

Picture Imperfect

Whilst reading an article on “Why are young people today not interested in traditional art?” my attitude changed from mind-dumbing boredom to one of indescribable annoyance. When replying to the endless questions of “what are you studying at uni?” I actually think that my response of “History of Art” receives a surprisingly warm welcome. However; I digress. The issue which really bothers me, is that despite the country’s youth being labelled as ‘not interested’ in art, and the ‘cleverest’ students (apparently) all applying for medicine, dentistry and natural science, where is the room for art appreciation to be taken up as anything more than a hobby? Furthermore, as I write this essay on the train back from London, having left the Tate Modern in a huff, how can we expect students to get involved in Art when the cost of a student ticket to a Tate exhibition is around the 13 pounds mark? Exhibitions themselves are what inspire some young art historians in-the-making, and to be charging such prices annoys me somewhat. And this is Roy Lichtenstein, pop art extraordinaire, his works will be better recognised and received than the old classics by the youth of today. I’m not expecting galleries to make exhibitions free, or for the younger generations to be particularly interested in ‘Italian altarpieces pre-1500’, but I do feel that if a gallery think they are holding an exhibition which could draw in a younger crowd, they should reduce the cost to students and children (if children aren’t already free). I feel that this could benefit the galleries too. Art is infectious and if you can draw in a younger fan base, they will want to go to exhibitions in the future, even for decades to come (I know I will be when I’m older). But I am one of the converted, and it’s hard to convince someone who isn’t passionate about art that it’s worth a gallery visit for 13 pounds. I know countless teenagers how ‘like’ or are ‘kind of interested’ in art, and who admit that they would enjoy an exhibition opening, but again, as students it’s hard to prise them from 13 pounds unless it’s something they really want to go to.

This price tag to entrance fees also fuels the common thought that art is only to be appreciated by middle and upper class male 50-somethings in tweed jackets and red corduroy pants. Even worse, I encountered 3 or 4 school trips in the gallery. Great right? Wrong. They were all French students. I for one can’t recall any trips to art galleries whilst at school, never mind foreign galleries, and that perhaps highlights a difference between ‘European’ and British educations. With students being tested and pressured to qualify for various stages in their educative lifecycle, I really do feel that the British youth miss out on wider culture, and without sounding cliché, they learn less about the wider world. No wonder our women find mainland men so mystical and sexy. They know a bit about everything, whilst our students know a lot about nothing. They somehow manage to go to galleries without wearing red corduroy or tweed. Lefts face it Britain, our galleries need to ‘bring sexy back’, and I for one, shall gladly lead the way.

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