

A DAY AT THE MUSEUM

Vox populi, vox dei

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New York, on a summer morning, a few years ago. Four best friends – all French, young, and curious students – were wandering in the city, after a restless night, in search of the MUSEUM OF MODERN ART.

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"I think this museum will make us the *utmost* good. A little excitement by the thought of art, no less, after our perambulations, well, it is not too much. Moreover, it is quite *fascinating*: the art is now truly independent, available and finally *Democratic* in such a place. Thousands of tourists come to *drink* the emotions of modern painting. These people are wonderful. This new form of entertainment, in a quality place, which is accessible to all, well, it really frees the world. The masses become active, participate in art, and this is more than a random collection for helots! I don't know

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Immanet was apparently speaking, it was barely 8am, and he already was a pain.

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Even if they had been walking for a long time now, all the way from the nightclub streets to Midtown Manhattan, the sidewalk had turned into a kind of improvised cot, on which each of the thoughts of these friends were flowing, like drool on a pillow. There was no need to rack their brain, the museum of modern art would take responsibility for that. They had to save their energy, especially since it was still quivering due to the excesses of the night before. And to top it all, they had to entertain themselves. – But that was exactly the point!

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Two reasons were discussed yesterday by the pending doctor Braslecorps and the future historian Transcendeau, first on a mocking tone, then with all due seriousness. It determined *analytically* the merits of this visit, which may seem delusional, the day after a party. *First*, since what happens by night stays in the dark, they decided they could of course visit the museum after their sleepless night. *Then* – and this is where one gets a hint of the latent talent, the malice, the almost perverse genius of these young minds –, they had discovered that they *had to be* in such a state of daydream, of intellectual wandering, in such a delirious mind, to *fully* assess the lunacies of contemporary art!... Mannerin, whose words often conditioned group decisions, perhaps because he was the one who hosted his friends in his own house, was understanding: as a future engineer in physics, full of common sense and respectful towards the

art, as a matter of principle or by mimicry, or without knowing why, he said that there was nothing to say, but that they had to see for seeing. Immanet, who was sometimes a tad harsh with his scientific
55 peers – this was his *literary* side – approved for once without further ado: since the classic paintings are on the top floor, after meandering through contemporary art, they would perfectly be able to enjoy the experience, late in the morning...

60 They were still walking. Dragging a little bit, Mannerin and Braslecorps, who were usually so positive and so prone to emit their opinions on all things. They were silent. Transcendeau was driven by the genius of the place and amazed by the architecture, and the yellow taxis, and urbanism in general. He looked everywhere in this
65 poetic city. Immanet thought, too: and while he was walking with his eyes wide open, he seemed smart.

But it was a tedious walk, and the four friends were all stirred up. The alcohol ingested the day before was still relatively drowning
70 their thoughts, and the spectral presence of Mary-Jane was similar enough to a thick veil of mist falling on their eyes, or to a mermaid, flowing all around both inside and outside of its victims.

A fairly bright light appeared: sun bleached the glass walls of
75 buildings, like a stellar neon halo. They wandered further, quite blinded. Hoping they would arrive in time for the opening, so as to be the first to enter, they got lost and angry, and it took them some time to be back on track.

But, in a way that lightened the mood, a fountain, whose water jets
80 caught the sunrays, formed a *miraculous* rainbow.

Braslecorps became so animated that he had to immediately explain this mundane phenomenon. He felt they were listening to him, and so went into the details, and in the end he was himself impressed by the deep tunes these considerations gave him, although he was still
85 stamped with Mary-Jane.

When Braslecorps was done speaking, the silence that followed was still Braslecorps. (Others were still trying to understand, and Mannerin felt he had forgotten his physics course.)

As for Transcendeau, he had rejoiced in advance of the
90 monumental inscription that would be found on the MoMA: *for the people and by the people*, or even, *built by the people, and dedicated to the advancement of learning*, etc. And, as if those slightly pedantic dreams had touched the chord just right in him, he started to quiver, he was a child again, an anxious one, stamping his feet.

