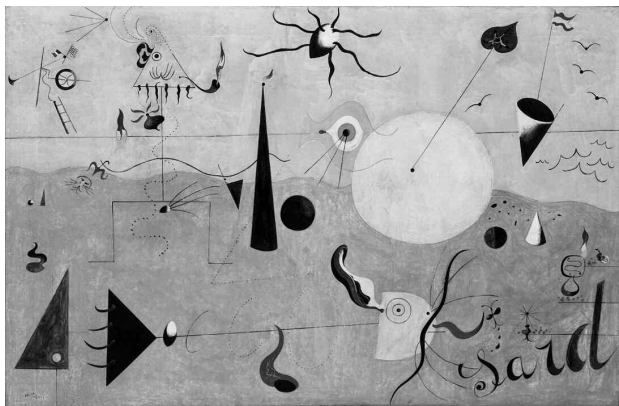
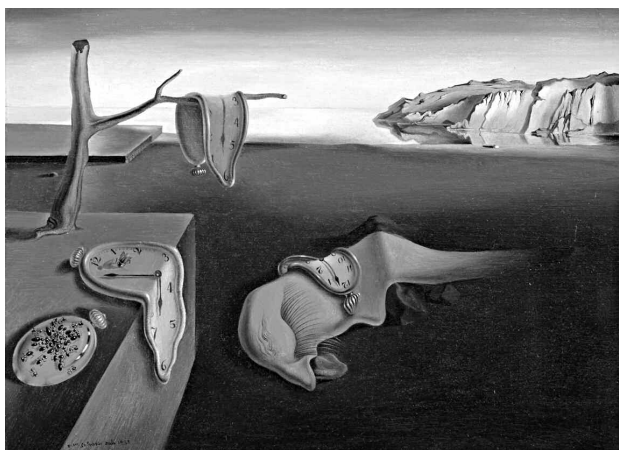


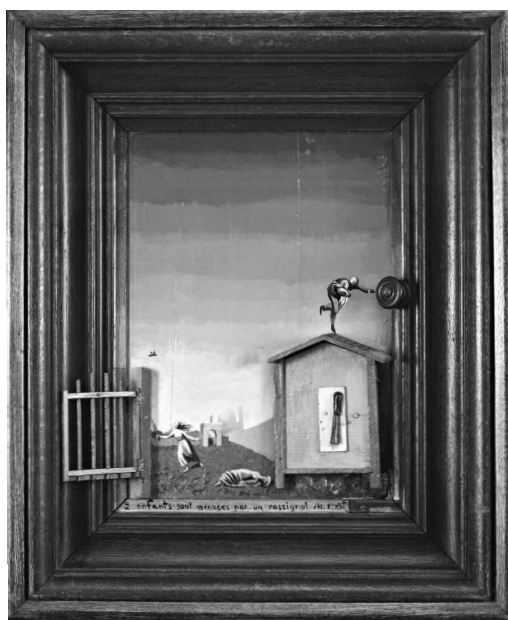
LESSON FOUR: Landscapes: Real and Imagined



**IMAGE TEN:** Joan Miró. *The Hunter (Catalan Landscape)*. 1923–24. Oil on canvas, 25 ½ x 39 ½" (64.8 x 100.3 cm). The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Purchase. © 2006 Successió Miró / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / ADAGP, Paris



**IMAGE ELEVEN:** Salvador Dalí. *The Persistence of Memory*. 1931. Oil on canvas, 9 ½ x 13" (24.1 x 33 cm). The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Given anonymously. © 2006 Salvador Dalí, Gala-Salvador Dalí Foundation/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York



**IMAGE TWELVE:** Max Ernst. *Two Children Are Threatened by a Nightingale*. 1924. Oil on wood with painted wood elements and frame, 27 ½ x 22 ½ x 4 ½" (69.8 x 57.1 x 11.4 cm). The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Purchase. © 2006 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / ADAGP, Paris

## INTRODUCTION

Landscape was a popular subject for a great number of nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century artists, many of whom painted outside, directly from nature. Surrealist artists employed a very different source for their landscapes—the unconscious mind. In this lesson, students will examine three landscapes incorporating images from nature as well as from the unconscious that challenge expectations of the traditional genre.

