Looking at Mindfulness: 25 Ways to Live in the Moment Through Art

Christophe Andre
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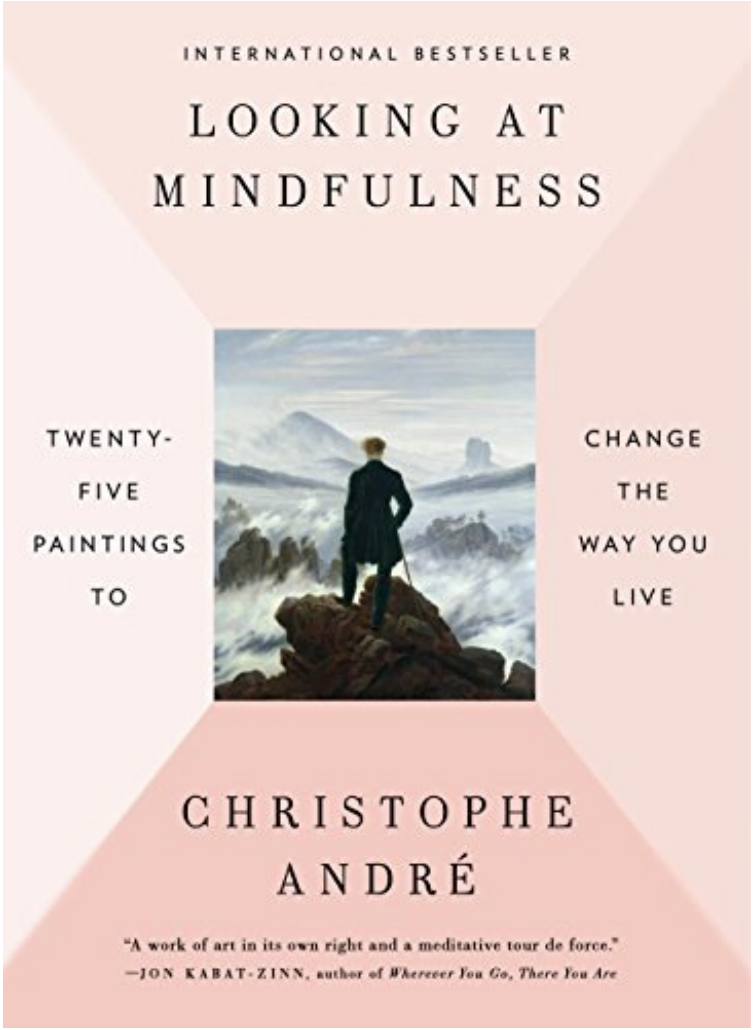

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Christophe Andre : Looking at Mindfulness: 25 Ways to Live in the Moment Through Art before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Looking at Mindfulness: 25 Ways to Live in the Moment Through Art:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. If you like art, and you like mindfulness and meditationBy KhareIf you like art, and you like mindfulness and meditation, this book is for you. Printed on nice quality paper - it's a pleasure to read and see the accompanying works of art. I learned a lot about mindfulness from this book, in a fun and beautiful way. I'm waiting for Dr. Andre's next book that will be released in June 2017.1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. It isn't always easy to "getBy Eudora PainterThis is an unusual book. I was drawn to it because it offered an original in-road to understanding "mindfulness": Start with a painting and use that painting to

discuss some aspect of a Lesson. It isn't always easy to "get," and is sometimes not too interesting, but it is always beautiful.0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Five StarsBy DJM DesignsCan't wait to finished reading this beautiful book. I gave two as gifts already.

