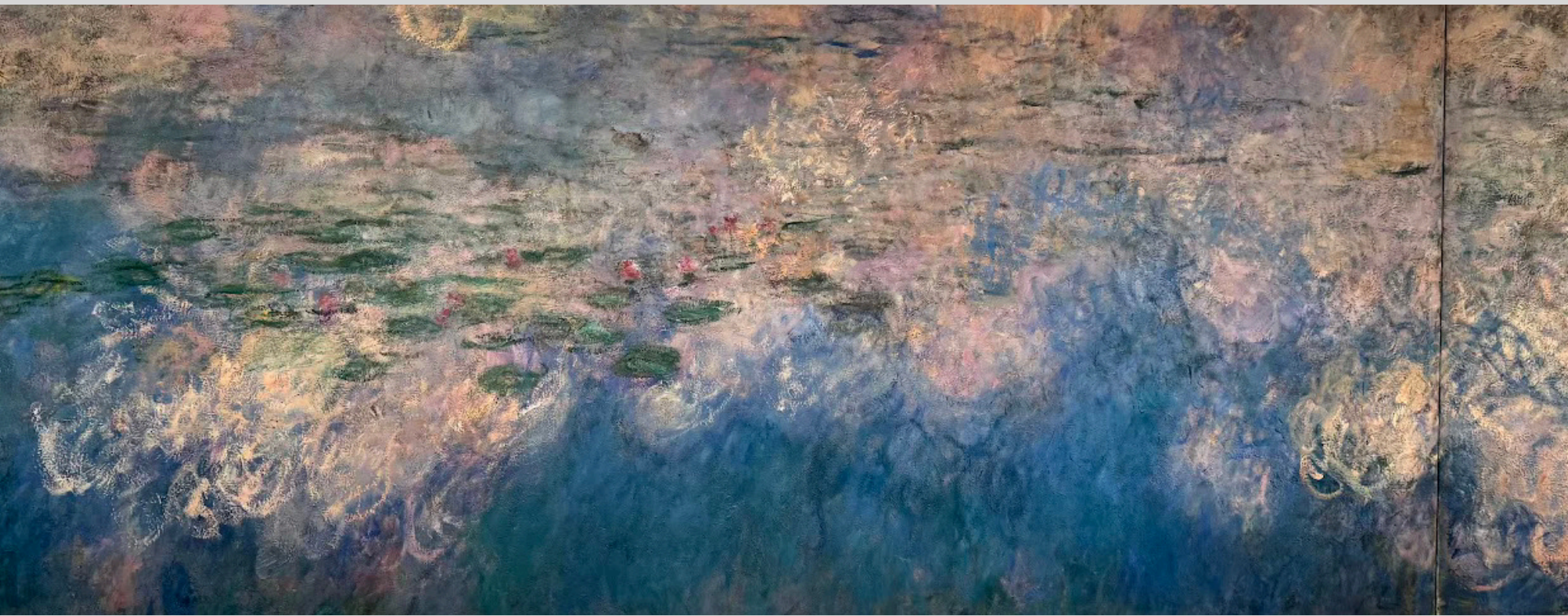


EXPLORING ART THROUGH MOMA

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Initial Thoughts

At first glance, the bright colors drew me closer from way down the hall. My poor vision couldn't make out what I was walking towards, but nonetheless I was intrigued by the burst of color and by the contrast it had against the whiteness of the walls. When I'd come close enough to register that the material for the entire work was stuffed animals, I felt a surge of youth and excitement.

Artist and Message

Mike Kelley's work, *Deodorized Central Mass with Satellites*, is created entirely from plush toys found at thrift stores and yard sales. Mike repurposes these familiar symbols of lost innocence and abandonment to comment on consumer excess and moral decline. He intentionally sewed the faces of the plush toys inward to avoid emotional responses and draw attention to his commentary.

Dissecting the Art

In a large white space, 14 bundles of stuffed animals suspended in the air, supported by concealed white wires. There are a total of 13 smaller bundles of common colored stuffed animals sown together. The 14th bundle is the most eye-catching, the largest and placed in the center. Unlike the surrounding bundles, the center piece is multi-colored, with the stuffed animals arranged to mimic the order of the rainbow. Fixed on the walls around the hanging masses are 10 brightly colored, abstract sculptures.

