

# *Memoirs of a Painted Woman*

By

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## Abstract

*The Memoirs of a Painted Woman* is a one-woman theatrical piece that revolves around the women in some of the most famous paintings of all time. The script is a blend of the true art-history as well as fictional lives of the women and deals with the duality of the word “painted”. Through direct audience address and first person recounts from the women themselves, the piece attempts to ask the question of whether or not being a muse is as grand of a thing as it is made out to be. The works being used include: *Mona Lisa*, *The Girl with the Pearl Earring*, *A Portrait of Dora Maar*, *American Gothic*, *Gala Against the Light*, *Self Portrait of Frida Kahlo* and *Marilyn Monroe*.

## Introduction

The objective of this thesis was to devise an original piece of theatre. The thesis contains three components: the written script, the rehearsal and preparation of the technical aspects of the performance and the actual performance of the work. It was important for me as an artist to do this thesis because my college career has been spent completing a degree that is separate from my art. The thesis allows for me to use my creativity in a way that my degree has not allowed me to.

When I began this journey I knew that I wanted to create a one-woman show. But the question was, about what? I wanted to do something with a strong message and voice, but it also had to be comical. I ended up settling on an idea that blended art history, pop culture and prevalent issues. “Memoirs of a Painted Woman” is a piece that deals with the fictional and real lives of some of the most famous painted women in history. The title stems from the multiple interpretations of the word “painted”. It can mean literally painted on a canvas, but it can also mean “done-up with lots of make-up” or “beautiful.” Finally, painted can take on a darker interpretation, it can imply a “facade” or glossed exterior that does not quite match up with the interior. All of these are truths about the women in the paintings. The script combines direct audience address from the narrator and then character scenes. The Narrator helps to establish the themes of the play, introduce the characters and comment on their stories. The characters also address the audience directly.

This is the list of paintings to be performed. The show is performed in chronological order.

Leonardo da Vinci- Mona Lisa

Johannes Vermeer- Girl with the Pearl Earring

Pablo Picasso- Portrait of Dora Maar

Grant Wood- American Gothic

Salvador Dali- Gala Against the Light

Frida Kahlo- Self Portrait

Andy Warhol- Marilyn Monroe

To tie the stories of these women together, I thought I would present the idea of being a muse as a conflict. There is a definite feminist element to the work. The play combines both comedic and dramatic elements, hopefully exploring the role of women in art throughout history. All of the scenes will deal with the individual's experience as a muse. I drew inspiration from this quote:

*'Muse'*

*It's such a horrible word, so insulting, carrying with it the cast-iron expectation that women have no role in artistic production but to provide decorative inspiration for the male genius (Conway, 2012).*

### The Girls

There are very specific reasons as to why I chose the women I did. Each woman must be a different type of muse; that way they offer varying experiences. This helps to balance the comedic and dramatic elements. Mona Lisa is the first painting. It is most iconic painting in history, but other than that, not much is known about the real woman in the painting. I had a lot of fun creating the character of Mona Lisa. Art historians believe that the woman in the painting was Lisa Gherardini; she was twenty-four years old at the time of the painting, married to a merchant and the mother of three kids. It struck me that

what is considered such a young age in our society was old in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, so I wanted to play with the duality of a 24 year old in the sixteenth century compared to a 24 year old today. Also, Mona Lisa was the most successful muse, and is the most well known painting in history, so the audience automatically knows who she is. I kept the entire monologue for Mona Lisa upbeat and comedic in order to start the show off on a light note. The goal with Mona Lisa was to get the audience comfortable with laughing and to introduce them to the style of the show, in hopes that they would go on this journey with me.

The next painting was the Girl with the Pearl Earring. Again, not much is known about the subject in the painting, so there was a lot of freedom to create her character. When I looked at the painting, I saw so much sadness in the eyes of the girl; I knew that I had to make her my failed muse who feel in love with her artist but lost him. The third painting was the portrait of Dora Maar. Dora was one of Picasso's tortured muses. Picasso was notorious for intentionally abusing his lovers emotionally. There is a good amount of information about Henriette Theodora, which is the real name of Dora Maar. The story of their relationship is so sad; I basically stuck to the true history, and made Dora Maar my victim. The woman in American Gothic was the opposite of a muse and is remembered as probably one of the sourest pusses in art history. She is the first character in the show to openly detest the idea of being a muse, referring to it as a fantasy. The portrait I chose of Gala by Dali was done towards the end of Dali's career, after their divorce. I picked Gala, and this picture specifically, because she tortured Dali with her affairs and lack of love. While it is said that she inspired his creativity, she broke his spirit, so she was my villain.

