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It was my last half-day Friday of the summer at my job in lower Manhattan. My friend Mike and I decided to meet at the Museum of Modern Art. I tried to rush up from downtown to midtown on the subway, but I left one delayed train only to get on another train on another line that went immediately out of service. The train I did finally take remained with the doors open for at least two minutes at every stop all the way up to the museum.

Once above ground, we navigated each other via our cell phones to a place called Burger Heaven for lunch. We ordered cappuccinos because the Hispanic guy who made and served the coffee was flirtatious and easy on the eyes. He put a lot of cinnamon on top of the steamed milk and brought them steaming hot to our table. After eating a couple of very down-to-earth burgers, I told Mike we had to get some better tasting espresso in the sculpture garden. I imagined there must be a place there outside.

We used Mike's membership card to get me into MOMA for just five bucks. The usually entrance cost is twenty dollars. A sign next to the member's table said BAG CHECK. Taped below the sign was a sheet of Xerox paper with a crooked arrow, drawn crudely in blue ballpoint ink. We went to the first available bag check person and he told us that the member's bag check was way to the right and we would get out of the museum faster by using that one now. We thanked him and did as he suggested.

This was my second visit to MOMA since it reopened in its new building. Mike and I had come earlier in the summer on another one of my half-day Fridays. We'd perused through about half the galleries then and now we wanted to see the rest.

But first, we went and stood in a short line for more coffee. One guy in slow motion was running a fully automatic espresso machine, so we spent several minutes watching the people in the garden. I commented on the white birch trees near us and told Mike that we'd had them in my front yard when I was a kid out in California. I said I'd seen them all over Germany the many times I'd visited there. He said his Mom used to weave the bark to make purses and clothes. I thought he was kidding, but she really did. I thought that kind of stuff would look good somewhere in this museum.

After finally getting our iced lattes, we sat down and started talking about the number of women here who were wearing some sort of Capri pants. We noted a variety of trendy collarless blouses that didn't really hang well on their bodies. Mike was quite concerned about this discovery. Someone should tell them, he thought. I knew it wasn't going to be us, so we went inside to look at art.

We strolled quickly through the photography and new

acquisitions areas and then up to part of the permanent collection we'd missed on our last visit. I had visited the old MOMA many times and knew the collection then very well, so I was continually noting which works were coming back at me like old friends and which ones I was seeing for the first time. I couldn't be quite sure of some.

We agreed that *Starry Night* by Van Gogh was just not interesting anymore. A giddy, corpulent guy in a Hawaiian print shirt stood next to the painting and was directing his wife to take a snapshot of him with a digital camera she was obviously not on good terms with.

Mike said the Van Gogh painting had become a symbol and it was hard to look at it as an innovative artwork at this point. We both loved the Egon Schiele painting of *Gerti Schiele* that hung across from it. I was quite a Schiele fan in my early twenties and this one graced the covers of a few books of his art, one that I still have at home. But I felt as if this could be the first time I was really seeing this painting. This was the exact opposite experience of *Starry Night*. A few minutes later, I realized that I still liked nearly all of the Futurists better than I like Picasso. A young woman, probably a docent, was talking to a group of restless folks about Futurist manifestos and the abandonment of the past in every sense in order to make way for the speed and noise of the future. We laughed about putting together a show of paintings by Chelsea queens on speed and calling it 'Futurism 2, the Tina Years.'

By this time we were tired of the art. There was too much to take in. We were still walking around, but now looking out of windows at the apartments across the streets and feeling the vertigo that catches one by surprise at various high places in the new MOMA building. We noticed there were lots of people crowded into the empty white hallways that didn't have any art. These unadorned corridors were reassuring somehow. We enjoyed watching people as they tried to find the restrooms or manoeuvred their way onto sluggish escalators and into sterile elevators.

I told Mike that the art here seemed old, much older than I used to think it was just a few years ago. There was something of the shopping mall or airport here: gobs of expensive art, traffic, and extra space. The art was smaller here in its new super-sized home and it felt less vital.

We could still pick out things that moved us. There were just fewer surprises. I found myself thinking of that Hispanic guy who had made us the cappuccinos a couple of hours before.

Adapted for performance by Barbara Campbell from a story by Rob Stephenson.