Stop doing, stop moving, stop twisting and turning. These are the first steps toward inner calm and increased mental clarity, says psychiatrist and leading meditation practitioner Christophe Andreacute;, who in this book guides us through the art of mindfulness, beginning with art itself. Looking at Mindfulness collects classic and esoteric paintings, from Rembrandt to Hopper to Magritte, and offers a lucid commentary on the inner workings of each. Andreacute; describes the dynamic on the canvas, and turns to the viewer's own reactions, exploring the connection between what we see and what we feel. Moving beyond the art on the page, Andreacute; teaches us what it means to consider our surroundings, our daily interactions and obligations, and their effect on our inner well-being. The paintings are a visual and tangible first step to understanding mindfulness and the benefits of living in the moment. In practicing mindfulness, within ourselves and out in the world, each of us can make immediate, meaningful, and permanent changes in our well-being and the well-being of others.Beautifully written, wonderfully accessible for any novice or expert, Looking at Mindfulness delivers practical steps and a comprehensive understanding of the practice and meaning of mindfulness and meditation. An authentic and effortless voice, Andreacute; brings clarity to what it means to live mindfully and how we can make a more conscious effort to do so.From the Hardcover edition.

"A work of art in its own right, and a meditative tour de force."mdash;Jon Kabat-Zinn, author of Wherever You Go, There You Are "A masterpiece....Christophe Andreacute;, takes a wholly fresh approach to mindfulness, offering beautiful paintings as the starting points for meditation....Everything about this book is exquisite: its language, its instruction, and its gentle insistence that each of us has to practice cultivating this clarity for ourselves. I whole-heartedly recommend it."mdash;Mark Williams, Emeritus Professor of Clinical Psychology, University of Oxford "A poetic, compassionate guide to mindfulness, offering a fresh and thoughtful path."mdash;Publisher's Weekly "In this internationally best-selling book, French psychiatrist Andreacute; guides the reader through the practice of mindfulness to art itself. Using color photographs of classic and modern works, the author shows readers how to quiet the outer world and intensify their presence in the moment, neither trying to escape it or change it. Andreacute; responds to each art piece in terms of feelings and sensory perceptions, helping readers to visualize themselves inside the canvas, smelling, hearing, and really seeing the scene. A fascinating book, suitable for those who are interested in art or the discipline of mindfulness."mdash;Library JournalAbout the AuthorChristophe Andreacute; is a French psychiatrist and bestselling author who has practiced meditation for many years. He runs meditation groups at the Sainte-Anne Hospital in Paris, helping people to free themselves from suffering and enjoy their lives. After many highly acclaimed books, Looking at Mindfulnessnbsp;is his most original and personal work.Excerpt. copy; Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved.By the same authorFeelings and MoodsTo Jon Kabat-Zinn for his vision,To Zindel Segal for his knowledge,To Matthieu Ricard for his example,And to all three for their teaching and friendship.Living in mindfulness means paying regular, calm attention to the present moment. This attitude can radically alter our relationship to the world, ease our suffering and enhance our joys. Mindfulness is also a type of meditation. Its basic techniques are quick and simple to learn, but take years to master fully (like everything in life that matters to us).To move toward mindfulness we must first understand what it is and how it is practiced. The words in this book offer insight into these things. We must then free ourselves from words in order simply to sense and feel, and the paintings will help with this. Lastly we must practice and experiment on our own. Advice and exercises are suggested throughout the pages that follow. The secrets of living in mindfulness can be summed up in three words: understand, feel and practice, over and over.Other Titles by Christophe Andre?Title PageCopyrightDedicationPrefacePRELUDE: PRESENCE, NOT EMPTINESS1. BECOMING AWARE: AN ATTITUDE OF MINDLive in the present momentBreatheInhabit your bodyClose your eyes and listenObserve your thoughtsMake space for your emotionsUse your attention to expand your awarenessBe simply present2. LIVING WITH THE EYES OF THE MIND WIDE OPEN: A PHILOSOPHY OF EVERYDAY LIFESee ordinary thingsSee the invisibleSee what is importantAct and donrsquo;t actSharpen your