



1936

Oil on canvas

39 5/16 x 39 3/8 inches
(99.9 x 100 cm)

SALVADOR DALÍ

Spanish

The Louise and Walter Arensberg
Collection, 1950, 1950-134-41

LET'S LOOK

Does this image look
real to you?

Why or why not?

What is a civil war?

How do you think Dalí's
creature reflects civil war?

What other objects in the
painting might relate to civil war?

SOFT CONSTRUCTION WITH BOILED BEANS (PREMONITION OF CIVIL WAR)

When Dalí painted his *Soft Construction with Boiled Beans (Premonition of Civil War)*, the Spanish Civil War had not yet begun. In fact, he completed the painting nearly six months before General Franco's fascist army unseated the democratically elected socialist government of the Second Spanish Republic. Though it is likely that Dalí changed the title after the military coup to add to the seemingly prophetic power of his unconscious mind, a volatile climate of social and political struggle had existed in the country for years. Dalí began his studies for *Soft Construction with Boiled Beans* in 1935, sketching the hideously deformed anatomy of the colossal creature. The aggressive monster destroys itself, tearing violently at its own limbs, its face twisted in a grimace of both triumph and torture. Dalí employs his 'paranoic-critical method' in the painting by contorting the massive limbs into an outline of a map of Spain. Though Dalí intended this painting as a comment on the horrors of the Spanish Civil War, he did not openly side with the Republic or with the fascist regime. In fact, the painting is one of only a few works by Dalí to deal with contemporary social or political issues. Unlike other Spanish modernists, including Pablo Picasso and Joan Miró, who used their art to make political statements in support of the Spanish Republic, Dalí preferred to remain apolitical. Even when Dalí's sister Ana María was tortured and imprisoned by communist soldiers fighting for the Republic, and Federico García Lorca, his friend from his days at the Academy in Madrid, was murdered by a fascist firing squad, Dalí did not take sides.