95 All imagined how the MoMA would look like. Immanet anticipated marble, Transcendeau thought it would be rather similar to the Boston Public Library columns, Mannerin and Braslecorps preferred anyway the pace of the Central Park Science Museum, *as a matter of principle*.

100 The wild bunch reached the right street, blocked by scaffolds of all kinds. Then suddenly appeared, lost in the urban forest, the august silhouette of a MUSEUM.

Nobody had noticed it; and, after passing it, they had to go back.
105 "Here is the MoMA ! ".
The facade of the MoMA was quite modern indeed, so modern that they had not even remarked it at first sight.

They had not lost their VIP passes, Mannerin noticed the Central
110 Park Science Museum definitely looked better, and they stepped foot in the sacred place.

For various reasons, they almost unanimously felt that the visit of the museum would make up for some deficiency, as if their souls – conceived as containers – would be filled with a bit more culture.
115 Only Braslecorps, yet constantly *positive* and *moving forward*, and still clouded by alcohol inhalations, was quite skeptical about contemplating art for more than a few hundred thousand milliseconds – because, *a priori*, painting is about personal impression and intuition of the moment –, and he did not hide it.

Nevertheless, they consistently noticed that, *for an Art Museum*, it did look very *modern*. Immanet recalled that the museum was supposed to be called Museum of *Modern Art*. What he meant by that, it wasn't understood – and anyway, besides these wooly conversations (mostly worthless, as they lacked pragmatism),
125 Mannerin practically reminded that it was time to hurry.

That was when Transcendeau took the opportunity to revive the quarrel of the ancients and the moderns, pointing out how smart it was on their part to have bought the VIP pass, which helped them save time at the counter. And indeed, the four young men enjoyed a
130 heady feeling of superiority over others, i.e. old people.

But they were early, and had to wait for the exact time of the opening. People piled into the hall. Because they had hoped to have the museum for themselves, the four friends got impatient, and thundered against the organization.

135 Finally, at 9am, they double-crossed everybody and entered the gallery

140 From here on, this may be construed as a deep breath of *Art Criticism*.

The visit would be rather normal: a continuous Ariadne trail would guide the modern aesthetes through the maze of the museum, from the outside to the inside, from the first floor to the last, from the most
145 contemporary works to more traditional art. Transcendeau was glad, Immanet questioned the relevance of such a course, was searching for meaning in all this, did not find any. Braslecorps and Mannerin spoke little, agreed, no doubt, were listening to some music with their headphones, and were most certainly thinking intensely.

150 A confused heap of visitors thronged to the first floor, and everybody felt shaken by their precipitation, while the guards began their daily endless patrols. On this point, Immanet marveled in silence at the old covenant, broken by centuries, that rose again thanks to these armed men: in fact, they would all give their lives for

155 all these paintings, it was their job, their duty, their *raison d'être*,
and in them *the Action again became the sister of the Dream!*

Yet, if there was one thing that annoyed everyone, although they
were staunch Democrats who backed the publicity of art, it was the
practice of cohabitation. Sharing the museum and rubbing *that damn*
160 *crowd*.

"These people disgust me. Thanks to them, the paintings do not feel
good or smell good," railed Immanet.

"Whatever! This crowd, going to the museum, while we're in New
York, I think its *sub-lime!*" Transcendeau replied. "And you should
165 feel the same..."

Immanet, who wasn't responding, was stamped with wonderful
calm and inconceivable wisdom, which only a true thinker could
afford. And, as he was throwing silent glances towards
Transcendeau, who though he had had the last word and felt good
170 about it, Immanet's heart rejoiced.

"Who cares? We won't argue about such a thing. Let's start with
the courtyard, nobody's going there. All these badgers climb
upstairs," Mannerin intervened, as usual, full of good sense.

175 It was quite cold outside for a summer morning. Immanet enjoyed
the walk in the Sculpture Garden, and immediately spotted a *fecund*
work, some kind of psychedelic pyramid with spikes everywhere,
which also seemed to suffer from the weather. Some time went by,
and he was still looking at it. Nothing happened. That was boring,
180 they didn't know what to look at, so some began to think.

