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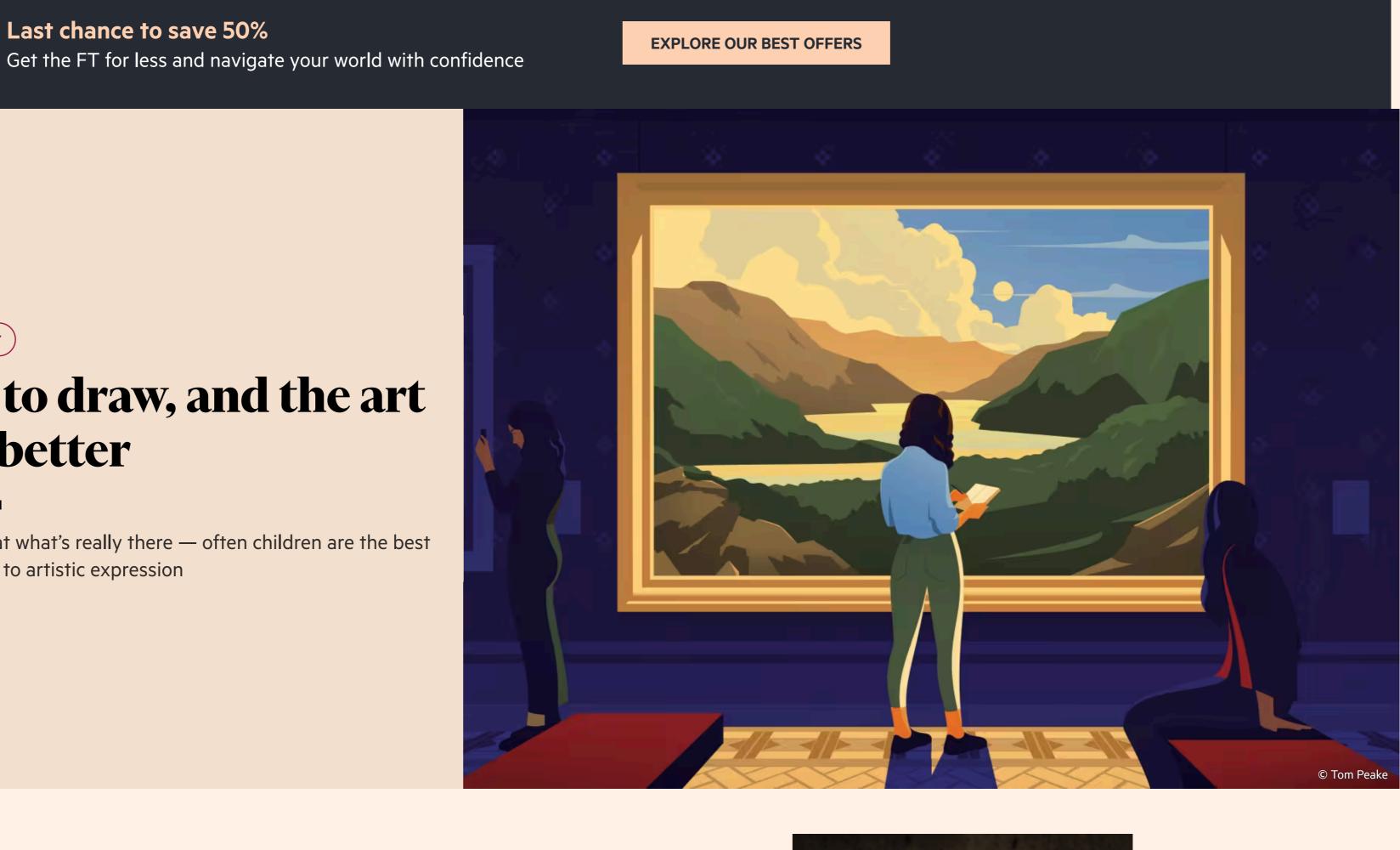
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Lilah Raptopoulos OCTOBER 13 2023

A man named Patrick Bringley published a memoir earlier this year called *All*

place he knew. He stood still there for 10 years.

the Beauty in the World. When his brother died from cancer, Bringley quit his job in media and became a museum guard at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Americas' largest museum. He wanted to stand still in the most beautiful

