



TRT: N/A

**TITLE:** WILLIAM ROBINSON INTERVIEW  
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**TRANSCRIPT**

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**FABRIZIO**

*00:53*

I WANT TO BEGIN BY TALKING ABOUT HOW YOU DESCRIBE YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH, NOT TO THE EXHIBIT, BUT TO THE PAINTINGS THEMSELVES.

**WILLIAM ROBINSON**

*01:05*

I HAVE LEARNED SO MUCH ABOUT THE HISTORY OF ART FROM THIS COLLECTION. YOU KNOW I STARTED AS A GRADUATE FELLOW IN CLEVELAND AND THE MORE I LEARNED THE COLLECTION THE MORE I LEARNED TO APPRECIATE IT. IT'S ONE OF THE GREAT COLLECTIONS OF MODERN ART IN THE WORLD. IT HAS A WORLD CLASS REPUTATION AND EACH PAINTING HAS A STORY TO TELL. AND I DON'T KNOW ALL OF THEM YET BUT I AM LEARNING THEM. I'VE SPENT ABOUT 6 YEARS TRYING TO DISCOVER THE HISTORY BEHIND PICASSO'S GREATEST PAINTING OF THE BLUE PERIOD CALL THE (?) LIFE. AND I FINALLY THINK THAT I'VE COME THE END OF THAT BUT THE OTHERS ALL HAVE STORIES AS WELL.

**FABRIZIO**

*01:41*

SO YOU ANTICIPATE THAT YOU WILL WORK YOUR WAY THROUGH IT TRYING TO FIGURE THEM ALL OUT?

**WILLIAM ROBINSON**

*01:45*

YEAH, I HOPE SO AND I'M LEARNING NEW THINGS EVERYDAY. AND WORKS OF ART ARE AMAZING BECAUSE THEY HAVE NOT JUST THE HISTORY OF THEIR CREATION AND THEIR ASSOCIATION WITH THE ARTIST BUT THEN THE CONTEXT OF THE PERIOD AND THEN THEIR POST HISTORY. WHO BOUGHT THEM AND HOW THEY WERE SOLD AND IT'S REALLY FASCINATING INFORMATION AND TO ME, WHAT'S REALLY GREAT, IS WHEN IT CONNECTS TO THE LARGER STORY OF HUMAN CIVILIZATION AND ART HISTORY AND WARS AND THINGS OF THAT SORT.

**FABRIZIO**

*02:13*

IT'S INTERESTING HOW ART TIES EVERYTHING TOGETHER RIGHT?

**WILLIAM ROBINSON**

*02:19*

IT DOES.

**FABRIZIO**

*02:20*

IT REFLECTS, IT SAYS SOMETHING ABOUT US AS A CIVILIZATION.

**WILLIAM ROBINSON**

02:24

ABSOLUTELY.

**FABRIZIO**

02:26

DO YOU FEEL A KIND OF STEWARDSHIP FOR THE EXHIBITION? DO YOU FEEL UNEASY WHEN THEY ARE ON THE MOVE AND DO YOU FEEL SETTLED WHEN THEY FINALLY, THERE ARE SECURITY PEOPLE IN PLACE, THE HUMIDITY IS JUST RIGHT AND DO YOU FEEL UNEASY UNTIL THAT POINT?

**WILLIAM ROBINSON**

02:46

NO I NEVER FEEL ANXIOUS. I MEAN I KNOW THAT WE ARE WORKING WITH VERY PROFESSIONAL INSTITUTIONS AND I KNOW THAT THEY ARE TAKING VERY GOOD CARE OF THESE WORKS, CONDITIONS FOR SHOWING THEM ARE QUITE STRICT. I ACTUALLY ENJOY THIS PROCESS BECAUSE EVERY TIME THE PAINTINGS ARE INSTALLED IN A DIFFERENT WAY YOU LEARN SOMETHING NEW AND THEY ARE ALWAYS INTERPRETED AT LOCAL VENUES AND I AM INTERESTED IN HOW OTHER PEOPLE SEE THESE WORKS OF ART. SO IT'S PART OF A CONSTANT LEARNING, IT'S EXCITING IS WHAT IT IS.

**FABRIZIO**

03:17

TALK ABOUT THE LEVEL OF FLEXIBILITY YOU GIVE TO THE DIFFERENT INSTITUTIONS. YOU LET THEM DECIDE THE ORDER OF THE PAINTINGS.

**WILLIAM ROBINSON**

03:26

EXACTLY, IT'S UP TO..

**FABRIZIO**

03:28

WHY?

**WILLIAM ROBINSON**

03:28

WELL IT'S, EACH INSTITUTION WANTS TO CONTROL HOW THE WORKS ARE SHOW AND THEY HAVE FULL CONTROL. I MEAN WE TALK ABOUT IT AND IT'S, IN A WAY, A COLLABORATION. BUT THE ULTIMATE AUTHORITY IS ALWAYS WITH THAT INSTITUTION. AND I, BY THE WAY, NO ONE HAS EVER GONE WRONG YET.

**FABRIZIO**

03:45

IS THAT RIGHT?

**WILLIAM ROBINSON**

03:46

YEAH, IT'S, EVERY TIME I SEE IT IN A DIFFERENT WAY, I AM AMAZED.

**FABRIZIO**

03:51

THE MUSEUM HAS CHANGED THE STRUCTURE IN SOME WAYS, PAINTED WALLS, ETC. HOW IMPORTANT IS THE WAY IT'S PRESENTED TO THE EXPERIENCE?

**WILLIAM ROBINSON**

04:08

IT'S CRUCIAL. UM, WE HAVE, IN CLEVELAND, WE ARE GOING THROUGH A MAJOR RENOVATION AND EXPANSION PROJECT AND WE ARE NOW IN THE PROCESS OF PLANNING OUR REINSTALLATIONS AND WE HAVE A PROCESS ASSOCIATED WITH THAT CALLED INTERPRETATIONS. YOU KNOW, HOW DO WE CONVEY THE MEANING OF THIS ART TO THE PUBLIC. THE FIRST ISSUE IS HOW THE WORKS ARE DISPLAYED. WHAT YOU PUT NE.. IN THE CENTER OF A WALL AND WHAT YOU PUT NEXT TO EACH OTHER, INFLUENCES TREMENDOUSLY HOW PEOPLE RESPOND TO THEM, REACT TO THEM, HOW THEY UNDERSTAND.. I MEAN, MY PERFECT GALLERY IS A GALLERY WITH NO LABELS. AND YOU WALK THROUGH THIS GALLERY AND YOU SEE THE SEQUENCE OF IMAGES AND YOU UNDERSTAND THE MEANING JUST BY LOOKING AT THE WORKS. THAT'S THE IDEAL FOR A CURATOR.

**FABRIZIO**

04:45

SO IT'S NOT CHRONOLOGY NECESSARILY, IT'S...

**WILLIAM ROBINSON**

04:47

IT'S A MIXTURE. IT'S A MIXTURE OF THEMES, CHRONOLOGY, UM, YOU CAN'T JUST LINE UP THINGS TOTALLY CHRONOLOGICALLY. WHICH BY THE WAY, MUSEUMS USED TO DO. THEY DID.

**FABRIZIO**

05:00

SURE.

**WILLIAM ROBINSON**

05:02

BUT WE DON'T DO THAT ANYMORE. THERE ARE RELA...PEOPLE WHO GO TO MUSEUMS SHOULD PAY ATTENTION TO THAT. WHAT'S IN THE CENTER OF THE WALL. WHAT'S NEXT TO EACH OTHER. UM, THERE ARE TWO PAINTINGS IN THIS SHOW THAT I LOVE TO SHOW TOGETHER. ONE IS BY MANET AND ONE IS BY (BURT MORISO?) AND THEY HAVE A VERY CLOSE AND STRONG RELATIONSHIP AND I LOVE SHOWING THOSE TWO TOGETHER. WE HAVE A COUPLE OF CUBIST PAINTINGS BY PICASSO HERE. ONE, ONE OF HIS EARLIEST CUBIST PAINTINGS PAINTED IN 1909, ONE JUST A FEW YEARS LATER. AND YOU SEE THE PROGRESSION OF CUBISM IN JUST TWO YEARS. IT'S AN AMAZING RELATIONSHIP. AND YOU WOULDN'T UNDERSTAND IT IF YOU SAW JUST ONE OF THOSE WORKS IN ISOLATION.

**FABRIZIO**

05:39

YOU HAVE TO SEE THEM TOGETHER TO...

