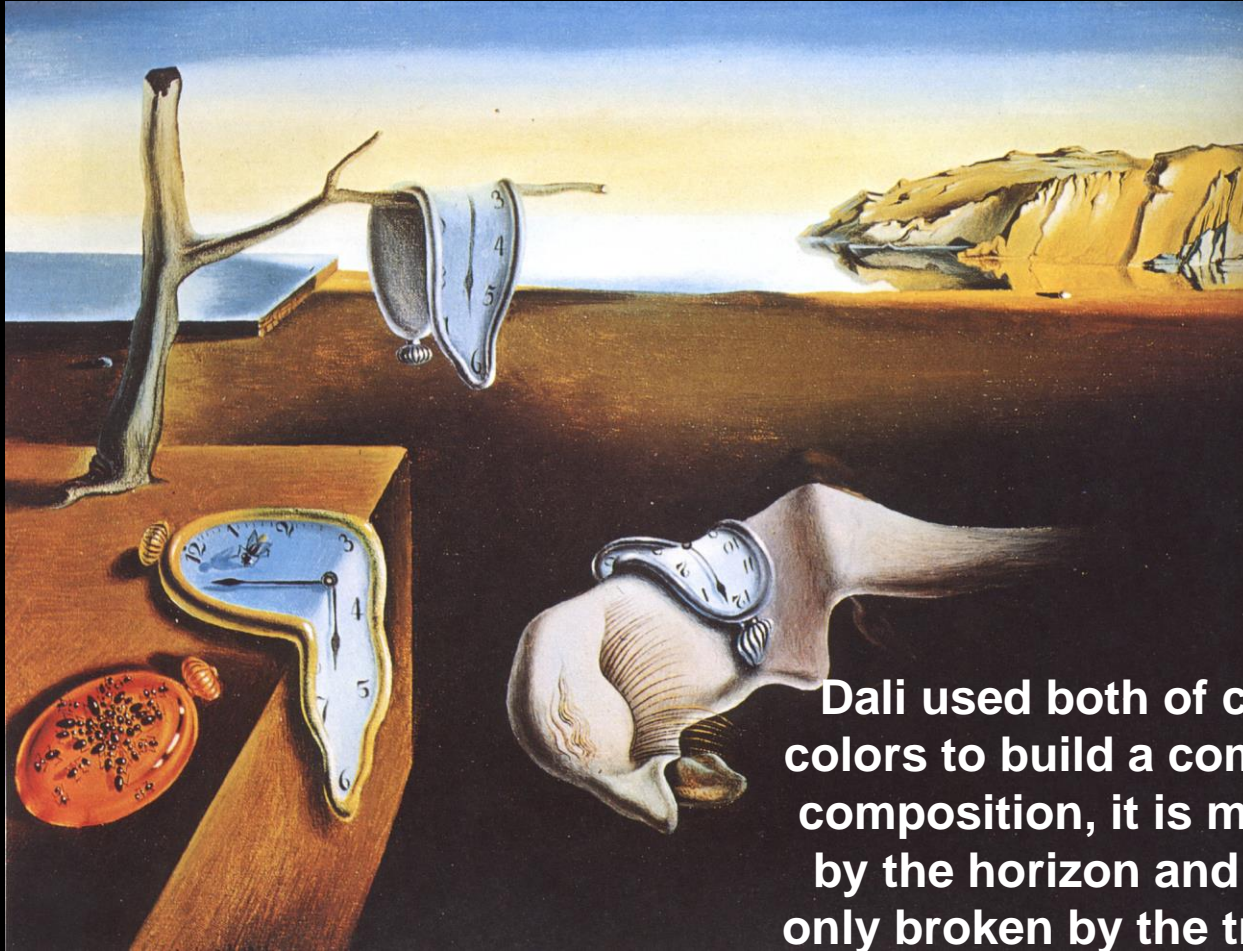
Oil painting

24cmx33cm

1931

Compositional

Over the whole painting, light plays an important role which can construct the atmosphere of dream. This artwork is divided into two sections which are dark (the first layer and the right) and bright (left and the back).



Dali used both of cold and warm colors to build a comparison. In the composition, it is mainly balanced by the horizon and the horizon is only broken by the tree and the soft clock in the center. This design seems to be an expression of the restlessness on the beach

Technical

Conceptual

According to Dali's own statement, this painting represents his memories in his early ages. The clock with ants shows his tension because it is normally in the pocket. Some people analyzed that the reason why those clocks are soft is because of his fear to sexual disability. To this opinion, Dali did not show any attitude against. Also, Dali admitted that some objects in this painting are inspired from sceneries or other things he has seen such as the soft clock referenced from a type of soft cheese. These clocks are like memories, become loose, out of shape and soft as time goes by.



