

Madison Scott

English 101

Mr. Kilduff

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*On the 8th Day God Said, 'Let The Artist, Be Damned'*

'Portrait of the Artist' by Vincent Van Gogh hangs in a gold frame in Musee D'orsay in Paris, France. His sorrow is captured in pale greens and blues, though merciful brushstrokes, and it was conceived only a year before his death. He wrote to his brother in the midst of a depressive episode and describes this painting as his '*True Character*'. Van Gogh saw beauty in the things that others didn't give a second thought, and that is what it means to be a true artist. Artists seek refuge in black ink and frayed brushes. Yet, when words fail there is nothing left but chicken scratch in worn journals, and paint brushes that have been embalmed by acrylic. Words often fail artists, as most cultural structures do. Creating art is about being authentic. Therefore, artisans must break the metal shackles that our minds have been anchored with by society. The role of the artist is to harbor the heartache of society, and immortalize it for the generations that follow.

The relationship between The Artist and language is like how an old dog tied to a post loves its owner. Or the way a beggar that has nothing left to pray for, stands with an empty can on the steps of a church. The Artist is in a complex, yet synonymous, love affair with language. May the weight of language be emphasized, without it, a complex society cannot exist. Language is the seed of life for civilization, and yet simplifies the complexities of human nature. The Artist can be grateful for the joys language brings, and still recognize it as a form of restraint. Language is a double-edged sword. It is humanity's greatest gift, and worst enemy. Each cultural institution, concept of identity and personal relationships have been constructed by the use of

language. Words are incredibly powerful, especially for something inanimate and intangible. However, the human mind is complex and impossible to understand, words do not justify the depth and spirituality humans experience. There are some experiences that cannot be conveyed through words, they can only be felt.

*The Tortured Artist* is helpless, like a baby bird that tumbled from the nest. The Artisan must use his ink, his canvas and his studio to nurse himself back to good health. Just as a young girl who found the baby bird in the park, might wrap the bird in a blanket and hand feed him seeds until he is strong enough to fly again. An artist that cannot devote himself to creation, will never know himself. It is assumed that the strongest form of intimacy is between lovers, but truly knowing yourself without fear, is an indescribable sensation of intensity and freedom. Below is an excerpt from Abelardo 'Lalo' Delgado's poem, 'stupid america'. Delgado delicately writes about how society demonizes minority groups, and assumes violence or incapability of them.

he is the picasso

of your western states

but he will die

with one thousand

masterpieces

hanging only from his mind.

(stupid america, Delgado)

Where does the artist turn when society won't let them create? Delgado delicately explains how Mexican-American people are not given the same freedom to create as White Americans. The cage of language cannot be solely faulted for the restriction of creation. With complex systems comes inequality, which is seen in our schools, access to resources and the approval of creating art between cultures. There is an epidemic of hollow hearts and sorrowful souls that turn cruel, because we shame people for their vulnerability and have no respect for creatives. There are unwritten poems behind the eyes of strong men. There are women with hands that were destined for painting, but have never held a brush because they are occupied tending to children. Language and power hold hands. Every Bible, written law and fairytale tells us who to be and how we should be living.

We will never live to see a modern day renaissance. Art is no longer esteemed. To be a poet in modern America, is to live as a street cat in its last life. To relieve the blame on the artist, let it be understood that the people in power utilize the beauty of language against us. It is not the artists, the Jane Doe's or The Jones' that weaponized language in the pursuit of power. It is Big Brother and the men in suits on T.V. that tell us who to love and who to hate. There is power in the ability to create through the expression of language, but there is no freedom when there is a fear of creation.