I loved Bringley's book. It taught me how to get more out of museums, how to pay attention, and how to think differently about time. Since I read it (and disclosure — began to date someone who loves to draw), I started to want to see better. You know when you start to learn about wine, and suddenly you care where a wine is from? I wanted that, but for art, and also for life. So we started drawing: at museums, we drew the art. This is even more fun with children, so

we brought my sisters' kids along. We drove to the Bruce Museum in Connecticut, sprawled out on the floor with pencils and markers, and drew until it got dark. At one point my niece Scarlett turned to my boyfriend Larry. They were drawing a Lois Dodd night painting, a peaceful view of a barn at night. "Why are you in such a hurry?" she asked him, as she steadily filled her barn with dark grey. "Maybe you should slow down." A few months later I asked Bringley to walk me around the Met, to record an

His advice was, basically, the same as Scarlett's: slow down. We passed through corridors that spanned tens of thousands of years, and I asked him how to avoid feeling like you just don't get it. Like you went somewhere, and you walked, and *looked*, but didn't really see. He suggested going alone. "Right

now, you and I are walking through Medieval Art and we're talking about

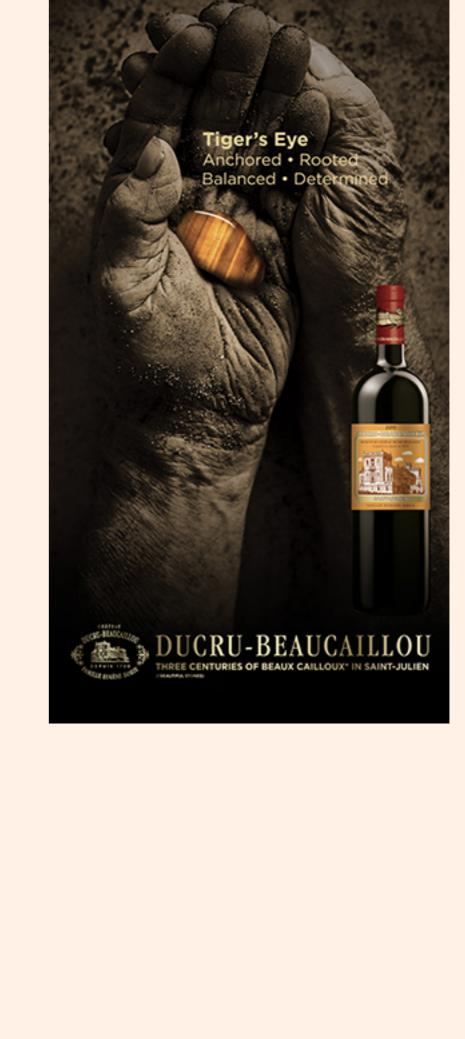
things that have nothing to do with Medieval art," he told me. "But if you and I

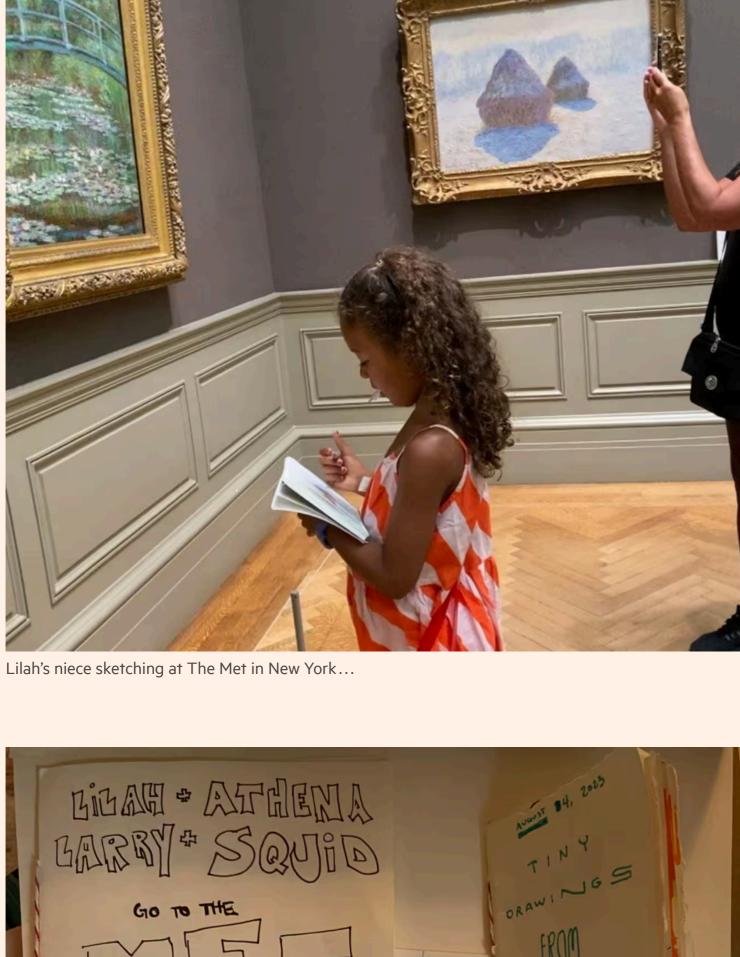
episode of the FT Weekend podcast, which I host. I was still looking for

