the Solari Report

Food for the Soul: Women Artists at the Philadelphia Museum of Art with Nina Heyn and Ricardo Oskam

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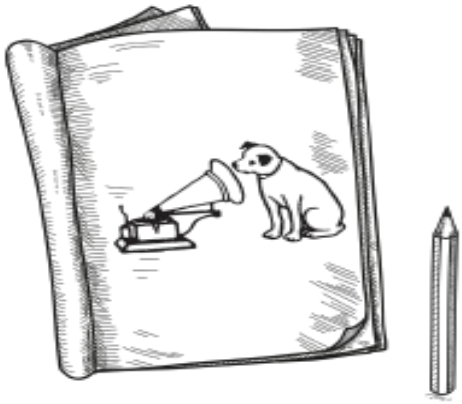
Transcript



Ricardo Oskam: Ladies and gentlemen, welcome to *The Solari Report*. I'm Ricardo Oskam, and I'm here joined by my co-host, Nina Heyn, who hosts the *Food for the Soul* series and has a tremendous wealth of knowledge of the art, as you have established. Nina, today we will talk about our recent adventures in Philadelphia. We traveled to the Philadelphia Museum of Art to specifically look at the women in art, the women behind the canvas, not the models, correct?
Nina Heyn: Correct.

Oskam: Tell us why; why do we focus on women only?

Heyn: Let me start by saying that the Philadelphia Museum of Art is a vast, huge building that is one of the types of museums they did in the 19th century, which were collections of everything that has ever been available for educational and artistic purposes. The 19th century museums, like the ones in New York, for example, and the ones in Washington, if we talk about the United States, or the Louvre in Europe, started as museums where they would collect everything. You would have the antiquities; anything from Egyptian mummies to medieval armors, then they would have pottery and textiles.

Of course, there would be a selection of paintings of art. This is that kind of a museum. That particular one was established or opened in 1876 to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence in the United States. It was like a centennial celebration in America. It was, from the beginning, a huge, vast building that was in the middle of Philadelphia until now. It is impossible for anybody, no matter how dedicated, to take it in in one day or a few hours, especially not if you're just visiting for a couple of hours.

First, when you go to a museum like this, you have to limit yourself: okay, today I'm just going to be looking at Egyptian antiquities or textiles, or whatever. For us, we decided to go to the painting section. Also, to limit ourselves further, we decided that we were going to go on a little treasure hunt and look for the paintings done by women artists, of which there are only a few.

We're hoping that we are going to have a book that I wrote called *Women in Art: Artists, Models, and Those Who Made It Happen*. That's the title of the book. This book will be coming out as *Solari's* first publication. In that book, I talk about many women artists who, throughout centuries, have been painting paintings. It so happens that at the Philadelphia Museum of Art, we found several paintings created by those artists. That was our goal, to go through this vast museum, but

on a treasure hunt, and to see the ones that we wanted to explore further.

Oskam: To stop on a third topic of the book, so it's the women behind the canvas; it's *The Woman on the Canvas*. It's also the third category of women that made it happen, that were responsible for allowing people to paint through financial means, for example, but also women that changed the course of how women painted at all, that they were maybe not allowed to join a guild, for example. We'll get to all of that as we make our way through the six women painters.

Before we do that, you mentioned something very interesting to me. You opened up my interest in the arts by taking me to the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam last year and talking about Johannes Vermeer. Then, this was our second sojourn into the world of arts. When we discussed why everybody needs to dive into this and study it and what it can bring to your life, you mentioned something that stuck with me.

You said in our very structured and orderly day-to-day lives, where some people might have a 9:00 to 5:00 job and have a very rhythmic structure every single day, the often chaotic nature of the arts is something to explore, something that breaks open that order and creates a bit of chaos for you to enjoy. In that chaos, there's something personal that speaks to everyone. We will talk about what spoke to me and what spoke to you as we played the game of if I had infinite resources and the opportunity to buy something there, what would I take home? We'll get to that at the end, which is always a famous game.

Heyn: You go to a museum, and pick one painting you're taking home. Which one is this going to be? That game we always play when we go to museums. It was a pleasure going with you and discovering things that we have discovered together or have been unexpectedly confronted with in terms of art. Yes, I agree with you. The reason I named the website where I write all those art stories *Food For the Soul* is because I think that you need to nourish your mind by reading books, talking to people, and traveling.

Obviously, you need to nourish your body in order to function, but there's also a third component to it. In other words, you need to nourish -- you can call it spirit or soul, or yourself, if you like, by being exposed to things out of the ordinary. I think that art pushes you out of the day-to-day grooves of what the French call *métro*, *boulot*, *dodo*, which means going on the metro, going to work,

and sleeping.

You need sometimes to be pushed out of this ordinary existence towards something that is transporting you to something better and nicer. I think that's what art does, and that's what we did on this wonderful afternoon a few days ago when we were wandering and trying desperately to find the specific paintings that I want to talk about. It wasn't easy, because they were really hidden mostly.