## LESSON OBJECTIVES

- Students will become familiar with the terms “landscape,” “iconography,” and “abstract,” and will revisit the terms “foreground,” “middle ground,” and “background.”
- Students will explore how the artist’s perception impacts the way he or she interprets and represents a subject

## IMAGE-BASED DISCUSSION

Give your students a moment to look at *The Hunter (Catalan Landscape)*.

- Ask your students to define “landscape” (a work of art whose primary focus is natural scenery). Ask your students why this painting might be considered a landscape. Ask them if they can identify natural or organic imagery in this work.
- Ask your students to write down five words that describe the place depicted in this painting.
- Ask your students to choose some favorite words from their list and share them with the class. Direct them to use visual evidence from the work to explain their word choices. Make a list of the favorite words on a chalkboard or on chart paper.

*The Hunter (Catalan Landscape)* was painted by the Spanish artist Joan Miró. The preparatory sketches for this painting, which were more figurative, show a peasant about to barbecue his lunch. At first glance, this painting may look abstract, but it is filled with meaningful iconography. Introduce your students to the terms “abstract” and “iconography.”

- Ask your students to list the iconography that is recognizable to them. Write a list of the words on a chalkboard or on chart paper.
- Ask your students to locate the title figure, the hunter, in this painting. After giving them a few moments, inform your students that the hunter is the stick figure with the mustachioed, triangle head, smoking a pipe. Ask your students to find other parts of his body—such as his heart (which shoots flames), his eye, and his ear. This figure, which recurs in other paintings by Miró, is considered to be a self-portrait.
- Ask your students to pick out other iconography in the work, using visual evidence to support their choices. They may notice the large beige circle, a cross-section of the trunk of a carob tree that sprouts a leaf and a giant eye bisected by the horizon line. Visible to the left is a ladder and wheel topped by two flags. In reference to the fragmented letters and words found in Dada and Surrealist poetry, Miró placed the word “SARD” (short for “Sardana,” the national dance of Catalonia) in the bottom right corner of the painting.

About his transition in 1923 from painting directly from nature to working in a Paris studio, Miró explained, “I have managed to escape into the absolute nature, and my landscapes have nothing in common anymore with outside reality . . .”<sup>12</sup> That said, he apparently felt that his paintings embodied the locations as much as if he’d painted them from nature.

- **Ask your students to consider in what ways *The Hunter (Catalan Landscape)* resembles a collage (see Lesson Two).**
- **Now ask your students to look carefully at *The Persistence of Memory*, by Salvador Dalí. Have your students write down five words that describe the place depicted in this painting. Ask them to choose some favorite words from their list and share them with the class. Direct them to use visual evidence from the work to explain their word choices. Make a list of the words on a chalkboard or on chart paper.**
- **Compare this list of words to the one for *The Hunter (Catalan Landscape)*. How many words do the two have in common? How many words are different?**

Inform your students that the Spanish artist Dalí painted *The Persistence of Memory* in 1931. He frequently described his paintings as “hand-painted dream” photographs.

Dalí was very interested in Sigmund Freud’s writings on psychology. An Austrian psychologist writing in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century, Freud revolutionized the way people think about the mind with his theory of the unconscious. The unconscious is the part of the psyche that thinks and feels without the person being aware of those thoughts and feelings. According to Freud, dreams are coded messages from the unconscious, and Surrealist artists were interested in what could be revealed by their dreams.