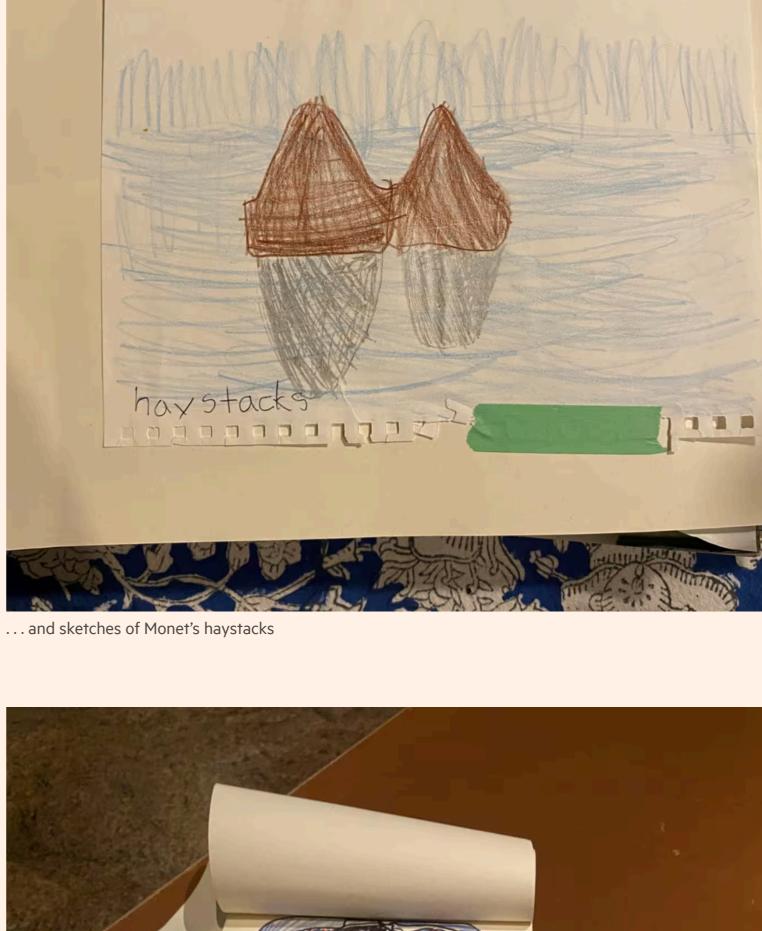
guidance, and thought he could teach listeners, too.