For instance, some piece of moldy muss titillated Transcendeau,
who had been inspecting it for the last five minutes or so: it was a
puzzling puzzler, milling and bustling its tentacles, which gave him
vertigo – proof that a work of art has as much profusion as the almost
185 emerald green moss that covers it.

There was actually something of the dream in this atmosphere!...

Because he could not lay hands on his modern *intersign* and
become, for some time, God on his couch, namely : play video
games, Mannerin also felt time was going too slowly, thought the
190 visit was absurd, and so alcoholically began crowding the empty sky
and the garden with his own imaginary adventures. He fantasized
assaults, helicopters and hostage-taking, saw a commando attack the
museum, guns blazing, automatic weapons strafing everything that
was on hand, and blood spurting on the white walls. The impacts
195 could even give these frozen statues a new splendor and gradually
bring the garden, the works and the museum back to a certain *life*.
Sharing aloud his personal inspirations, Braslecorps insidiously
remarked this jolly good show would be *positive*. And what a
malicious pleasure it would be to eliminate all those who pollute the
200 aisles!...

The remote and concentrated Immanet, who was nonetheless
hearing them laugh, turned around and automatically assumed that
their trance came from the statue – a shaped ball, diametrically
massive, flat and raised in a miraculous balance – in front of which
205 they were standing with their eyes and mouths wide open. That
impression aroused an exhilarating joy in him. His friends, converted

to art and emotion!... Transcendeau was interwoven with Mannerin, and yawning.

210 Something appeared.

A giant naked woman, lying sideways, was placed in the middle of a small pool. – And so, in a split second, the wanderings of their eyes had discovered the essence of the Sculpture Garden.

215 "UGLY".

However, her strange nudity, her proximity to the water, and her so delicate curves, inspired in them many beautiful thoughts. Then they tried to get the name of the artist, so as to be amused, but almost failed to find the panel.

220 "Aristide Maillol."

They laughed.

“Funny shaped woman! But you know what? The most charming curve on a girl, well, it’s her *smile*,” nailed Mannerin.

225 They laughed again, and even tried to climb the statue to take a picture. A guard appeared in the distance, the camera was hidden.

It then began to rain, and their hopes and dreams and jokes vanished; so did Immanet’s last efforts for reviewing *everything* out there; it was too good an opportunity to shorten the visit of the Sculpture garden, so they left.

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At that time, while some didn’t dare to reveal their secret for fear of being the first, silence culminated with Braslecorps reporting it loud and clear, because he lived one minute at a time, from hand to mouth: they were hungry. They stopped by a vending machine. There, 235 Immanet was waiting, the rest of them eating, and their hearts and minds were filled with art like a fulfilled stomach.

240 After such an impromptu digression, the visit resumed, and they held tight again that Ariadne trail. – But Mannerin had spotted something, and was already gone.

Nothing was more curious than that curiosity, as they say: this was a wall, with all the names of all the donators of all the works displayed in the MoMA.

245 He approached, came face to face with it, and read all the names...
...At the bottom, he stopped, and glanced at the remaining empty space.

Then, he lifted his chin and came back with his friends. Immanet had a grin on his face, the others didn’t understand. They finally resumed the visit.

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255 Here comes the very heart of the matter: they were climbing the stairs, just about to see contemporary art *per se*. A few scouts even announced its presence, including a Roy Lichtenstein classic – such a classic that the masterpiece was precisely located in these stairs, as a forewarning of what was coming. How unfortunate nobody stopped

by! Anyway, after all, its value was a *sure thing*, no need to dwell at length.

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Floor two was seemingly full of people, and uncrowned *chefs-d'oeuvre*, and hot air. They immediately came toe to toe with a very secretive piece of Mystery.

265 “What’s that thing?”

“Funny k-rap !” Transcendeau shouted in an elegant way.

“Who gives a...”

“Remarkable contraption!” Immanet remarked, as he interrupted Braslecorps’ genuine observation.

270 “A very sophisticated mine-clearing device!” Mannerin explained, who had already encountered many technologically-advanced stuff in video games.