Frida Kahlo is the only female painter in the piece, doing a self-portrait of herself as a male. I wanted to delve into the idea that a woman's idea of a muse is different than a man's idea. A woman does not think of a muse as something beautiful, she is a harsh critic. She sees a woman through a woman's eyes, and sees ugliness. So, she was my revolutionary in a sense. Finally, Marilyn ends the show because she was the epitome of a painted woman. She became anything and everything the public perceived her as. She was a chameleon. Once she achieved stardom, she wanted to be seen as more than just a blonde bombshell. The public could never see her for what she was inside rather than the painted exterior. In the end she dies alone in her bed, so she was my martyr.

#### Technical Aspects of the Piece

The play was presented for an audience at the Studio@620 on April 4<sup>th</sup>, 2013. Based on the time allotted to memorize the show, in addition to advise from my thesis director, I only performed four of the seven girls for the thesis presentation: Mona Lisa, Girl with the Pearl Earring, Gala Against the Light and Marilyn. Prior to the show I had to devise the technical aspects of the play. I decided to wear all black and use small props to distinguish the narrator from the characters. For Mona Lisa I used a loaf of bread. For Girl with the Pearl Earring I wore a blue headscarf and had a bundle of letters. Gala drank a glass of wine, and Marilyn had a bottle of pills and lipstick.

The original idea for the staging of the play was to have large prints of the paintings hanging from the ceiling in golden frames; there would be a hole in the face of the painting that the narrator could stick her head in, literally becoming a part of the painting and demonstration to the audience the transition into that character. This idea was not used because finding and/or recreating large prints of the paintings was difficult

to do in limited time. The Studio@620 has a projector and screen so I decided to use a PowerPoint presentation, which had all of the paintings in order that were then projected behind me. When the narrator was transitioning into a new character, the screen would change and the painting would appear. The narrator would assume a tableau, similar to the pose of the woman in the painting, and then she would begin talking, symbolizing the change of character. I was worried that the audience would not understand the switch of characters, but in the end they did not seem to have a problem following the concept of the show. The final stage design for the performance had the projector screen down for the whole show. A chair sat center stage, with a couch on stage right and a table with a bottle of wine and a glass on stage left. Mona Lisa and The Girl with the Pearl Earring were performed center stage, Gala was performed at the table on stage left and Marilyn was on the couch in stage right.

Music was another technical element used to demonstrate the transition into a new character. For Mona Lisa I choose the song “Gigue” but J.S. Bach. It is a classical Baroque piece, which was the style of music following the Renaissance when the Mona Lisa was painted. It also seemed very upbeat and proper which was a great juxtaposition to Mona Lisa’s first line, “Does this frame make me look fat?” I used “Six”, but Marcel Pequel for The Girl with the Pearl Earring. This music was perfect for setting the mood of this character. It is mostly piano, creating a somber and reflective atmosphere. Gala was a villain, but she was smart and educated in the arts. I used the opera song, “Signore, ascolta!” from Turandot in the Forbidden City, sang by G. Puccini. The song sounds heavy and dark, the perfect characterization of Gala. Finally, for Marilyn I choose an instrumental version of her famous song, “I Wanna Be Loved By You,” from the movie

“Some Like It Hot.” I sing this song later in the play, and everyone thinks of Marilyn when they hear it, so I thought it was a good way to introduce her.

### Reflections

In retrospect, I don't think I could be happier with the results of my thesis or be more proud of my work. I learned so much about the writing process through this experience; I also learned that I am a good playwright. I feel empowered because I now have the courage to present a play completely created and performed by me to the public audience. I was shocked at the response of the all who attended, their interest and reaction to the themes of the show. My second reader, Bob Devin Jones, gave me some great advice about improving the play by giving the Narrator more of a story of her own instead of her just commenting on and setting up the women. I have been asked to perform the entire show for a weekend at the Studio@620 this summer. I am going to continue to improve the script, taking the advice of my director and second reader. I hope to perform the show in multiple venues locally, as well as take it with me when I move to New York City. I owe so much gratitude to my committee for their constant support and advise. A special thanks goes to Dr. Thomas Smith and the Honors College for nurturing young artists and stepping outside the boundaries of traditional scholarly research. This was the proudest moment of my entire collegiate and artistic career thus far.