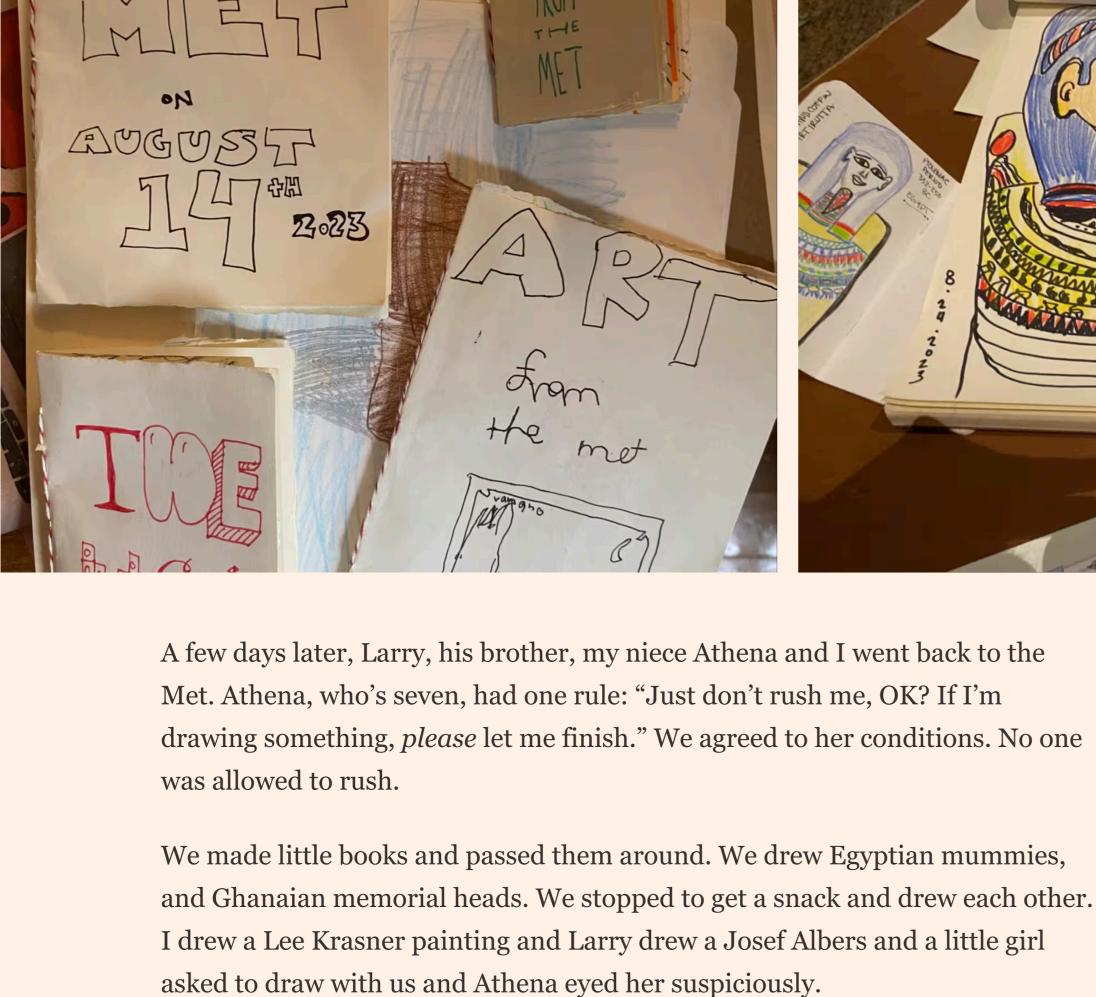
split off from each other and I said, 'Go look at this stuff for 15 minutes and I'll look at this for 15 minutes,' your soul could quieten down. You could start to be penetrated by it." We ended up in the Impressionist rooms, some of the busiest in the Met, in front of a Van Gogh. I asked him for his rules for contemplating a painting. His first: do nothing. Look at the details, then look at the whole thing. Don't decide if it's good or bad, because that's not even really the point, is it? Just decide if it does anything to you. "All of that," he said, "takes time and quiet." Then go away, do that with other art too, learn more, "and then return, return. Keep

returning."



