

The National Gallery – February 8, 2018 – London, England

By Tom Allin

Yesterday was a rest day. Nancy is definitely down with a cold and I keep telling myself I am well. It felt good just catching up on reading, writing, an afternoon nap and an evening meal at the Swan.

Knowing I can no longer do eight hours in a museum allows us and today just me to not get up at the crack of dawn, have my leisurely couple of cups of coffee, a late breakfast and finally close the door behind me and head off in the direction of a museum.

Today I have chosen The National Gallery.



Our ten-year old copy of Lonely Planet's London and The National Gallery's introduction brochure both provide a short list of must see paintings. However, for me there was only one must see and hundreds of want to see paintings.

Johannes Vermeer's *A Young Woman standing at a Virginal*. My photograph didn't turn out as well as I hoped so I recommend seeing it in person. I believe my favorite Vermeer (to date) is *The Music Lesson*. The colors and details are beyond my imagination of what a human can do with a paintbrush. But my favorite may change because there are several of his paintings that we haven't seen which we most likely will see in our coming travels.



It doesn't seem all that long ago that modern paintings were the only paintings I enjoyed. So much more fun to walk the world's great and not so great museums without a preconceived idea of what you think you like.

I thought Rembrandt's *An Elderly Man as Saint Paul* was fabulous. The face showed so much emotion.



Another face I thought was ever so interesting. Also I wish everyone could see the painting details of the fur lined jacket. *Erasmus* by Hans Holbein the Younger.



Not sure why I took a fancy to Frans Hals' *Young Man holding a Skull* other than I could see me holding a skull like this young man but not see me as Shakespeare's Hamlet holding a skull and reciting his famous soliloquy.



The next painting reminded me of the *Three Musketeers* a book I read as a young boy. It is the diabolical *Cardinal de Richelieu* by the artist, Philippe de Champaigne.



I wasn't the only one touring The National Gallery but most the galleries are large so even with a crowd you have room and paintings to yourself.



I thought this next painting was a very pretty lady. It turns out it's a self-portrait by the artist, Elizabeth Louise Vigée Le Brun.



I think George Stubbs' painting of the racehorse, Whistlejacket, is one of the best horse paintings I have ever stood in front of.



Every once in a while you have to stop and appreciate the building, The National Gallery.



So many paintings have backstories I know nothing about. I had never been aware of Saint Catherine receiving a ring from Christ, referring to her vision of their “mystic marriage”. *The Mystic Marriage of Saint Catherine* by Parmigianino.



Another painting I enjoyed. The details were so exacting. The painting is *The Family of Darius before Alexander* by Paolo Veronese.



Another of my favorite painters, Paul Cezanne. This painting is his *Bathers* done about 1900.



Need to return to The National Gallery to see the paintings in the Annex building. My feet and legs gave out before I was able to walk the Annex's galleries. Next time.