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## *Memoirs of a Painted Woman*

*The room is divided in half; one half for the audience and one half for the performance space. There are no platforms. Hanging from the rafters are seven large squares covered with drapes. A stool sits center stage. There is a couch stage right and a small table with a glass and a bottle of wine stage left. The lights come up and the NARRATOR enters, crosses to the stool and sits center stage.*

NARRATOR: What is art? Poetry, acting, dance, scrapbooking. It's all art. It takes so many forms and can mean so many different things. But to most people, say the word art and they imagine a painting-- with an ornate, golden frame hanging on the wall of some museum. Created by a man, palette in hand, standing in front of an easel, wearing a smock and maybe one of those bowls of fruit is sitting on a table. If the work is any good, or when the artist finally dies, their paintings become famous. For years the pieces will be passed around by the art critiques and shown in small, private galleries until eventually they arrive at their final resting places, offered for the tourists to wander by for all eternity. Their feeble minds earnestly trying to decipher what Pollock meant when he splashed paint on a canvas.

So what exactly is a painting? It involves both the painter and his subject; whether it is a bowl of fruit, a breathtaking landscape, or a beautiful woman. No painting would be the same without the skills of each artist, but without a SUBJECT would there really even be a picture? Man discovered early in our evolution the need for a subject, or a muse. 2,500 years ago the Greeks believed that there were nine immortal muses: Calliope, Clio, Erato, Euterpe, Melpomene, Polymnia, Terpsichore, Thalia and Urania,

Sneezy and Dopey. Their beauty and song inspired the most famous artists in Greece. Often they were not depicted in the art, but simply the stimulation for it. With the fall of their empire, the belief in the gods of the Greeks was abandoned, but the idea of the muse remained. From Ancient and Classical art, to the Renaissance and Romanticism, fast forwarding to Impressionism and Cubism, Surrealism and Pop Art, the muse has always played an important role. The concept, however, has transcended the Greek definition. Instead of immortal goddesses, the muse is now a person, most often a woman. Mona Lisa, Dora, Gala, and Marilyn: the muses of some of the most famous artists of all time. Their pictures have made them immortal; beauty frozen in time.

It all sounds rather romantic doesn't it? But what does it really **take** to be a muse? Surely the requirements are different depending on the employer. It makes me wonder whether it's as good as it is made out to seem. Perhaps if we could ask some of these women they could help us understand. What stories could they tell us of their lives? And are they whom they seem to be in the pictures?

*Cross towards the painting of the Mona Lisa. The NARRATOR goes behind the painting and removes the drape. The painting has a cut out where the face of Mona Lisa would be. The NARRATOR has placed her face in the hole, symbolically demonstrating the transition into MONA LISA. This is replicated for the reveal of every painting.*

*MONA LISA:* Does this frame make me look fat? I knew carbonara and tiramisu for breakfast was a bad idea. I'm sure you all know my name; I'm the Mona Lisa. Please, don't applaud, I know you're all star struck—Luigi, stop throwing those meatballs at

your brother, I spent hours making those! Would you like something to eat? No? Ok, suit yourself. You know, when my husband told me he wanted a portrait of me, I thought it was a joke. Us 16<sup>th</sup> century Italian women weren't always easy on the eyes. But I figured, what the hell, it should be fun. When I met Leonardo, when he painted me, I never would have thought that he would become famous. And I definitely never thought I would become famous either. But he did, and I did too. It's not easy having a smile known the world over. Not back in my time. There was nothing I could do with the fame by the time I had it. I was already married to a merchant, popping out babies and making pasta. See if I were a hot 24-year-old today, I wouldn't have three kids and boobs that sagged down to kneecaps. I'd be singing the "hit me baby one more time" and not be worried that my husband would actually do it. You girls have it so easy today, no need to get married to the first ugly slob who asks your Papa. —Mario, get out of that tree, you are going to fall and break your arm!