Oskam: They were hidden. It was very interesting to see you try and negotiate with some of the guards who were walking around to try and find these paintings specifically that we were looking for. Obviously, you speak about six languages fluently, so your pronunciation of some of these French names was very interesting to hear.

Heyn: We were saying, "What, lady?"

Oskam: Let me tell you, Nina, your wealth of knowledge is very impressive. I enjoy talking to you about these paintings. It breaks open my understanding of history and puts everything into a contextual wrap. Talking about the painters from the Dutch Golden Age and why the sudden change from theology and mythology as a theme in these paintings to more everyday life scenarios, in these genres, to hear why that happens from you just broke open my understanding of history and put it into a context where it's so much more exciting to learn about these things. Thank you for doing that. Without further ado, let's jump into our first painter.

Heyn: That brings us, actually, to a Dutch artist. We're on your home turf, Ricardo. The first one that we were looking for is the artist known in the West, at least as Judith Leyster. Is there a better Dutch pronunciation of that?

Oskam: That's very accurate. Absolutely.

Heyn: She is the Dutch Baroque, meaning 17th-century artist, a woman who has been a student of a much more famous artist called Frans Hals, that has been recently throughout Europe, a big exhibition to celebrate an anniversary, and there was a big exhibition of Frans Hals' art. She painted paintings within this genre that you have been referring to, so-called genre scenes, which means anecdotal paintings of something happening that was either a satire, so for the viewer's enjoyment, and sometimes more realistic. The painting we have seen in

Philadelphia is called *The Gay Cavalier*, gay being happy or joyful, and it shows two people drinking.

One is standing happily with a glass raised and very drunk at this point. The other one is sitting and also drinking. The moralistic part of that painting comes through the third actor in that scene. This is a skeleton, so this is a symbol of death, of course, who is holding a time glass to show that time waits for nobody. Of course, the moral of the painting is that if you drink too much or drink yourself to death, then sooner or later, you're going to end up in the company of that skeleton. It is a moralistic admonishment that one should not drink too much, but how she paints it is very dynamic.

These two people are standing and drinking, almost as if they were in the tavern. Even the skeleton is bending forward. There is a lot of movement in this painting. There have been, obviously, genre scenes like this, but probably much more static and subtler. Hers is a very ebullient way of telling the story through painting. To me, the interesting thing is that Judith Leyster died in 1660, literally, and for about 230 years, 1893, something like this, she has been forgotten to the point that at the very end of the 19th century, there was a painting of hers at the Louvre that had a different name. While cleaning the painting, they discovered her signature underneath the layers of dirt, grime, and somebody else's signature.

They started getting interested: who is Judith Leyster? Then, if someone like this has signed a painting, who is this person? Then, they started looking at various paintings of that era. Until today, practically, some paintings have been misattributed very often to Frans Hals because he was her teacher, and it's the same kind of style of painting and the same kind of light, something that you paid attention to that you looked at it and you like the way the light and shadow is playing in this painting. They started discovering, "Oh, no." There was another painter, and what's more, she was a woman, but she was completely not appreciated until practically the 20th century.

Oskam: Her husband was also a painter who was also falsely attributed.

Heyn: Yes. That's what usually happened well into the 19th century; a woman painter very often would be a wife or a daughter of a painter. That's how they would get exposed to paint materials and painting as an occupation because they would not attend painting school. That was the main reason for men. In fact, if

we look at the second painting that we have found, we had a very hard time finding it at the museum by a French artist from the 18th century, Elisabeth Vigee Le Brun.

She was a young artist who already had the skills as a teenager. She was the daughter of a painter. The problem was that when she started painting, she was not a member of the guild of painters, which a painter needed to be. At some point, the guild confiscated her painting materials, and she was forbidden to paint because she was not a member. She was not allowed to practice her craft.

Oskam: Why did somebody need to be a member of a guild at that time to be able to paint?

Heyn: That was the law. You want to paint; you want to collect money; you want to get paid for painting; you have to be part of a professional association.

Oskam: Right.

Heyn: In Hollywood, if you want to work on a film set, you have to be a member of the guild of carpenters or electricians. You cannot just go on the set on a union shoot and not be a union member. Those laws exist today, but they were very stringent, meaning severe, and applied to painting at the time when she lived. What happened was that eventually, she managed to become a member of the guild, and then she started supporting her family because her father died when she was young. She was left with her mother and her brother. Then, her mother remarried. Elisabeth's stepfather was not a very nice man. The teenage Elisabeth was supporting the entire family by painting.

Oskam: Imagine that responsibility at that age as a teenager, having the responsibility to finance the existence of your family. Part of what's left after all the tragedies. I wonder, since painting is such an expression of creativity, if you have such a strong financial incentive, would that inhibit the creative aspect of the painting at all?