mindUnderstand and accept what is3. PASSING THROUGH STORMS: THE PRESENT MOMENT AS A REFUGEEscape your mental prisonsLet goStay present to the worldMove forward, even when you are hurtAccept mysterySee happiness gently emerge4. OPENING AND AWAKENING: THE GREATEST OF JOURNEYSWorkContemplateLoveExperience the expansion and dissolution of the selfTAKING FLIGHT: UNIVERSAL AWARENESSSome Useful BooksWebsitesBibliographyAcknowledgmentsPhoto CreditsPRELUDEPhilosopher in Meditation, Harmensz Van Rijn, known as Rembrandt (1606ndash;1669)1632, oil on wood, 28 x 34 cm, Museacute;e du Louvre, Parisnbsp;The first thing we see is the intense, yellow light of the winter sun outsidemdash;a sun that dazzles without warmth. Then we notice the old man sitting motionless, having turned away from his table and the book he was studying. Is he thinking? Resting? Meditating? We look to the right and notice the low cellar door, then our eyes are drawn to the spiral staircase, but we have barely registered its first few steps when we notice the fire crackling in the grate and the woman stoking it. Our eyes return to the staircase, but it

leads only into darkness.The painting is small, the place it depicts is dark, yet we have a sense of immense space. This is the genius of Rembrandt, who leads us on a visual journey through all the dimensions. We travel the painting widthways left to right, from the daylight pouring in to the fragile, almost derisory firelight. Therersquo;s a dialogue established between the sun that lights but does not warm and the fire that warms but sheds no light. Are these the sun of reason and the fire of passion, two ingredients that combine in philosophy? We travel the paintingrsquo;s height by means of the spiral staircase that links the deep secrets of the cellar to the dark mysteries of the upper floor, and we travel its depth, from the background where the philosopher sits to the surrounding circle of shadows. But the sense of space also derives from the subtle interplay between all that is revealed and all that is hidden, where our imagination is crucialmdash;what lies on the other side of the window, behind the cellar door, at the top of the stairs? The largest of the worlds hidden from our restless eyes is the philosopherrsquo;s mind, his inner world. Shadows and darkness, a little light, a little warmth and a working mindmdash;is that what our inner selves are like?Meditation means stoppingStop doing, stop moving, stop twisting and turning. Meditation means withdrawing a little, stepping back from the world.At first what we feel seems odd. Therersquo;s an emptiness (no action or distraction) and a fullness (a tumult of thoughts and sensations that we suddenly notice). Therersquo;s what we lackmdash;points of reference and things to domdash;and, after a little while, therersquo;s the calm this lack brings. Things here are not the same as they are ldquo;outside,rdquo; where our mind constantly attaches itself to some aim or project, acting or thinking about something in particular, having its attention held by some distraction.The apparent inaction of the experience of meditating takes a little while to get used to. As in Rembrandtrsquo;s painting, or when we move from light to shadow, we donrsquo;t see clearly straightaway. We have gone inside ourselves, for real. Our inner world was close by, but we never went there. We tended to hang around outside; in todayrsquo;s world of frantic demands and frenzied connections, our relationship to ourselves often goes untended. We abandon our inner world. The outside world is easier to travel and better signposted. To meditate is often to move through a land without paths. In the room where the philosopher is meditating therersquo;s less light, so you have to open your eyes wider. The same is true inside ourselves. There is less that is obvious or reassuring, so we must open our mindrsquo;s eye much wider.We expectedmdash;or hopedmdash;to find calm and emptiness. We often find ourselves in a huge, rowdy, chaotic bazaar. We aspired to clarity, we find confusion. Sometimes meditation exposes us to anxiety and pain, to things that hurt us and that we have avoided by thinking about something else or busily doing things elsewhere.Calming agitationIt all looked so simple from the outside! We thought it would be enough just to sit down and close our eyes. But no, thatrsquo;s just the start. Itrsquo;s indispensable, but not enough in itself. So what now? Now we have to work. We must learn to look, to remain slightly apart from the world, sitting just like this with closed eyes. We must learn to allow the tumult to settle.The first thing to accomplish is no more than that, sitting still and quiet for long enough to allow a kind of calm to settle around the chatter