Coffee, dessert—nothing? Fine. Before me, no real women became famous for being painted. Men only remembered the muses. Us Italian women were the closest things to goddesses that you could find. Because I was the first real woman to become famous, the art historians weren't exactly sure what to do with me. No one really knew who I was. There were so many rumors. Supposedly I was a portrait of Leonardo in drag. (He wished he had this strong of a chin) They said I was Da Vinci's mother, a woman suffering from high cholesterol, that I was pregnant because of the way I was dressed. *Chuckles*. But my favorite one was that I was Da Vinci's lover, Isabella of Aragon. That man was GAY. Does the picture of the perfect man not spell that out in big bold flaming pink letters?

Oh, and it's not a smile, it's a smirk. I'll let you in on a little secret. His name is Crescenzo...which in Italian means "to grow, spring up and thrive". Let's just say, he fits the description! Of course, he was the first to call me the playful one. Being the wife of merchant, well the sex was no good. He had no passion. I had to take a lover; otherwise I would have died from dissatisfaction. Pasta can only fill so many holes! In the painting they say that I look innocent. Right hand crossed over the left, hair pulled back and fastened in a bonnet, fashionable clothes. They even called me the "Madonna". Don't they know I was going for the 16<sup>th</sup> century post-coital look? Do you honestly believe that they would write songs, poems and movies for a boring wife of a merchant?

While I wish I were the muse to a younger, more attractive artist, it's so exciting to know that I am the subject of the most well-known painting in history. Leonardo made me famous, and that is the dream of every muse. Though, would it have killed him to paint me with some eyebrows?!

*Transition back to audience address, somehow demonstrating a switch back into the NARRATOR.*

NARRATOR: Hmm. *Looking puzzled back at the portrait of Mona Lisa.* That was interesting. She did make a really good point. So many people want to be remembered. The male gender collectively longs to be immortalized as conquerors and innovators and breadwinners. But, what does the female gender have to be remembered for? It wasn't until recently that women could be admired for having ambition. There are wonderful mothers and teachers, but they rarely are celebrated. Perhaps this was the allure of being

a muse, it allowed for a woman to be famous, renowned, and prominent. Many women have tried to latch on to rising fame of a man in hopes of being immortalized with him.

*Cross towards the painting of the Girl with the Pearl Earring. The NARRATOR goes behind the painting and removes the drape.*

GIRL WITH THE PEARL: “Please don’t leave me,” was the last thing I ever said to him. Johannes. He was my artist, my world. We had met the previous fall when he came to stay with the master of the house for business. No one had ever looked at me the way he did. It’s as if he saw the true me, the part that I kept hidden away. You see, the help aren’t exactly regarded as people. You are an object; no one stops to ask how you are doing or what you dream of at night when you rest your head after a long day’s work. So, I learned to become an item in a large house of things. Then Johannes came along and my life changed. If I was going to belong to someone, at least I belonged to the man that loved me. He didn’t even care that I was a servant. On the third night he was with us, I heard something crash while I was sleeping. I quickly leapt from bed and when I swung open my door, there he was, drunk and whispering for the girl with the blue headscarf. Only I wasn’t wearing my headscarf. My hair was down and tucked behind my ears. He kissed me. It was the strangest feeling, human touch; the wave of warmth that fell over me. After that first encounter we would meet every night at midnight, and stay up all night talking about life and love and our dreams. This is when he first showed me his art. I’d lie out in the moonlight and he would sketch my slender frame.

He stayed with us for three weeks before he had to return home. It wasn’t until we met on his last night that I learned he had a wife. He promised that we would meet once a

month and that he would write. With every letter he would include a sketch of a bird or flower. I would re-read all of his letters at night, just to feel close to him. Every time I saw him, it was as if he never left my side, and I never ceased being his favorite possession. He began working on a portrait of me. I would wear his favorite blue headscarf and my nicest dress. I could stare longingly at him for hours. I kept holding on to the dream that he would leave his wife and come rescue me. He was my only way out.

We snuck away once a month for a year, and each time he would add more to the portrait. He called me his skylark and his muse. I had never heard the word muse before, but when he explained what it meant, I realized it was the greatest compliment a man could ever pay a woman. To be the inspiration for something so beautiful. He gave my life worth with that single word.