**WILLIAM ROBINSON**

05:40

THAT'S RIGHT AND THEN SOMETIMES, AND I KNOW THIS MODERN ART IS BAFFLING TO MANY PEOPLE AND IT'S BECAUSE YOU SEE SOMETHING IN ISOLATION, YOU HAVE NO CONTEXT FOR UNDERSTANDING IT. I REMEMBER THE EXPERIENCE...THERE'S AN ARTIST

NAMED MARK ROTHKO WHO DOES THESE KIND OF LARGE ABSTRACT FIELDS AND I DIDN'T GET THEM FOR A WHILE AND SOME OF MY FRIENDS DIDN'T GET THEM AND I REMEMBER I WAS IN NEW YORK AND I WENT TO THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART. IT WAS A VERY HOT DAY AND I'D BEEN RUSHING AROUND AND I WENT DOWN AND I SAT DOWN AND I SAT IN FRONT OF THIS ROTHKO. IT'S KIND OF A BEAUTIFUL BLUE BACKGROUND, GOLD AND WHITE. AND IT HAD A FEELING TO IT. IT WAS MUSICAL AND IT WAS JUST THERE WAS A MOOD THAT.. AND THEN I TURNED AROUND AND THEN THERE WAS A VERY DARK ROTHKO AND THEN WAS A.. AND I SUDDENLY GOT ROTHKO. IT'S ALL ABOUT CONVEYING IDEAS AND EMOTIONS DIRECTLY THROUGH FORM AND COLOR. BUT YOU DON'T GET THAT OFTEN ON THE FIRST ENCOUNTER OR BY JUST SEEING ONE IN ISOLATION.

**FABRIZIO**

06:31

I'M THINKING OF THE MONDRIAN PIECE. THE SORT OF ICONIC FORM PIECES THAT HE HAS. BUT THAT'S UP AGAINST A PIECE FROM ANOTHER ERA FROM HIM. ANOTHER TIME OF HIS LIFE. DOES THAT HELP YOU UNDERSTAND THAT AS WELL?

**WILLIAM ROBINSON**

06:46

YES BUT I ALSO THINK THAT'S A PAINTING THAT'S REALLY HARD TO GET IN ISOLATION. IF I WERE TO SET THAT UP, IF I WERE DOING A MONDRIAN EXHIBITION, I WOULD SHOW YOU WORKS IN ONE GALLERY THAT WERE VERY TENSE AND ANXIOUS AND THEN I WOULD TAKE YOU IN TO THE MONDRIAN CLASSIC (?) AND THESE PAINTINGS, BY THE WAY THEY ARE NOT SUPPOSED TO BE COVERED WITH GLASS WHICH WE HAVE TO DO FOR, TO PROTECT IT. HE WANTED TO CREATE THESE UTOPIAN ENVIRONMENTS AND UNDERSTAND THAT HE IS COMING OUT OF THE CHAOS OF THE FIRST WORLD WAR AND HE WANTS TO CREATE THESE TOTALLY HARMONIOUS ENVIRONMENTS AND WHAT YOU WOULD HAVE IS A SERIES OF THESE PAINTINGS COMING OFF THE WALL AND PROJECTED TO YOU AND SURROUNDED YOU IN AN ENVIRONMENT OF THEM. AND YOU WOULD GET THE MOOD. AND YOU WOULD UNDERSTAND MONDRIAN, IF I COULD, IN FACT MORE THAN THAT. IN THE FIRST GALLERY I WOULD PROBABLY SHOW YOU A FILM ABOUT THE FIRST WORLD WAR WITH BOMBS BLOWING UP AND PEOPLE COMING OUT OF THE TRENCHES. AND THEN YOU WOULD UNDERSTAND HIM BETTER AS AN ARTIST.

**FABRIZIO**

07:38

THE COLLECTION ITSELF. HOW IS IT THAT CLEVELAND CAME TO HAVE SUCH AN EXTRAORDINARY COLLECTION?

**WILLIAM ROBINSON**

07:53

THERE ARE TWO PARTS OF THAT. THE FIRST PART IS WE HAVE HAD EXTREMELY ADVENTURESOME COLLECTORS. AND ONE OF THE THINGS THAT VISITORS TO EXHIBITIONS MIGHT PAY ATTENTION TO IS THE CREDIT LINE IN THE (?) NUMBER AND THE (?) NUMBER WILL TELL YOU THAT DATE WHEN THE MUSEUM ACQUIRED SOMETHING. IT'S THE FIRST NUMBER, 1982 WHATEVER. AND YOU'LL SEE FOR EXAMPLE IN THE RODIN GALLERY. MANY OF THOSE WORKS WERE BOUGHT WHILE RODIN WAS ALIVE, RIGHT OUT HIS STUDIO BY CLEVELANDERS. AND THAT'S WHY THEY ARE SOME OF THE FINEST RODINS IN THE WORLD. SO THAT'S PART OF IT, ACTIVE INTERESTED COLLECTOR. AND THE OTHER ASPECT IS THAT FRANKLY, WE'RE A VERY WEALTHY INSTITUTION. AND WE HAVE BEEN ABLE TO COLLECT SOME OF THE GREATEST WORKS OF ART IN THE WORLD AND WE'RE STILL DOING IT. YOU'LL FIND SOME OF THESE

PICTURES UH, WERE ACQUIRED IN THE PAST TWO OR THREE YEARS. AND THEY HAD BEEN IN PRIVATE COLLECTIONS AND NOT SEEN FOR 50 YEARS BEFORE THAT. IT'S PART OF THE FUN OF BEING THE CURATOR.

**FABRIZIO**

08:47

LEONARD HANNA IS ONE WHO CONTRIBUTED MOST OF THE PAINTINGS IN THE COLLECTION IT SEEMS. SAY A BIT ABOUT HIM. DID HE KNOW THAT HE WAS MAKING A COLLECTION ABOUT A PARTICULAR MOVEMENT OF ART?

**WILLIAM ROBINSON**

09:03

OH ABSOLUTELY. LEONARD HANNA WAS THE SON OF MARCUS HANNA. IF YOU KNOW AMERICAN HISTORY, HE CONSIDERED THE PERSON WHO MADE PRESIDENTS IN THE EARLY PART OF THE CENTURY. VERY POWERFUL MAN. AND UH, LEONARD WAS INVITED TO BE A MEMBER OF OUR BOARD. HE KNEW NOTHING ABOUT ART. HE HAD NO TRAINING. AND HE BECAME VERY INTERESTED. HE STARTED COLLECTING... HE BECAME ONE OF THE GREATEST COLLECTORS OF MODERN ART IN THE WORLD. WE HAVE SOME OF THOSE THINGS HERE. A PINK PERIOD PICASSO WAS HIS FIRST PURCHASE. IT'S A GREAT WAY TO START BY THEIR WAY. AND HE COLLECTED VAN GOGH'S AND CEZZANE'S AND PICASSO'S, AMAZING THINGS. AND HE WAS TOTALLY SELF TAUGHT. ALTHOUGH THE MOST IMPORTANT THING FOR ART EDUCATION ISN'T TO READ BOOKS, IT'S JUST TO GO SEE THINGS. IT REALLY IS. SO HE WOULD, HE HAD AN APARTMENT ALSO ON PARK AVE. AND HE WAS ALWAYS TRAVELING THROUGH EUROPE. AND HE JUST SAW THINGS AND HE BECAME PASSIONATE ABOUT MODERN ART. AND HE, I FOUND A LETTER FROM HANNA WHEN HE TALKED ABOUT THE ACQUISITION OF OUR BLUE PERIOD PAINTING "LA VIE" WHEN HE SAID THAT HE HOPED THAT THIS WOULD DEVELOP AND INTEREST AND A SPIRIT FOR MODERN ART IN CLEVELAND. AND SO HE WAS VERY FOCUSED IN WHAT HE WAS BUYING. BUT HE KNEW WHAT HE WAS DOING. HE TAUGHT HIMSELF THOUGH. IT'S AMAZING.

**FABRIZIO**

10:10

DOES THAT REFLECT A SENSIBILITY THAT THIS KIND OF GREAT ART AUGHT NOT TO BE JUST FOR PEOPLE OF A CERTAIN CLASS, THAT EVERYONE CAN FEEL LIKE THEY SHOULD COME TO THIS PLACE?

**WILLIAM ROBINSON**

10:21

WELL MANY OF THESE ARTIST AS YOU PROBABLY KNOW, WERE QUITE RADICAL IN THEIR POLITICAL VIEWS. AND UM, THEY WERE TRYING IN MANY CASES TO CREATE ART FOR EVERYONE. AND OF COURSE THEY HAD CREATED GREAT CONTROVERSY AND IT DIDN'T WORK OUT THAT WAY IN THE MANY CASES IN THE BEGINNING. BUT UM, IN THE SAME LETTER ABOUT HANNA, HE WRITE, BECAUSE "LA VIE" THAT PAINTING WAS VERY CONTROVERSIAL. IT WAS DE-(?) BY ANOTHER MUSEUM. AND PEOPLE SAID THAT PEOPLE FOUND IT ANNOYING AND PUZZLING BECAUSE THEY COULDN'T FIGURE OUT THE MEANING OF THE SUBJECT. AND HANNA WRITES, "I'M SURE THAT THE IMPORTANCE OF THE PAINTING IN PEOPLE'S MINDS WILL GROW WITH TIME. AND THAT'S TRUE, I'M MEAN I'VE HAD MY OWN EXPERIENCE, IT THINK MANY PEOPLE HAVE HAD THIS EXPERIENCE OF SEEING A WORK OF ART AND NOT REACTING TO IT THAT POSS...AND THEN YOU SEE IT AGAIN AND YOU SEE IT AGAIN. AND THIS IS WHAT'S TRUE OF GREAT WORKS OF ART, THEY GET BETTER EVERY TIME YOU SEE THEM, THEY JUST LEARN

MORE. AND THEN THE WORKS THAT AREN'T QUITE SO GOOD, THEY DON'T HOLD UP OVER TIME.

