

Museum Visit Paper

The painting I chose was Vincent van Gogh's *Irises*. Vincent van Gogh's *Irises* will be painting "A". Painting "B", which hangs beside van Gogh's *Irises* is Pierre-Auguste Renoir's *Albert Cahen d'Anvers*. This paper will compare painting A and B.

Painting A, Vincent van Gogh's *Irises*, is dated 1889 (Getty Museum Information Placard: Vincent van Gogh). Van Gogh used oil on canvas, which measured 28 x 36 5/8 in. (Getty Museum Information Placard: Vincent van Gogh). This painting is currently on display at the Getty Museum.

Painting B, Pierre-Auguste Renoir's *Albert Cahen d'Anvers*, is dated 1881 (Getty Museum Information Placard: Pierre-Auguste Renoir). Renoir used oil on canvas, which measured 31 7/16 x 25 1/8 in. (Getty Museum Information Placard: Pierre-Auguste Renoir). *Albert Cahen d'Anvers* is currently on display at the Getty Museum.

The gallery where these two paintings hang is cold. The blue wall connecting with the tan floor, makes the gallery feel impersonal and frigid. I believe the reason for the coldness of the gallery is to detract from the gallery, so viewers can focus on the paintings. Paintings line the wall where the van Gogh is hung. Although many of the other paintings were impressive, I was drawn to the van Gogh. The lighting was even, but flattering. Even though the atmosphere was cold, I enjoyed looking at painting A and B.

Vincent van Gogh's *Irises* portrays a field of Irises. All of the Irises are blue, with the exception a sole white one. This painting is of the Impressionism period. This painting is one of van Gogh's brighter paintings. The shadowing is very slight and used

sparingly. Van Gogh instead blended the oil into a variety of blues, greens, yellows, brown, and white. Black is used to outline some of the leaves and flowers, but is very subtle and underwhelming.

This is an exceptionally optimistic painting, considering van Gogh was in the Asylum at Saint-Rémy, France during this period. Van Gogh had his own separate room for his studio at Saint-Rémy. Van Gogh frequently painted the inside of the Asylum, the gardens from his windows, and scenes he saw on walks around the Asylum. Apparently the *Iris*es were planted around the Asylum.

Vincent van Gogh's *Iris*es and Pierre-Auguste Renoir's *Albert Cahen d'Anvers* might not look like they have anything in common at first. When I first saw both paintings side by side, I was not sure why the museum hung them together. The van Gogh depicted flowers, while the Renoir was a portrait. Looking at both placards, I realized that both paintings were painted in the 1880's (Getty Museum Information Placard: Vincent van Gogh/Pierre-Auguste Renoir). Both paintings also were painted in France on with oil on canvas (Getty Museum Information Placard: Vincent van Gogh/Pierre-Auguste Renoir). These are the similarities between both paintings.

There are several differences in Vincent van Gogh's *Iris*es and Pierre-Auguste Renoir's *Albert Cahen d'Anvers*. The first difference is the subject matter. One has flowers, the other a man. Secondly, the paintings are not the same size. Van Gogh's painting is more of a landscape shape, while the Renoir is more of a portrait shape. Van Gogh uses more light than Renoir. If I had to look at both paintings, with no background, I would not understand the grouping of these two paintings.

Vincent van Gogh's *Iris* and Pierre-Auguste Renoir's *Albert Cahen d'Anvers* would have had different functions and messages. Van Gogh's painting can be interpreted in different ways. *Iris* can be seen as a field of flowers. However, upon taking a second look, van Gogh's *Iris* can be seen as a cry for help. The one white flower can stand for van Gogh's loneliness. Another interpretation could have the white irises representing something spiritual. The interpretations could be endless. The function of this painting was to hang on an art gallery's wall.

On the other hand, Pierre-Auguste Renoir's *Albert Cahen d'Anvers* seems to be more straightforward. This painting is a picture of Albert Cahen d'Anvers. The function of this painting was to be a portrait for Albert Cahen d'Anvers. When commissioned Renoir's intention was to paint a portrait for Albert Cahen d'Anvers personally. Portraits, especially oil portraits, were and are a sign of wealth.

The difference between a direct experience and a mediated experience are in the detail. Online, pictures, and other mediated experiences, the textures and brush strokes cannot be seen. Depending on where the painting is viewed, the colors can be distorted. In a direct experience, every brush stroke can be seen. The canvas does not look smooth with a direct experience. Swirls, bumps, and imperfections in the canvas can be observed. It is better to have a direct experience.

I chose Vincent van Gogh's *Iris*, because I have always been drawn to van Gogh's work. I feel *Iris* represents van Gogh's loneliness. This painting made emotions that I thought were buried deep inside me. Although the painting is under glass, the paint on the canvas is very thick and expressive. The thick paint made me feel van

Gogh's anguish and pain, despite the lightness of the painting. This painting, like the others he completed while at the Asylum, is full of raw emotion. I feel the lone white iris represents his frustration at being mad in a sane world.

When I first saw this painting, I felt tears gathering in my eyes. Van Gogh was such a talented artist, but his art screams his pain. I can identify with this emotion. Sometimes, I feel like the lonely white iris in this painting. I never fit in with my peers. Although I was fortunate to have both my parents physically, I have always felt alone. I believe everyone can appreciate van Gogh's work, but to really understand his paintings, an individual must have experienced some level of emotional pain. Only then can one truly understand the pain and loneliness depicted in van Gogh's paintings, even the lighter ones like the *Iris*s.

I really enjoyed my trip to the Getty Museum. Seeing a van Gogh, even behind glass, was a memorable experience. I look forward to visiting the museum again in the future.