His wife started to become suspicious of his monthly vacations and the letters became scarce. When he failed to meet me in the village on that winter day, I knew that I had lost him. He sent me a letter a few days later informing me that his wife had given birth to a son. The light in my life was suddenly turned out. I only ever wrote him one letter. I asked him to meet me the following month, to at least allow me the chance to say goodbye. When we met, I pleaded with him to run away with me but he refused. He said he could never be married to a servant.

I was the muse for his greatest work. And no one even knows my name. Now, they only remember me for my earrings. And they were his wife's.

*Transition back to audience address.*

NARRATOR: There are muses who desperately need their artist, and there are those that don't. For some, being a muse is their only chance of escape. And when that fails, life is more torturous. Artists are smart, they expect women to rely on them, to need them, and if you don't need them financially, in the literal sense, then they will make you need them in another way. The need for love is greater than the need for salvation. When a muse is in love, the artist has complete domain over her.

*Cross towards the painting of the Dora Maar. The NARRATOR goes behind the painting and removes the drape.*

DORA MAAR: I look ridiculous. He knows that because he did it on purpose. Do you know what it is like to be in love with a man who is sick? A man who takes joy in torturing the woman that loves him. I gave ten years of my life to Pablo and he gave me this, a cubist version of some child's nightmare.

My name is Henriette Theodora and I am the private muse of Pablo Picasso. I am referred to in his paintings as Dora Maar. Women who are painted always want aliases when the renderings of them are, how do you say, abstract. And Pablo loved to be abstract, not only in his work but also with life. His love for me existed in thought or as an idea, but it was never concretely shown. It's not all his fault. I just don't think he knew how to properly love another person.

I was an artist too. Famous for my photos and poetry, I even tried to paint. That never seemed to matter to Pablo though, he viewed other forms of art as insignificant and trivial, and my painting skills were far below his.



I used to do little things to catch his attention, to demonstrate my love. I would always cook him pastries and rub his tired hands at the end of a long day. Once I slipped into his studio, wearing lingerie, and crept up behind him as he was working. I threw my arms around him and kissed his neck. He never even looked up from his painting.

It was always hard for me to go through life without feeling he truly loved me. I always felt ugly compared to Marie; her beautiful blonde hair and her new born baby girl. I could never give that to Pablo. I was born sterile. An incomplete woman. He liked that about me, he used to call me his “woman in tears.” My sadness somehow made him happy. His “Weeping Woman” series is one of his best, it was an epithet that followed any mention of my name; tears were my only significant characteristic. He even hung the bloody gloves that I had used to hide the cuts on my wrists on the wall. Like it was a piece of art.

Our love affair ended when he met Françoise. She was younger, as so many are, and more feminine. She could give Pablo another child. I had shared him with Marie and Maya, and I could not share him with another. I never thought I would need a man; I was self-reliant for the first thirty years of my life. It all changes when you fall in love.

Pablo once said, “Painting is not done to decorate apartments. It is an instrument of war against brutality and darkness.” I think he was talking about us; we had so much darkness in our lives. His art was a gunshot against the torment we felt inside. I don’t think it won the war.

*Transition back to audience address.*

NARRATOR: Being a muse is so romanticized and women love that romantic stuff. We want to be treated like princesses and idolized like goddesses, but all that does is set us up for disappointment because the things that we thought we wanted to be don't exist anymore. It's not our fault, we've been called princesses since we were a little girl, we've been told to be dainty, to speak softly, to fulfill our roles. It's unfulfilling and it leaves women bitter. They say a picture is worth a thousand words...

GOTHIC: Do you smell that? It's a mix of cow manure, rotting cabbage and his decaying flesh; which really is all just the same damn thing. I guess you just get used to it when you live on a farm in Iowa. Actually, I think it is just the general smell of the entire Midwest. Cross over the Eastern Standard Time line and BAM, your nostrils are inundated with the illustrious aroma of shit.

God, how did I even end up here? You know, being raised Baptist has definitely ruined my life. If I had it my way, I would have married Harry Levowitz, but no, can't go mixing your yokes, so here I am with Stanley; a good Christian man with land and promise and completely impotent. Harry, he became a doctor and moved to the city and here I am living the dream. You know, I think that painter, what was his name, Wood, yeah, he titled mine and Stanley's portrait "American Gothic" because life on a farm is like a horror film. I pray some masked man with a chainsaw would come running out of the woods and cut me to pieces to end my misery.