Indeed, a lot of broom-like bamboo rods with plastic lids had been assembled so as to form a ball. Namely, the MoMa had just acquired a Roving Landmine Detonator by Massoud Hassani. The speechless bunch began reading its humanitarian story. With the proper funding, the miraculous ball would rove large tracts of land, detonating whatever it may come across, and thanks to its resilient design, it could explode, just shed a few legs, and keep rolling.

280 “Mind-boggling!”

They gave it a wild round of applause.

Actually, Immanet completely disagreed, but, seeing that they were all fond of it, for it was both very useful and weird – just like all the great achievements of human intelligence, Mannerin noticed – some part of Immanet disagreed with himself. So he gave it great praise; and, when it couldn’t be praised anymore, as it had been acclaimed during a good five minutes, they took a picture, and moved on. That would make a pretty cool facebook picture.

290 But after reading the few lines of the display panel, an intense and hollow nebula had seized them. Mind-clearing! As if a thick fog had come up on them, they saw wonky, not very clearly, almost nothing. Something rang, Mary-Jane was flowing all around like a siren both inside and outside, it was Mannerin’s mobile phone.

295 “But where’s that freaking Transcendeau?...”

Indeed, where was he? He had completely disappeared during the last five minutes. Matter-of-factly, by necessity, or the lure of chance, or beginner’s luck, their friend and brother in arms had been talking for some time – and properly – with a GIRL! ...

300 Far and away, three poker-faced observers conversed. When he returned, no one talked to him.

So as to ease the situation, and ward off that intriguing silence, they talked about MINES. Why are they still used? Aren’t they amoral? Yet, they are an effective weapon. Quite cheating, though. But cheap and easy to build!

Braslecorps, full of common sense, thought it was necessary to fulminate against "war’s stupidity", and, while he was at it, “man’s

stupidity” too. They all questioned the will to commit oneself, to
310 fight and die for ideas, etc.

Immanet, in real time, took great care of his lecture. He began by
exposing the multiple forms of consent to war, should it be patriotic,
ideological, or intimate. Nevertheless, afterward, he did not fail to
slightly nuance his position, by evoking the multiple forms of
315 constraints, whether it be intimate, ideological or patriotic, which
weigh on the fighter – just like a Damocles sword, intervened
Mannerin. He finally concluded on the more general problem of
human freedom, and castigated the voluntary servitude.

Transcendeau’s intelligence, which had felt provoked by so much
320 knowledge, looked deep down itself for some material to contradict
Immanet, as a matter of principle, but it returned empty-handed.

Mannerin was surveying the silent Transcendeau.

After waiting a good five minutes, thinking maybe it would give
325 him a disinterested air, Mannerin indeed decided to act, couldn’t wait
any longer, completely lost it and finally proposed the riddle openly,
yet with utmost discretion:

“Who was that girl you were talking to...?”

330 “It was *Tenille*, a naked pole-dancer!” Immanet said. Nobody
understood the joke, but it did allow Transcendeau to escape from
answering the question. (By the way, *Tenille* was a chromogenic
color print from Philip-Lorca diCorcia, actually displaying a naked
pole-dancer.) Immanet had been eyeing it for a few minutes by now.

335 Undeniably, these works inspired a lot of thinking in him. But,
because he didn’t have enough time to think about everything,
everything had to be photographed to be thought of later. So, as they
were making their way through the rest of the two floor galleries,
they weren’t subject to enormous emotions – the works were there,
340 and so were they, stuck – except for Immanet, who wanted pictures
to be taken of everything.

Braslecorps and Mannerin, on the contrary, felt insignificance
exhaled from this gallery. Daily photos, journals and raw material
made the works of art; life was spread out everywhere like everyday
345 paper; and, exhibited publicly, art was like a waste ground without
real interest.

As for Transcendeau, he respected this *a priori*. With that being
said, he was *a posteriori* more attracted by a group of Asian tourists
– female – who had invaded the room. So he waited for them to press
350 and then immobilize, nose to nose with the works, to go behind them
and look.

Two naked women and two naked men appeared hand in hand.

They were confronted to Charles Ray’s *Family Romance*. The
atmosphere became somewhat uneasy, people gave it a few glances
355 and moved on.