Influenced by Freud’s writings on dreams and the unconscious, Dalí self-induced hallucinations in order to access his unconscious while creating works of art. He called this the “paranoiac-critical method.” On the results of this process, he wrote, “I am the first to be surprised and often terrified by the images I see appear upon my canvas. I register without choice and with all possible exactitude the dictates of my subconscious, my dreams. . . .”<sup>13</sup> Although he claimed to be surprised by the images, Dalí rendered them with meticulous precision, creating the illusion that these places could exist in the real world. Dalí, in his typically ironic way, once said of himself, “The only difference between a madman and me is that I am not mad.”<sup>14</sup>

- **Ask your students why this painting might be considered a landscape, based on the definitions they came up with earlier. Ask them to name elements in *The Persistence of Memory* that remind them of real views in nature. Ask them to name unusual or unfamiliar elements that may have come from Dalí’s imagination. Are some of the elements hard to categorize as being strictly from nature or strictly from the imagination?**

After your students have responded, inform them that Dalí painted the coastal seaside landscape based on the cliffs in his home region of Catalonia. The ants and melting clocks are recognizable images that Dalí placed in an unfamiliar context or rendered in an unfamiliar way. The large central creature comprised of a deformed nose and eye was drawn from the imagination, although it has frequently been interpreted as a self-portrait.

- **Ask your students to look at *Two Children Are Threatened by a Nightingale*, but refrain from mentioning the title. Ask them to describe what is going on in the foreground, middle ground, and background of the painting.**

12. William S. Rubin, *Miró in the collection of The Museum of Modern Art* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1973), 21.

13. Salvador Dalí, quoted in press release, The Museum of Modern Art, 1934.

14. Salvador Dalí, quoted in *MoMA Highlights: 350 Works from The Museum of Modern Art* (revised edition) (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 2004), 154.

Inform your students that this work is by Max Ernst, a German artist involved in both Dada and Surrealism. Like Dalí, Ernst, who created many dreamlike images, was also interested in Freud's writings on psychology.

The title of the work is inscribed at the base of the image. The work may be linked to a "fever-vision" Ernst experienced when he had measles at the age of six, "provoked," as he wrote (in the third person), "by an imitation-mahogany panel opposite his bed, the grooves of the wood taking successively the aspect of an eye, a nose, a bird's head, a menacing nightingale, a spinning top, and so on."<sup>15</sup> A poem Ernst penned shortly before making this work, begins, "At nightfall, at the outskirts of the village, two children are threatened by a nightingale."<sup>16</sup>

- **Ask your students if knowing the title changes what they think about the painting. As there are more than two figures in the work, ask your students to consider which figures might be the children and who the other figures might be.**

While Ernst rendered *Two Children Are Threatened by a Nightingale* with attention to illusionism, modeling of form, and perspective, he also attached real, three-dimensional objects to the painting. Ask your students to name some of the items attached to the painting and frame (red wood gate, red hut, and red and blue knob).

- **Ask your students to consider why Ernst might have combined three-dimensional objects and two-dimensional painted illusions of objects in this work. Ask them why the artist might have extended the painting to the inner edge of the frame. How might this relate to the artist's interest in dreams?**
- **Refer back to the lists your students created to describe the landscapes in *The Hunter (Catalan Landscape)* and *Persistence of Memory*. Could any of the words be applied to this image? Which ones and why?**

## ACTIVITIES

Look at *The Hunter (Catalan Landscape)*, *The Persistence of Memory*, and *Two Children Are Threatened by a Nightingale* with your students again. Ask them to imagine what it would be like to spend a day in each of the landscapes depicted in these artworks. Ask them to write "postcards" from each of the three locations. They should include both a description of the places shown in the images and a description of the mood that comes across in each image.

Have your students keep a dream journal for one week, writing down any images or scenes that they remember upon waking. At the end of the week, ask your students to pick an image or scene from one of their dreams to write about further or to incorporate into a work of art. Ask them to consider if any of the images from their dreams resemble real locations they have visited in the past. Encourage students who have difficulty remembering their dreams to create a landscape from their imagination.

15. Helen M. Franc, *An Invitation to See: 150 Works in The Museum of Modern Art* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1973), 87.

16. Ibid, 87.