

Soft construction with
boiled beans 1936
essay sample



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The Soft Construction with Boiled Beans 1936 was one of Salvador Dalí's many surrealist creations. In order for us to know the implications it has on Dalí and the conclusion we can get for this masterpiece, it is wise to understand the movement Dalí was a part of.

Surrealism began in the early 1920s, it is a cultural best characterized by its visual works most especially in paintings and on literary works as well. In the venue of surrealism an artist considers his work as an expression of his philosophy and must then consider his work as an artifact. It is very observable in these works that there is an element of surprise and hidden meanings in details, representations and visual personifications. One of its founders, André Breton suggested that Surrealism is a form of revolutionary movement.

Looking at surrealism historically, its thoughts and ideas were developed and nurtured from the Dada movement that started in Paris. The Dada movement which peaked in 1916 in Switzerland is an ideology and a movement at the same time themed with anti-war politics. They engaged in artistic endeavors that shows their rejection of the existing standards on art during those times. This movement was very influential in later styles such as Nouveau Réalisme, avant-garde, Fluxus and of course surrealism.

The Dada movement believed that it was the reason and the logic in a capitalist society that invited people to engage in war. Because of this primary idea, these artists they showed their rejection of war by embracing disorder, chaos, irrationality, and idiosyncrasy. As what George Grosz described the Dada movement as “ *against the world of mutual destruction* ”

In the years starting in 1930, Surrealism was more visible in the worlds of art and philosophical scenes. In 1936 the London International Surrealist Exhibition became the melting pots of Surrealism. It was in 1929 that Salvador Dali joined this movement and from then on became an active participant in the visual aspect of the group; he was one of the pillars that established the surrealism visual style. In surrealism, the movement incorporated psychological methods in their art: their goal was to expose what is true psychologically by stripping ordinary things with its ordinary veil and then exposed their image that was beyond the formal grasp of thoughts; this is the only way where empathy can be stirred up.

In a series of visual presentations, the thoughts and style of Surrealism became more prevalent. The style was a combination of the abstract and the psychological all in a very depictive manner. This style gave some artist in those eras a deeper feeling of the psyche, wherein the mind is about to explore a picture rather than allow the picture to say what it has to say.

Surely, surrealism had much impact in the different facets of human thoughts, it does not only apply to anything visual such as the painting, sculpture or in photography; it surrealism in itself if a revolution, an upheaval to free the mind and the imagination.

The surrealism movement had an impact both on radical and in revolutionary politics, as other surrealists members do join in close ties with political figures that support a specific political thought. Also, some surrealist showed support indirectly by highlighting in their work the need to establish a link between freedoms of thoughts and freeing oneself in the repressive culture

and media every one was in before. This was made more pronounced, when the slogan in the 1968 revolution in France had the slogan " All power to the imagination".

In psychology, the surrealist movement has indeed a strong connection between the psyche and the production of art. Andre Breton, wrote his idea on the fundamental crisis of an object, as what he called it. He explained that when an object is perceived, it is not really an eternal object but an extension of a person's being; it was here that the idea of the phantom emerged. This idea was further magnified in Dali's paintings when he emphasized the thoughts that an object has a both a mechanical meaning and a when the mind uses its unconscious part the image can show off its phantom side.

In the physical side, a techniques also used by Dali was related to psychology and to similar ideas by Max Ernst which is the rubbing of a pencil over a textured surface and wait until the phantom image appears in the paper.

For Dali, the phase of paranoia which he found really interesting was his appreciation of the ability of the brain to connect things that were not previously linked. This concept was the made idea behind his idea on paranoic-critical method which he described as "*spontaneous method of irrational knowledge based on the critical and systematic objectivity of the associations and interpretations of delirious phenomena* "

When you use this method in your art, or in creating art and in perceiving how others would see your art, Dali said there is an active process that <https://assignbuster.com/soft-construction-with-boiled-beans-1936-essay-sample/>

occurs in the mind and this active process is incorporated into the final product, into the final art work. When this is in the thoughts, the artist and the perceiver will see a double image or a vague image that can be seen and interpreted in many different ways.

According to Breton, he said that the psychological method of Dali is an “*instrument of primary importance... (it) has immediately shown itself capable of being applied equally to painting, poetry, the cinema, the construction of typical Surrealist objects, fashion, sculpture, the history of art, and even, if necessary, all manner of exegesis.*”

In the artworks done by Salvador Dali, the represented works and images has many meanings and have many interpretations as well. Salvador Dali's works do not get its meanings from the unconscious projection of the viewer, this was shown as a result of the Rorschach tests. In the year 1935, a year before his artwork entitled *Soft Construction with Boiled Beans 1936* was created; Salvador Dali made a detailed description of this style and thoughts and exposed it in his essay *The Conquest of the Irrational*.

The history of his paranoiac-critical activity started off when in 1929, he had his attention focused on the internal mechanism of anything paranoiac and then he tried to imagine if he can possibly pull off a method for determining the systematic relations appropriate to paranoia. This very primary method was then called the delirio-critical. To cut his interpretation of paranoiac-critical, it is wise to look at paranoia as defined by Salvador Dali, for him paranoia is the restlessness in the interpretative connections between things and their systematic structure.

For Dali, the paranoiac-critical method is used to produce image that are genuinely unknown in nature. The mind which he referred to here as paranoiac sees the image with alternate meanings and one interpretations from the other are replaced as long as the new interpretations comes in. In short, there is an exchange of thoughts and interpretations one after the other. On the other hand, those things that were noticed or created by the paranoiac mind are not relevant.

