Young Prospective Artist Finds Herself in a 'No Sketch' Zone

By Don Ross

(01/07/05 - RALEIGH) — It is standard operating procedure for students of art to learn by example by sketching masterpieces in an art museum.

A budding artist in Durham found that the time honored tradition was challenged while seeking inspiration at the Matisse, Picasso and the School of Paris: Masterpieces from the Baltimore Museum of Art exhibit in Raleigh.

Over the weekend at the North Carolina Museum of Art there were works by Matisse, Picasso, Monet, Degas and some Illanas.

Julia Illana is a second grader who was visiting the popular exhibit there with her parents and was sketching the paintings in her notebook.

"I love to draw in my notebook," Illana said.

Her sketch of Picasso's Woman with Bangs, which came out pretty good, and Matisse's Large Reclining Nude got the promising artist into trouble with museum security.

A museum guard told Julia's parents that sketching was prohibited because the great masterpieces are copyright protected, a concept that young Julia did not understand until her mother explained the term.

"If you wrote a book and someone saw that book and copied it," Julia's mother said. "Then people would think that that person was the one who wrote the book when you were the actual one."

Actually, the museum guard was mistaken. There was no copyright issue, and the museum apologizes and is telling artists to sketch away as long as they do not interrupt the flow of traffic in the always crowded gallery.

Julia admits that she's not ready to show her artwork anyway.

"I wouldn't publish my notebook with the sloppy writing," she giggled.

Although her renditions of Hole in Hand and Pink Ghost are pretty impressive for a six-year-old.

Assured now that it is OK to sketch, Julia's going back on Sunday to try her hand at a Cezanne, and maybe a Matisse or two.

More than 88,000 people have visited the exhibit scheduled to end January 16.
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