

Looking at her hurt. The way her eyes rolled up, searching for a purpose, the way her dull, blue dress made her skin shine through, giving her a ghostly presence. I had never seen a woman so beautiful be so haunting. Her cheeks were rosy, but not the kind that promised good health and a blushing grin. The kind that had been battered, scraped, pressed against with the sole purpose of inflicting pain.

I wanted to touch her. Glide my fingers over the airy ruffles of that dull, blue dress that seemed to float above the floor like a cloud. Feel her cinnamon curls, pulled back tightly enough to reveal her soft complexion. She reminded me of my 5th grade teacher, Ms. Benson, who would always pat down her tailored skirts, trying to brush away the uncleanness of the world. Her attention never seemed to be on the 11 year old children she was meant to take care of.

This woman had been through hell. I could see it in the way she interlocked her fingers through the dark beads of her rosary, letting the cross weave in and out of her fingertips. She clutched it so tightly I could only imagine the imprint it left in her skin.

It was time to move on. Once the connection between unspoken emotions is bound together, it's always time to move on. My eyes shift to the blank, white walls, searching for indulgence. I probably won't find what I'm looking for, though it's not that nothing can be found.

I look out of his bedroom window only to gaze at what must be the first sight he saw when he woke up each morning and the

last sight he saw when he laid his heavy head down to rest. It's the lily pads that keep me coming back. Even the slightest movement from the life hiding beneath the cold seal of water breaks through to the surface, radiating out, piercing through the still, shallow pond. Water lilies bob up and down to the vibrations, the disturbances. If the hunger for visual delicacies is stronger than the drive for social enthusiasm, Giverny, France is the place to be.

I can imagine him perched at his windowsill taking in the beauty of what must have taken years to accomplish. Flowers dug their roots into every inch of dirt, trees wept through their branches forming the stream below. I don't believe I've ever seen a water lily in real life, but I can only imagine how sweet they would smell if I could only cup one's soft petals around the ridge of my nose.

I must have dozed off. The thick, gooey surface began to creep its way through my mind, building a box around me. I've never been much of a fan of impressionism, though the history behind each piece pushes to the outermost layer, starring the observer straight in the face. The contrast of colors leaves its footprints in one's imagination, but never quite feeds the hunger of one's fantasies.

It was time to find something more out of the ordinary. More silhouettes embodying the image of a once lively person and fading landscapes chipping away their individuality won't do me any good.

I search the walls again, walking across the cold marble floors.

I peek around slim, white corners, feeling the dense support structure holding this building in tact.

I spotted it from across the hall almost as if we were destined to discover each other's presence. I could feel a sort of faint tug on my chest as if it was dragging me in like a fish being reeled towards its predator's grip. The layout of their body made it hard to depict if they were a man or a woman. Their body's outline appeared jagged and misplaced. Just looking at the way each body part sectioned off into its own individualized image, like a puzzle with all the wrong pieces, made my stomach turn. As I stepped closer the more familiar they became. I did not know this person, this thing, but it continued to pull at the strings of my memories and tracing back the unpaved roads of my mind.

Mutilation, that's the word.

The way their body appear contorted reminded me only of the set of memories I had tried so hard to forget.

Swim season was filled with disfigurements. The way our bodies morphed to the sport was difficult to comprehend right away. Girls' bodies grew sharp edges and thick masses that coincided with their stroke. Hipbones poked through skintight bathing suits as weight began to melt off and muscle began to weave around our bones. Every girl was different. I remember coming into the locker room each morning seeing how contrasting the rate of development each girl had inherited. Some stood nearly still, wrapping towels around themselves like cocoons, hiding their pointed edges and frail bodies that stood straight up and down. Others peeled away their damp, musty suits off like

band-aids, revealing their rounded surfaces. Being young requires the stages of disproportion, as does any---

"I never really liked Picasso's work." a man's voices echoed from over my shoulder.

After two years of coming to the Detroit Institute of Art, every Sunday, alone, this was the first time anyone has ever had the audacity to interrupt my solitude.

"I completely disagree." I replied, still shaken by surprise. "His work represents objects from all perspectives, all at once. It's brilliant really."

"Cubism isn't brilliant. It represents the mutilation of the human body into fragments; it eats away at the natural beauty of an object. Art is about aesthetics and appealing to an audience."

"Art is not about appeal or beauty, it's quite the opposite. A "good" artist will focus on the unpleasant aspects of their audience's ideas and use the reaction of distaste to fuel change or awareness. All art should be made for a reason, don't you think?"

"Sure, you could say that makes things a little more interesting, but art began as a way of capturing the natural beauty of the world, not tearing up public opinion simply to create an uproar of ideas."

"But the only way to induce change is to make a scene. Paintings of landscapes have no deeper meaning."

"I guess."

There's silence for a while. I can feel the heat from his body radiating outwards onto mine. He was so close to me his heavy breathes brushed over the back of my neck, creating a domino effect of hairs piercing upwards. As the air flowed in and out

of his lungs more rapidly, so did my steps leading the way through the nearest cool, empty hallway. I immediately saw the sign labeled "Eighteenth Century American Artwork".