For Dali “ *It is enough that the delirium of interpretation should have linked together the implications of the images of the different pictures covering a wall for the real existence of this link to be no longer deniable.* ”

For Dali these links that he referred to can be a signifier-signifier relationship, it can be the signifier-signified relationship or lastly, it can be both. Four years after Dali created his *Soft Construction with Boiled Beans 1936* artwork, his thoughts and ideas about the paranoiac-critical method were molded and his strong sense of this philosophy were later seen his works such as *Slave Market with the Invisible Bust of Voltaire* .

Salvador Dali's paranoiac-critical method is a way where the unpredictable connections between things can be used and seen in many different ways. This is one of Dali's contributions to the world of art since it greatly helped artist understand what meanings mean, what meanings are for. In his statement, “ The paranoiac mechanism whereby the multiple images is released is what supplies the understanding with the key to the birth and origin of all images, the intensity of these dominating the aspect which hides the many appearances of the concrete.”, we can easily conclude that his art

forms, his way of showing things definitely is connected with his purpose of giving juxtaposing meanings gained from a single image.

In order to understand the theory on why Salvador Dali pushed through with his ideas for the creation of the Soft Construction with Boiled Beans 1936, let us first look at the prevailing political thought at his times and his opinions towards them.

Salvador Dali was seen as the supporter of Franco, the authoritarian..

Despite Dali's active participation in artistic side of surrealism; surrealism forefront Andre Breton made active efforts in order to disconnect Dali's name in the organization. While he was still young, Salvador Dali was a follower of the political thought on anarchism and communism; in fact, he had accounts and remarks that were at those times shocking for anyone who believed in the Dada movement (before the Surrealism movement came to be). But as he grew older, then his political views changed as well. On the time of the debate between André Breton and Dali with regards to Dali's political belief, Salvador Dali published his book *Dali by Dali* wherein he asserted that he is an anarchist and a monarchist at the same time, issues between him and Breton ended, even if the latter continued eliminating him from the Surrealist movement.

During the start of the civil war in Spain, Salvador Dali escaped and refused to take side on any group, he also did the same when the World War II broke out. The famous author George Orwell criticized Salvador Dali for his failure to take side, Orwell even went as far as describing Dali using this following lines: " When the European War approaches he has one preoccupation only:

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how to find a place which has good cookery and from which he can make a quick bolt if danger comes too near.”

After the political turmoil in Spain, Dali congratulated Franco for clearing Spain out of any form of destructive forces, and he sent telegrams to the latter with great favor for Franco's signing the death warrants ordered against the prisoners of the civil war.

The *Soft Construction with Boiled Bean 1936* by Salvador Dali was also called *Premonition of Civil War*. The painting shows a huge contorted and disfigured figure which was believed to symbolize Spain at the times before and during the civil war. The figure is alternately grabbing itself upward while holding itself down at the same time. The interpretation of the painting shows the two sides of war as Dali saw it. He believed that war can be both destructive and necessary at the same time, it can be mutilating and rewarding at that.

Even if Salvador Dali was open with his friendship and support to Franco and the inevitable Civil War, Dali remained was also loud with his idea that war can destroy and may be brute, but he also upheld the idea that it is a required thing to do if you want to achieve change. The boiled beans signify the ancient offering by the Catalans to their Gods. The little man who can be seen in the bottom left of the painting are his representations to two of his childhood friends, Anneke and Nikki.

Looking at surrealism in its political influences, the idea has strong similarities with the ideas of Karl Marx, Sigmund Freud and to Hegel. A

majority of the surrealist artists are in close relation with the leftist politics.
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Despite this connotation, Salvador Dali maintained an uncertain position between the politics of his period and his art which led Andre Breton to mock Dali for protecting the ideas of the “irrational” Hitlerian idea. But without further thought, Dali readily denounced the words of Breton by stating, “I am Hitlerian neither in fact nor intention.”

In another exchange of ideas, Dali stressed that surrealism can exist in an apolitical state and can further denounce any form of fascism. Since his art is apolitical it can therefore say anything it has to say and will bank on the ideas of the perceiver on how it saw things to be. IN the year, 1934, two years before the creation of the *Soft Construction with Boiled Beans 1936*, Dali was under a surrealist trial and was finally expelled from the group.

We can very well see from the case above that Dali's ideas existed for himself; he as in no way obliged to showcase something that his mind does not grasp. He stood firm in his ideas on paranoiac-critical which acknowledge no form of politics. For him, his art form is a total disorder. He replied to his trials with the words, “I myself am surrealism.”

Moreover, Salvador Dali also used intricate symbolisms in his works. For example is his *Soft Construction with Boiled Beans 1936* used the disfigure woman as Spain and the boiled beans as serving to the gods. One of his most controversial works which is the *Persistence of Time*, demonstrate Dali's interpretation of Einstein's theory of relativity suggesting that time is not a fixed entity but relative.

It was also during the years that Dali made the *Soft Construction with Boiled Beans 1936* artwork; when he ventured into other form of art such us the <https://assignbuster.com/soft-construction-with-boiled-beans-1936-essay-sample/>

famous *Lobster Telephone*. The Lobster telephone has sexual symbols in it, when the point when the lobster's sex organ is, is also the place where a person talks. It was said that this manifestations of Dali's sexual reflections were in fact his hidden thoughts about sex itself. It was said that Gala, Dali's wife, had an average sexual satisfaction with him because Dali developed an awkward idea towards sex as a result his father's exposure to him to disfigured pictures of the vagina.

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