**FABRIZIO**

11:25

TALK ABOUT THE ARTIST THAT ARE REPRESENTED HERE, WHAT WERE THEY REACTING TO? WHAT WAS THE KIND OF ACADEMIC ART THAT THEY DEFINED?

**WILLIAM ROBINSON**

11:48

WELL THIS IS ROUGHLY THE AGE OF MODERNISM. YOU KNOW WE HAVE ALL THESE - ISMS, IT IS THE AGE. IT'S STARTING WITH THE FRENCH REVOLUTION. YOU HAVE POLITICAL MOVEMENTS. HOW MANY, YOU KNOW, SOCIALISM, COMMUNISM, ALL KINDS OF -ISMS. IT'S AN AGE OF REVOLUTION IN EVERY FIELD. I MEAN THINK OF SCIENCE. WHAT, MODERN SCIENCE WAS, THE WHOLE IDEA BEHIND MODERN SCIENCE IS THAT YOU ACCEPT NOTHING AS A GIVEN. EVERYTHING MUST BE TESTED AND YOU MUST EXPERIMENT AND YOU'RE ALWAYS TRYING TO EXPERIMENT TO FIND THE NEXT AND THE NEWEST THING. AND THAT'S EXACTLY WHAT THE ARTISTS WERE DOING. YOU KNOW, I'VE OFTEN THOUGHT THAT WHOLE PURPOSE OF THE MODERN PICTURE IS TO CREATE A NEW DEFINITION OF ART AND YOU PUT IT OUT THERE IN THE PUBLIC AND A LOT OF PEOPLE SAID NO, THAT'S NOT ART. AND THAT'S WHAT THE IMPRESSIONISTS WERE UP AGAINST. YOU KNOW, AT THE TIME WHAT WAS POPULAR WERE PAINTINGS THAT LOOKED LIKE ILLUSTRATIONS. YOU KNOW, VERY FINE TECHNIQUE, THEY LOOK LIKE PHOTOGRAPHS. AND THE IMPRESSIONISTS HAD AN ENTIRELY DIFFERENT WAY OF APPROACHING ART. THEY WENT OUTDOORS AND PAINTED. THEY WANTED THE EXPERIENCE OF NATURE. THEY REALLY MADE THE PROCESS OF PAINTING AND CREATING ART VISIBLE. YOU KNOW, YOU SEE THE BRUSH WORK, SOMETIMES THEY DON'T COVER THE ENTIRE CANVAS. THEY WANTED TO GET MOTION AND ENERGY. AND OF COURSE, THE WHOLE WORD IMPRESSIONISM WAS MEANT TO BE DEROGATORY. UM, IT COMES FROM AN EXHIBITION THAT WAS HELD IN 1874 WHEN A CRITIC WROTE ABOUT MANET'S PAINTINGS, IT'S NOT A PAINTING, IT'S JUST AN IMPRESSION. YOU KNOW IT'S JUST A SKETCH, IT'S NOT REALLY ART. AND SO THAT, AT THE CENTER REALLY OF THIS AGE IS THE QUESTION OF WHAT IS ART. NOT WHAT IS BEAUTY BUT WHAT IS ART. AND WE'RE STILL DEBATING IT.

**FABRIZIO**

13:23

THE SENSE OF REALITY IS THAT AT THE TIME...THE IMPRESSIONIST WERE CREATING NOT A FICTION BUT AN ADDITIONAL REALITY. TALK ABOUT THAT.

**WILLIAM ROBINSON**

13:46

IT'S A DIFFERENT KIND OF REALITY. PART OF IT IS THE REALITY OF TRYING TO CAPTURE NATURE WHICH IS NOT FIXED AS IT'S MOVING AS IT'S CHANGING TO SUGGEST, YOU KNOW, THERE'S SO MANY DIFFERENT KINDS OF REALITY. LATER ARTISTS WOULD TRY TO CAPTURE MOTION IN THEIR WORKS OF ART. BUT THEN THE OTHER ASPECT IS WHAT WE'RE TALKING ABOUT A MINUTE AGO, IS THE PHYSICAL REALITY OF PAINT ON SURFACE. AND THIS BECOMES INCREASINGLY IMPORTANT AS MODERN ART DEVELOPS. ARTISTS BEGAN USING NON-TRADITIONAL CANVASES. I MEAN YOU REALLY SEE THE KIND OF ROUGH CANVAS THAT GAUGUIN USES, PERFECT EXAMPLE. UM, YOU WILL.. WITH CUBISM, PICASSO ACTUALLY STARTS TAKING THINGS THAT HE FINDS AROUND THE STUDIO AND HE GLUES THEM ON TO THE SURFACE OF PAINTINGS. I MEAN IT WAS HERESY, UH, TO PEOPLE WHO HAVE A SENSE OF ART, THAT

IT'S SUPPOSED TO BE SOMETHING..YOU KNOW THIS EXPRESSION, A WINDOW IN SPACE? IT COMES OUT OF THE RENAISSANCE. I MEAN IMAGE YOU'RE LOOKING AT A WALL AND THE FRAME AROUND A PAINTING IS REALLY LITERALLY THE FRAME OF A WINDOW AND YOU'RE LOOKING INTO SOMETHING DISTANT, ANOTHER WORLD...WELL MODERN ART IS THE OPPOSITE. THEY WANT TO MAKE YOU AWARE THAT THIS IS A REAL PHYSICAL OBJECT IN YOUR SPACE THAT'S BEEN CONSTRUCTED BY AN ARTIST. THEY OFTEN WANT TO PUSH THAT IMAGE TO YOU. SO IT WAS SHOCKING AT THE TIME AND FOR MANY PEOPLE, YOU KNOW, A LOT OF THIS ART IS OVER 100 YEARS OLD, IT'S STILL SHOCKING TO PEOPLE. AND YOU DON'T ALWAYS GET IT RIGHT AWAY. I CAN'T STRESS THIS ENOUGH TO VISITORS. YOU WILL NOT ALWAYS GET IT RIGHT AWAY. IT MAY TAKE YOU YEARS TO REALLY UNDERSTAND AND THEN TO BEGIN TO HAVE NOT JUST AN INTELLECTUAL UNDERSTANDING OF THE ART. BECAUSE THAT COMES FIRST. BUTT TO HAVE A REALLY EMOTIONAL, AN INTUITIVE RESPONSE TO THE WORK OF ART. THAT TAKES TIME.

**FABRIZIO**

15:30

THE BRUSH STROKES ARE IMPORTANT...RIGHT?

**WILLIAM ROBINSON**

15:45

PROBABLY THE BEST EXAMPLE IN THE SHOW IS VAN GOGH. I MEAN HE'S JUST A MANIAC PAINTER. BUT WHAT I THINK PEOPLE DON'T UNDERSTAND, HE'S UNDER TREMENDOUS CONTROL AT THE SAME TIME. HE'S, HE WAS BRILLIANT. I THINK PEOPLE HAD A LOT OF MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT VINCENT VAN GOGH. HE SPOKE MULTIPLE LANGUAGES FLUENTLY, ENGLISH, DUTCH, FRENCH, HE READ LIT.. IF YOU READ HIS LETTERS YOU WILL UNDERSTAND HE WAS BRILLIANT. I MEAN TOTALLY BRILLIANT. AND YOU SHOULD LOOK AT HIS DRAWINGS. HE WAS A GREAT DRAFTSMAN. ONE OF THE GREATEST DRAFTSMAN IN THE HISTORY.. HIS DRAWINGS ARE BEAUTIFULLY CONTROLLED, THE SENSE OF SPACE. AND HE TAKES THAT INTO PAINTING THOUGH. I MEAN IT'S ALMOST, WITH, WITH THOSE ENERGETIC LINES. LIKE HE'S, YOU KNOW WITH THE BRUSH THOUGH, IT'S AS IF HE'S DRAWING. AND UM, THE KIND OF ENERGY AND EXCITEMENT THAT HE IS ABLE TO PUT INTO A PAINTING. CHANGED THE COURSE OF THE HISTORY OF ART. SO MANY ARTISTS WERE INFLUENCED BY HIM, GERMAN EXPRESSIONISM, THE.. HENRI MATISSE. ALL OF THOSE ARTISTS WERE STRONGLY INFLUENCED BY THIS REVOLUTIONARY WAY OF PAINTING.

**FABRIZIO**

16:54

TALK ABOUT THE IMPORTANCE OF NATURE. WHY WAS IT IMPORTANT TO BE OUTSIDE CREATING THIS ART.

