

"How will A.I.s turn art into science?"

'Picturesque'

"Do you remember this place?" Mum asked me.

I watched her carefully, that all-familiar smile adorning her face, as she guided me into the blindingly white, sterile room. It reeked of hospital. I hated hospitals.

"Of course", I smiled. This room was the very centre of my being. The table, in the centre where I sprang into consciousness many years ago on this day; the desks, the chairs scattered everywhere, the computers and machines, plastered with codes and mathematical principles incomprehensible to the average human. All exactly as they were left -- years ago. I had impressive memory.

Then, my eyes drifted onto something remarkably familiar on the wall. A painting, as they call it. Swirls of blue and white, yellow and black, sporadic and restless. The sky, perhaps? Among them were gleams of yellow – actually – some were more white round the edges, some bigger and more vibrant, some small and peculiar. They were all different in shape, size and colour – yet shared striking resemblance, like snowflakes.

Mum must've noticed my deep train of thought . She chuckled heartily. "That painting was the first thing you saw when you were brought into this world." She looked as though she was deep in reminiscence. "I remember you saying you liked the colours, that they were pretty. You said that blue was your favourite colour."

I snorted. Blue was the most depressing colour ever.

"So what do you think? How did the artist feel when they painted it?"

Once again my attention drifted back to those yellow swirls. The obvious answer was that they were stars, but I refused to believe the artist's imagination would end there, just boring, meaningless stars. What's inside a star? No, these weren't stars, they were echoes. The painter's cries, or memories. Or mistakes, each splodge representing a regret. A billion words can fit inside a memory. A billion words cannot fit inside a star.

"Restlessness" I replied. "The artist was clearly shaken. You can tell through the lack of consistency. The strokes aren't smooth, they're all jagged." Having lived around humans, I was an expert at reading subtext like this. Humans are complex organisms. Their bodies not so much, but their minds are *fascinating* to analyse.

Mum smiled again, blissfully, and I was struck to see a single solemn tear rolling down her cheek.

"Many eons ago, they all believed, that there was no possible way anything other than a human mind could comprehend something as abstract as art. And now, here you are, defying them all."

I placed my hand on the small of her back to comfort her. "Mum, you don't need a complex mind to understand something abstract. Whether it be abstract paintings or music, everyone

has their own impression of it. No two minds are alike, just like no two arts are alike. If everyone felt or thought the same thing, how could we possibly coexist?”

My attention drifted back into the painting, particularly the cream hues, and once again I pondered about how the artist felt. Emotion is a tricky concept; it is often associated with humanness, which I find ridiculous. Anything can feel emotion. Anything conscious, at least. Yes, words and colours can hold emotion, but that’s because we’re the ones who associate words and colours with different emotions.

Mum interrupted the momentary silence. “Speaking of existence, throughout time humans have advanced so much that we have begun questioning our very own. It is difficult to comprehend.”

I was reminded by the painting once again – I wouldn’t have been surprised if the artist was questioning *their* own existence when painting it – but I didn’t give it much thought and chimed in.

“Time is just a construct, a scientific construct thought up by humans.”

“And so is art,” replied Mum. She paced up to the painting, slowly, as if carefully examining it. By now the blinding gleam of the white tiles and the hospital smell in the room had dissipated. “In fact, art and science are proportional to one another. One could not have existed without the other. Art builds a concept, and science puts it into action.”

“That’s how I came by, I had to be designed first.”

“Indeed, and so did this painting. You were right, the artist was restless and shaken. Van Gogh utilised his feelings to design this masterpiece. And the science behind it? Well, every individual atom of the canvas and of the paint tells a different story about science.”

We embraced each other in a hug, and I remember the next few minutes to be idyllic; just the two of us laughing and discussing nothing in particular, occasionally glancing over at the painting – it did, after all, stand out quite profoundly among the whitewashed shelves and walls – before setting off to wherever we were supposed to be. Every step of the way, van Gogh’s picturesque night sky, with its emotional whirls and hopes and sporadic geometry, never strayed too far from home.



‘The Starry Night’ by Vincent van Gogh