The title, Deodorized Central Mass with Satellites, is difficult to connect to the piece at first. However, the central mass referred to in the title is the largest bundle, placed in the center. The satellites that “orbit” the central mass are the 13 smaller bundles of stuffed animals scattered around the space. To complete the title, the 10 sculptures fixed on the white walls emit a pine-scented mist, hence referred to as deodorizers.



Exploring the role of arts in the lives of New Yorkers

By diving deeper into the art pieces featured at the MOMA, I've gotten a grasp on how art drives curiosity and inspiration. Each art piece captures a story and message that is up to the observer to interpret. The same art piece might resonate differently with a group of observers. Our experiences shape our perspective, and as New Yorkers we can offer a unique way of seeing things. I'd describe art as a two way street. The art itself provokes the senses and stimulates thought, and the observer internally returns their own personalized interpretation. Especially in the fast pace of New York, art grounds us in who we are.



First Impressions:

When I first saw Monet's Water Lilies, the size of the piece almost overwhelmed me. It isn't a painting you just look at, you almost enter it. The canvas stretches across the entire wall, and the moment you stand in front of it, your eyes adjust to the soft blues, greens, and lavender tones. At first, it feels peaceful, but after a few seconds you start noticing how active the brushwork is. It's calm, but also full of movement. It felt like the room got quieter, almost like the painting created its own atmosphere.



What Stood Out to Me:

What surprised me most was how abstract parts of it are up close. You see these short, layered strokes that don't look like flowers or water until you step back. That made me realize how much Monet was experimenting, not just painting a pond, but painting light, time, and mood. The reflections on the water blend with the lilies so much that the boundary between sky and pond disappears into one flowing scene. That blending felt intentional, like he wanted the viewer to get lost in the scene rather than identify every object.

Claude Monet's Water Lilies at MoMA is a large-scale, panoramic painting of a pond filled with floating water lily pads. The surface of the water reflects the sky and surrounding trees, so the painting shows both the lilies themselves and the soft, blurred reflections above them.

There is no horizon line or land, just water, lilies, and shifting light, so the entire piece feels like a continuous view across the pond's surface. The colors blend together in layered brushstrokes, creating the impression of light moving across calm water.



Why the Piece Matters:

Monet painted these near the end of his life, and they are considered some of the first steps toward modern abstract painting. The huge scale also connects art and engineering since the canvas construction, the layout, the studio setup, and even the way museums display the panels today all involve technical decisions.



Exploring the role of arts in the lives of New Yorkers:

Working on this project helped me understand how important art is to everyday life in New York. When I visited Monet's Water Lilies at MoMA, I realized that art isn't just something people look at, it's something they use to slow down, reflect, and connect with each other. New York can feel rushed and overwhelming, but museums give people a space to breathe. Standing in front of such a huge, peaceful painting showed me why so many New Yorkers rely on the arts as a break from the noise of the city. I also noticed the diversity of people around me: families, students, older adults, tourists, and locals. Everyone interacted with the artwork differently, but the painting brought all of us into the same moment. That helped me see how art builds community in New York. It creates shared experiences and conversations among people who might never speak to each other outside the museum. Whether it's street murals, music, or museums, the city uses art to celebrate culture, inspire creativity, and make people feel connected. This project helped me see that art isn't separate from the lives of New Yorkers, it's part of what shapes the city's identity and keeps its communities vibrant.

First Impressions:

When I first stumbled upon this artwork, I was taken aback by the mere size of it.

It dominated the space, taking up almost the entire wall, with it being the only artwork displayed. The size of the painting made me feel as if I was in the painting, right across from the man on the couch. I was immediately drawn to it because of the sense of familiarity it gave to me. This artwork looked like it could be on any street in New York City. When learning of the painting's name, Untitled, it fueled my interest as the mystery behind the work drew me in.