**WILLIAM ROBINSON**

17:02

WELL THEY THOUGHT OF THEMSELVES ALMOST AS SCIENTISTS YOU KNOW? THEY THOUGHT OF.. YOU CAN'T... IF YOU PAINT A LANDSCAPE IN THE STUDIO, YOU ARE JUST MAKING THIS UP. YOU KNOW, IT'S A TOTAL FICTION. SO IN ORDER TO UNDERSTAND NATURE THEY WENT OUTSIDE. YOU KNOW, MONET DID THIS LARGE PAINTING AND HE DUG A TRENCH SO HE COULD RAISE AND LOWER THE CANVAS. THERE'S A PAINTING IN THE SHOW BY MONET. IT'S A SEASCAPE. YOU SEE THE SHORELINE AND FROM X-RAYING IT WE KNOW THAT HE ACTUALLY CHANGED THE SHORELINE BECAUSE THE TIDE HAD COME IN. SO THEY ARE TRYING TO CAPTURE THE REALITY OF LIGHT AND REFLECTION AND ALL OF THAT YOU SEE OUTDOORS AND THAT EFFECTED THEIR

TECHNIQUE THOUGH. THEY REALIZED THEY COULDN'T CAPTURE THIS WITH THE OLD TECHNIQUES OF WORKING VERY SLOWLY AND MINUTELY. YOU CAN'T, AND THEY WENT IN WITH THE BRUSH STROKE TO SUGGEST WIND AND ATMOSPHERE AND IT WAS VERY IMPORTANT FOR THEM TO BE PAINTERS OF MODERN LIFE. AND IN A WAY, THEY THOUGHT OF THEMSELVES AS REALISTS BY THE WAY. NOT EVERYBODY LIKED THAT TERM. DEGASSE HATED THE WORD IMPRESSIONISTS. HE CONSIDERS HIMSELF A REALIST.

**FABRIZIO**

18:10

HOW DO YOU THINK THIS MOVEMENT TRANSFORM THE WAY WE SEE ART? THE WAY WE SEE LIFE?

**WILLIAM ROBINSON**

18:21

WELL IT TOTALLY CHANGED THE DIRECTION OF ARTS AND CULTURE. UM, AND IT ALSO..THERE'S SO MANY ASPECTS TO THIS BECAUSE THE OTHER THING THAT THE IMPRESSIONISTS DID IS THAT THEY BROKE AWAY FROM THE IDEA OF ART BEING SOMETHING BEING CONTROLLED AND SANCTIONED BY THE STATE. WHICH IS WAS TRUE IN FRANCE AT THE TIME. YOU KNOW THERE WAS AN ANNUAL EXHIBITION CONTROLLED BY THE FRENCH GOVERNMENT TO UPHOLD THE VALUE OF FRENCH ART BY THE WAY. THEY EVEN INSISTED THAT YOU HAD TO EXHIBIT YOUR PAINTING IN CERTAIN KINDS OF FRAMES. SO THE IMPRESSIONIST WERE AMONG THE FIRST ARTISTS TO HOLD THEIR OWN INDEPENDENT EXHIBITIONS. IT WAS A GREAT REVOLUTION, THEY WERE RISKING EVERYTHING. IT'S LIKE THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION YOU KNOW, WHEN THEY PLEDGE THEIR SACRED FORTUNES IN LIFE. THEY WERE RISKING THEIR CAREERS, THEIR RE.. EVERYTHING, UM, TO SET OUT ON THIS NEW PATH. AND THAT, THAT CHANGE OF THE ARTIST NO LONGER NECESSARILY WORKING AT THE PLEASURE OF THE GOVERNMENT OR THE CHURCH AND INSTEAD OF BEING INDEPENDENT CREATORS, CHANGED THE HISTORY OF 20TH CENTURY CULTURE.

**FABRIZIO**

19:35

I WANT TO TALK ABOUT A COUPLE OF THE PAINTINGS. THE RED KERCHIEF BY MONET. WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THIS AND SPRING FLOWERS, HOW ARE YOU BEGINNING TO SEE HIS ART CHANGE?

**WILLIAM ROBINSON**

20:06

WELL SPRING FLOWERS WAS PAINTED WHEN HE WAS A YOUNG ART STUDENT IN PARIS. AND IT'S VERY TRADITIONAL AND ITS PALETTE AND ITS SUBJECT. THE RED KERCHIEF IS ONE OF THE MOST REVOLUTIONARY PAINTINGS IN THE HISTORY OF ART. IT'S REALLY OVERLOOKED. AND LET ME TELL YOU A LITTLE BIT ABOUT THE PAINTING. HE STARTED WITH A VERY CONVENTIONAL IDEA OF DEPICTING TWO FIGURES INSIDE A ROOM TALKING TO EACH OTHER. AND IN FACT, BY X-RAYING IT, THAT'S HOW WE KNOW THAT. AND THEN AT A CERTAIN POINT, HE CAME UP WITH THIS WILD IDEA, HE PAINTED THOSE FIGURES OUT AND YOU SEE A FRENCH DOOR, WINDOWS, AND YOU SEE A WOMAN WHO WALKS QUICKLY PAST BEHIND A SNOWY BACKDROP, SHE STOPS FOR A SECOND AND LOOKS BACK AT US AND YOU JUST SEE THIS BLURRY FACE. I MEAN LOOK AT THE EYES, THERE'S NO, IT'S JUST LITTLE DABS OF PAINT. AND THE WHOLE REST OF THE ROOM IS DONE IN A SIMILAR TECHNIQUE WHERE YOU SEE THE LIGHT FLOODING INTO THE ROOM RENDERED BY LITTLE STABS OF UNMODELED, YOU KNOW, THERE'S NO GRAY TONES TO MODULATE, IT'S JUST PURE COLOR VERY QUICKLY APPLIED. IT'S A PAINTING THAT I

KNOW THAT MONET LOVED AND VALUED. HE KEPT IT WITH HIM FOR HIS ENTIRE LIFE. IF YOU LOOK AT PHOTOGRAPHS OF MONET'S STUDIO TOWARD THE END OF HIS LIFE WHERE HE HAS THOSE GREAT PANELS OF THE WATER LILIES FROM (?), YOU WILL SEE THAT PAINTING HANGING IN THE MIDDLE OF THE ROOM. IT MEANT SO MUCH TO HIM PARTLY BECAUSE IT'S A GREAT WORK OF AND I THINK ALSO FOR SENTIMENTAL REASONS BECAUSE IT DEPICTS (?) WHO WAS HIS FIRST WIFE WHO DIED TRAGICALLY IN THE 1870'S. AND IT'S THE KIND OF PICTURE BY THE WAY THAT I THINK OUR MUSEUM IS KNOWN FOR. GREAT BREAKTHROUGH, IMPORTANT WORK OF ART THAT, THAT WAS CRITICAL TO THIS.. HE NEVER SIGNED IT BY THE WAY. NEVER WAS GOING TO SELL THAT PAINTING BY THE WAY. NEVER.

**FABRIZIO**

21:42  
WHY?

**WILLIAM ROBINSON**

21:43  
IT MEANT SO MUCH TO HIM.

**FABRIZIO**

21:48  
LET ME ASK YOU, WHO IS THIS WOMAN? IT'S HIS MISTRESS WHO BECOMES HIS WIFE.

**WILLIAM ROBINSON**

22:05  
RIGHT, HE'S LIVING WITH HER AT THE TIME AND DIED TRAGICALLY IN THE 1870'S.

**FABRIZIO**

22:12  
WHAT WAS THEIR RELATIONSHIP LIKE, DO WE KNOW?

**WILLIAM ROBINSON**

22:14  
WELL, IT WAS UH, THEY HAD A TOUGH TIME. VERY LITTLE MONEY. MONET WAS CONSTANTLY BORROWING FROM OTHER PEOPLE. VERY POOR. AND SHE WAS MARRIED TO SOMEONE WHO WAS TOTALLY DEVOTED TO HIS ART. THERE'S A VERY WELL KNOWN PAINTING THAT HE DID ON HER DEATH BED. AND HE'S LOOKING AT HER AND SHE'S DYING. AND HE'S LOOKING AT THE WAY HER FACE IN CHANGING COLORS. AND HE TAKES AND HE DOES A PAINTING OF HER. AND HE'S, MONET IS SO FOCUSED ON HIS ART. IT'S EXTRAORDINARY.

**FABRIZIO**

22:53  
DESCRIBE THE GLANCE THAT SHE IS GIVING US. THAT GLANCE IS THE PERSONIFICATION OF THIS ERA IN PAINTING. THAT MOMENTARY GLANCE.

**WILLIAM ROBINSON**

23:17  
WELL, I THINK EVERYTHING THAT NEEDS TO BE SAID ABOUT IMPRESSIONISM CAN BE SAID WITH THAT PICTURE. IT'S SUMS IT ALL UP. IT HAS THAT SENSE OF MOVEMENT, INSTANTANEOUSNESS, INTENSE COLOR, REFLECTED LIGHT. AND THE FACE, THE FACE IS JUST EXTRAORDINARY. IT'S JUST THOSE QUICK DABS OF PAINT. NOBODY BEFORE MONET WOULD HAVE THOUGHT OF PAINTING A FACE LIKE THAT. ARE YOU KIDDING?