Heyn: That's a very good question. At some level, definitely. If someone has to make a living creating little landscapes of, I don't know, little doggies in the forest because that's what sells, then yes, it kills your creativity. She was very lucky and unlucky. This is the story that I wrote in the book: how her life was going up and down throughout her life for no fault of her own. Here you have the young woman who has lost her father and is supporting her family. It is

going medium rare, so to speak; not the greatest. Then, she manages to befriend a woman called Marie Antoinette.

Befriending a queen usually means that this is going to be fantastic because she became a court painter, which she did, and painted dozens of portraits of the queen and all the members of the court, her children, and all the aristocrats. This was great. The only problem was that poor Elisabeth Vigee Le Brun could not stop the winds of history blowing, and her patron had lost her queenship and her head at some point. Poor Elisabeth!

Oskam: Quite unfortunate timing.

Heyn: She ended up in exile for many, many years, going from one country to another, ending up in tsarist Russia for many years. That was maybe not the happiest time of her life, but that's how she had to manage. In fact, she had the last word, Elisabeth Vigee Le Brun, because eventually, she managed to return to France, and she has outlived, I think, six different rulers of France.

She lived through almost the mid-19th century, so she outlived them all. She lived until she was 86 years old. Her life was constantly ups and downs. The funny thing is that the painting that you and I have seen, which we liked, was a nice portrait.

Oskam: Absolutely.

It is a very nice portrait, just at face value. Then you started to explain why it's relevant too in terms of its historical context because when you think about how ladies in that age would usually be the style, the trend of clothing, how they would usually portray themselves was very different than the lady we see in the picture who's wearing a stroll hat, which is, for those aristocratic families at the time, very unfitting, right?

Heyn: Yes, but the young Elisabeth Vigee Le Brun, who had as patron a young Marie Antoinette, meaning two young women very much imbued with the theories of Jean-Jacques Rousseau of returning to nature and shepherdess and all this more natural life, they have introduced a new fashion at the court, which was exactly the straw hats and the muslin dresses. Never mind the crinolines and flowing hair instead of wigs. That painting reflects that change in fashion. Obviously, it was kind of fake shepherdesses, and they were still aristocrats, but they just wanted some change in the looks.

Those two, the painter, the queen, the ruler, have been the fashion-forward game changers that were a harbinger of the new era. The problem is that the revolution was also part of the harbinger of the new era as is where both women of place that they were in, but interesting, the irony here is that the portrait that we were looking at is the portrait of Madame du Barry, who was the official last mistress of King Louis XV, who was the father of Louis XVI, the husband of Marie Antoinette, the one who lost her head. She was the mistress of the father.

Marie Antoinette did not particularly get along with her so-called stepmother, but Madame du Barry was at court and had official portraits painted. The irony was that she was from a very modest background, to put it mildly. The proletariat, if you like. After the old king died, Louis XV died, and she was living in a little chateau outside Paris. When the revolution came, the mob at the chateau seized poor Madame du Barry, who was not that young at that time anymore. Then she ended up at the guillotine; she got her head cut off as an aristocrat.

Obviously, the funny thing or the irony or this bitter irony here is that she was definitely not an aristocrat. She was a mistress, an ex-working girl, so to speak, from the proletariat, and it was the proletariat who killed her. It's sad and ironic at the same time. This is the person that Elisabeth has painted at the height of her fame and beauty. This is the story of the two women and what happens when they get mixed up with the revolution.

Oskam: It's a fascinating life story. It's also very interesting if you think back then, you didn't have televised fashion shows. Probably, the way people learned about fashion in different countries was through paintings. I just wonder how that influenced how people thought about France and the fashion over there. Anyway, that's fascinating. This is one of those in the third category; if you think about the start of our conversation, women have made it happen. These two ladies conspired to definitely change some trends; they definitely made that happen.

That's very interesting. Our third lady; I love this lady. This is Rosa Bonheur, our third lady. I love her story. This is a woman with a very powerful voice who was not afraid to tell people what she really thought and what she enjoyed how to express herself. Without further ado, let's dive into Rosa Bonheur and her fascinating story.

Heyn: We are going to look at the painting that is modestly entitled *Two Horses* by indeed a painter called Rosa Bonheur. This sweet, girly name should not be the indicator of who this person was because she was the daughter of a painter, so she already had the skills and access to making art. From a very young age, she was a tomboy. She had several brothers. Her father thought that maybe the several boys that he had would become painters, but it ended up that she was the one who was the painter. She was in love with painting animals.

She would have her own menagerie of pets. She would go to the countryside to paint animals. She would not be very interested in portraits or landscapes, all those girly kinds of flowers, those girly types of paintings. She was interested in animals, and the bigger the better. The cows, the horses, that kind of painting. She was also quite eccentric. She was clearly not interested in the normal ladylike life. She would go to the horse fairs to sketch and draw the horses she would later paint, and she wore pants. We're talking mid-19th century.