Dissecting the artwork:

When taking a closer look at the painting, I noticed that there was a man, with a full suit and dress shoes on, sitting on a beat-up couch on a corner of the street where trash is waiting to be collected. This contrast caught my attention, as I wondered, why would a well-dressed man sit on a beat-up and forgotten couch? The

man sitting seemed to be deep in thought while smoking. When researching this painting, I was able to solve the mystery behind it. This painting was based on a photograph taken in 1979, during Kippenberger's first trip to the United States from Germany. It incorporated Kippenberger's interesting persona, where sometimes he referred to himself as a sales representative. I

learned that Kippenberger frequently used the title “Untitled” as an intentional choice in order to challenge traditional art world conventions. By excluding a unique title for artworks such as this one, Kippenberger is able to force the viewer to engage with the artwork and potentially form a personal connection with it, instead of following only Kippenberger’s interpretation with a unique name. Calling different artworks Untitled allowed viewers to directly confront the painting and information provided, instead of relying on a narrative provided by a title.



Artist and Message

This artwork was made by Martin Kippenberger and is part of a series called Dear Painter, Paint for Me. The significance behind this series lies within its unconventional artistic choice that challenges conventions. Kippenberger commissioned a professional painter to create the works from his snapshots, and this piece challenged the traditional role of authorship while making a comment on the commercialization of art since the artwork was a commissioned product. Kippenberger almost never worked alone and frequently collaborated with others for his artwork. As his artwork is featured in museums like the MoMA, the artist's message reaches a deeper level, as Kippenberger often ridicules the pretentiousness of the art scene.