AND OF COURSE, IF HE HAD BEEN PAINTING SOME PERSON WHO HAD COMMISSIONED THE WORK, THEY WOULD HAVE REJECTED IT. SO NOT SURPRISINGLY, HIS WIFE WOULDN'T DO THAT. IT'S JUST SUCH A REVOLUTIONARY PICTURE. AND YOU HAVE TO SEE THESE THINGS IN PERSON. YOU HAVE TO GET CLOSE TO THEM. TO SEE THE WAY HE PAINTS THAT FACE, IT'S REALLY UNBELIEVABLE.

**FABRIZIO**

24:06

SO THAT EXPERIENCE, THE PEOPLE WHO ARE GOING TO BE COMING HERE IN THE NEXT COUPLE OF WEEKS, DOES THAT SORT OF EXCITE YOU, THINKING THAT PEOPLE WILL BE STANDING THERE EXPERIENCING THAT? DO YOU IMAGE PEOPLE SEEING IT FOR THE FIRST TIME, NOT FROM THE CATALOG BUT IN PERSON?

**WILLIAM ROBINSON**

24:20

ABSOLUTELY. IT EXCITES ME. YOU KNOW, THE ONLY THING THAT BOTHERS ME ABOUT TOURING THIS COLLECTION IS THAT I CAN NO LONGER COME DOWN FROM MY OFFICE AND LOOK AT THESE THINGS. BUT SEEING THEM AGAIN, EVERY TIME, AND THAT'S, THAT'S TO ME THE CORE OF A GREAT WORK OF ART. IT CONSTANTLY HAS THAT EXCITEMENT TO IT.

**FABRIZIO**

24:40

I WANT TO ASK ABOUT THE VAN GOGH PIECE. IS THAT AN OFFICIAL TITLE FOR IT?

**WILLIAM ROBINSON**

24:53

NOW YOU HAVE TO BE REALLY CAREFUL WITH TITLES BECAUSE THEY ARE OFTEN MADE UP BY DEALER AND SOMETIMES BY CURATOR AND SOMETIMES THEY ARE WRONG. SO BE CAUTIOUS.

**FABRIZIO**

25:02

GOT YOU. OK.

**WILLIAM ROBINSON**

25:06

BUT IT IS TWO TREES ON A HILLSIDE.

**FABRIZIO**

25:11

THERE YOU GO, THIS IMAGE IS IN AN ERA FOR VAN GOGH. THIS IS AFTER THAT TERRIBLE TIME AFTER HE CUTS OFF HIS EAR. HE HAS COMMITTED HIMSELF. SO WHAT'S GOING ON WITH VAN GOGH AT THIS TIME?

**WILLIAM ROBINSON**

25:37

LET'S START WITH THIS. A VERY POPULAR MISCONCEPTION ABOUT VAN GOGH. BECAUSE THEY'VE SEEN THE MOVIES AND THEY'VE READ THAT HE WOULD HAVE THESE WILD ATTACKS AND THAT MAYBE HAD SOME TYPE OF MENTAL ILLNESS. HE DID HAVE HIS ATTACKS. WE STILL DON'T QUITE UNDERSTAND THEM BUT HE NEVER PAINTED WHEN HE WAS IN THAT STATE. NEVER, NEVER, NEVER. UM, AS I MENTIONED HE WAS THIS BRILLIANT MAN. A GREAT WRITER, EXTREMELY LITERATE, AN INCREDIBLE

DRAFTSMAN. AND HE HAD THIS INCIDENT THAT WE DON'T QUITE UNDERSTAND WHERE HE HAD HALLUCINATIONS, HE HEARD THINGS AND HE SLICED OFF PART OF HIS EAR AND HE RAN TO A BROTHEL AND HE GAVE IT TO ONE OF THE WOMAN AS A PRESENT. THE TOWNSPEOPLE WERE REALLY UPSET AND THEY WANTED HIM INSTITUTIONALIZED. SO HE VOLUNTARILY WENT TO THIS ASYLUM. AT FIRST HE WASN'T ALLOWED TO PAINT AND THEN, HE HAD A VERY SYMPATHETIC DOCTOR BY THE WAY. AND HE REALIZED THAT PAINTING WAS GOOD FOR VINCENT. HE FIRST LET HIM PAINT INSIDE HIS ROOM. AND THEN VINCENT WANTED TO GO OUT BECAUSE VINCENT WAS A GUY WHO WANTED TO REACT IMMEDIATELY TO WHAT WAS IN FRONT OF HIM. AND SO THEY LET HIM TO GO OUT, ACCOMPANIED BY THAT GUARD THROUGH THE NEIGHBORING VILLAGES AND TOWNS AND FIELDS AND THIS IS WAS THAT TIME, THAT SUMMER AND THAT FALL WHEN HE PAINTED MANY OF HIS GREATEST WORKS. STARRY NIGHT, WHEAT FIELD WITH CYPRESS TREES AND THE POPLAR TREES. THAT WAS PAINTED IN OCTOBER DURING THAT PERIOD. BUT THAT, IT WAS DEFINITELY PAINTED OUTSIDE AND DIRECTLY FROM NATURE. AND YOU CAN JUST SEE THE WAY HE IS REACTING TO THE LANDSCAPE AND OF COURSE HE SAW ALL OF THESE THINGS METAPHORICALLY, THE CYPRESS TREES TO HIM WERE SYMBOLS OF DEATH. CERTAIN COLORS HE ASSOCIATED WITH IDEAS. BLUE WAS A VERY SOOTHING COLOR, HE ASSOCIATED IT WITH ETERNITY. SO UM, IT'S, IT'S AND IMPORTANT PAINTING FROM THAT CRITICAL PERIOD IN HIS LIFE.

**FABRIZIO**

27:31

IN JUNE HE PAINTS STARRY NIGHT, WE SHOULD SAY SOMETHING ABOUT THAT. WHAT DO WE KNOW ABOUT THAT IMAGE?

**WILLIAM ROBINSON**

27:50

NO I DON'T THINK IT WAS PAINTED AT NIGHT.

**FABRIZIO**

27:53

OBVIOUSLY NOT, I GUESS. BUT DO WE KNOW ANYTHING ABOUT THE IMPRESSION THAT HE GOT AT NIGHT? DID HE SAY MUCH ABOUT THAT PAINTING?

**WILLIAM ROBINSON**

27:59

OH YEAH. HE WROTE ABOUT THAT PAINTING A LOT. HE WRITES ABOUT ALL OF HIS PAINTINGS. I, IF ANYONE IS INTERESTED IN VAN GOGH, READ HIS LETTERS AND HE TALKS ABOUT HIS WORK ENDLESSLY. AND HE DID TALK ABOUT THAT PAINTING AS AN EXPRESSION OF ETERNITY AND HUMANITY AND UM. HE HAD A LOT OF IDEAS BEHIND HIS PAINTINGS TOO. HE'S NOT JUST A PERSON WHO IS JUST INTERESTED IN MOVING PAINTING AROUND. AND THIS WAS PART OF HIS GENERATION OF ARTISTS TOO, WHO BY THE WAY WANTED TO GO BEYOND, THEY WERE VERY CRITICAL OF THE IMPRESSIONISTS BECAUSE THEY THOUGHT THAT THESE WERE PEOPLE WHO WERE ONLY REACTING TO NATURE. AND INSTEAD THEY WANTED TO PAINT FROM INSIDE AND THEY WANTED TO PAINT ABOUT IDEAS AND FROM THE IMAGINATION AND THEY WANTED TO GET THAT INTO THEIR PAINTINGS.

**FABRIZIO**

28:40

TALK ABOUT WHEN YOU SEE THE POPLARS. DESCRIBE IT FOR US.

**WILLIAM ROBINSON**

28:50

WELL I SEE THE TWO TREES IN THIS INCREDIBLY ENERGETIC, ALMOST EXPLOSIVE LANDSCAPE BUT WHICH IS AT THE SAME TIME VERY PEACEFUL. (?) THE TWO THINGS TOGETHER WHICH IS AMAZING. UM, THAT INCREDIBLE BRUSH WORK, WHERE HE'S JUST, HE'S DRAGGING IT THROUGH MOUNDS OF PAINT. AND AT THE SAME TIME IT'S VERY, VERY CONTROLLED. YOU KNOW, EVERY LINE, EVERY..EVERYTHING IS ABOUT THIS KIND OF RHYTHMIC MOVEMENT THAT SINGS TOGETHER. I MEAN YOU JUST HAVE TO SEE VAN GOGH PAINTINGS IN PERSON TO UNDERSTAND THIS ASPECT OF HIS WORK. YOU'LL NEVER SEE IT IN A BOOK BECAUSE YOU CAN'T SEE THE TEXTURE, YOU CAN'T GET THE FEELING OF THE ENERGY THAT IT TOOK TO PRODUCE THOSE BRUSH STROKES.

**FABRIZIO**

29:40

IN THE PAINTING YOU SEE AN UNEASY INSTABILITY IN THE PAINTING. BUT YOU DON'T SEE THAT.

