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The Art of Portraying Art in Island

“An Art Museum Designed for Taking Selfies” by Laura C. Mallonee appears on *Hyperallergic*, a website that describes itself as, “a forum for playful, serious, and radical perspectives on art and culture in the world today” (Vartanian). Mallonee is, “a Brooklyn-based writer” who “holds an M.A. in Cultural Reporting and Criticism from NYU and a B.F.A. in painting from Missouri State University” (Vartanian). However, despite her credentials, Mallonee lacks artistic critique and ineffectively attempts to persuade the average selfie-taker to visit the museum designed for selfies, Art in Island.

Mallonee begins with a photograph of a young man who appears to be exiting a rendition of Van Gogh's *Starry Night*, as one of his legs is only half visible (Mallonee). Mallonee's usage of an image is a powerful and relatable appeal to pathos. It is also an effective appeal to logos because it is appropriately used when addressing a museum designed for taking photographs. Furthermore, the photograph is captioned, “A visitor at Art Island,” and one of the prominent parts of the photograph is the young man's grin (Mallonee). This smiling factor, accompanied with the caption, appeals to pathos because it implies that the average visitor to the selfie museum not only enjoys his or her time while there, but is ecstatic to be there.

Mallonee claims that, “Most museums across the US and Europe have had a difficult time handling the selfie onslaught” (Mallonee). The language of the claim, namely the word “onslaught,” introduces the factor of hyperbole, and along with it, a degree of inaccuracy. This usage of a hyperbole effectively appeals to pathos as it paints a dramatic scene; however, it simultaneously appeals to ethos ineffectively as it is disproportionate to the reality of selfies.

Mallonee compares how society and early 20th century art critics snubbed the work of Pablo Picasso during his lifetime but later realized it to be revolutionary to a shift in attitude when stating, “like early 20th century art critics snubbing Pablo Picasso, they’ve been banning selfie sticks right and left, while begrudgingly allowing or actively encouraging the taking of selfies” (Mallonee). This comparison is an effective appeal to ethos because it is comparing idea of selfies (which the museum completely endorses) to the revolutionary work of Pablo Picasso. However, it is also an ineffective appeal to ethos because it adds to the sense of exaggeration present. Subsequently, it would contribute to Mallonee’s overall lack of artistic critique and her personal bias.

Mallonee argues that the negative attitude that museums across the US and Europe hold toward selfies is progressively changing. She reveres certain “visionaries” that see beyond the negatives of selfies and instead begin to embrace their social involvement. Mallonee also mimics the average selfie-taker while stating, “they’ve launched the world’s first selfie museum, Art in Island, where the point isn’t to look at art — how boring is that? — but to pose for photos with it” (Mallonee). This signifies the major difference between the Selfie Museum and the average art museum. This description also appeals to ethos effectively because Mallonee understands the

feelings of an average selfie-taker when visiting a museum. However, the mimicry can also be an ineffective appeal to pathos and ethos because it is a form of mockery.

Mallonee then breaks for a photograph captioned, “Visitors posing with displays at Art in Island,” wherein a young woman is happily taking a photograph of another in front of an interactive form of Leonardo da Vinci’s *Mona Lisa* (Mallonee). This photograph is an ineffective appeal to logos because it is not portraying a selfie. Although, it does convey the reoccurring sensation of happiness the visitors experience when at the museum, and therefore, appeals to pathos effectively. This adds to Mallonee’s growing collection of appeals to pathos and causes her attempt at persuasion seem emotional, especially when compared to the minimal appeals to ethos and logos.

Mallonee quotes the founders of the museum and shares their inspiration to create Art in Island: their disapproval of art museums not allowing visitors to acquire any proof of their visit to the museum, i.e. selfies (Mallonee). Mallonee alludes to the fact that the reader would require proof (a selfie) in order to enjoy his or her time at an art museum. This comment portrays the inner desire of the average reader to share his or her experiences with the world, even if that be a visit to an art museum. It also alludes to a notion that a person does not actually visit a place, socially, until they have acquired a piece of evidence proving that. This is an effective appeal to pathos because it hints at the fact that the average selfie-taker is missing out on a true museum and social experience by not visiting Art in Island. Quoting the founders of the museum is also an effective appeal to ethos.

Mallonee shares further details about what makes the art museum unique. She describes the art as interactive and says it gives an alternative perspective of certain pieces, giving birth to

a more healthy appreciation. She says, “with portions of each work slightly altered or left out entirely, the art isn’t even finished until *you* complete the picture” (Mallonee). This creates a feeling of speciality and is an effective appeal to pathos. It is worded as though the art is dependent upon the visitor and selfie-taker to be a complete work of art. This is an effective appeal to logos because it provides a logical incentive to visit the museum. It is also an ineffective appeal to ethos because, despite mentioning the art itself, Mallonee fails to share any critique.

Mallonee highlights the factor of convenience that the art museum offers. She shares that, “it takes only two hours to get through the entire museum — a refreshingly short trip compared to the literal days you can spend lost inside the Met without a selfie stick” (Mallonee). By alluding to the fact that she has gotten through the entire museum, Mallonee effectively appeals to ethos. However, she contributes to the existing sense of exaggeration by the use of her phrase “literal days” (Mallonee). This is an ineffective appeal to ethos because of the inaccuracy associated with the hyperbole.

Mallonee then adds additional pictures of joyful visitors at various pieces of art, taking pictures of each other (Mallonee). Although the theme of joyful visitors is a powerful and visual appeal to pathos, this is also an ineffective appeal to logos because, again, the photographs don’t portray visitors taking selfies.

After considering the appeals made by Mallonee in “An Art Museum Designed for Taking Selfies,” the sense of exaggeration and personal bias becomes apparent. Despite her artistic credentials, Mallonee fails to provide adequate critique about the museum and its art in attempts to persuade the average selfie-taker to visit Art in Island.

Works Cited

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