

The hated art project essay sample

[Art & Culture](#), [Painting](#)



I selected this painting on display at the Getty Museum by French artist James Jacques Joseph Tissot, titled “ What Our Savior Saw.” This exhibition included 124 watercolors selected from a set of 350 detailed illustrations of the New Testament.

I don’t know what made this particular piece stand out to me, probably because at first glance, I really didn’t realize what the painting was about until I read the title and looked at it again, and then it hit me. It was more to it than people merely sitting around in an open field with a couple of Roman soldiers among them.

As I walked around with a copy of this piece in my school bag for a week or so, I often thought about what I could possibly say about this painting/artist. Also during this time, I shared this painting with a couple of people, and asked them what they thought of the piece without telling them what it depicted. One individual stated, “ They look sad about something.” Another individual stated, “ The people appeared shame for some reason.” Then I informed them what the piece was and they wanted to look at it again, they were quite impressed with the work after they realized what it was about.

Eventually it hit me why I was drawn to this particular painting out of all the rest. It was the fact that probably no one else thought to wonder other than Tissot, what Jesus saw, or for that matter, what exactly was on his mind as he was nailed to a cross looking down on all the people that were looking up at him. Yet in Tissot’s mind’s eye, after reading this biblical story came up with the idea to paint this portrait from the viewpoint of Jesus. I find this to be absolutely amazing to come up with this idea.

From my research, I discovered that Tissot was born in 1836, in Nantes, France, a seaport on the French coast and the son of a very prosperous, successful shopkeeper. Throughout his life, Tissot was fascinated with all things nautical, and his ability to accurately paint rigging and shipboard scene paintings must have come from his childhood. Tissot senior was unenthusiastic about the prospect of his son becoming an artist, but eventually accepted the inevitable of his son's artistic pretensions forming the basis of his career.

Tissot had a successful artistic career in Paris and London Society. In the mid 1870s, Tissot met Kathleen Newton, an Irish divorcee with a colorful past. Kathleen became his model, mistress, and great love of his life. Many other successful men kept mistresses, but did not, like Tissot, live openly with them in adulterous relationships. This situation forced the painter to choose between his social life and Kathleen. To his credit he chose his lady. Kathleen was an extremely attractive young woman, and appeared in many of Tissot paintings at this time. In the late 1870's her health started to decline, with the onset of that great 19th century killer Tuberculosis. Tissot remained devoted to her. In 1882, the desperately ill Kathleen committed suicide. Tissot was devastated by his loss, and never really recovered from it. Like many English people at this time, Tissot became interested in Spiritualism, and on a number of occasions tried to contact the dead Kathleen. The exotic French artist and his fallen woman, one of the great 19th century English love stories.

In 1882, Tissot carried on working back in Paris, producing a series of paintings depicting the costumes and manners of fashionable Parisian women in sumptuous surroundings. These paintings were, for a time, extremely fashionable. Tissot, hard working and shrewd, quickly became successful in Paris, where his oil paintings of social events and his conversation pieces rapidly became popular. These paintings were beautifully painted, and an interesting record of social life at the time, but were controversial. This was the time when commercially successful people were overtaking the landed aristocracy in wealth, and as patrons of the arts. This situation was not to the liking of everybody, and in some quarters Tissot paintings were regarded as depictions of the nouveau-riche, and described by some as mere painted photographs of vulgar society. Following this, Tissot experienced a profound religious experience, and became increasingly devout. Tissot embarked on a series of religious paintings, visiting the Middle East on a number of occasions to observe and paint the landscape, architecture, costumes, and customs of the Holy Land, convinced that the region had remained unchanged since Jesus' time. Tissot died in France in 1902.

My opinion hasn't changed about the work after researching its history or the artist's history. I selected this piece not because I disliked the painting, I disliked the event or the story that it tells. The fact that an innocent and righteous man was crucified for no other reason than that he had a following as a result of his goodness and his teachings, and was feared because those in power at the time did not understand him and therefore felt threatened by him.