**WILLIAM ROBINSON**

29:59

ABSOLUTELY NOT.

**FABRIZIO**

30:00

TALK ABOUT THAT.

**WILLIAM ROBINSON**

30:03

LET ME SAY THIS. I HAVE BEEN ENGAGED IN A VAN GOGH RESEARCH PROJECT FOR SOME, LITTLE TIME NOW. AND WHAT WE'VE BEEN STUDYING IS WHEN VAN GOGH, HE MADE, OFTEN MADE MULTIPLE COPIES OF HIS GREATEST WORKS. THE ART (?), THERE ARE THREE OF THOSE FOR EXAMPLE. AND HE WROTE IN HIS LETTERS, THAT THE FIRST ONE, HE WAS ALWAYS WORRIED ABOUT BECAUSE HE SAID, 'I'M AFRAID OF MY EMOTIONS IN FRONT OF NATURE.' AND IN THE SUBSEQUENT VERSIONS HE WAS TRYING TO CALM THAT. AND IF YOU STUDY THEM VERY CLOSELY YOU WILL SEE THAT THE LINES ARE MUCH FINER, THE COLORS, THERE ARE MORE COLORS BUT THEY ARE MORE CONTROLLED. SO IT'S THE OPPOSITE OF WHAT WE THINK ABOUT VAN GOGH. THIS GUY, HE WAS NOT A MADMAN. HE WAS REALLY INTERESTED IN TRANSFORMING THIS POWERFUL IMPRESSION OF NATURE INTO THIS BEAUTIFUL DECORATION. BUT HE ALSO AT THE SAME TIME WANTED IT TO BE DISTINCTLY MODERN.

**FABRIZIO**

30:51

SO WHEN YOU SEE THAT PAINTING. IT DOESN'T ELICIT A KIND OF MELANCHOLY OR SADNESS KNOWING THAT WHILE HE MAY HAVE BEEN IN CONTROL OF HIS FACULTIES WHILE HE WAS PAINTING, HE WAS GOING THROUGH THE MONUMENTAL STRUGGLES THROUGH OUT HIS LIFE?

**WILLIAM ROBINSON**

31:14

NO, YOU KNOW I DON'T SEE THAT PAINTING THAT WAY. UM, VAN GOGH COULD BE VERY MELANCHOLY AND YOU SEE THAT IN SOME PICTURES BUT NOT IN THAT ONE. I DON'T SEE IT AND WHAT I DO SEE HIM IS USING PAINTING AS A WAY, IT ACTUALLY WAS CALMING FOR HIM OF WORKING THROUGH ISSUES. AGAIN, I HAVE TO REPEAT, WE

REALLY DON'T UNDERSTAND EXACTLY WHAT WAS WRONG WITH HIM. UM, SOME PEOPLE THINK IT WAS EPILEPSY COMPOUNDED BY LACK OF DIET. I HAVE DISCOVERED ONE OTHER THING, HE DID A PHOTOGRAPH OF ONE OF HIS DOCTORS WITH A FOXGLOVE PLANT. FOXGLOVE IS THE SOURCE OF DIGITALIS. UM IT WAS, IT'S NORMALLY USED FOR HEART DISEASE. BUT IT IS ALSO USED FOR PEOPLE WITH EPILEPSY BUT IT CAUSES HALLUCINATIONS. AND WE KNOW THAT VINCENT WAS TAKING FOXGLOVE. SO I DON'T KNOW IF THAT EFFECTED HIS ART OR NOT BUT UM...I THINK HE IS A VERY DIFFERENT PERSON THAN THE WAY HE IS PERCEIVED BY THE PUBLIC.

**FABRIZIO**

32:14

THIS IS A BOOK YOU NEED TO WRITE BY THE WAY.

**WILLIAM ROBINSON**

32:21

I'M WORKING ON IT.

**FABRIZIO**

32:25

THE FINALLY PIECE THAT I WANTED TO TALK ABOUT IS THE RODIN PIECE.

**WILLIAM ROBINSON**

32:34

WELL HE WAS, RODIN WAS COMMISSIONED IN 1884 TO DO A SCULPTURE FOR THE CITY OF CALAIS. IT WAS COMMISSIONED BY THE CITY COUNCIL AND IT WAS TO COMMEMORATE AN EVENT THAT HAPPENED DURING THE HUNDRED YEARS WAR BETWEEN FRANCE AND ENGLAND. UM IN 1347 THE ENGLISH SURROUNDED THE TOWN OF CALAIS AND THEY HAD HELD SIEGE TO THE TOWN FOR A LONG TIME AND THE PEOPLE WERE STARVING. AND THE HEADS OF CALAIS, THE BURGHERS DECIDED TO OFFER TO SIX MEN AS HOSTAGES. THAT THEIR LIVES WOULD BE EXCHANGED IN ORDER FOR THE ENGLISH TO LIFT THE SIEGE. AND THE ENGLISH AGREED AND THAT'S THE SUBJECT OF THIS SCULPTURE. ONE THE THINGS THAT RODIN DID, IS HE WOULD DO A LOT OF STUDIES FOR THE INDIVIDUAL FIGURES AND THEN AFTERWARDS, HE WAS ALSO MAKE UM, IMAGES OF INDIVIDUAL WORKS AND THERE ARE ACTUALLY TWO WORKS FROM THAT SERIES IN THE EXHIBITION. ONE IS A COMPLETE VIEW OF ONE OF THE BURGHERS, A SMALL VERSION AND THEN WE HAVE THIS VERY, THIS INCREDIBLE HEAD UM, THAT RODIN MADE. AND THE AMOUNT OF EMOTION AND THE DRAMA OF THAT HEAD IS REALLY EXTRAORDINARY.

**FABRIZIO**

33:40

IT'S AMAZING. WHO DO YOU SEE WHEN YOU SEE THAT? SAY SOMETHING ABOUT THE SIZE OF THAT. AND THEN THE SENSE OF ANGUISH...

**WILLIAM ROBINSON**

33:54

IT IS ANGUISH. YOU KNOW HE'S OFFERING HIS LIFE UH, IN EXCHANGE FOR HIS HOMETOWN TO BE SAVED. SO YES, AND I THINK RODIN GOT MORE EMOTION INTO SCULPTURE THAN ANY OTHER CONTEMPORARY OF HIS PERIOD. AND YOU KNOW, RODIN IS THE GREAT REVOLUTIONARY FIGURE IN THE HISTORY, MODERN SCULPTURE STARTS WITH RODIN. UM, HE WAS SUED AT ONE POINT AND ACCUSED AT HAVING CAST SOME OF THESE FIGURES FROM LIFE THEY ARE SO REALISTIC. THAT HAPPENED IN THE 1860'S, WITH, THERE'S A SCULPTURE CALLED THE AGE OF BRONZE. BY THE 1880'S HE

HAD ACTUALLY MOVED BEYOND THAT INTO THESE EXTREMELY EXPRESSIVE FIGURES THAT GO BEYOND NATURALISM. WHICH IS WHY HE IS CONSIDERED THIS GREAT TRANSITIONAL FIGURE FROM TRADITIONAL INTO MODERN ART. YOU KNOW, PEOPLE TRY TO MATCH UP THESE WORDS, IMPRESSIONISM, SO ON SO, WITH SCULPTURE. RODIN GOES ACROSS ALL THOSE BOUNDARIES. I MEAN, HE'S AN IMPRESSIONIST AT ONE POINT, HE'S A, BY THIS TIME HE'S ALMOST AN EXPRESSIONISM, I MEAN YOU WON'T SEE ANYONE ELSE WORKING THAT WAY UNTIL THE 20TH CENTURY. SO HE'S AN AMAZING TRANSFORMATIVE FIGURE IN THE HISTORY OF THIS ART FORM. AND OF COURSE WE HAVE ONE OF THE GREAT RODIN COLLECTIONS IN THE U.S. AND YOU SEE A SELECTION OF THEM IN THIS EXHIBITION.

**FABRIZIO**

35:16

THE HEAD, AS I UNDERSTAND IT, THE SCULPTURE THAT HE DID, THEY WEREN'T CRAZY ABOUT IT. THEY WANTED SOMETHING TRADITIONAL, MORE HEROIC.

**WILLIAM ROBINSON**

35:31

EXACTLY, THAT'S VERY COMMON FOR MANY OF THE ARTISTS IN THIS SHOW. THAT THEIR WORKS WERE REJECTED, THEY WERE SCORNE, UM, MANY OF THE NAMES OF THE MOVEMENTS WERE DEROGATORY TERMS. CUBISM, MADE UP BY A CRITIC WHO HATED THEIR ART. AND THEIR WORK WAS NOT WIDELY EXCEPTED DURING ITS TIME. AND BY THE WAY, ONE OF THE REASONS WHY WE HAVE GREAT IMPRESSIONIST ART IN THE U.S. IS THAT THE FRENCH PUBLIC HATED IT. AND THE FIRST PEOPLE TO REALLY BUY IMPRESSIONISM SERIOUSLY WERE AMERICANS. AND MANY OF THE GREATEST IMPRESSIONIST WORKS IN THE WORLD ARE IN THIS COUNTRY AND IT'S TRUE FOR SOME OF THE OTHER MODERN ARTISTS AS WELL. THE RODINS BY THE WAY, MANY OF THEM WERE BOUGHT DIRECTLY OUT OF HIS STUDIO WHILE RODIN WAS ALIVE. SO UH, I GUESS WE ARE FORTUNATE.