To do so, she had to get permission from the local police to actually do so; to wear pants because that was an offense and not allowed. Under the guise of the fact that she had to go and be at the horse trader's market, and it was a little difficult to be in a crinoline to be doing paintings, so they allowed it, but she literally had to carry a permit from the police.

Oskam: I can't believe that.

Heyn: This is the time she was creating things. She was a very spunky, energetic person. She also had an incredible talent. This painting of two horses was painted when she was barely 20 years old. If you look at this painting, you can Google it, or if you go to the museum, it looks so beautifully painted.

Oskam: There's a reason she understood the anatomy of animals so well, you explained.

Heyn: She would go to the abattoir, for example, and study the chopped-up bodies of horses and cows when they were preparing steaks. Basically, do the same thing that Da Vinci did several hundred years before: look at the anatomy of what he was drawing, which was good for the painters but, of course, not an occupation for a mid-19th-century lady from Paris. She was supposed to be wearing beautiful dresses and straw hats and paint flowers, and she would have none of that.

Oskam: There's one example of her being a very eccentric lady, which is this portrait drawn by somebody else of Rosa Bonheur herself, where she was actually leaning-originally, she was painted leaning on a chair. As I read it, she didn't think the chair was exciting enough. She just painted a cow instead of the chair and completely changed the painting, but it looks perfect. It looks like this is the original, but she was unhappy about the chair and would rather be leaning on a cow.

Heyn: Yes, because she was not interested in chairs. She was interested in cattle, so to speak, as people, meaning as models for their portraits.

Oskam: I love that.

Heyn Catherine, Olly, and I went, the next day, to a museum called the National Museum of Women in Arts. There is another Rosa Bonheur painting. This is a painting of a group of cows. Every single one of them has a different face, if you like, and a different pose, and a different expression. For her, it doesn't matter if she painted a lion or a dog. This person needed to be somehow portrayed with a character in the looks. She was a very unusual artist.

Oskam: Did she try and implement the human emotions into those faces of the animals?

Heyn: I don't know if we need to anthropomorphize that much. As an artist, she was much more attuned to what she saw in the animals. Remember, this is the 19th century when there were no animal shelters; animals are not treated very nicely. Even pets, even dogs and cats, were not treated very nicely; they were utilitarian.

Oskam: They serve the role, and that's it; basic utility.

Heyn: There was not too much of a 21st-century sensibility when we dressed up dogs in clothes and polished the claws of cats. This was not that era. Animals were utilitarian. Dogs were supposed to guard the house. The cat was supposed to catch mice, and the rest you just ate.

Oskam: Right.

Heyn: She was saying, "I see much more humanity and personality in all the models of animals that I paint than in the people." There's a painting if you read

the article I wrote in the book. She, at some point, was fascinated by Buffalo Bill, the epitome of being a cowboy, if you like, and she met him. His real name was William Cody. She painted his portrait, which is a nice portrait of him sitting on a horse, but she spent much more energy, skill, and talent on painting the horse rather than the person.

Oskam: The horse was the real star.

Heyn: That tells you where her priorities lay. She's the most nonconforming artist of her era, to run around in pants and paint cattle when everybody else, all the women, were painting flowers and talking about whatever it is, but certainly not cattle. It takes a lot of guts.

Oskam: It takes a lot of courage.

Heyn: Yes.

Oskam: She's world-renowned right now where the big painting with all the horses, the many horses. I forgot the name of this painting, but it received a medal from the king of Spain, I read. This is world famous.

Heyn: Right.

Oskam: Wonderful.

Heyn: Now she's getting more and more recognition because she was a female painter. For every 100 male artists, there's one woman painter. Of course, there are so few of them that any of them is now celebrated. Also, at some point, throughout most of the 20th century, the art was not celebrating anything particularly realistic. It was abstract art or surrealist art, or any kind of pop art. These are the types of styles of painting in the 20th century. Someone who paints cows realistically was not particularly celebrated. Now, obviously, she's getting a bit of a renaissance.

Oskam: In line with those themes, our next female painter is Berthe Morisot. Her main theme is motherhood and the very intimate scenarios of motherhood. A woman is standing beside her children and in very day-to-day situations. That's also a world very close to men in that day and age where men were out working and maybe away to hunt or be out on long trips, where mothers would stay home with the children. Who better to paint that than a mother herself?

She was very observing, very close to that world.

Heyn: Right. There is something that should be said, though. Berthe Morisot was part of the high society in France, if you like. She took lessons from Courbet. She was extremely well-placed in the society. She would spend much time attending theater operas and hanging around with writers and painters. She was married to a brother of Edouard Manet. She obviously had enormous talent, but she was already well-placed in the society. She was quite sophisticated. In that sense, she's much different from many women painters who basically were apprentices or daughters of painters, and then they made a way up the ladder.

Berthe Morisot is part of the French society of the second part of the 19th century. In fact, she was also a friend and collaborator with all the impressionists because she was the only woman who was part of the first impressionist exhibition in 1874 when a group of painters such as Monet, Pissarro, and Degas, the artists who decided that because their new style of painting, meaning what we call today impressionists, was not being accepted by the establishment, if you like.