Cultural context – Fang Lijun

After all most one century, surrealism has become a big part of modern art. Fang Lijun (1963) is an artist from China. His work shows a strong sense of comedy, humor and satire. Fang Lijun lived in 1990s and it was when the cynical realism movement took place. In his work, he mainly expresses current Chinese people's opinion on rapid development and urbanization within the country. His work <yawning> was made in 1993.

Cynical realism was born as an art trend mainly based on painting or drawing in new China. It originally started in 1990s. In 1991, Fang Lijun established his first generation of his cynical realism artwork in an exhibition. The bored mood and the sense of satire within his work accurately expressed Chinese people's moral values at that time. In 1992, his artwork went to exhibition again and people thought highly of his art language. Fang Lijun's cynical realism artworks are seen as "a cultural trend against human values in 1980s."

As the background, China was just opened in 1989. New ideas and international elements kept rushing in this country with new blood. The government focused on the development but a gap between the world people knew and the world will be in future was getting bigger and bigger. In this case, Fang Lijun applied his way of expressing people's voice and his attitude.

Lijun is obviously influenced by the idea of surrealism. This is also different from western surrealism, in Dali's work, the concept can be explained without a major character in the painting. In another word, Dali described people with objects but today surrealist artist prefer to describe people specifically with people. Hence, after a long term development, the cores of different surrealist art are still in common.

Compositional

In this painting, a yawning man's face takes more than a quarter of the whole composition. In the background, there are 4 or 5 people (probably one more behind the big face). Their looks are very similar which are numb. However, people can also find a type of smile with the sense of satire on their faces. All the people in the painting are without hair and the four in the back are also in same heights.

Also, those four people only have two types of clothes colors. Two of them wear in blue and the other two wear in green but the person standing in the front wears a white shirt which is also different from those four people's dressing style.



Formal response to work

<yawning>

Fang Lijun

Oil painting

1.5mx1.8m

1993

Technical

In Fang Lijun's work, he doesn't show strong contrast in colors instead he is trying to make a peaceful atmosphere which feels relaxed. The painting is not very detail but the use of oil paint still shows a smooth texture which also looks peaceful.

Conceptual

When a yawning face stands out of a group of numb faces, the original atmosphere "I don't care" is strengthened. Except this, there will be another attitude which is quite cynical. This artwork keeps a sense of peace without any emotion or we can say it is try to express the attitude of "I don't know, I don't care and I wasn't there". However, behind these calm and cold personalities, in fact, people still have their nature of seeking for freedom.

Cultural context – Tetsuya Ishida


Tetsuya Ishida (1973-2005) was a Japanese artist. He once stated in interviews that he was forced by parents and teachers to develop a career as a teacher of chemist. These pressures made he think differently and his experiences appeared in some of his artworks that that explore the society's expectation on youths.

Ishida went to Musashino Art University as he wanted to develop his art. However, his parents were satisfied with his career choice so they refused to provide him financial support during his college. Hence, he had a very hard time.

He's been in a company but he finally left. Ishida still wanted to develop his own career as a solo artist. From 1997 to 2005 he made great achievements and he could work full-time as an artist until he died. On May 23 in 2005, Ishida was killed by a train when he was 31. some people believe it was an accident yet most people think that was a suicide.

Ishida gathered different rule that people play from the world and he transferred them from the real life into canvas. However, the world shown in his artworks doesn't look like a real world. He directly showed people's main concerns which are the whole Japanese society, education, management of the country. Today, teenage crimes and children murdering have become a social problem, Ishida acted as a boy in his artworks and showed his understanding based on being a child. His artworks represent modern people in his mind. "All the sadness and pain I have drawn are hidden in the deep ocean."

— Ishida



石田徹也

2005年 31歳の時 踏切事故で亡くなる

午前10時



Formal response to work

<燃料補給のような食事>

(Meal is like fuel supply)

Tetsuya Ishida

1996

Oil painting

Compositional

In this painting, three people wear in same uniform are given food with oil guns liked equipments by another three people with same uniform.

The three people who are filling the other three with food have similar faces and looks which are numb and bored. They stand in a same position as the three eating ones sit in s same position. The painting shows a strong sense of being unified. Same uniforms, same positions, same faces, same hairstyles, same equipments and same chairs, all of these are elements that support the concept inside..

Technical

Ishida used oil paint for most of his artworks which made them visually realistic. In his art pieces, the contrast is not strong but they bring a sense that makes people feel real about the atmosphere and environment in his works. Ishida also used a wide range of grey which brings the sense of depression and pressure.

Conceptual

In Japan, people's lives are full of strict rules and extremely ordered. This is also where people's pressures are from. Ishida wants to express people's daily lives and their roles in his artworks and show the facts including pressures. However, these might also be a factor of his death. (He committed to suicide in 2005.)