This museum had something obscene, incarnate, full of life that
attracted Transcendeau a lot; but, when he was caught red-handed by
his friends, he had to forget about his contemplative journey along
with the Asian teenagers.

360 They moved on.

“That’s my house!”

Some architectural models had just caught their attention in the next room. The place was full of demented utopian designs that buzzed their young minds. Mannerin was particularly impressed by a
365 *Familian House Project, Santa Monica, California* designed by Frank O. Gehry (he even remembered the guy’s name). Still, Braslecorps immediately objected it didn’t include a swimming pool, which is a problem for parties. Transcendeau gave it a cool-looking
370 nod.

Immanet was scratching his back. He didn’t appreciate that bourgeois lifestyle in big houses, was rather interested in a shut off islander life, yet admired the projective relevance of these utopias. Furthermore, he knew that praising the performative value of utopia
375 would unnerve Transcendeau’s highly sensitive practical mind.

He hit the bull’s eye, they talked a little bit.

“Obviously these are utopian designs, so they are un-re-al!”

“Heck, I’d still like to have that for a house!”

“Imagine the parties, man.”

380 But there was a video games exposition.

“Video games!”

“By golly, video games!”

385 “*Das ist cool!*” (Transcendeau often liked to utter a few German words, so as to lay an emphasis on what would simply sound banal in English.)

“Of course...” Immanet said – but they didn’t get his pun.

Their eyes dotted and pixelised for fifteen good and long and intense minutes – maybe too intense for Immanet, who thought it was
390 the right time to make his voice heard. He began talking, they wouldn’t listen, he went to the toilets.

And, when he came back, they had already moved on to floor three. After all, these were video games, but *old* ones.

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“Look at that!”

“By golly, that’s cooler than cool!”

400 They had just bumped into a small helicopter, one of the first ever built, which was hanging above the hall.

Because he had a *cinematographic culture*, Transcendeau remarked it looked like the helicopters from *You only live twice*, the fifth James Bond movie; as for Mannerin, he noticed it was a Bell 47D: he had already encountered it in a video game. Even if Braslecorps doubted
405 it was impressive, they were all fascinated by such *obsolete* equipment, which gave them a sense of comfort and pride, for living at a time with more modern choppers. It was also exhilarating for these technicians to see such an *ancient* object in a museum of modern art. Finally! It was about time for the Conservatives to be
410 open-minded and recognize the value of these productions, which are not only works of art but also milestones of industrial prowess!...

They reluctantly moved on – even if their hearts and minds were still connected to that Bell 47D, which had been, for the moment, a show-stealer, the main-event, namely the true Star of the Museum.
415 Even Immanet rejoiced himself with the MoMA’s successful attempt to please all kinds of audiences.

A series of odd chairs, and broken jars, and bygone advertisements filled multiple rooms, where an air purifier, a replica Ferrari and two supple cups could also be seen: the Architecture and Design gallery had just been invested.
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Braslecorps wanted to sit on a mesh chair, but it was apparently forbidden, Transcendeau’s mind silently boggled in front of a neo-futurist glass bowl, and Mannerin accompanied Immanet to the
425 toilets.

They weren’t thrilled by all that fifties mess.

What interest could be found in that kitsch apparatus? After all, these objects didn’t belong to their time! Of course, all these things were *there*, in the museum, but... but because they were not *quite*
430 *sure* of their value and didn’t know what meaning it could be given, they hesitated, and hesitated, and when Immanet approved of it, they skipped.

“Time’s passed!” These were Mannerin’s few words of wisdom.

435 It would be pretty painful to dwell on the drawings the next room was full of. They didn’t know any of the authors. It was all about randomized outlines on poor quality paper. Anybody could do it, especially kids.

Some were funny, some ridiculous, but the majority was gloomy.
440 Most were not even beautiful at first sight.

Though, a naked portrait of a woman did catch their attention, but her depiction also wasn’t that pretty.

They skipped.

“That’s more like it!”