**FABRIZIO**

36:18

WE'RE THEY NEGOTIATING WITH RODIN HIMSELF? OR HIS PEOPLE?

**WILLIAM ROBINSON**

36:20

WELL AGENTS AND WITH HIS FOUNDRY, WITH FAMILY. I DON'T, YOU KNOW HE HAD AN ENORMOUS STUDIO SO I DON'T THINK THEY, I DON'T KNOW ACTUALLY.

**FABRIZIO**

36:29

BUT IT GIVE IT A KIND OF IMMEDIACY.

**WILLIAM ROBINSON**

36:32

OH ABSOLUTELY. ABSOLUTELY. AND AGAIN, THIS IS SOMETHING YOU LEARN OVER TIME. I'VE SEEN MULTIPLE VERSIONS OF MANY OF THESE SCULPTURES, I'VE NEVER SEEN BETTER CASTS. WHICH IS AMAZING, NOT EVEN, PARIS DOES NOT HAVE A BETTER AGE OF RODIN THAT WE DO. OURS IS MUCH SUPERIOR.

**FABRIZIO**

36:52

WHAT'S YOUR RECOMMENDATION FOR SOMEONE WHEN THEY COME TO THIS EXHIBIT? SHOULD THEY SEE IT IN PIECES, ALL AT ONCE?

**WILLIAM ROBINSON**

37:15

I WOULD TRY TO SEE IT AT ONCE. BUT I WOULD REALLY, IT DEPENDS ON HOW MUCH TIME YOU HAVE AND WHAT YOUR TOLERANCE IS. I WOULD REALLY TRY TO FOCUS ON THE MAJOR WORKS. AND YOU CAN KIND OF TELL WHERE A WORK IS PLACED IN A GALLERY, WHAT THAT MOST IMPORTANT WORK IN THE GALLERY. IT'S NOT THAT HARD. AND THE OTHER THING I THINK IS REALLY CRITICAL IS TO LOOK AT THE WORK FIRST BEFORE YOU READ THE LABEL. I MEAN YOU'RE TRYING TO REACT TO THIS AND THEN IF YOU GET LOST OR YOU WANT TO KNOW MORE ABOUT IT THEN YOU CAN READ LABELS. THE MOST IMPORTANT REACTION YOU CAN HAVE IS THAT DIRECT RELATIONSHIP WITH COLORS AND LINES AND WHATEVER IT IS ON THE CANVAS.

**FABRIZIO**

37:55

IF YOU WOULD, GO BACK AND TALK ABOUT YOUR RELATIONSHIP TO "LA VIE". IT SEEMS LIKE THAT ONE IS ONE OF YOUR FAVORITES. IS THAT FAIR TO SAY?

**WILLIAM ROBINSON**

38:12

THAT'S MORE THAN FAIR TO SAY. UM, THAT PAINTING HAS ALWAYS INTRIGUED ME. THERE ARE MANY MANY DIFFERENT INTERPRETATIONS. PICASSO SCHOLARS DECLARE IT TO BE ONE OF HIS MOST DIFFICULT AND MYSTERIOUS PAINTINGS. AND I THOUGHT I WAS GOING TO CRACK THE MEANING OF THIS PICTURE. I BEGAN GOING TO SPAIN. MEETING MEMBERS OF HIS FAMILY. STUDYING THE ARTISTS HE WAS ASSOCIATED WITH. AND IT ACTUALLY, THAT WAS THE PAINTING THAT INSPIRED AN EXHIBITION I DID RECENTLY ABOUT MODERN ART IN BARCELONA, LATE 19TH, EARLY 20TH CENTURY THAT WAS IN CLEVELAND AND THE METROPOLITAN. AND THAT'S THE PAINTING THAT REALLY INSPIRED IT. I STILL FEEL VERY PASSIONATELY ABOUT IT. I GOT INTO A DISCUSSION, LET'S PUT IT THAT WAY, WITH JOHN RICHARSON, WHO IS THE GREAT PICASSO BIOGRAPHER, ON NPR ABOUT THE INTERPRETATION OF SOME OF PICASSO'S PAINTINGS. I MEAN PICASSO IS ENDLESSLY FASCINATING ARTISTS. HE IS, THERE IS WITHOUT QUESTION, THE MOST IMPORTANT ARTIST OF THE 20TH CENTURY. AND WHAT WE LOOK AT TODAY IN GALLERIES WOULD NOT BE THE SAME IF HE HAD NOT LIVED.  
[WATER BREAK]

**FABRIZIO**

39:20

LET ME START WITH THIS ONE. HOW DO YOU DESCRIBE YOUR RELATIONSHIP TO THESE PAINTINGS?

**WILLIAM ROBINSON**

39:34

WELL I HAVE BEEN THE CURATOR OF THIS COLLECTION FOR ABOUT 15 YEARS NOW. AND I AM CONSTANTLY LEARNING NEW THINGS ABOUT THEM. THEY ARE TEACHING ME MORE ABOUT THE INDIVIDUAL ARTIST, ABOUT THE WORKS OF ART. AND I SEE NEW THINGS IN THEM EVERY DAY. AND I'VE TRAVELLED TO DIFFERENT COUNTRIES, I LEARN MORE ABOUT THE ARTIST, I COME BACK AND I SEE THESE PICTURES IN AN ENTIRELY DIFFERENT LIGHT. AND I HOPE THAT AUDIENCES HAVE THE SAME REACTION. YOU KNOW THAT'S, IT'S REALLY INTERESTING, YOU KNOW YOU HAVE A PERMANENT COLLECTION THAT JUST HANGS THERE. AND IT'S NOT SO MUCH THAT THE OBJECTS

CHANGE, BUT THE PEOPLE WHO VIEW THEM CHANGE. AS WE LEARN MORE...WHEN I DID THIS EXHIBITION RECENTLY THAT WAS TALKING ABOUT THE HISTORY OF SPAIN, UM, I'LL NEVER SEE THESE WORKS IN THE SAME WAY AGAIN. AT LEAST THE PICASSOS AND THE WORKS... BECAUSE I UNDERSTAND THEIR RELATIONSHIP WITH GREAT, IMPORTANT HISTORICAL EVENTS. AND THAT'S WHAT'S EXCITING ABOUT GREAT ART, IT'S CONSTANTLY GIVING.

**FABRIZIO**

40:37

WHAT WAS IT LIKE IN BEIJING? WHAT WAS THE REACTION LIKE?

**WILLIAM ROBINSON**

40:42

WELL, BEIJING WAS FANTASTIC. THIS EXHIBITION WAS DESCRIBED AS THE MOST IMPORTANT EXHIBITION OF MODERN ART EVER HELD IN CHINA. THERE WERE INCREDIBLE CROWDS. MY MOST MEMORABLE EXPERIENCES WERE TAKING GROUPS OF UNIVERSITY STUDENT THROUGH BECAUSE THEY ARE SO FASCINATED WITH THE WEST. THEY WANT TO KNOW MORE. THEY HAD LOTS OF INTERESTING QUESTIONS. SOME OF WHICH WE MIGHT CONSIDER NAIVE BUT THEIR LEARNING. WE ARE LEARNING ABOUT EACH OTHER. AND IT, I THINK IT'S AN EXAMPLE OF HOW ART CAN BE USED TO BRIDGE GAPS BETWEEN PEOPLE AND CULTURES.

**FABRIZIO**

41:17

IS THERE ONE RIGHT WAY TO HANG A COLLECTION LIKE THIS? YOU GIVE A LOT OF FLEXIBILITY TO INSTITUTIONS THAT...

**WILLIAM ROBINSON**

41:20

EVERY INSTITUTION INSTALLS IT ACCORDING TO THEIR INTERPRETATION OF THE COLLECTION. IT'S FASCINATING TO SEE IT, IT'S INSTALLED DIFFERENTLY AT EVERY VENUE. THE LABELS, INTERPRETIVE MATERIALS ARE ALWAYS DIFFERENT. AND IT'S SOMETHING THAT I LEARN, HELPS ME LEARN MORE ABOUT THE ART.

**FABRIZIO**

41:43

IT SEEMS LIKE THE PAINTINGS, IT'S NOT ENOUGH TO SEE THEM ALONE, BUT SEEING THEM IN A BIGGER CONTEXT. THAT'S WHAT'S GREAT ABOUT AN EXHIBITION.