The establishment would have an annual show called Salon in Paris, where all the artists would bring their paintings, and then the paintings would be shown, and the people would buy the paintings. After several years of having their paintings rejected, they said enough was enough, and they decided to mount their own exhibition, which happened in 1874. She was part of that exhibition—the core group of impressionists and part of the art history.

The sad or maybe not surprising fact is that of all this group, everybody was very celebrated until very recently, except her because she was a woman. I was like, "Oh, okay. She's painting women and children, and she's a woman." She was not as famous. Now she's getting some recognition because there have been several major exhibitions of her art. When the art historians are taking a second look at her art, they recognize that she actually has as much talent as anybody else in that group, but she was always less prominent.

Oskam: Was the audience at these shows like Les Salon, or were they traditionally men and women who showed up to those events?

Heyn: Men and women, but very bourgeois kind of people, who wanted to

have a nice landscape realistically painted, possibly with some flowers and butterflies, and something that you can put on the wall of your living room and be very happy about. Then the impressionists come, and then everything is just splashes of color and very vivid colors. It's not painted precisely. Sometimes, you cannot even recognize the face very well, and it's like, "What the hell is that? I'm not buying that."

They struggled for quite a long time. When you and I live in the 21st century, and we look at it, and then we talk about it, you and I love the colors. We love the very fact that this is not exactly realistic because we're used to that. We spend 100 years; these paintings have been living amongst us, so to speak. In 1874, forget about it; nobody wanted that kind of art. Everybody wanted a nice, realistic landscape.

Oskam: This is where the art that people display in their houses serves a very social element, too, where it's all about displaying that you have something that, in general, the current trend appreciates, and not just you on a personal level. It's very much fitting with the trend and not breaking it. If the trend doesn't appreciate it, it's far less likely to be bought and portrayed in one's house for social events.

Heyn: Correct.

Oskam: With that, let's move on to woman number five; female painter number five, Mary Cassatt.

Heyn: Cassatt has two Ts at the end. She has this Frenchy type of name, but she wasn't French at all, even though she lived most of her life in Paris. She is a Philadelphia native. Born in Allegheny, Pennsylvania. She's a native of that region. She was born into an upscale part of the Pennsylvania society, if you like, in the mid-19th century, 1844. The family, thank God, had several children, so there was not much pressure on her to follow the recognized social pattern of getting married properly and living in society.

Since she did have talent, the family was fine with her going away and studying in Paris. In fact, after her very successful father semi-retired, he and his wife, Mary's parents, moved to Paris and lived with her in the second part of their lives. In their retirement, they lived with her. She was never married, and never had a family, but she had a large slew of nieces and nephews that she adored.

She is similar to Berthe Morisot. It's more or less the same time. She's three years younger than Morisot, but she lived much longer because she lived to 80.

Cassatt, like Morisot, was a painter of women and children, the kind of domestic scenes. In fact, this was her trademark. Ironically, she never had children herself, but maybe this for an artist is very good because she was not distracted by household life because she could sit and observe, and quietly paint. She's obviously a more celebrated impressionist, and more well-known. Certainly, she's well-known in the United States.

Oskam: Could it also be a way of filling that gap of never having had children herself? This was a way of studying that world, of dipping her toes into the world of motherhood without actually being a mother herself. Is there a psychological reason there?

Heyn: Absolutely, Ricardo. Excellent insight. I think you 'hit the nail on the head'. Yes, that has definitely fulfilled some psychological needs. We have great art out of that. She's also very interesting in terms of biography because, obviously, she was an American, but also was in France. She moved from the United States, where the art at the time was extremely traditional. Of course, nobody had heard of impressionism. She moved to Paris, studied there, and wanted to participate in the Salon. She submitted her paintings, and then some were even accepted.

She wrote home, "Oh, I'm so happy they accepted my art." The paintings accepted to the salon were the Spanish dancers, like genre scenes of the Dutch Baroque thing. She went to Spain; she painted *A Woman with a Mandolin*. She's an American creating in Paris, *A Woman with a Mandolin*. It's clearly a nice painting for Salon because this is something that people want to put on the wall, but it still needs to express her art. Then, she fails to be admitted. A couple of years later, her paintings are not accepted to the Salon. This is a drama for a painter because if your paintings are not accepted, then you do not exist; nobody will buy them.

Then, through Degas, who befriended her, she got close to the impressionists. The first exhibition, was five years after the first one, so the first exhibition for Mary Cassatt, in which she participated in the impressionist show, was in 1879. She had 10 or 11 canvases being exhibited. One of them is what we saw at the Philadelphia Museum of Art, the *Woman With a Pearl Necklace in a Loge*. This is a

woman all in pink, probably in the loge of an opera or a theater. This is the painting that was accepted.