445 The final room of floor three was indeed devoted to artistic photography, and they all appreciated that art – which was truly *modern* – maybe because it is within everyone’s reach. It even seemed easy, and these pics were so perfect! The framing, the light, the subjects, everything was reunited to make *artistic yet realistic*
450 compositions!

There were many crowd-pleasing pictures.

A bounced nose, overlooking an open mouth, forming a sort of hole, rather like his two eyes, glued against the picture: that was Mannerin’s face Mannerin, looking at *Cycle of Civilization. The Mythology of the Civilizing Processes*, by Valie Export. (A man’s chest was photographed being clean shaven.) The Cycle of Civilization did beat and bounce within Mannerin’s heart and mind.
455 Some photographs even displayed naked – *female* – bodies.

That curiosity did attract their attention.

460 For example, a hairy naked woman was lying naked on the street.

“We didn’t encounter that sort of stuff last night.”

“Sad times! Ours is a shy generation...”

Another picture depicted a naked black girl, and had
been “appropriated from magazine advertisements aimed at African
465 Americans or that feature black subjects. The artist had digitally
removed all branding information and his investigation encourages
viewers to look critically at how mass-produced and widely
disseminated images in the media construct and reinforce stereotypes
about African American life, and how the public participates in these
470 narratives.”

“Wouldn’t have figured that out without the panel!”

“Anyway...”

However, and that was most intriguing, these pictures were quite
far from being erotic. That lack of desire puzzled them, it wasn’t
475 normal, they didn’t understand.

They did wonder, as they were leaving, why their own pictures
never looked that sharp and *artistic*. After all, as diverse as
photography itself, the collection included works not only by *artists*,
480 but also by journalists, scientists, entrepreneurs, and amateurs. Why
not *them?*... *They* were also *amateurs*.

It was a puzzling mystery.

That even sounded like a challenge to Braslecorps: he caught his
camera, Mannerin stroke his best pose, and he tried to take a black
485 and white picture of his own. Braslecorps was doing his best, trying
to frame his best shot, moving and bending and finally opting for a
canted angle. Sadly, out of sheer modesty, he never displayed the
result of such *technique*.

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Floor four was quite a pain: again, that was contemporary art – so
contemporary it could barely be looked upon. They rushed through,
cast a few glances and skipped many oddities (since, after all, *the*
495 *customer is always right*.)

They were casually wooshing through the rooms and glimpsing at
what was there – only so-so – when Immanet began talking. They
continued, as if nothing had happened – but he was still talking.

A photograph of the dictionary entry “DE-FI-NI-TION” had been
500 enlarged, and was presented.

Immanet remarked it was not *his* definition of definition.
Transcendeau also said it was *disputable*. And what was that doing in
a museum of modern art? That was suspicious. They didn’t
understand, tried to find a reason, yet couldn’t. It was *even more*
505 suspicious because they were usually never on the same page; yet,
this time, they *both* didn’t understand. – So that’s out of pure logic
they disagreed to agree on that thing, and again relentlessly tried to
define what a definition could be, according to art, through a post-
modern chain of reasoning that would still consider the free play of
510 faculties, etc.

It was time consuming.

Braslecorps had just come back from the toilets, which he had a
hard time finding; he and the others were growing impatient; and,

ultimately, conjoint miracles did so that Immanet and Transcendeau –
515 by joint agreement and public consent – both *agreed to disagree!*...

In the next room were exposed multiple monochromatic paintings,
along with psychedelic geometrical designs, displaying red, white
and blue rectangles. These were Mondrian and Von Doesburg's
520 coveted masterpieces. Everybody's enthusiasm came down
vertically.

After generously giving it a closer look, they still didn't
understand.

Always positive yet realistic, Braslecorps legitimately figured out
525 these were probably not great successes, since nobody knew their
names before reading the labels. Mannerin quite agreed.

Transcendeau alone was quite happy: even Immanet kept his head
down, as a shy and polite sign of disapproval, which, he thought,
proved without the shadow of a doubt *he* was right: if a painting can't
530 please anybody, anytime, and without an explanation panel, its
rubbish.

"This might be the abstract expressionism part," Immanet finally
uttered.