of our mind, enough for us to start seeing a bit more clearly. We must not try to achieve it by force or willmdash;that would only trigger more chaos. We must let it happen, let it come, from inside.We have gone inside ourselves, for real. Our inner world was close by, but we never went there.Sometimes we have to wait a long time. This process is not something that can be rushed. We would like to speed it up, but no, meditation takes time. In fact there are days when nothing comes at all. Which may come as a bit of a shock, and seem out of tune with times that promise us instant, guaranteed results. Zen wisdom has many tales to illustrate this point, such as the one about a student who asks his teacher, ldquo;Master, how long will I have to meditate to attain serenity?rdquo; After a long silence the master replies, ldquo;Thirty years.rdquo; The student looks stricken. ldquo;Ernbsp;.nbsp;.nbsp;. thatrsquo;s a very long time. What if I make twice the effort? What if I work really hard, day and night, and donrsquo;t do anything else?rdquo; The teacher remains silent for a very long time and then says, ldquo;Then it will take you fifty years.rdquo;Starting to see more clearlySo we have stopped, we have sat down and closed our eyes. Not to sleep, not to rest, but to understand. We need to understand what we feel and put some order into the chaos that is simply the worldrsquo;s echo within ourselves. We must understand that there are two paths: the path of intelligence (acting, intervening, kneading reality with our will, lucidity and effort) and the path of experience (welcoming naked reality and allowing it to cover, inhabit and imbue us, in a movement of intensely attentive letting go).Both intelligence and experience keep us in contact with the world, one enabling us to understand it better, the other to feel it better. Each in its own way is a perfect path. Neither is superior to the other. We need them both, and we must keep both alive and in working order.To put it more simply, we can say that the first path is that of philosophical thought, while the second (receiving the world without necessarily understanding it, or understanding it but without words, or beyond words) is that of mindfulness. It is the meditative approach of mindfulness that is the subject of this book.Living in mindfulnessMindfulness means intensifying our presence to the moment, stilling ourselves to absorb it, instead of escaping it or trying to alter it, through thought or action.There is mindfulness in the action of the philosopher who turns for a moment from his work of thinking and enters a different mode of being, digesting and assimilating all that his intelligence has just produced or discovered, preparing himself, perhaps, to go further still, and pausing to be aware.So mindfulness is not about creating emptiness, nor is it about producing thoughts. It means stopping to make contact with the ever-shifting experience that we are having at the time, and to observe the nature of our relationship to that experience, the nature of our presence at that moment.This is what is

happening now if, while continuing to read these words attentively, you realize that you are also breathing and having bodily sensations, that there are other objects in your field of vision besides this book, that there are sounds around you, that there are thoughts calling you away or murmuring assessments and judgments of what you are reading, and so on.Mindfulness means, just as you are about to turn this page and move on to the next (perhaps your hand is already poised, before you even finish reading these lines), halting your movement and observing, for example, the intention to turn the page thatrsquo;s already within you. Saying to yourself, ldquo;Irsquo;m going to turn the page,rdquo; rather than doing it without even noticing. Mindfulness means making a tiny space every now and then to see ourselves doing something. You will tell me we donrsquo;t need to do this in order to turn a page. And that is true. On the other hand, it may prove useful at many other times in our lives.1.BECOMING AWARE:AN ATTITUDE OF MINDThe Magpie, Claude Monet (1840ndash;1926)1868ndash;1869, oil on canvas, 89 x 130 cm, Museacute;e drsquo;Orsay, ParisTo make a perfect winter day like this, you must have a clear, sparkling air, with a sheen from the snow, sufficient cold, little or no wind; and the warmth must come directly from the sun. It must not be a thawing warmth. The tension of nature must not be relaxed.HENRY DAVID THOREAU, JOURNAL (FEBRUARY 1854)LIVE IN THE PRESENT MOMENTItrsquo;s now, right now. In a little while it will be something elsemdash;the magpie will have flown away, the sun will be higher in the sky, the shadow of the hedge will have retreated. It