Oskam: The interesting thing about this painting, if you look at it, the thing that stands out to me is that there seems to be a mirror image on her left. Is she sitting in front of a mirror?

Heyn: No. I wonder if this is in front of the mirror. I think she's placed with all this world behind her because we see the other loges and other boxes behind her. To me, she's like a debutante with her first public showing. The world is looking at her, and she's looking at the world. The one thing that she's definitely not looking at, the way I see it, is that she's not looking at the performance. This is about how she entered the social scene, if you like, but she's really not relating to the arts being performed on the scene.

Oskam: Is that a metaphor for her not being accepted into the Salon for a couple of years?

Heyn: You could read it this way. This is the beauty of going with anybody to see, like you and I went there and looked at paintings. A painting is whatever the painting tells you, whichever way it speaks to you. I might be fascinated by the pink colors of it because I love color and I love the way the things are painted. You might be looking at the social aspect of it. In every painting, you can find something for yourself in a painting if you look hard enough; in a good one, obviously. If it's a lousy painting, that's not salvageable.

Oskam: It's true.

Heyn: You may find different interpretations that would never occur to me. It's fun to go sometimes to a museum and look at the painting and say, "What does this tell you?" People come up with completely different stories because sometimes they draw from their own biographies or whatever they have read or, seen, or experienced. They have their own relationship. That's what art is supposed to do: resonate for yourself. The artist puts something on canvas. Sometimes, what the artist puts is completely different than what we see 200 years later because the world has changed, and we have a completely different interpretation of what we see.

Oskam: There's not only the individual element of relating to specific emotions being portrayed, or social elements, but also the current trends in society that

are at play, or how people relate to animals and their role in society. I wouldn't know a fancy word to describe that, but there's a more significant element of play there. It just underscores what you said at the start of this conversation, that you need to take time and focus on one thing if you go to a museum because there is something to discover in these paintings.

It's only sometimes five seconds of looking at it, and then immediately it snaps. Sometimes, you need to talk about it, look at it, have a cup of coffee, and come back with a different view. Then, it just opens up your world. I'm thinking about, to throw that in, I'm thinking about what you told me about how some of these paintings changed the era before it and after.

For example, the Cezanne painting: it has a pre-Cezanne era, and there's a post-Cezanne era, and how that broke up the way people painted. Once you get that insight and you walk through the museum and look at similar paintings that were created in the post-era, you realize the significance of this pivotal painting that opened up that era and the possibility of people that mimic that style of painting. It's just fascinating. That's why I love traveling with you through these museums, because if you buy a ticket and go in, you're never going to discover that yourself.

Heyn: Certainly, I agree with you that the worst thing that you can do in a museum is trying to see everything because unless it's a very small place, you get overwhelmed after the third painting, and then there's the whole section on pots and another on jewelry, and another on textiles. After five minutes, which is-- If the big museums, let's say the British Museum or the Louvre, when I go there, and I go there quite often, I decide in the morning, I'm just going to go to this wing, and I'm just going to look at this and nothing else. To me, a museum is like a candy store. I told you I want all the candy, of course.

Oskam: Your eyes lit up. It was wonderful.

Heyn: I learned not to do that because if I do, my eyes glaze over, and I didn't get anything out of it. It's fun to go with friends or children because everybody-- if you go with a group of two or three people, I bet you that the same painting is going to have a completely different reaction from three different people because people will see whatever they project their own insights into it.

Every painting, they just say, “Oh, I hate this painting because it's dark.” The

other person says, "Yes, but it makes me think of my dad or whatever." It's a completely different reaction. That's what's joyful that you can use this painting to relate to other people basically. It's fun. We've taken a huge amount of time discussing all those paintings, so why don't we do one more painting?

Oskam: Our last one was incredibly hard to find. You were like a bloodhound looking for this final painting.

Heyn: We went one floor after the other, one wing after the other. We couldn't find it. The guards had no idea what we were talking about. It was not easy.

Oskam: We found her. We scoured the museum, and we found Georgia O'Keeffe.

Heyn: Correct.

Oskam: Tell us about Georgia O'Keeffe because her style is very, very different than the ladies we've seen before.

Heyn: She's a 20th-century artist, so obviously, it will be different. Also, she has something in common with all the women I talked about. Meaning they carve their own path in art regardless of the styles and regardless of influences. What happens is that, for someone starting to create in its earnestness or seriousness in, let's say, around 1920, this was the period in art where you have so many other directions. You have surrealism as expressed by Dali or, Magritte, or de Chirico. We will talk about that. And you have Picasso, who was a cubist at the time.

You have Fauvism and the paintings of Matisse. You have many styles that exploded at the beginning of the 20th century. Here is a woman who comes out of nowhere. She's 20-something, goes to New York, and has to make a name for herself. She has chosen to paint in her own way. You would call it hyperrealistic; not even surrealist, but hyperrealist: enormous flowers that she's very famous for, or the abstract paintings, but they are on the border of being completely abstract. If you look at the painting we have seen, called the *Red and Orange Streak*, you could argue that this is a painting of a sunset or the sun coming through in between two things.