As to Mannerin, he noticeably remarked maybe he wasn't drunk
535 *enough* to appreciate that, or maybe the effects of alcohol had already
disappeared. Braslecorps agreed and swore next time they would get
really drunk (indeed, a truthful way of inhabiting the world lies, of
course, in science – useful, as it helps to live better, to control – but
also in brief abandonment, in alcohol, drugs, and delirium.)

540 They conveniently left.

Then a room with a carpet.

"Strange thing!"

Mannerin went to the toilets; Braslecorps's mind, connected to
545 his stomach, reminded him he was hungry; the others stomped the
carpet and paid tribute to contemporary art by sitting on it for five
minutes.

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When he came back, they thundered in the stairs. Indeed,
Braslecorps had said that some classics are *outdated* and *ugly*.
Immanet legitimately did not intend to let him say such an insult. It
took him a while to exhibit in three points, first, the democracy of art,
555 second, the aristocracy of art, and to finally conclude, synthetically,
the free play of the faculties – considering, of course, that all the
tastes are not the same, yet that standards remain. Braslecorps didn't
back down, Immanet persisted in his growling, and began to pour
into sarcasm. Transcendeau judged time was right to bring his two
560 cents to the conversation, and all of a sudden he colored Braslecorps'
words with admirable sophistry. Immanet then opted to slay the
method of his opponents; and history, whose determinist thinking
undermines the understanding of art; and philosophy; and concepts;
and sensualism; and everything. He ended up claiming the
565 unspeakable as the sublime value of art.

"So everything is relative!" Transcendeau rejoiced.

"Maybe, but that's arguable!" Immanet immediately replied.

They kept pondering – because, after all, one has the right to judge freely or to poke one's nose in front of contemporary art.

570 And in the end, Immanet gave up first, not short of ideas but lacking deserving opponents.

Meanwhile, they had reached floor five.

575 Everything here sparkled with diffuse mystery; some sort of poetic flavor emanated from the works; it was beautiful. That august room was indeed full of art.

"I'm freaking tired!"

580 Mannerin had politely emitted some grievances about dwelling on there.

"Be not afraid of greatness: some are born great, some achieve greatness, and some, like floor five, have greatness thrust upon 'em," Immanet answered.

There was silence.

585 "So don't worry, my dear fellow companions: from this day to the ending of the world, we together shall be remember'd as few, very few, but happy few, we band of brothers."

Immanet had a proud look on his face. They had listened, silently, again.

590

Suddenly Transcendeau's subconscious went unexpectedly loose and he had a wild gesture with his bag. He then had a run-in with one of the guardians, who told him to carry his bag manually and with great care, not to damage anything. He felt provoked, and underestimated, and betrayed, and insulted by that. Of all people, *he* would be the one to break a work! He fulminated, yet the guardian wasn't listening to him.

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The others laughed.

600 They quite rushed through the crowded floor, and only took time to reflect on the most attractive *chef d'oeuvres*.

"Burgers on a tablecloth?" Bralecrops' vision might have misrepresented Paul Cézanne's *Still life with apples*.

605 "Interesting!" Immanet enjoyed complimenting the works, as if some of the genius he gave them splashed back on him.

As to Mannerin, he was looking at *The Bather*, another painting by Cézanne. He mocked the bather's physique, and noticeably remarked he had more muscles. Small talk about body-building ensued. You apparently have to eat armies of chicken to gain muscle fast, which, by the way, reminded Braslecrops he was hungry – but this is digression.

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Meanwhile, Transcendeau was just having a revelation. *Art meant nothing, painting still-lives was useless!*

615 "Apparently you can *utter*, yet not *hear* the word *still-life*," bickered Immanet.

There was a silence, Transcendeau didn't get that, incriminated Immanet's innocuous mind. Anyway, Rousseau's *Dream* then managed to reconcile everyone, and all remembered last night's
620 erratic behavior and twisting and seeing funny things in the air and everywhere. There was a little bit of Mary-Jane in Rousseau. They took many pictures.

Just beside, a householder was telling his family they would soon have a Rousseau at home, as if it had already belonged to them. The
625 buyer sounded like a creator.

