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“Interesting.”

It is the one comment that all artists should never hope to be applied to their work.

“Interesting” is a very polite way of saying, “I don’t get what you just did, but I don’t want to hurt your feelings, so I’ll say the next best thing.”

It would be so much better if one said honestly, “I didn’t get what you just did, so what were you trying to do here?”

When the artist tries to explain, she might discover accidentally why her intent hadn’t been as clear as originally thought.

I am often asked this question: “Why do you write?” My answer, which I hope will be yours too, is: “Why do you breathe?”

Art is like breathing, except that when you breathe it in, your body undergoes a transformation, however slight it may be. Somehow, for a fleeting second, something has changed in the way you perceive the world, and you may find yourself dealing with its repercussions for the rest of your life.

Sometimes a work of art can be so great that your feelings about it can evolve over time. One of my favorite paintings is Andrew Wyeth’s *Christina’s World* (1948). A young woman whose face we never see is stranded on the autumnal grasses of a wide field, her body contorted, as she reaches out to the stark house in the far distance on her right.

I was probably in my early teens when I first saw that painting in an art book. My reaction was “Interesting.”

When I became more aware of the disability rights movement by the late 1980s, the painting took on a whole other meaning for me. It was almost as if Wyeth was telling us: “Look how helpless this crippled girl is!”

When I saw the actual painting at the Museum of Modern Art, I had a very different reaction. The mysterious Christina seemed to be defiant, expecting the relentlessly brutal world to accept her as she was. And the painting techniques that Wyeth used to convey such a multi-layered image of enormous feeling and compassion were nothing short of extraordinary. And the painting was physically smaller than I thought it would be!

I’ve said this before, but it does bear repeating in light of *Christina’s World*: Art is a specific point-of-view that we respond to, whether be it positive or negative.

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Art is projection of the realness from the artist's soul. We react strongly as a result.

Without experiencing art in a real and passionate way, our lives begin to absorb the usual gray-colored grind—basketball and other sports tournaments, bills to pay, gossip, our children, the news that seem to overlap in deaf periodicals, the latest sexual conquest.

Our souls will in no time feel gray, and we fall into a slumber worse than death: a wearying time of wondering how to articulate those murky feelings lurking inside of ourselves, and giving up on the very notion of communicating ourselves *as we are*, which is what art tries to do.

Art is communication at its very best.