

Art'istory: The Good, the Bad and the Crazy

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When it comes to the world of famous art, it's easy to recall the pensive face of Mona Lisa, or the composed marble sculpture of David. However, when it comes to art, there's always more than meets the eye. Here are some bizarre, behind-the-scenes knowledge of what stories lie beneath the canvases and artistic movements throughout history to today.

Dadaism: The Art of Absurdity

A signed urinal and brightly-colored cardboard suits were among the artistic hallmarks that came forth from this art movement, which began in 1916. Dada, or Dadaism, began in Germany and spread across the world in a time where bold movements like Cubism and Expressionism were changing the way the general public views art. Dadaism was a rebellion against the conventional norms of the time, purposefully aimed at being non-sensical and absurd. One of the movement's founders, Hugo Ball made a cape, hat and suit out of cardboard to recite a poem that was composed of no real words, but sounds and body motions. In 1917, another big name of the movement, Marcel Duchamp, showcased a detached urinal which he titled, "Fountain." Another of Duchamp's famous works is a postcard featuring the Mona Lisa, in which he scrawled a mustache and goatee.

Jackson Pollock's Secret Geometry

Jackson Pollock, born in 1912, was known for his seemingly chaotic, paint-splattered works. However, there was a method to his madness that was far from chaos and closer to mathematics. His works were actually intricate fractal patterns, that is, a geometric pattern that is duplicated at various size scales, according to physicist Richard P. Taylor in "Order in Pollock's Chaos." This means that if one zoomed in to look closely at one part of a Pollock painting to observe a pattern, they could step back and see that same pattern repeated across the canvas in larger and larger scales, creating the visual of a pattern within a pattern. Taylor scanned identical copies of Pollock's work into a computer program and confirmed that many of his pieces have replicated fractal patterns. Not only that, but many of Pollock's paintings reflect fractal patterns found in nature, such as in shore patterns created by bodies of water and tree and cloud formations.

The Sistine Chapel: Michelangelo's Revenge

This colossal gem from the 1500's is well known to anyone who has perused an art history book- but there is a lot about the Sistine Chapel that they don't teach students in grade school, for good reason. Firstly, it is a recorded fact that Michelangelo was reluctant on taking on this task, as he saw himself as more of a sculptor, above all else. During this pain-staking project, Michelangelo wrote that his body was bent and contorted "like that of an old shrew." The mural also has a secret in which Michelangelo exacted his revenge against a lofty critic. Biagio da Cesana, a papal official at the time, criticized the artists for "shameful nudity." Michelangelo's response? Painting the critic into the mural as a naked man with the ears of a donkey, having certain body parts of his being bitten by a serpent.

Just an Artist Trying to talk to Aliens

Cai Guo-Qiang is a contemporary artist with an explosive art form. Guo-Qiang uses pyrotechnics to create smoky spectacles, but he has a very specific audience in mind: extraterrestrials. His displays

create bright flashes and smoke patterns that linger in the air to hopefully catch the eye of an aerial viewer. Guo-Qiang is so proficient in pyrotechnics, that the Chinese government commissioned him to orchestrate the fireworks displays for the Beijing Olympics.

Dr. Seuss's Unorthodox Taxidermy

Known most for his whimsical stories filled with vivid illustrations, Theodor Seuss Geisel A.K.A. Dr. Seuss has another surprising artistic hobby: taxidermy. Geisel adored the Springfield Zoo growing up, in which his father was the superintendent of parks. Because of this connection, Geiss had access to the body parts of deceased exotic animals, to which he created sculptures of imaginary creatures in the 1930's.

SOURCES:

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