**From the World of Arts to the Life of Machines**

Art is all about depicting the world inside our head. Dimple Meera Jom and Subhadrika Sen plunges into the world of arts by visiting the Manchester Arts Gallery but they end up in feeling the world of machines! Explore these two extreme worlds along with them.

The gallery welcomed us with a pineapple. We are not talking about the juicy pulpy yellow fruit, this is the *Queen Pineapple* made of clay! Traditionally, pineapples were used as a symbol of hospitality. During the 18th century, teapots and table wares were made in Pineapple shape. This *Kate Malone’s* huge and technically marvellous creation is named the *Queen Pineapple*.

With this warm welcoming we headed to the *Half- Life of a Miracle*, which is a digital animation which shows us how the influence of belief and desire affect one’s act of consumption. There were many beautiful paintings and pictures in the pathway. The pictures were simple and random snaps, but, these had huge reflection into one’s life. This made us realise that ***pictures can also be philosophical***!

The next floor of the gallery had different depictions of poems, historical incidents and religious portrayals. One of the paintings that captured our sight is the *Shadow of Death* which portrayed the life of Christ from His birth to His crucification in one picture. The artist *William Holman Hunt* travelled several times to Jerusalem to make this Biblical scenery as accurate as possible. ***Art is not all about having creativity, a canvas and paint, it also requires a deep study of the history and a plunge into the story***.

The painting adaption from the *Odyssey*, one of the major Greek epic poems attributed to *Homer,* is something to be highly appreciated. The painting titled *The Sirens and Ulysses* is a magnificent work by the English artist *William Etty* which stands apart from other works in the gallery because of its unusually large size. In the actual scene in *Homer’s Odyssey* , Sirens were depicted as human animal Chimeras, but *Etty’s* creation of the scene portrayed these chimera’s as naked young women. This indeed gave a double sided opinion of the painting, when some critics admired it, others criticized it for its nudity.

How could be the creation of the first woman be like? A classical depiction of the mythological figure *Pandora’s* birth, showered with gifts by her creators, the gods, was canvassed by *James Barry*. The reason for all the evils was believed to be released into this previously untroubled world by Pandora, who opened the sealed box which was told never to be opened.

*Head of E.O.W. III* is another ‘not to miss’ piece of art in this gallery. This portrait by *Frank Auerbach* is nothing but some random colours on a canvas. It seems so, but it isn’t. We stood back at a distance and glanced at the painting again. To our excitement we saw *Estella Olive West, Auerbach’s* model and lover. The head of his lover emerges slowly from layer of thick paint called *impasto*. The thickness of the painting was a result of several sittings and layers of paints. At each session he painted the entire canvas again to find the visual equivalent for his real experience of the model. According to ***Auerbach, ‘If something looks like a Portrait, it doesn’t look like a person.”*** He stood faithful to his words indeed!

The paintings *Expectations* by *John William Godward* reflected an Indian touch in it. On exploring further into the artist’s life we learnt that the artist had been to India in 1877 to paint the *Delhi Durbar* which is hung at the Buckingham Palace. It was the period when the *Raja Ravi Varma* paintings got popularized. There are many studies about the Indian influence in the British arts. Though *Godward* came to India for painting the *Delhi Darbar*, its quite significant that his ‘*Expectations*’ has influence of *the Lady Lost in Thought* by *Ravi Varma.*

Finally, our visit ended with the thought provoking creative work- *the Imitation Game*. How would the world be like if the machines that we daily keep in touch interact and respond to us? The gallery exhibited an experiment with artificial intelligence. The most amazing combination of arts and science is *Velonaki’s Fish Bird*. This creation portrays the love of two wheelchairs who loves each other and they communicate each other through pieces of white paper which is spitted out to each other with the help of advanced computers. The bits of paper and the messages that they throw to each other makes one wonder do they have a real heart!

The Manchester Art Gallery visit helps everyone to look back into a century where people had found time to enjoy and spent time on creating magnificent piece of art. In today’s world where humans are turning into machines, Manchester Art Gallery gives us a message: ***When machines are trying to be like human, why can’t we at least be a little humane as these machines!***