She was living in New York at the time, in a high-rise building on, the 50th floor in Manhattan. She would see the sun as in-between those tall towers, a kind of

stream in-between. Obviously she didn't paint the realistic office building. She would paint what she painted, which are these kind of abstract lines. She really exploded with her own very characteristic style when she went to New Mexico and started painting the desert and flowers and skulls of bulls in the desert, those kinds of things.

That was her world. She talks about it in her letters or memoirs that she matured in her art when she finally left New York and started spending a big part of the year in New Mexico, and that the desert spoke to her. This was the land that inspired her. One person gets inspired when they go to the sea and look at the sky and water, and somebody else is going to the desert and looks at dry plants.

Oskam: That's back to my earlier point about you need to understand the historical context to truly appreciate these paintings because you look at O'Keeffe's paintings when she was still living in the 'concrete jungle' of New York where services were readily available. There was a grocery store around every corner, and then this lady decided to pioneer into the United States, the western side where you have no plumbing, no running water, and she became an adult in her style of painting, and her painting style changed.

Suddenly, she's painting a very different way of seeing the world around her. You need to understand that context to really appreciate the *Red and Orange Streak*, the red and orange you see in this painting, and the sun going through those buildings, and then the very vivid bullhead skeleton; there's a context to it, a historical context around their lives. This is fascinating stuff, if you understand it.

Heyn: Knowing a little of the biography of the art always helps because you understand where they're coming from, which is not to say that you have to. The beauty of art is also that you don't have to know anything about the painter, and it can still speak to you as artwork or whatever inspires you, but it obviously changes the perspective. Sometimes, the good thing is to look at a painting, see how it speaks to you, and then find out more about it, and the perspective shifts. That works, too.

Oskam: The perfect example was I knew I appreciated paintings that are vivid, very realistic day-to-day scenarios that I engage in. For example, the painting next to me is something that speaks to me because it is the place I grew up in.

It's Rotterdam in a historical context. We saw Richard Ansdell and George Stubbs with paintings of hunting scenarios from 100 years ago or 200 years ago where you see a very vivid scenario of a person standing over an elk that he just shot, and the bloodhounds are still around it. It's a scenario that I can relate to.

It's very easy to understand, if you will. Then you and I, as we crossed through The Barnes Foundation first and then the Philadelphia Museum of Art, stumbled upon an artist that I had no clue I would love so much, which is de Chirico, Giorgio de Chirico, who spent his life in Italy, but he grew up in Athens, in Greece. His style of painting is very different than all those very realistic paintings that we were describing before, but somehow, it spoke to me, somehow it just stood out. If you look at that wall of all these different paintings, this is the one that spoke to me.

I just wanted to look at it for 10 minutes at a time. I can still, to this day, not explain why. When I look at his *Red Tower*, for example, or the one with the square, it's almost like a little world with many question marks, but somehow you can relate to it. When I looked at the one on the square, it took me back to my travels in Cuba because of maybe the Greco-Roman elements hidden in there; because it's empty, it almost leaves it open for interpretation.

It lets me, as the viewer, interpret it in my own way. There's a lot of room for me to interpret it in my personal world and my personal experiences. I wonder whether that plays a role or it's just the way he uses the colors that are juxtaposed. I don't know if it's that. This is where I will rely on you to help me understand why I like this painting because I don't know.

To answer the last question that you asked, I have a feeling that you respond to the fact that most surrealist paintings have a mystery in them because they show you some non-existent fantasy world that is populated with various interesting elements. The least, like this Magritte, who is the master of them all, is probably even the better. You engaged with the painting, trying to figure out a mystery. That's how people are attracted to reading mystery novels because they are trying to figure out who did it or, how it was done, or what is going on.

These kinds of paintings do not just give you; this is the landscape of a tree and a lake. They give you a world that you don't know because it's a fantasy world. You enter that world, and then you try to figure out what it's about, and you can populate it with whatever you want. You can create your own story. I personally

love surrealist art beyond measure, and I have several surrealist paintings on my walls. One is behind me. I can even see it. I totally understand your love. What I find fascinating is that we went in search of, after all, realistic paintings by women of the 17th, 18th, and 19th centuries.

They are very interesting as art, and they are very good works of art, but they are still living within the world of realism, if you like. What you ended up loving was a complete surprise. Something extremely modern and something very rich in possibilities of interpretation. That's what happens in museums. People go there for one thing, and they get something completely different.

You had no idea that you would love surrealist art or de Chirico, who is not that well known, less known than Magritte, and you probably have yet to see any paintings of him because there are not that many in the museums, and it was a total surprise. You go there, it's like, "Oh my God, I didn't know that I liked that." It's almost like going to a different city. You go to a city because you go on a business trip, and then you find someplace, it's like, I didn't know that I like that. It's a discovery.