It wasn't always like this. I did love Stanley once. He is a few years older than me, but when we first met he was so much fun to be around. He'd take me for rides in his pickup truck or we would go to the lake. He worked on his Dad's farm. He was very

strong back then with a full head of blonde hair. I was quite the catch too I will have you know. But, time has a way of kicking your ass and now look at us—I've got rick rack on my dress and he's wearing overalls. Aren't we just the poster couple for a sexless marriage?

Lots of people think my face is funny; I'm the sour puss of the artistic world. No sex will do that to you. I know women aren't supposed to want it, and blah blah blah. But 10 years without it and any man you look at starts to seem like a good lay. That must be why there's so much incest in the Midwest. You'd think I could start a fire when I rub my thighs together. The romance is so dead in this relationship that we sleep in separate rooms. Hell, we weren't even painted at the same time. Woods painted Stanley first, and then...he did me.

Women have a problem, and I don't know how far back it started or what sparked it, but we are obsessed with this idea that we can change our men. That somehow we are going to inspire them to be better. If that ain't the most ridiculous thing I have ever heard. Men don't change. I don't care how pretty or smart you think you are, your feminine wiles may last for a couple years, honey, but they will ware off and soon, he's back to being that simple minded, sex driven Neanderthal he was when he met you. Just let me be an example for all of you, I got caught up in wanting to change Stanley. He was good looking and hard working and Baptist, of course, but I wanted him to be sensitive. Ask me what I am thinking, care about my dreams and hopes, and idolize me like I was some kind of muse or something that was sent from above to improve his life. That's why I stayed. That's why I didn't marry Harry, or any of the other men I could have, because I thought I was a muse. I can tell you one thing, I ain't no damn muse. I am like an anti-

muse. No man has looked at me and been inspired to do anything but throw up or run away in a long time.

Don't get caught up in that fantasyland of being a muse. It only leads to heartbreak and disappointment, girls. Just learn to accept your men, and if you can't, well, there's always vodka.

NARRATOR: Some women don't need to be muses. They choose to be, because they like the way it feels. They know the power that lies within inspiring an artist, and they take it. They are the reason their artist paints; they stimulate their minds, open their hearts and liven their dreams. They are their reason for living.

*Cross towards the painting of the portrait of Gala Against the Light. The*

*NARRATOR goes behind the painting and removes the drape.*

GALA: History often doesn't favor women with power. A man with power, well he is a leader, a warrior, a king. But a woman with power, she is just a bitch. *Smiles.* Good thing I like being a bitch.

Maybe from my picture you don't know who I am, but I am sure you know my husband. The Master of Surrealism, Salvador Dali. Which would make me Gala. Now, that we've been introduced maybe you've heard stories of why people hate me but do you know why you should thank me? It is because of me that Dali ever became anything more than lunatic painting his childlike fantasies. I was the tie to the real world that kept him from slipping into madness. I was his muse. You're welcome!

Art has always been a part of my life. When I met Paul Eluard I fell in love with his work. He was a poet, as you may know, and he was one of the reasons I got involved in the Surrealist movement. We got married and unfortunately had a child. Cecile never could do much for me, so I never paid her any mind. Luckily Eluard's mother took her in so we could continue to travel. Traveling is one of my favorite things. In every city I could find at least one little exploit. Oh, come now, you know you're all thinking the same thing. I've always been rather insatiable. Sex is important if you want to be a muse. There's only one way to inspire a man in my opinion, and that is through his loins. Artists are simple; they chose the muse they want to take. She's a better muse when she enjoys the sex as much as he does. That was my allure. Paul Eluard, Louis Aragon, Max Ernst, Andre Breton, and then Dali.

I always had a fondness for young artists. Ironically, it was Eluard who eventually convinced me to marry Dali. So, if he were to die I would at least inherit his valuable works. I saw in Dali the possibility for fame and we were such a wonderful pair. So eccentric and outrageous, I knew exactly how to market us. The perfect artist and muse for an entire era. We were on the cover of *Life* magazine, in gossip columns, friends of Andy Warhol and Disney. We could and did do anything we wanted.

