



fact

opinion

NORTON SIMON MUSEUM
An anthology of public voices

volume one

Canvas of Conversation—
an exploration of multiple perspectives within Art

INTRODUCTION

Every time I visit a museum it is a unique adventure. Each time, I am surrounded by a new community with which to share the experience of a being a “viewer”.

A memorable incident at the Metropolitan Museum of Art inspired me to create this anthology. I visited the MET with an individual who owned a gallery. We were viewing paintings by the artist Paul Gauguin, who is one of my favorite painters. This individual asked me, “Did you know he was a pedophile?” Suddenly, the painting I had known for years was different. I realized how the power of unknown information could quickly change my perspective.

Due to this experience, I developed a curiosity for the various perspectives in which viewers experience a piece.

At museums, individuals range from scholarly experts to those who’s knowledge of artists and art work is vague. The range of the audience opens the range in opinions, and it is my belief that one opinion is no more valuable than another that may exist on the further end of this spectrum of observers. In order to investigate this further, I conducted an experiment that involved eavesdropping at the Norton Simon Museum. This book reflects the public’s interaction within the museum, as well as gives insight into the multiple perspectives that exist within an audience.

Volume 1:

**Canvas of Conversation--
an exploration of multiple perspectives within Art.**

The layers of conversation presented in Canvas of Conversation allows the audience to become the voice behind the painting. Each time the reader turns a page, they are presented with additional conversations about the Art ranging from fact to fiction--hopefully allowing them to gain new perspectives about the work. The audience's voice is a crucial part of how the work in the museum is perceived. Through the multiple opinions expressed by the audience, will the reader gain unexpected meaning about a painting? When opening the book, there is a folder that holds layers of translucent paper stacked on top of one another to reflect upon the multiple conversations that were collected. This stack is to be displayed as one canvas portraying the viewers voices.

The rectangles on top of the page represent the range of conversations based on fact to opinion. These rectangles are situated left to right. The first rectangle on the left side is colored red and the far rectangle on the right is colored blue; everything in between represents the voices between fact and opinion. For example, a viewers comment "There is a lot of green", becomes a fact because they state the obvious of what is in front of them. This highlights the first rectangle, which is red. On the other hand, a subjective commentary on how the painting makes the viewer feel, or how they feel about the painting becomes an opinion, thus highlighting the last rectangle of the spectrum.

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John Altoon (American, 1925-1969)

Ocean park series #8, 1962

Oil on Canvas





The blue.

This is California, this is the sun, this is the vegetation
(reading from label).



There is the desert, you can see the storm clouds. And the sun.

That's the ocean? That's vegetation, and I don't know what that is, maybe the clouds?



Can you see it?

Mm, no.

But well what does that mean?

Hmm.

I don't know.

That's possible.



I thought cards.

I thought these were mountains, but they're not.

Maybe it's a stingray. I don't know, because I can see the cactus.

What if I told you I just got a bunch of colors and just threw them together?
What would make you look at it from this perspective for you to think that's cool?

That looks like the sun streaming down“where's the ocean.

Sand.

Tree.

It's like a hand, and this is the head of the horse.



Kind of a strange, strange looking sun. I think it's, it's just creative. I think it's a lovely earth for being creative. As far as the dollar goes, he's making plenty. It gives him credibility. I don't know if this is priceless. But I mean like Picasso, and Van Gogh, those people worked through changes, but this

It's just paper and paint, canvas and paint, and that's all. It's not priceless.

This guy was high.



Can you see it?

Mm, no.

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Hmm.

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The blue. Sand.

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That's possible.

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(reading from label).

It's like a hand, and this is the head of the horse.

Georges Iacombe (French, 1868-1916)

Chestnut gatherers (also referred to as *Autumn*), 1893-94

Oil on canvas





Like the acorns, and then there's leaves,



I've had chestnuts, roasted chestnuts a lot.

I didn't realize how much grey there was in there,

I've never noticed all that before when I came here before.
I have been here before a few times over the last few years but I haven't noticed as much because I haven't kind of looked and sat down.



There are lots of layering,

Maybe people eat them.

Have you ever had one? I haven't had them for years.



This is like a halo effect, around the head.

You usually roast chestnuts I think, you don't eat them.

it looks like a mouth down there.



The red is amazing.

It's very peaceful. Almost like the women are being embraced by the arms of the trees.

that's good.

You see the chestnuts here on the ground.

The colors are wonderful, that grey kind of color in the background with the red next to it is wonderful. And the blackish color with the red is wonderful. The feeling about it, being close to nature like that, or all nature.

And all that fruit that's falling in the chestnuts.
Its all about the seasons changing.

I really like that with the red. I like that, there's not too many colors too, to concentrate more on the design.



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Edgar Degas (French, 1834-1917)

Little Dancer Aged Fourteen, 1878-1881

Bronze





...



...

Henri Rousseau (French, 1844-1910)

Exotic Landscape, 1910

Oil on canvas





Vegetation...

Henry Rousseau,



Some of them were waaay out of scale, way out of scale.

He didn't paint till he was 40.

He didn't?

He had a lot of jobs.



No. This almost does have a little bit of a primitive aspect to it.



(Scoffs)

that's good. That's a nice picture.



Vegetation...

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Henry Rousseau, that's good. That's a nice picture.

He didn't paint till he was 40.

He didn't?

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He had a lot of jobs.

Gustave Courbet (French, 1819-1877)

Apples, Pears, and Primroses on Table, 1871-1872

Oil on canvas





I like that.



I like that.

Georges-Pierre Seurat (French, 1859-1891)

Angelica at the rock (after Ingres), 1878

Oil on canvas





This is a copy. Well I mean look at it. The photograph, the little things, are identical to this. There is a monster in his painting.

He(Seurat), as a student at 18, copied that.

Ingres.

Seurat. This is a copy of that.

That's identical to that.



Who copied that?

This?

Oh ok.

So, why don't you understand why he would copy that?

No, no, no.

Uh huh.

Mm hmm.

Hmm.



Some of the work was identical. People say Scurat, Scurat, Scurat.




Well, because it just doesn't seem legitimate. It should be legitimate.
Because he's now famous too, this guy, right? And he's famous for copying...?

He's got to learn to see. That's what you need, to learn.

Anyone that can write their own name, can draw. That's boring.
You need to be able to see"

And that's why he's copying. To see, the shapes, the colors



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Mm hmm.

And that's why he's copying. To see, the shapes, the colors

Hmm.

Jean-Baptiste Camille Corot (French, 1796-1875)

*View of Venice: The Piazzetta Scene
from the Riva degli Schiavoni, 1835-1856*

Oil on canvas





What is that?



It's by Corot, he usually did landscapes.



What is that?

It's by Corot, he usually did landscapes.

Pablo Picasso (Spanish, 1881-1973)

Bust of a Woman, 1923

Oil with fixed black chalk on canvas





See, that is wonderful. Ah this makes sense.



See, that is wonderful. Ah this makes sense

.

Jean Auguste-Dominique Ingres (French, 1780- 1867)

Comtesse d'Haussonville, 1845

Oil on canvas





Look at her little eyelashes.

Look at the different folds in the back.

Even the molding?

Look at the seams, her eyelashes!

The fringe, the upholstery, the pattern!

The majority is blue.



It's interesting body language, the twists and downs.

I know, isn't it crazy?



Wow.



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Look at the different folds in the back.

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Look at the seams, her eyelashes!

The fringe, the upholstery, the pattern!

The majority is blue.

Wow.

COLOPHON :

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special thanks to the public who were vocal about their opinions