

**THE EXPRESSIVE QUALITIES OF ARTWORKS
BY MAGDALENA ABAKANOWICZ, SALVADOR DALI,
AND GEORGIA O'KEEFE ©**

By Connie J. Schlosberg

Artists express their ideas through their art. Such artists as Magdalena Abakanowicz, Salvador Dali, and Georgia O'Keefe have opened our minds to new thoughts through their art. Let's compare and contrast the following works of art: Abakanowicz's *Backs in Landscape*, Dali's *The Persistence of Memory* and O'Keefe's *Purple Hills Near Abiquiu*. We'll start with the individual works themselves.

There is a silent echo when observing *Backs in Landscape*. The multiple images of burlap molded casts in the sand resemble humans bowing in prayer. The human-like sculptures blend in with the natural landscape. One would wonder why they are all facing one way. What is its purpose? Or do we actually need one? Prayer is a personal and quiet observation. Maybe that is Abakanowicz's point.

Dali's surrealistic *The Persistence of Memory* is haunting and odd looking. One's eyes travel throughout the painting to find objects and ask what they have in common. Notice the watch faces melting in the seaside environment. Is time wasting away in the sun? It appears to be a body lying in the sand with a time piece upon it. Is Dali telling us that time is precious and that we waste it away?

The strong mountain in O'Keefe's *Purple Hills Near Abiquiu* commands us to observe its colors and textures. The image is simple yet powerful. One would sense the emptiness in nature, but the mountain seems alive. It resembles a

body lying in the desert. A place where man and nature can convene for meditation.

The difference between these great works of art is the approach that the artist used. Abakanowicz used casts and placed them in nature in her *Backs in Landscape* piece. Her work is touchable and three-dimensional. In a photograph, one would feel that he could touch it, feeling closer to the art. Dali's *Persistence of Memory* has an eerie presence to it. The surroundings are vivid and almost frighten one to think more about the affects of time. The ants surround the pocket watch on the table the same way they would attack a smashed cookie on the floor. In the center, the entity lying on the beach is a mangled peculiar face with a body that is almost dolphin-like. His images speak to us in volumes. O'Keefe's *Purple Hills Near Abiquiu* has a sweet, pretty quality to it. It does not overpower someone when viewing her painting. The landscape is not unusual. Most of us have seen mountains. Her approach to make the mountain livable, breathable is what holds our attention.

All of these works have strangeness to them that make one want to look again. The body-like sculptures bowing in the sand, the withering watches mesmerizing us and the mountain breathing life are all expressing quiet echo. They encompass nature and include the aspects of man. Each one captivates its audience to think what is being said here.