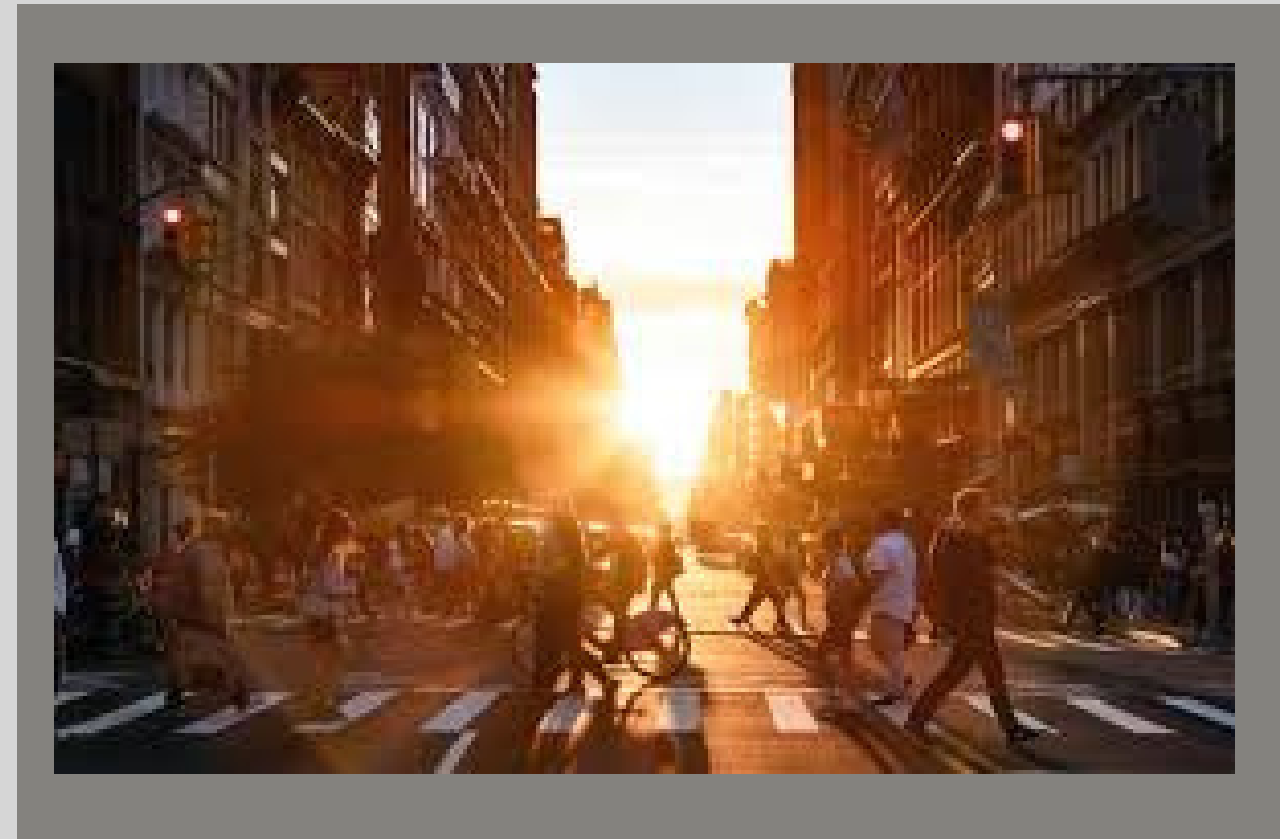
Why it Matters

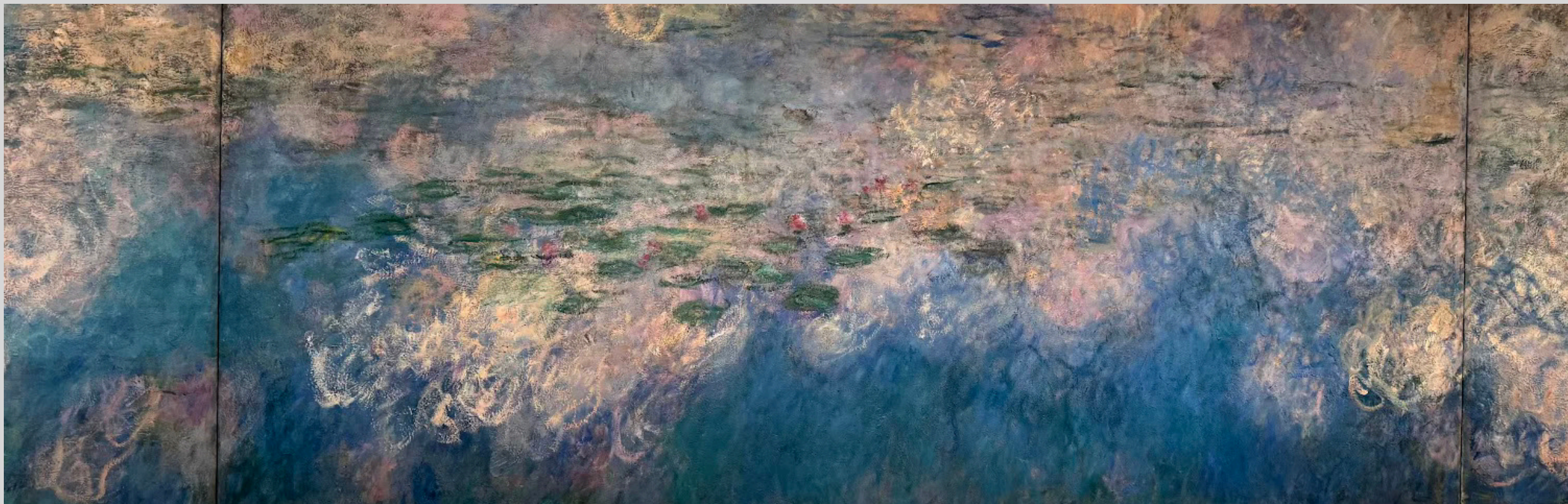
This piece matters as it helps challenge traditional artistic conventions. The feature of Kipperberger's artwork in museums is a reminder for viewers to remember his message and to challenge the norms in everyday life.

Exploring the role of arts in the lives of New Yorkers:

Visiting MoMA for the Arts in New York City allowed me to dive deeper into the art that captures different cultures, everyday life, emotions, senses, and stories. When observing *Untitled* by Martin Kippenberger, I was able to feel a sense of familiarity and connection with the man in the painting. His reflective posture while smoking a cigarette allowed me to reflect back on my life as I wondered what could have propelled him to sit on a beat-up couch. This artwork, along with others, allowed me to view New York and other cultures through a different lens. Seeing the painting in person helped me realize how art captures moments that New Yorkers might walk past every day without even noticing. It opened my eyes to the diversity of experiences, struggles, and routines that make up such a vibrant city.

Through this I learned how artwork allows others to learn about other stories and livelihoods through just one piece. It reminds me to be grateful to live in such a vibrant and lively city as New York City, where I have access to museums such as MoMA and am even able to observe the different types of lifestyles of people around the city. This project pushed me to explore NYC more intentionally by learning more about the culture and communities. This project has strengthened my understanding of how art captures and preserves different stories and cultures and allowed me to dive into the narrative of an artist in any time period. It made me feel more connected and appreciative of the community I am a part of.





THANK YOU!