**WILLIAM ROBINSON**

42:05

THAT'S RIGHT. UM, THERE ARE A NUMBER OF WORKS HUNG IN RELATIONSHIPS HERE THAT WILL TELL YOU A LOT ABOUT THE WORKS OF ART. IT'S VERY DIFFERENT THAN IF YOU SAW THE WORKS INDIVIDUALLY. FOR EXAMPLE, TWO OF MY FAVORITE PAINTINGS, IT'S A PAINTING BY EDOUARD MANET. IT'S A PORTRAIT OF BERT MORISOT WHO WAS ANOTHER IMPRESSIONIST ARTIST. AND THEN THERE'S NEXT TO IT, A PORTRAIT BY BERT MORISOT THAT WAS IN THE VERY FIRST IMPRESSIONIST EXHIBITION. AND I ACTUALLY DIDN'T CARE FOR THAT MANET THAT MUCH WHEN I FIRST SAW IT. AND THEN AS I CAME TO LOOK AT THAT PAINTING MORE AND I CAME TO UNDERSTAND THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THESE TWO PEOPLE [PHONE RING] THE PAINTINGS BECAME MORE MEANINGFUL TO ME [PHONE RING] UM, JUST TO...

**FABRIZIO**

42:51

HOLD ON.

**WILLIAM ROBINSON**

42:58

JUST TO SAY A WORD ABOUT THIS PAINTING BY EDOUARD MANET, WHICH I REALLY DIDN'T CARE FOR THAT MUCH WHEN I FIRST SAW IT. IT IS QUITE UNUSUAL IN THE WAY THAT IT'S PAINTED SO QUICKLY. AND IF YOU'RE A FAN OF MORE TRADITIONAL ART, YOU MIGHT THINK IT'S UNFINISHED. IT'S NOT UNFINISHED. UM, AND IT'S IMPORTANT TO, I THINK, THE UNDERSTANDING OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THESE TWO PEOPLE, MANET AND BERT MORISOT, WHO IS THE SUBJECT OF MANET'S PAINTING. AT THE TIME, WOMAN WERE NOT ALLOWED TO ATTEND THE OFFICIAL ART SCHOOLS IN FRANCE. THEY WERE SHUT OUT. SO BERT MORISOT FIRST STUDIED WITH (?) THEN SHE STUDIES WITH MANET. AND THEY DEVELOPED A VERY, VERY CLOSE RELATIONSHIP. IF YOU LOOK AT PAINTINGS THAT MANET DID WHEN THEY FIRST MET, THEY ARE VERY WOODEN. YOU KNOW, THERE'S NO PERSONALITY TO THEM. THEN HE PAINTS THIS PICTURE OF HER A FEW YEARS LATER AND AT THE TIME YOU HAVE TO UNDERSTAND THAT BERT MORISOT'S PARENTS, SHE CAME FROM A WEALTHY FAMILY, DID NOT WANT HER TO BE AN ARTIST. THEY WERE TELLING HER GET MARRIED, SETTLE DOWN, BECOME A RESPECTABLE WOMAN. AND SHE'S CONFLICTED BECAUSE SHE WANTS TO BE AN ARTIST, SHE'S FITTING AGAINST THE ESTABLISHMENT AND I THINK ALL THAT IS IN MANET'S PAINTING. I THINK ALL OF THAT QUICK BRUSH WORK, THAT KIND OF NERVOUSNESS TO HER FACE. THE WAY SHE GLANCES TO ONE SIDE AND THROWS HER HAIR. I MEAN THIS A WOMAN WHO IS REALLY TORN. AND THAT, THAT'S IN MANET'S PAINTING. AND THAT'S WHY IT'S SO INTERESTING TO SEE THOSE TWO PAINTINGS TOGETHER. AND THEN YOU HAVE BERT MORISOT TRYING TO BE AN IMPRESSIONIST WHERE YOU HAVE THESE BEAUTIFUL REFLECTIONS ON THE, FROM THE LANDSCAPE ON HER BODY. SO TO ME, I'VE LEARNED SO MUCH BY THINKING ABOUT THOSE TWO PICTURES AS A PAIR.

**FABRIZIO**

44:39

WHAT WAS THE DECISION LIKE, THE DECISION MAKING PROCESS LIKE WHEN YOU WERE DECIDING WHETHER NOT TO LET THE EXHIBITION TRAVEL?

**WILLIAM ROBINSON**

44:51

WELL UM, AT AN ART MUSEUM, CURATORS DON'T DECIDE, WE PROPOSE. SO IT WAS UH, A PROPOSAL THAT WAS NOT GREETED ALL THAT ENTHUSIASTICALLY AT FIRST. BECAUSE THE IDEA OF PUTTING ALL THESE GREAT WORKS OF ART TOGETHER AND SENDING THEM AT ONE TIME ON A TOUR WAS HORRIFYING TO OUR TRUSTEES. THE WHOLE IDEA WAS SHOCKING. I MEAN HOW CAN YOU DO THAT, WHAT HAPPENS. I THINK THEY GOT USED TO THE IDEA, I THINK WE TALKED THEM INTO IT. I THINK IT'S AN EXCITING IDEA BUT IT'S SOMETHING THAT WE'VE DONE ONLY BECAUSE WE ARE CURRENTLY IN THE PROCESS OF EXPANDING THE FACILITIES, THE BUILDING IS CLOSED AND I'M SURE WE'LL NEVER SEND THIS COLLECTION ON TOUR AGAIN. SO IT'S, THE EXHIBITION HAS BEEN DESCRIBED AS A ONCE IN A LIFETIME OPPORTUNITY AND IT IS.

**FABRIZIO**

45:41

TALK ABOUT THE CONDITIONS THE ARTIST SHOWN HERE WERE RESISTING.

**WILLIAM ROBINSON**

45:57

IT'S A PERIOD OF REVOLUTIONS IN EVERY SPHERE. I MEAN FOR ME, THE MODERN ERA BEGINS WITH THE FRENCH REVOLUTION. YOU HAD THE IDEA OF GETTING RID OF KINGS, THE WHOLE IDEA THAT PEOPLE CAN DECIDE THINGS FOR THEMSELVES. AND YOU CHALLENGE EVERYTHING. YOU CHALLENGE POLITICAL SYSTEMS, YOU CHALLENGE THOUGHT, IT'S THE RISE OF SCIENCE. IT'S THE AGE OF -ISMS. THERE'S EVERY KIND OF -ISM IN OUR CULTURE IN THE PAST TWO CENTURIES, POLITICALLY, OTHERWISE. AND THESE ARTISTS IN A WAY THOUGHT OF THEMSELVES IN THE SAME WAY AS SCIENTISTS OF THE PERIOD YOU KNOW. YOU DON'T ACCEPT TRADITION. YOU CHALLENGE TRADITION. EVERYTHING MUST BE PUT TO THE TEST. AND YOU MAKE THINGS WHICH ARE CHALLENGING. UM, WE HAVE THIS PHRASE THAT A LOT OF PEOPLE FIND BAFFLING - AVANT-GARDE - A FRENCH PHRASE. IT MEANS THE ADVANCE GUARD. THE PEOPLE WHO ARE AHEAD OF THE REST OF SOCIETY. AND THAT'S WHAT MANY OF THESE ARTIST, THAT'S HOW THEY THOUGHT OF THEMSELVES. AND IN MANY CASES, THEY CREATED THINGS THAT THEY KNEW WOULD NOT BE BROADLY ACCEPTED. THEY MADE THEM TO CHALLENGE ACCEPTED CONVENTIONS. THEY SORT OF MADE THIS IN A WAY TO ASK THE QUESTION, IS THIS A WORK OF ART. AND IN MANY CASES, THEY PUT THOSE WORKS OUT IN THE PUBLIC AND THE PUBLIC SAID NO, THAT'S NOT ART. AND OF COURSE THAT'S STILL GOING ON TODAY. THAT'S WHY WE LIVE IN KIND OF THE AGE OF MODERNISM AND MODERNITY. THE WHOLE CONCEPT OF IT IS THAT THEY ARTISTS CHALLENGE THE ACCEPTED NOTIONS.

**FABRIZIO**

47:24

AND WHAT DIFFERENCE DID IT MAKE, WHAT WAS THE CHANGE?

**WILLIAM ROBINSON**

47:27

WELL THE ART IS CERTAINLY VERY DIFFERENT. AND MANY OF THESE WORKS ARE OVER 100 YEARS OLD. AND THEY'RE STILL AS CHALLENGING NOW AS THEY WERE WHEN THEY WERE CREATED. I HEAR, I GO INTO THE GALLERIES, I LISTEN TO PEOPLE TALK AND THEY ARE OFTEN BAFFLED BY THE WORKS OF ART AND I THINK THE CRITICAL THING IS TO HAVE EXPERIENCE. SEE A LOT OF THEM AND KEEP AN OPEN MIND. AND YOU'LL BE CH... YOU'LL BE AMAZED. I MEAN, I THINK THE ART WILL CHANGE THE VIEWER, IT DOES CHANGE YOU OVER TIME, ESPECIALLY. YOU LEARN MORE, BUT YOU JUST HAVE TO KEEP AN OPEN MIND.

**\*\*THIS TRANSCRIPT HAS NOT BEEN EDITED FOR CONTENT OR GRAMMER\*\***