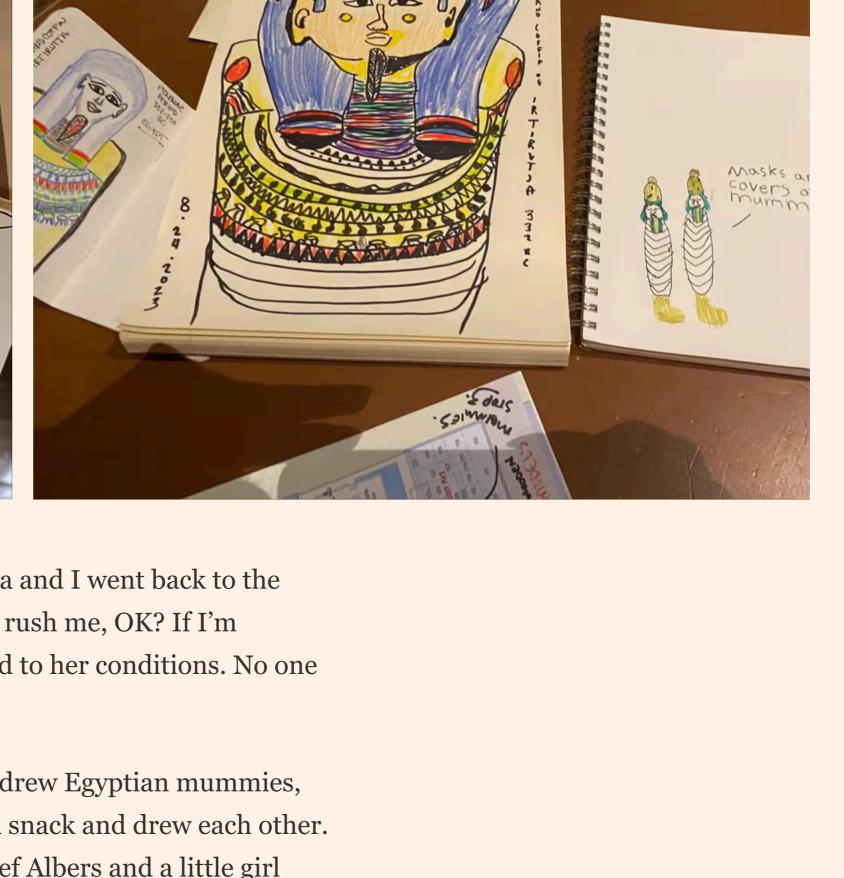






took a photo of the water

forgotten.



We went back to the Impressionist rooms, to a gallery full of Monets. Athena stood in front of his haystacks. I stood in front of his water lilies. We drew. Someone came up behind us. "Are you drawing?" they asked. Yeah, we said. Huh, they said. Athena asked me what I noticed. I told her that most lines go horizontally in the water, but the tree reflections go vertically. I asked what she

noticed. She said that the haystack's shadows were the same size as the haystacks, but upside down. 66 I looked over and Larry was writing down her phrase: "What did you notice?" Moved A steady stream of people

by her focus, I took a photo of her

lilies and moved along. They drawing, and suddenly noticed the scene barely looked at the around us. There was Athena, finishing painting itself. Snap, turn. her haystack, occasionally jostled by the Snap, turn crowd. Behind her was a steady stream of people taking a photo of the water lilies and moving along. They barely looked at the painting itself. Snap, turn. Snap, turn. I realised I'd been guilty of this too, not too long ago. I also realised some of these people were dressed up to match the water lilies. They were taking influencer photos, with the water lilies.