A lot of people wonder if I actually loved him... I'm sure there were moments. He had such an imagination and a lust for life. He could make me laugh. But, he craved attention like a child and I hate children. I wasn't his lover, I was his mother. I had to take care of him, teach him how to eat and dress and not spend all of the money. I was married for fifty-three years to a man who would rather touch himself than his wife. A boy who was afraid of the beauty of the female body. And you wonder why I had affairs? You

think I am the one who destroyed him? He was wasting me and I would not be wasted. You can hate me all you want, but my infidelities stimulated Dali's creativity. Do not be fooled, I was not the pretty muse who just stood there to be painted with stars in her eyes. I was not just some decorative inspiration for his genius. I took a weak and pitiful man and transformed him into an artist. I was the genius.

*Transition back to audience address.*

NARRATOR: A woman can so easily see the beauty in others but often fails to see the beauty in herself. Somehow we see ourselves as not good enough, pretty enough, or not thin enough. Don't you ever get sick of it? Some days, it just seems like it would be so much easier to be a man.

FRIDA: Mira que si te quise, fue por el pelo, ahora que estas pelona, yo no te quiera. "Look, if I loved you it was because of your hair. Now that you are without hair, I don't love you anymore." I'm not beautiful. You are wondering why I am here. Wondering why the only female artist decided to paint herself as a man. I'm that loco divorcee who chops off all her hair and puts on her husbands clothes. What can I say; I've never truly felt like a woman.

Children, they're so impressionable. They will believe anything you tell them. Santa Claus, the Easter Bunny, God...I've learned that what you don't say is just as important. I had polio when I was six, which left one of my legs thinner than the other. When I was a teenager, there was a terrible bus accident. I was impaled with a metal bar through my abdomen and my uterus; I broke my spine, collarbone, and ribs, and fractured my pelvis. And my parents never once told me I was beautiful. Cristina, she was their

beautiful daughter, and Frida, she was broken. Thirty-five surgeries couldn't put her back together. My childhood taught me the pain of life, not the beauty. I was born a bitch, not a princess.

It was after the accident when I was bedridden for months that I started painting. I started with self-portraits and they kind of stuck. I paint myself because I am so often alone and because I am the subject I know best. My paintings aren't dreamscapes or abstract ideas off in the distance, like all these male artists who paint pain they have never experienced themselves. My pain is visceral. Unlike male artists, I am not persuaded by appearances, I see through the façade and paint the true image of the subject. I paint the true female form and experience. Those girls that they paint, they're not real. Not to me anyway, the world has never looked at me like a muse.

I know Diego didn't. He cared too much for the exterior. I will tell you some wisdom. If you are married to a painter and they don't paint you, they don't love you. Painters fall in love with people they find inspiring. A baron woman with a unibrow and one leg bigger than the other is far from inspirational. Depressing is what it is. He was already a famous painter before I met him. He actually liked my paintings and he was the first person that was nice to me in a long time. He wanted a wife, but it is hard to make someone feel like a man when you don't feel like a woman. His disappointment in me caused a lot of bitterness. He hated me and I hated myself. There were affairs on both sides. I slept with women and men; I didn't care. I just needed to find someone that could make me feel something. Dull the pain. The day he slept with Cristina was the day I turned my hate towards him. She was the woman I could not be, she was the muse, and she was the favorite. She had won.

So yes, I am the female artist painting myself as a man because I am tired of being a woman.

NARRATOR: For some, the power that lies within being a muse can be too much to handle. They begin to forget the difference between the image of the muse and who they really are. Like a drug, they become addicted to the idea of being loved and admired. But the admiration of strangers does not replace the security of someone who loves your true self. It can be very lonely.

*Cross towards the painting of Marilyn Monroe. The NARRATOR goes behind the painting and removes the drape.*

MARILYN: *During the course of the monologue she periodically pops pills and slowly gets more drugged.*

Everybody wants to be liked. But I crave it. The thought of someone not liking me just tears me up inside. I think it's because growing up I didn't have any friends. I didn't have anyone that cared about me. I used to look at the girls from the picture shows and think, "wow, they're liked." People wanted to be around them! Becoming one of them was my way out. *Over joyed. And now here I am! Giggles. Dances across the room and ends with a wink. Blows a kiss to the audience.*

To be liked, you have to do what other people want all the time. And at first, it was easy because I liked the way people treated me. They thought I was important and they thought I was beautiful. Oh, when someone thinks you're beautiful, it's the most wonderful feeling in the world! If only I could live in that moment when I first walk out on stage, when the audience is roaring and shouting your name. The lights blinding, their



screams deafening, your heart races and you forget who you are. *She lives in that moment for a beat. Slowly coming out of it.* It doesn't stay easy, though. Once you start doing and being what people want you to be, you can't ever stop. People just keep taking and taking. (Takes a pill) And I just keep giving and giving until there's just none of me left. Besides, they don't even really see me; they just see Marilyn, the muse of the world. It's a lot of responsibility. *Beat.* I don't ever want to get old. It's so depressing. *In a playful manner.* I'd rather die young and beautiful than old and ugly!

