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A special art exhibit at the Carnegie Museum of Fine Arts on "Light" directed my attention to Pittsburgh. One of my friends spotted the show on TV.

After the prickly pear blooms in the spring in the shortgrass country, we have to wait a year before more color comes into our lives. We do have an abundance of light, especially after daylight savings time puts us to work during the hottest part of the day. Also, it doesn't take much excitement to dazzle a ranch-bound herder dependent on picking frijole beans and feeding the sourdough starter for after-six entertainment. Eating free hot dogs at the opening of a Piggly Wiggly store can be a lot of fun after being stranded on a ranch all spring.

Joined by a friend to see the show, we spent hours wandering through cases displaying marvels ranging from the huge reflecting mirrors used in old lighthouses to paintings by Van Gogh and Monet selected to demonstrate the artists' uses of light. Standing in one case was the first microscope — man's first opportunity to see minute mysterious things. (The 17th century sounds like the right period.)

Underneath a Van Gogh painting of a spectacular sunset was the following notation: "Our vision adjusts 30 minutes before darkness in what is called the 'Punkinge Shift.' Blues become more intense. Van Gogh anticipates the change by making his horizon an azure red hot sky." Stilled in front of the painting, a string of events in Van Gogh's life

flit by: "Poor beyond belief. Supported by a brother – his only supporter. Confined and reconfined to sanitariums. A madman capable of disfiguring himself."

Waves of chattering school kids tore through the room, breaking my reverie. Quiet returns and I back away from the painting searching a revelation of man's mystery. I chose an answer: *Vincent Van Gogh was a raving genius of such high plane, he painted in a visual precise sky adjusted to the very minute his sun reached the horizon.* (If my conclusion sounds stuffy or wrong, take up aerobic exercises interspersed with sessions of playing Mah Jong until it frees your spirit.)

Please imagine the brain waves firing in Van Gogh's tortured skull. The masses of electrons exploding in his chamber of creativity under a mop of red hair as inflamed as his mind. I thought: *Perhaps the keeper needs to be confined and the madman set free to write his script to music, paint his canvas to hue, and plaster his clay to form.* (Same prescription as above.)

More students poured through the hall, forcing a retreat to a tall window looking over a rainswept terrace onto the street.

Rain fell so hard the pigeons' seat dissolved in a white stream washing cigarette butts down the red tile steps. In the background, red and black umbrellas sheltered pedestrians rushing to catch green and tan buses. Yellow school buses parked waiting as the teachers made a head

count of restless charges performing monkey island routines. I hoped they weren't short a stray as the halls still echoed from the aftermath of boisterous students.

I returned to the room hanging the Van Gogh. A professor lectured on the horizontal brush strokes of the Van Gogh holding light. My right hearing aid began to clang; the left one, as it often does, answered by squealing from a low battery. Loss of audio reception helped authenticate my nods to the lady's critique. I didn't mind not hearing as I figured the last "horizontal brush strokes" she'd brushed were on her first doll house.

The Carnegies and the Mellons left a lot of dough to build and maintain the fine museums and centers of learning in Pittsburgh. Making libraries and culture available for the public might have been part of the planting of the seeds of discontent among the steel workers' families. I've explained before how many more cowboys we had in the days of small town pool halls that distracted boys from school. I regret to this day not giving cue sticks for junior high graduation presents.

I sure wasn't going to criticize Andrew Carnegie in his hometown. But I was plenty tired of folks over east of Angelo at Ballinger bragging about their Carnegie Library cut stone edifice. The last time a big showoff asked why Mertzon didn't have a Carnegie library, I shot right back that people in Mertzon don't need a library like some little jerkwater burgs east of Angelo.

At five o'clock, the security guards started motioning us outside in the rain the way cattle are kicked off the bottom deck of a truck. Two pay phones later, I caught a ride to the bed and breakfast. The rain grew heavier. I don't know whether my vision changed 30 minutes before darkness, but I sure learned a lot about the limits of an umbrella in a downpour ...