

Roll up, roll up, and watch the Mona Lisa weep

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1 Isn't it time we admitted that art is hell? You go to one of the world's great art exhibits looking forward to seeing human creation at its most beautiful and instead you experience human nature at its ugliest.

2 I am full of solidarity with the staff at the Louvre, who are striking for more pay because of the stress of dealing with 8.3 million visitors a year. Their job is to funnel the equivalent of the population of New York City through a palace built for a few hundred courtiers, past a painting intended for a private home. They describe their days protecting the Mona Lisa from her fans with words such as "unbearable", "aggressive" and "dangerous". I know just what they mean. It's probably small consolation that you are actually being paid to be in the presence of Leonardo's masterpiece while the rest of the world has to pay for that privilege and queue for half a day to claim it.

3 Just a few weeks ago the Sistine Chapel took action to protect the Michelangelo and Botticelli frescoes, cutting opening hours and raising prices. My recent memory of this, the ultimate shrine of Christian art, was of struggling to stay on my feet in the middle of a yammering mob while a team of young priests went hoarse calling for silence and respect. It was like Grand Central Station, except that there just wasn't room to sit down and weep. Four million people a year, the population of Sydney, enter the Sistine

inferno. The queue most days is six deep and a mile long.

4 These places are like rock stars. They are the charismatic species of art and architecture and the desire that people have to be in their presence has gone far beyond the attraction of artistic achievement. They are icons, talismans, pilgrimage sites and visiting them is as meaningful as going to a rock concert, getting caked in mud, hearing a booming noise and seeing on stage a capering figure one millimetre high.

5 The phenomenon has a tsunami-like momentum of its own and draws people whose motives have nothing to do with art and only a questionable interest in humanity. The Louvre is suffering from an added influx of *Da Vinci Code* readers; I don't think they're there for love of Renaissance painting. The Pope said he hoped the Sistine Chapel "leads the mind to open itself to the sublime".

6 Is it possible to open your mind to the sublime when you're being herded like cattle to the abattoir? Overcrowding makes every species aggressive. The tragedy of our great art works is that the more significant they become the less their significance can be appreciated. You brace yourself to visit a great gallery knowing that there's no chance of the transcendent experience supposed to happen when contemplating a masterpiece.

7 32 are in a difficult position. Their mission is to make great art available to the greatest numbers. Crowd control was never part of an art history degree. In a gallery's annual report the visitor experience, a massive problem, is never mentioned. Only when the works are threatened by footfall, flash photography or psychotic fans is action taken. Increasingly the choice is between risking a work's survival and letting it be seen. Some museums have Perspex screens protecting the major works, and the decorated floors and ceilings have been boarded over; other museums insist that tourists wear felt slippers - but the inlaid wood floors are still splintering.

8 The sharing of cultural heritage ought not to make the participants want to cry. Back in France,

archaeologists have found a way. When it became clear that the ancient cave paintings at Lascaux were being damaged by the rise in humidity caused by visitors' exhaled breath, they replicated the whole rock face in fibreglass and installed it in a custom-built visitor centre. Only scientists and heads-of-state are allowed to view the real thing.

9 As an experience, Lascaux 2 is still moving, dignified and impressive, all the more so because it doesn't provoke the unworthy desire to go home boasting that you almost touched the precious object. The custodians of this icon recognised that they were really in the theme park business and rose to the challenge of making a mass experience meaningful. Disneyworld or disaster: we have a choice. ■

Tekst 7 Roll up, roll up, and watch the Mona Lisa weep

- 1p 29 What becomes clear from paragraphs 1-3?
- A Enjoying great art and visiting crowded exhibitions do not go well together.
 - B Great museums and large cities have to deal with the same sort of problems.
 - C Museum management must be prevented from increasing admission fees.
 - D Protecting famous works of art from the public has become far too expensive.
 - E There is no solution to the problem of people misbehaving when a museum is overcrowded.
- 1p 30 How is paragraph 4 related to paragraphs 2 and 3?
- A It elaborates on what is said in paragraphs 2 and 3.
 - B It repeats what is said in paragraphs 2 and 3.
 - C It tones down what is said in paragraphs 2 and 3.
- 2p 31 Geef van elk van de volgende beweringen aan of deze wel of niet overeenkomt met de inhoud van de alinea's 4 tot en met 6.
- 1 De bestseller *The Da Vinci Code* heeft veel mensen gestimuleerd zich grondig te verdiepen in de schilderkunst.
 - 2 De kwaliteit van beroemde kunstwerken is meer dan eens beneden de maat.
 - 3 Grote groepen mensen bezoeken bekende kunstwerken meer vanwege hun populariteit dan vanwege hun artistieke belang.
 - 4 Om schade te voorkomen zouden alleen nog kunstkenners absolute topstukken mogen bezichtigen.
- Noteer het nummer van elke bewering, gevolgd door "wel" of "niet".
- 1p 32 Which of the following fits the gap in paragraph 7?
- A Archaeologists
 - B Art critics
 - C Art curators
 - D Security guards
 - E Visitors
- 1p 33 What is the purpose of paragraph 8?
- A To describe a solution for the dilemma of how to safely display art for the masses.
 - B To express a wish to convert art exhibitions into educationally significant events.
 - C To urge tourists not to come near precious but vulnerable works of art.
 - D To warn archaeologists to stop cheating audiences by displaying fake art.
- 1p 34 How can the tone of paragraph 9 be characterised?
- A As amused.
 - B As angry.
 - C As matter-of-fact.
 - D As pessimistic.

Bronvermelding

Een opsomming van de in dit examen gebruikte bronnen, zoals teksten en afbeeldingen, is te vinden in het bij dit examen behorende correctievoorschrift, dat na afloop van het examen wordt gepubliceerd.