

= Brush with Greatness =

" Brush with Greatness " is the eighteenth episode of The Simpsons ' second season . It originally aired on the Fox network in the United States on April 11 , 1991 . In the episode , Marge revives her high school @-@ era interest in painting by enrolling in an art class after getting encouraged by Lisa . When she wins first prize in a local art competition for a portrait of Homer on the couch in his underwear , Mr. Burns commissions her to paint a portrait of him . Meanwhile , Homer is determined to lose weight after becoming stuck in a water slide at an amusement park .

The episode was written by Brian K. Roberts and directed by Jim Reardon . Beatles member Ringo Starr guest starred as himself , while Jon Lovitz starred as Marge 's art teacher , Professor Lombardo . The episode features cultural references to films such as Rocky and Gone with the Wind . Since airing , the episode has received mostly positive reviews from television critics , who praised the use of Starr and the central focus on Marge . It acquired a Nielsen rating of 12 @.@ 0 , and was the second highest @-@ rated show on the Fox network the week it aired .

= = Plot = =

After Bart and Lisa see Krusty the Clown do his show at the Mt . Splashmore water park on TV , they consistently irritate and supplicate Homer about going there . Homer gets annoyed , but reluctantly decides to take them there . The family goes to Mt . Splashmore , where Bart , Lisa and Homer ride an intense water slide named H2WHOA ! . Due to his weight , Homer gets lodged in a section of the slide and the park 's rescue crew are forced to shut down the ride and remove him with the help of a large crane . Homer is made a fool of on the news for his massive size and admits that he needs to lose weight .

Once home , Homer announces to his family that he will go on a diet and exercise more . While Homer is looking for his weights in the attic , Bart stumbles upon several old paintings of Ringo Starr that Marge made as a student in high school , when she had a crush on Starr . Marge tells Lisa that she was scolded by her art teacher for doing those paintings ; she also recalls sending a painting to Starr for an " honest opinion " , but she never got a response . Lisa suggests that Marge take a painting class at Springfield Community College , which she does . She makes a painting of Homer on the couch in his underwear , which her professor , Lombardo , praises . The painting wins the college art show , thus gaining her fame and the headlines of the newspapers .

Mr. Burns wants Marge to paint his portrait for the Burns Wing of the Springfield Art Museum . She reluctantly agrees , as long as Burns insists that the painting portray him as a beautiful man . While Burns heckles Marge as she does the painting , Homer finds out that he weighs 239 pounds , which is twenty @-@ one pounds less than what it had been . After Burns insults Homer 's weight , Lisa and Maggie , Marge throws him out and is ready to quit until Homer encourages her to finish the painting : She also gets a reply from Starr , who is decades behind on answering his fanmail , praising her artwork . After working until well into the night , she finishes the painting and then it is unveiled at the opening of the Burns Wing . The painting depicts a naked , frail , and weak Burns . The people are shocked , until Marge explains that it depicts what Burns actually is : a vulnerable human being which will , one day , be no more . Burns is outraged at first , but then , like everyone else , accepts his new glory , praises Marge 's painting and thanks Marge " for not making fun of [his] genitalia " , to which Marge replies , " I thought I did . "

= = Production = =

The episode was written by Brian K. Roberts and directed by Jim Reardon . Prior to writing the episode , Roberts had been an audio and visual editor on the show . Musician Ringo Starr made a guest appearance in the episode as himself . He was the first Beatle to appear on the show ; both George Harrison and Paul McCartney would later guest star on the show in the season five episode " Homer 's Barbershop Quartet " and the season seven episode " Lisa the Vegetarian " respectively . When the story of Marge having a crush on Starr was pitched out , Roberts took the opportunity to

