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May 6, 2009

By [Rebecca J. Razo](#), Managing Editor, Walter Foster, Publishing Division

Categories: [General](#), [Museums and Events](#)

The day started out ordinary enough. It was Valentine’s Day, and though my husband and I traditionally shun the commercialized “holiday,” we threw caution to the wind and ventured north to the J. Paul Getty Museum, also known as the Getty Center, one of Southern California’s most exquisite and intriguing art museums.



*Get lost in the wondrous, transformative nature of a masterful piece of art, such as van Gogh’s The Starry Night, 1889. Image courtesy of Dover.*

We parked the car and boarded the tram for the 5-minute ride up the hilltop where—some 880 feet above sea level—the museum overlooks Los Angeles from the basin to the sea. As we ascended, my excitement grew in anticipation of seeing the featured exhibit, *Captured Emotions: Baroque Painting in Bologna, 1575-1725*. And, still awash in exuberance from having just finished writing a series of artist biographies for Walter Foster’s forthcoming *Daily Book of Art: 365 readings that teach, inspire, and entertain* (October 2009), I was eager to revisit the art of the masters, many of whom I had been researching for months.

My husband and I were chatting quietly, and I was lamenting the fact that our busy schedules usually prevent us from taking cultural excursions. Then I started talking about art—and that’s about the time I completely lost my head.

I don’t know if it was the change in elevation or if I’d had one too many mimosas at brunch. But by the time we’d reached the summit and exited the tramcar, I’d completely transformed from my relatively normal and generally tolerable self into some sort of pseudo art expert/sciolistic monster.

You know the type: It’s the guy who thinks he’s an authority after taking a beginning art-history class or the gal who wants to dazzle her friends with what she thinks is a deep philosophical understanding of art. It’s typically the loudest voice echoing through the exhibit hall. And its very intonation, often

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veiled in a fine mist of pretension, usually sends people scurrying into adjoining rooms to get away.

And, if you were at the Getty Center on February 14, 2009, at about 1:00 pm, chances are that the jarring voice you heard—the one at which you rolled your eyes—was mine.

I prattled on incessantly as I led my husband from room to room like a museum docent. I brandished my knowledge like a rifle, assaulting him with trivia and minutiae I'd gathered from months of research for the book, yet offering far less information than the gallery cards hanging beside each piece.

Soon, my sentences, coherent and sensible just a few hours earlier, had given way to little more than annoying strings of pleonasms: "Just look at the colorful vibrancy of this painting!" I said of van Gogh's *Irises*. "Aren't these luxurious furnishings simply opulent?" I commented while walking through the decorative arts exhibitions.

As we walked from room to room and I continued to rattle off factoid after factoid, I became painfully self-aware that people were moving away—*far* away—from us. I could have been wearing a skunk stole for how quickly the room was clearing. And there, while standing in front of Monet's *Impression, Sunset*, it struck me: I was that annoying voice echoing through the exhibit hall.

I glanced at my husband. Always quiet and generally acquiescent to my whimsical ways, he looked at me and smiled. His face said it all. He'd been patiently waiting for me to exhaust myself, but he was kind enough to let my overzealousness get a workout first. Then he took my hand and led me outside to the terrace.

As we watched the sun descend into the Pacific, I regained my senses.

"Was I obnoxious?" I asked him.

"Not too bad," he said.

I cringed.

I wasn't trying to put on airs or pretend to be something I'm not. But like a child visiting Disneyland for the first time, I was just so darn excited! There's something magical and transformative about being in the presence of great art—the history, the intrigue, the passion, and countless other indescribable aspects. I was enraptured and therefore compelled to share my enthusiasm.

Whether you are a full-time artist or simply enjoy art as a hobby, at Walter Foster Publishing, our job is to excite, inspire, and motivate you to explore the beauty of art in all of its wonderful, spellbinding ways.

That's why we've created the new **Walter Foster Blog**.

Thought-provoking discussions, art trends, interviews with up-and-coming artists, reviews of new products, tricks of the trade, fun facts—you'll find all of this and more right here at <http://www.walterfoster.com/catalog/blog.php> .

Are you an experienced or aspiring artist? Do you have insider information about a hot new art trend? Are you a museum curator? Care to share how your love of Walter Foster books and kits changed your life? Did you have an out-of-body museum experience like me? **We want to hear from you!** If you are interested in contributing to Walter Foster's Blog, send an email to the address below and write "Blog" in the subject line.

May *your* voice soon be the loudest in the museum exhibit hall, as you revel in your excitement for the remarkable and mind-blowing power of art. I promise, I won't roll my eyes.

For information about contributing to the Walter Foster Blog, email Rebecca Razo at [rebecca@walterfoster.com](mailto:rebecca@walterfoster.com).

The J. Paul Getty Museum is located at 1200 Getty Center Drive, Los Angeles, CA., 90049. (310) 440-7300 or visit [www.getty.edu](http://www.getty.edu).