Comparison between Fang Lijun and Ishida

These two artists have similar time background because they both live in stable environment and away from wars. This peaceful atmosphere enables them to explore more about people and the society. In Fang Lijun's <Yawning>, the artist focused on building an acceptably shocking sense to bring his deep concept which is more abstract. However, In Ishida's <meal is like fuel supply>, he firstly created a surreal and impossible scenery to show his concept which is full of reality and fact.

Personally, even though both of the artists show the sense of satire in their works, I think that Ishida's view contains more complain as he shaped everything so directly. He translated invisible pressure into visible pressure, verbally force into physically force. Fang Lijun's attitude seems to be more peaceful. As he is older and has experienced more than Ishida, he is able to observe situation or phenomenon with an open view. Hence, I think his art language is more attractive than his visual expression and his work can be constantly read by people under such a cultural background that wouldn't change soon. On the opposite, Ishida does have strong abilities on visual communication within his artwork but what he did is stating the situation and being satire at the moment. As a matter of fact, Ishida became widely known by people after his death. In my opinion, the society's attitude might be that it won't be noticeable if a person keeps complaining but we really need to think more when his life ends up with complaining.

Comparison between western artists to eastern artists

These three pieces of work I choose are all oil paintings, however, their authors are from different times, different backgrounds and different cultures. Generally, they can be classified into western, eastern, before 1950 and after 1950. From Dali's <persistence of memory>, we can see the strong contrast in the use of colors. Every object in the painting is clearly colored. Also, dark areas are very dark, so are bright parts. In the two eastern artworks, the contrasts are not too strong and all the elements are detailed. Both of them show a trend of having more grey in the use of colors.

What is more, Fang Lijun and Ishida present their concepts along straight directions. When people analyze their works, they would use a direct logic as well which is showing concepts through people. However, in Dali's work, his ways of expressing are more indirect. He presents his concept through multiple directions and it requires more background information to support people to understand. As what he did, Dali describes himself with objects then relates to people yet the other two artists describe people with people and finally make connections to people. Obviously, we are easier to understand things we have in common. Hence, many people's first impression on Dali's work are: what is he talking about?

<Underground Heart>

A2

Markers, pastels, color pencils,
fine liner

Oct 1st, 2015

Jiapeng Xie

My own work



Compositional

In my final piece, I did three self portraits which represent me at ages of 3, 19 and 8. (from the left to the right). The 3 years old one's body is covered by some numbers and the 19 years old one wears a diving helmet. For the child on the right side, there are 2 clocks growing out of his body. The person in the middle is pushing a heart inside the ground. In the landscape, there are rivers, lake and rocks which are shown in details. Generally, these three self portraits and mountains forms a pyramid-liked composition and lead the focal point to the helmet.

Technical

I sketched the outline with pencils and a fine liner first then used markers to painting colors as the base in the first layer. After this, I used pastels and color pencils to strengthen highlights and make some connections more detailed and soft. At the end, I used fine liner again to add some textures on all the portraits and objects in order to make them more realistic.

Conceptual

The theme of my work is about how I've been change by time. (next page)



At the age of 3, my understanding about time could only relate to numbers. When I was a kid, I thought each number has its specific color and I can still remember. So I described how I understood numbers with colors in order to show the attitude towards time at that period of time which was very basic.

This is based on my present age and the diving helmet with rust means being more experienced. I want to show that I've been sinking in the ocean of time for quite long and I also started to hide my mind. It is shown in the piece that I'm pushing a heart into the mountain.

When I was 8, I understood more about time I could realize it is something cannot be seen but would never return. I have been having dreams about time since 8 and I dreamed that clocks are growing out of my body then I become a part of time which can make me persistence. It probably shows my fear to death.

The person in the middle is pushing a heart into the mountain as I want to show that I am hiding my emotion as I got older. I find more peaceful about everything in recent years and I want to be ordinary and quite. The red heart brings a strong sense of being emotional but I choose to hide it. However, the two kids beside show their looks which are being curious, doubtful and suspicious because they do not understand why I will do so when I get older.

Formal comparison

To Dali

I used clocks as elements represent time. Also, the section on the right side came out of my dream and this is what the theme of surrealism is.

To Ishida

I focus on the expression of people and make them detail so that the visual expression is realistic. However, the occasion in the work is obviously not real and it wouldn't be true.

To Fang Lijun

I chose to draw such looks and the two faces on double sides because I want to emphasis that we do not have any understanding about what we would do when we get older. Instead, if we could know, our first reaction and response would be doubtful and curious. However, as we cannot run faster than time to predict what will happen, we won't get any evidence to proof. So our curiosity about the future is based on the lack of reasoning. Hence, this can be a type of satire which is also included in cynical realism.

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