Transcendeau hated and thundered long. Privatizing art! Just imagine! Immanet was almost envious. Having a Rousseau at home, within range! And already, he saw a fire, illuminating a room, most of which remaining obscure, with a bay window overlooking a
630 garden or, perhaps, a pine forest, and finally a stone wall, where the painting would rest. Sometimes of course he would generously lend it to some museum, but it would be his, and he would be happy.

By the way, as he rushed to finally see where Monet was hidden, he skipped multiple quality works, but it didn't matter. He then saw the true main event of the morning.
635

A thick crowd overcast his sight, but what a show! A girl's back was left bare by a slinky black dress, all shiny.

Immanet's eyes began catching a piece of Monet, he was titillated, all his emotions was about to burst. He definitely needed to share his feelings.
640

So, he tried to engage a discussion about Monet with the girl he thought was pretty. Obviously, she wasn't receptive to his English, it wasn't working, or maybe he was talking too much. (Anyway, his friends thought she wasn't that pretty.)
645

Some time had elapsed, and they all faced Monet, which had been partially deserted after everyone else had taken pictures of themselves in front of the *Water lilies*.

Immanet was still talking, Braslecorps was listening. There was another girl beside them. She was a tiny blond living piece of the American Dream. Braslecorps had stars in his eyes, yet his impatience was roaring, interwoven with his stomach. In the mean time, Transcendeau realized Monet was, after all, nothing more than
655 a stagnant water pool, with too much fancy colors to be realistic. Typical non-responsible painting. (He indeed preferred the photographs they had seen before: even if some of them were ugly, a number were politically engaged.) Mannerin, as to him, didn't understand much either, yet thought it was still a pretty thing to
660 watch.

With that being said, a hungry, impatient, half-monomaniacal Transcendeau quickly recalled – in a controversial way – that, if we had been born in Monet's time, we would probably be peasants living in a nationalist France, we would probably not have the opportunity to see these paintings, and they wouldn't be printed, and reproduced for the masses to see it, anytime, anywhere. He had many
665 more things to say, but Immanet immediately thought it was necessary to object peasants' impressions about art don't *really*

670 matter, do they? Nobody here could truthfully appreciate these works
anyway.

There was a silence.

Maybe the others finally concurred with Immanet, maybe they lacked arguments, or maybe they no longer cared.

675 They were actually quite tired, too tired for listening to the whole
thing, yet their motionless eyes were still orientated towards the
lilies.

Atop his fecund ignorance, Braslecorps again dared to express his
indifference for Monet, and backed it up, democratically, for he had
the right to *judge*. So, about that problem, some Kantian convolutions
680 were attempted by Immanet.

Most of them had already exited the room.

685 “There’s no way in hell we can finish it. We don’t have enough
time. And it’s taking you ages to walk past a single work... we’ve
been here and done it, that’s quite enough.”

“But you’re committed!”

“Committed to?”

690 “Committed to the museum, and you promised me!”

“There’s no such thing as commitment.”

“We were supposed to spend *a day* at the museum...”

“What do you want to do here for *an entire day*?”

695 Immanet then proceeded to shut his mouth, neither short of ideas
nor lacking inspiration, but because he had been abandoned by the
desire to discuss with his friends.

"Cry 'Havoc' and let slip the dogs of Art..."

700 And, just like that, in the blink of an eye, he had just kept for
himself his last few words of wisdom. It was a heady feeling, he was
quite bubbling on the inside.

Even before these dramatic words were spoken, Hunger had told
them the end of the visit.

They were not to stay here any longer.

705 They would finally leave the always-broken Ariadne’s trail and go
to eat.

Step on it, get a move on: Braslecorps and Mannerin were most
happy about that, Transcendeau quite happy, and Immanet’s regrets
couldn’t have top priority. Lunch would bring them back together.

710 A compact bunch of fellow sufferers was also nearing the exit – for
hunger is to equality and fraternity the safest path.

At 11PM, after concluding life was a ball of twisted wool, all
multicolored, whose bristles form a monstrous pearl necklace – with
sometimes magnifying mirrors – they were gone.

715