This kid, a member of the screen-addled, attention-less generation post-Z, was

the one standing there, quietly looking, demanding not to be rushed. Instead it

In September, Larry and I took a month off and travelled through Europe and

Turkey. At this stage I was drawing real stuff, too, and humbled daily by how

hard it is to draw as an adult. It was as if my hands had been developmentally

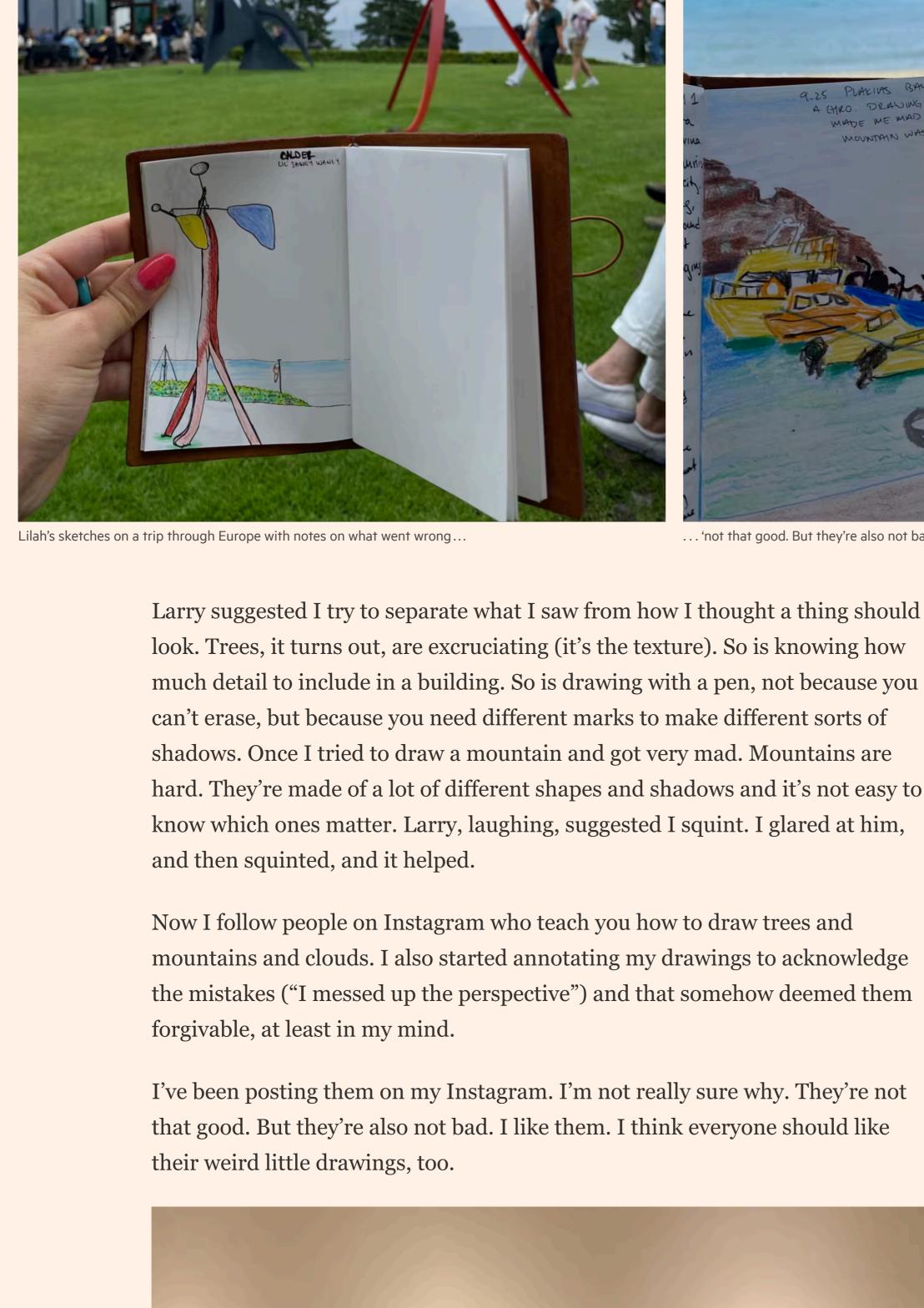
arrested at six years old, but they were itchy. I've doodled aimlessly for years,