I always wanted to be loved. To be swept off my feet. I thought that I had that a couple times. But Joe and Arthur, and anyone for that matter, just couldn't take being in love with someone that everyone else is in love with. They didn't understand why I had to play Marilyn. They wanted me to be a wife and I convinced myself that I could, but I couldn't. I couldn't be a wife and Marilyn at the same time. I really tried. But I was just so afraid of not being liked. It sounds so silly. But when you have it set in your heart, way down in your soul, that nobody would like boring Norma Jean, then you say goodbye to that girl and create yourself a girl that will be liked. (Takes a pill) Remembered.

Men always loved me. But often my stardom outshined theirs, and men have too much pride. There was only one man who was ever more famous than me. Jack. He had power, and he knew exactly how to use it to get just what he wanted. And he wanted me. *Smiles.* And he had me. *Giggles.* I liked being with someone stronger than me. If only she wasn't in the picture. All she wanted to do was control him. He didn't even love her. It was because of her and his father that we couldn't be together. (Takes a pill). I wasn't fit for the White House. I wasn't pure and wholesome like Jackie. *Smiles.* That's ok, because

she wasn't blonde. And all the reasons why we couldn't be together were the reasons why he loved me.

I just want to be wonderful and everybody wants me to be their angel. But who's going to save me? I think that I am good at hiding all this hurt but I'm not. Can't anybody see that? Sometimes I feel like I put so much on to myself, you know? I am so willing to recognize the pain I cause other people, but they can never see what they do to me. I'm just supposed to be invincible or something. (Takes a pill) I'm just a girl looking for the love she never had as a kid. I just want to love and be loved. But I keep messing everything up. (Takes a pill)

*Talking to an imaginary person.* Oh you want me to sing for you? Why sure, honey. *Sings one of Marilyn's famous songs. (I wanna be loved by you – by you and nobody else but you...I wanna be loved by you...alone. Boo boo be doo!)*

*Slowly saying each line.*

Why do they come to me?

Can someone tell me?

What is it about me?

I want you to do something for me, ok? Promise me you'll always remember be just like this. Just how I am in my painting. Remember me as the smiling blonde who stole your heart...Remember me as beautiful.

*With blurry eyes and slurred speech.* Do you know how intoxicating it is to be famous?

*She falls asleep.*

*Transition back to audience address.*

NARRATOR: What's it like to be a muse? You could be remembered throughout history, like Mona Lisa. It could leave you heart broken and alone, like the Girl with the Pearl Earring. You could learn how to use to your advantage, like Gala, or you could have it destroy you, like Marilyn. I was a muse once, and it was simultaneously the happiest and most difficult time in my life. It's funny, I feel like my experience as a muse is a combination of all seven of the women we have seen. It was incredible and empowering when it began, and tragic and devastating when it ended. I am still trying to figure out whether it will strengthen or wreck me. Despite the ending, I would never take it back.

The women we've seen today are some of my muses. But as you learned, the more you know about the woman behind the painting, the more you realize that she is so much more than what's bound by that frame. Every single one of them had their own struggles and burdens, and every one of them was flawed. Our muses are not the muses of the Greeks and Romans. They aren't goddesses, they are real women. And even Da Vinci, Vermeer, Dali and Warhol could not capture the complexity of a real woman. Being a muse is the most difficult job in the world. You are the backbone of your artist, there for constant emotional support. When the art is good and easy, so is your life, but that can turn in a second and your life is tortured like your artist. You are someone's shadow, often underappreciated and underpaid. That's why women are the muses; we've been doing this job for centuries. Only we can take being reduced to the decorative inspiration of our men with grace and dignity.

So, the next time you are walking through a museum admiring the works of great artists, remember that there is a woman behind that man and she is more than what is painted on the canvas. Ask yourself, what are her memoirs?