write Starr into the script because he had always wanted to meet a Beatle . He then sent the script to Starr , who was then in Southern France . Starr agreed to do the guest appearance after only reading two lines , and he told Roberts that he would be able to do it when he visited Los Angeles a few weeks later . The staff of the show was thrilled when Roberts revealed that Starr had agreed to do it , and they immediately decided to expand Starr 's role in the script . The Simpsons creator Matt Groening said of the guest appearance : " We were so excited that we got Ringo Starr coming in to do the show and we recorded him over at the Complex in West Los Angeles . We were given a list of rules about what we couldn 't do to Ringo , such as ' Don 't touch him ' , ' Don 't approach him ' , and ' Don 't ask for his autograph ' . But of course when he shows up in this big limo , Brian brings out a big poster and asks him to sign it ! " Roberts explained that he had not received the memo with the rules so he showed up with a copy of the script cover and asked Starr to sign it . Groening asked Starr if he wanted to be animated the way he was in Yellow Submarine or the way he was in the cartoon series The Beatles . Starr chose Yellow Submarine because he did not like his appearance in the cartoon . In addition to Starr , the episode features a guest appearance by Jon Lovitz as Lombardo and the doughnut delivery man that delivers doughnuts to the nuclear power plant . Lombardo 's physical appearance was based on an art teacher Reardon had in art school .

= = Cultural references = =

The line for the H2WHOA ! ride reproduces the staircases in the lithograph Ascending and Descending by M. C. Escher . The way Krusty removes the clown make @-@ up from his face resembles the way the Joker removes his make @-@ up in the 1989 film Batman . When Homer announces he is going on a diet , he says : " As God is my witness , I 'll always be hungry again ! " , a reference to the famous line " As God is my witness ... I 'll never be hungry again ! " from the film Gone with the Wind . Homer exercises in a way similar to how Rocky exercises in the 1976 film Rocky . The music that plays as Homer approaches the scale is the main theme from the film The Good , the Bad and the Ugly . A copy of Andy Warhol 's painting Campbell 's Soup Cans is visible at the art gallery .

= = Reception = =

In its original broadcast , " Brush with Greatness " finished thirty @-@ seventh in the ratings for the week of April 8 ? 14 , 1991 , with a Nielsen rating of 12 @.@ 0 , equivalent to approximately eleven million viewing households . It was the second highest @-@ rated show on the Fox network that week , following Married ... with Children .

The episode received positive reviews from television critics . Many lauded the use of Starr ; for instance , IGN ranked his performance in the episode , along with Paul McCartney 's performance in " Lisa the Vegetarian " and George Harrison 's performance in " Homer 's Barbershop Quartet " , as the tenth best guest appearance in The Simpsons ' history . They added that " Although none of these appearances were really large , the fact that the most popular band of all time appeared on The Simpsons is a large statement on the popularity and importance of the show . " Doug Pratt , a DVD reviewer and Rolling Stone contributor , wrote that " Brush with Greatness " has a " well thought @-@ out " plot and he enjoyed the use of Starr and Marge 's previously undiscovered talents . Paul A. Cantor , the author of the book Gilligan Unbound : Pop Culture in the Age of Globalization , said the " once again Brian K. Roberts proves his genius with ' Brush with Greatness ' in a superb work where Marge cultivates her wonderful artistic side . " DVD Movie Guide 's Colin Jacobson wrote : " From the opening at Mt . Splashmore through Homer 's diet and the unveiling of Mr. Burns ' controversial portrait , the episode packed a lot of great material . It also expanded Marge 's character in a pleasing way , as it avoided any semblance of sappiness ; we needed a break from sentiment after ' Old Money ' . Overall , ' Brush with Greatness ' provided a terrific episode . " The authors of the book I Can 't Believe It 's a Bigger and Better Updated Unofficial Simpsons Guide , Warren Martyn and Adrian Wood , wrote : " A superb episode , with Marge rightfully centre stage . Despite his general unpleasantness , Mr Burns ' gratitude to Marge is both

welcome and unexpected . And the dig at Water Parks is spot on . "

In October 2008 , Ringo Starr posted a video on his website in which he said he was too busy to answer fan mail and that all mail sent to him after October 20 would be thrown out . Although Starr did not mention " Brush with Greatness " in the video , several media sources compared his announcement to his portrayal in the episode .