Oskam: It's an adventure. It was certainly an adventure, and I'm glad you took us through the museum. I have to know, what is the one you would take home?

Heyn: That's very, very difficult. I cannot answer that easily because there were too many things I liked over there, so I cannot really answer that question.

Oskam: The 'kid in the candy store' suffers from the Godiva Chocolate problem.

Heyn: From the 'can of worms'. It could be one of the Cezanne's because I love Cezanne's so much, but there are too many paintings there. I recommend that people go and check it out. I love Georgia O'Keeffe very much because this is the type of painting that I would like.

Oskam: To stay with the Cezanne for a second. You explained his very unique way and his being truly a master of painting fruit where, to the untrained eye, it looks very simple, but once you see his unique style, you can't unsee it, and everything else. Correct me if I'm wrong, but Renard did it too, trying to paint fruit, but his style was second to Cezanne's.

Heyn: It was a bit more traditional. Definitely, if you look at the painting of

apples and pears by Cezanne, and if someone says, this is just apples and pears, and they're nice colors, but whatever, then I challenge this person to get a box of paint and try to recreate what Cezanne has spent his lifetime perfecting. Then, you discover how difficult it is to replicate even his painting. Even for the impressionists, as expressed by Renoir, even though they were not doing one-to-one realistic painting, making sure that it is almost like a photograph because, obviously, the art has moved on.

That's what the core of impressionism is, that they are trying to capture the light and the color as it is perceived and the given moment, and the brushwork is always very fast because they're trying to paint why they're standing in front of a landscape and they have to catch the moment. Even for the impressionist, it's still trying to render what they see in front of their eyes, meaning the realistic or maybe not the style but the image of whatever they see. Once you go to modern art, if it's a really sophisticated style like cubism, then, of course, everything is perceived through cubes.

Or if you go through abstract art, then obviously, this is going to be something other than a representation of actual objects in a realistic way. Until you go to those more complex styles, there is Cezanne, who is in the middle, who is theoretically painting a bunch of apples on a table, but he spent so much time trying to figure out the colors, the shapes, and how the eye actually perceive things, and our eyes constantly go from left to right. We look at that object from various angles, even unconsciously, because we move our body, we move our head, we move our eyes, and we don't look statically at anything because that's not how the human body functions.

That's what he's trying to capture. He moves beyond just looking at the object as something that is static and that you're trying to render as faithfully as you can. He's trying to do a composite of all the possible ways of looking at things. That's what modern art is. He is also painting what he perceives in terms of color, in terms of shape, and what he sees, different from what the convention would say. In other words, you look at the work of art because you're looking at the individual point of view. You're not looking at the work of art because it was created for you to decorate the wall.

This is a big difference in art. It's much more complicated than that, of course, but at the end of the day, the same way you and I went to the museum, and we have viscerally responded to Cezanne paintings because they are beautiful. We

don't know why. We don't need to know the theory of art. It's look at this; it's like, look at this, look at those colors, look at those apples, I mean, they're incredible. It's just something that you look at it, and if you have one wall of paintings and there's one Cezanne there, you're just going to be drawn to it because there is something that draws you there.

Oskam: It sticks out. You have to enjoy these paintings in real life. There's a difference between looking at a screen and an LED screen, and looking with your own set of eyes in person, in a museum. I encourage everybody to go out and enjoy these museums in real life. It is a blessing. It's been a blessing to do that with you, Ms. Heyn. It's been a lot of fun.

It's been a real pleasure. I've learned a tremendous amount from you, so thank you very much for that. I jokingly told you when we were in the United States, there was a pre and a post-Cezanne era. There is a pre and post-Nina Heyn era for me.

Heyn: That is too grand for me.

Oskam: Thank you very much. You're playing a big role in my appreciation of the art, so I want to thank you for that. I very much look forward to reading your book, too.

Heyn: When it comes out, yes, we hope.

Oskam: Hopefully, that will be soon. We'll also be updating the *Food for the Soul* website, so stay tuned for that, ladies and gentlemen. Nina, any final notes from your end? Is there anything you would like to discuss or inform people?

Heyn: No, I just would like to encourage everybody to go to any museum nearby. Just take children, family, whatever, and choose one or two paintings that, as Catherine says, you would take home, meaning choose the one that speaks to you best. Read a biography of whoever painted that. Just have fun. Museums are for fun. They are not work.

Oskam: Reserve time to do it. Don't rush. Just take your time. Playing this game can be a lot of fun with kids, too, getting them interested because if you play this game, what would you take home? They're going to actively look for their favorite painting. That's a nice trick of engaging your children, too, which I'm certainly, in my situation, going to do when they're a little older.

Heyn: Exactly.

Oskam: Nina Heyn, thank you very much. Ladies and gentlemen, thank you for listening to or reading Nina Heyn and me talking about the Philadelphia Museum of Arts. Stay tuned for the book coming out. Until next time, thank you.

Heyn: Thank you.