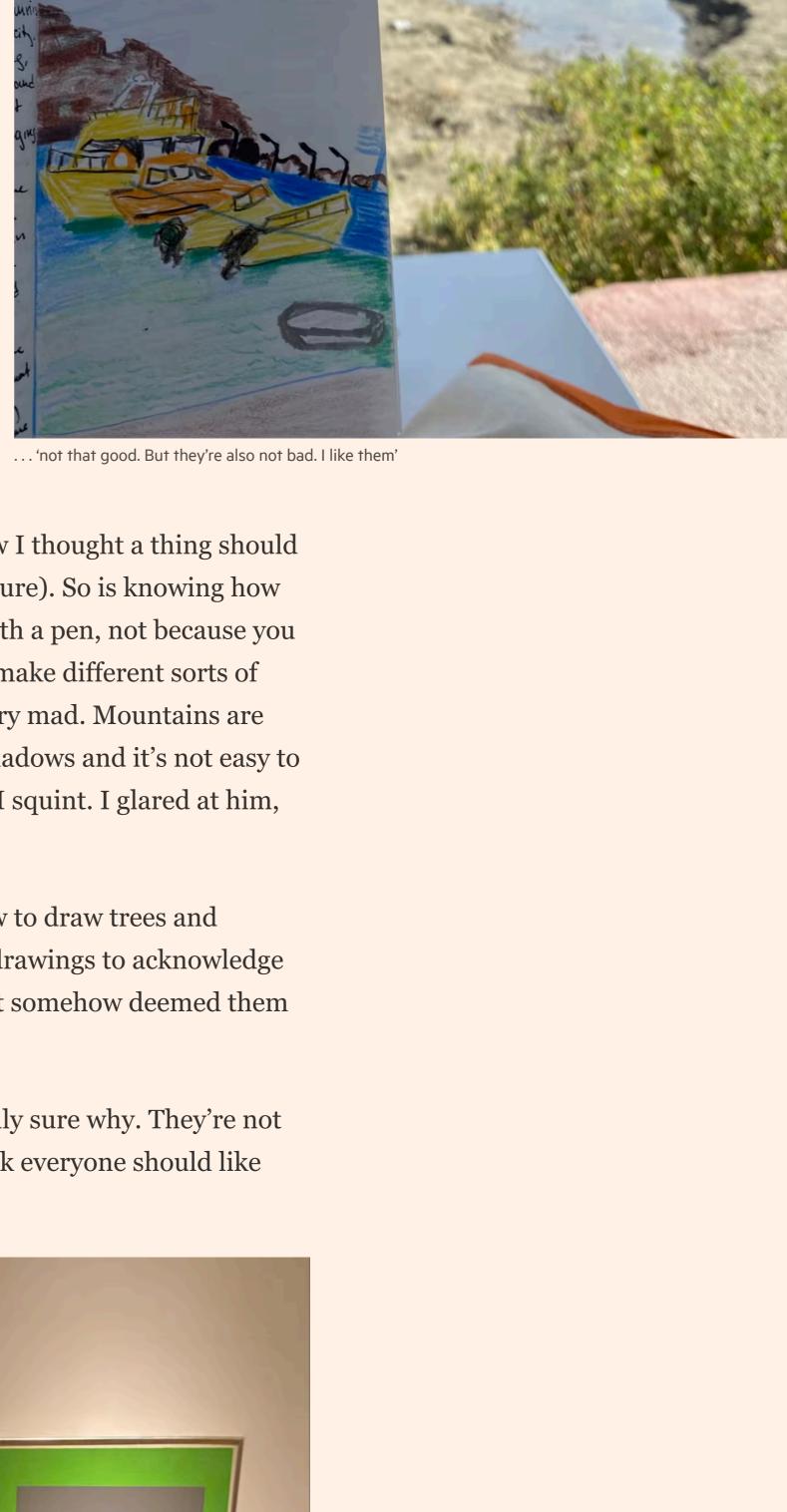
though nothing more than stars, dots, random shapes. I imagine this is why

was the people around her, buzzing in her ear, who weren't. The adults had

colouring books got so popular for a while. Colouring is hard for adults to mess up. In the seminal 1979 book Drawing on the Right Side of the Brain, Betty Edwards teaches you to separate what your brain assumes something looks like

from the shapes you're actually seeing. To help people see, she has students draw a piece of recognisable art that's been turned upside down. When they turn it right side up, they're shocked to see it's nearly perfect.







Lilah's niece and nephews at the Bruce Museum with their sketches of Josef Albers I also see more now. I wonder if a ledge is angled up or down. I notice things, like how Modigliani only sometimes painted eyes. Or how Matisse can make a face look sexy in impossibly few strokes. It's made my life more fun. Towards the end of our trip, my sister texted Larry and me. Her kids had asked to go back to the Bruce Museum and draw again, nice and slow. They found some Josef Albers squares that they liked, and they spread out. All of them drew, even the youngest, who's three, and my sister and her husband sat with them on the floor. Next time, we'll get the adults drawing, too. Lilah Raptopoulos is the host of the FT Weekend podcast



Pam Tanowitz's Song of Songs

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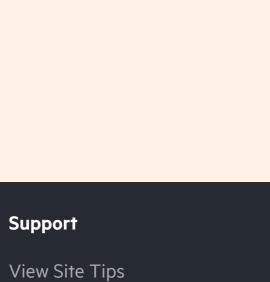
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