wonrsquo;t be better, or not as good, it will just be different. So now is the time to stop walking, feel the cold air sting our nostrils, listen to all the muffled sounds and admire the extraordinary light of sun on snow. We must stay here as long as we can, not waiting for anything in particularmdash;quite the opposite! Just stay here, doing our best to perceive the countless riches of this moment: the clumps of snow that fall from the trees with a tiny, soft thud; the blue-white shadow of the hedge; the small movements of a magpie seeking a little warmth in the sun. Everything is perfect. Nothing more is needed for this moment to feel complete.With mindfulness we can simply be present to this ordinary moment of light and grace.Decide to inhabit the present momentMindfulness teaches us to open our eyes. It is important to do this because, here and now, there are worlds around us that we constantly ignore. We can enter them by interrupting the automatic flow of our actions and thoughts.Itrsquo;s true that access to these worlds of the present moment is made easier by external gifts, such as the sun, snow and magpie of Monetrsquo;s painting. But it also requires a decision on our part to open ourselves up as often as we can to being touched, contacted and struck by life. This is an act of deliberate awareness. We must decide to open our mindrsquo;s door to all that lies beyond it, rather than hiding away in one of our inner fortresses, such as rumination, reflection, certainty or expectation.Mindfulness is also liberating. It frees us from thoughts of the future or past, because it pulls us back into the present. And it liberates us from our value judgments, because it pulls us back into presence. Our minds are cluttered with so many things! Some are important, some are interesting, and some are completely pointless and futile. These pointless things hinder our vision and connection with the world. We need the past and the future, our memories and projects, but we also need the present. Both past and future matter. The philosophy of the present moment doesnrsquo;t see it as better than the past or future, just more fragile. It is the present that we must protect, because it vanishes from our awareness whenever we are rushed or busy. We must give the present the space in which to exist.Feel instead of thinking:Immersive awarenessMindfulness meditation isnrsquo;t about analyzing the present moment, or at least not in the way people sometimes imagine. Itrsquo;s about feeling it, sensing it, with our whole body, without words. It is neither usual nor comfortable for us to do without language over a sustained period as we go through certain moments of our lives. Nor is it easy. Not talking is one thing, but not thinking! Just feeling and connecting. And yet all of us have already had this experience. What happens at such times goes beyond words and is very precisely described in the following extract from The Letter of Lord Chandos, a magnificent short story by Austrian writer Hugo von Hofmannsthal: ldquo;Since then I have led an existence which I fear you could hardly imagine, so inanely, so unconsciously has it been proceeding.nbsp;.nbsp;.nbsp;. It will not be easy for me to convey the substance of these good moments to you; words fail me once again at such times, filling any mundane object around me with a swelling tide of higher life as if it were a vessel, in fact it has no name and is no doubt hardly nameable. I cannot expect you to understand me without an illustration, and I must ask you to forgive the silliness of my examples. A watering can, a harrow left in a field, a dog in the sun, a shabby churchyard, a cripple, a small farmhousemdash;any of these can become the vessel of my revelation. Any of these things and the thousand similar ones past which the eye ordinarily glides with natural indifference can at any momentnbsp;.nbsp;.nbsp;. suddenly take on for me a sublime and moving aura which words seem too weak to describe.rdquo;As a Buddhist master once said, ldquo;Mindfulness does not react to what it sees. It simply sees, and understands without words.rdquo; Words can be immensely helpful to us at certain moments. Naming pain or joy can make us more able to bear, overcome, understand or savor it. But sometimes words can do nothing to help us express the complexity of what we feel, and can even hinder, falsify or spoil our experience. There are times when itrsquo;s better to say nothing. We must then be ready to relate to reality in a different way, sensing and feeling it. The term immersive awareness is sometimes used to describe this very particular state of mind, when we are intensely absorbed but not deliberately thinking, when we are just in the experience.The intensity of experience