**Paris, Art & You**

*“In Paris, art and everyday life are one, just like art and human nature.”*

Authored by Sara Herbst

Three years ago today, June 20th, 2017, marks the beginning of my first trip to Paris, France. It was a life-changing experience for me not only because I had dreamed of going to France ever since I started taking French lessons in 2011. In addition, I believe that this trip changed me because even though I had always liked art and drawing. Above all, I believe my trip to Paris is where my love for visiting art museums and my deep appreciation for all forms of art were born.

In just a 6-day trip, I planned to visit as many art museums as I possibly could, including the Louvre, the Centre Pompidou, the Orsay Museum, the Oranjerie and the museums of artists Picasso and Rodin. In those museums, I had the opportunity to experience art from a number of different time periods. In the Louvre, I visited the exhibits of Egyptian and Greek artifacts, as well as the Neoclassicism exhibit (18th century European art) and parts of the Renaissance exhibits. Side note: if you *ever* visit the Louvre, do *not* go to see the *Mona Lisa*. It is not worth it, as you will waste precious time and, more importantly, energy waiting in line. There will be about 50 elderly tourists blocking your view when you do get close enough to catch a glimpse of the tiny 77 x 53 cm painting. There are many beautiful paintings in there that won’t end up being a waste of your time. Onward, the Centre Pompidou is the National Modern Art Museum of France, so it consists mainly of contemporary pieces. My favorite part of it is the sculptures by Niki de Saint Phalle and Jean Tinguely in the Stravinsky fountain outside the museum. The Orsay and the Oranjerie are home to a collection of 19th century modern art, which is my personal favorite. I was especially excited to see Impressionist pieces. Furthermore, the Orangerie houses some of Monet’s famous *Water Lilies* and the Orsay has a great collection of numerous modern artists, including Degas, Rodin, Renoir, Monet, Toulouse-Lautrec, and of course van Gogh. Next, the Musée Picasso houses a big collection of pieces made by the artist during his time in the city and the Rodin Museum contains most of the sculptures created by the sculptor, including the famous *Thinker*, *the* *Gates of Hell* and *the Burghers of Calais.*

I remember the time I spent in all of these places vividly, and I think that art had a huge part to play in that. At the beginning of my trip, I promised myself to take as few pictures as possible so as to enjoy the fact that I was *in Paris,* the art capital of the world, taking in all these famous works of art. Nothing in this world is better than the feeling of serenity and spiritual calmness one feels when in a room full of works of art, contemplating what they all mean, concentrating on each brushstroke, admiring the colors, the work that has gone in to create each masterpiece. I could picture the artist painting the painting, sculpting the sculpture and in that moment, I felt that they were right beside me. In that moment, I felt like I could create anything, I could feel anything, I could be anything. That is the feeling that art gives me.

Nevertheless, the importance of art for me does not only lie in the feelings that it creates in people. I am of the opinion that by knowing art history and by loving art, a person can further their understanding of human nature and consequently the history of humankind. While I have primarily mentioned Western art in this essay because I am European, it is no question that Eastern, Latin American, Oceanic and African art play an equal part in expressing human nature. In my opinion, art history is not a subcategory of our history, as I believe it is directly entwined in historical events and can easily be used to discern and explain them better. Art expresses the way humans were feeling and their way of thinking in every historical period for as long as 64,000 years [₁]. To put that in context, the modern form of humans has existed for 200,000 years and civilization as we know it has been around for a mere 6,000 years[₂]. Art is people and people are art, they are one and the same.

However, what I love most about cities like Paris is that art is not only found in the museums. It is not only an experience for people to pay to see. It exists in the streets of the artist quarter, Montmartre, in the form of young artists selling their paintings. It exists in the architecture of Gothic churches like Notre-Dame, Saint-Eustache des Halles, Saint-Merry and so many more. It exists in the unique church of Sacre Cœur, which overlooks the whole city. It exists in the one of a kind architecture that is present in this city, like the Eiffel Tower, the dome of the Hôtel des Invalides, the Opera, the bistros and cafés in the centre, the houses. It exists in the form of street dancers and musicians. It exists in the windows of the small boutiques. It exists within all the street artists of this wonderful, complex, ancient city. In Paris, art and everyday life are one, just like art and human nature.

I’m positive that by now you are most likely thinking: what is the meaning of this article, the reason why I chose to write it? Maybe you haven’t even heard about half of these places in your life. The true reason I am writing this article is so that each person who reads this is intrigued to visit the nearest art museum, to look for art in their everyday life, to open their mind to the creativity and the beautiful things that exist all around us. It is so that everyone who reads this has the chance to look for art in their culture, in their hometown, and most importantly in themselves.

**Sources**

1. According to Wikipedia, the oldest known cave painting is a red hand stencil in Maltravieso cave, Cáceres, Spain. It has been dated using the uranium-thorium method to older than 64,000 years and was made by a Neanderthal.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cave\_painting

1. Elizabeth Howell, How Long Have Humans Been On Earth? For [www.universetoday.com](http://www.universetoday.com), on January 19th, 2015.

https://www.universetoday.com/38125/how-long-have-humans-been-on-earth/