

TRANSCENDENCE, INTERRUPTED: A Gallery Debate in Fractured Light



A small group of friends gathered in a art gallery that smelled like hospital disinfectant— air too clean, too still, as if even breath required permission. Its white walls stretched outward, immaculate, indifferent, their silence broken only by the faint hum of hidden vents and distant footsteps echoing through its halls. At the center a digital image was suspended in sterile reverence, its colors pulsing faintly.

Kasim spoke first. His voice arrived carefully, like a hand extended into darkness. "Can art ever transcend its boundaries," he asked, head tilted, searching past the visible, as if the painting concealed a second horizon— "or does it merely observe them?" His words hovered, thin as smoke, refusing to settle.

Wan-Sze shifted his weight, a flicker of impatience crossing his face. "What sort of question is that?" he retorted, his tone sharply echoing against the polished concrete floors.

Will leaned back, arms folded, a smirk gathering at the corner of his mouth like a storm refusing to break. He wasn't one for grand metaphysical claims. "Actually," he countered bluntly, "It does nothing." He leaned back, crossing his arms with a skeptical smirk. "Isn't it up to each viewer to interpret this work for themselves?"

Nadia drifted closer to the digital projection, her breath ghosting the surface of the image in a faint, vanishing bloom. "I once heard," she said softly, eyes tracing the trembling edge of the projection, "that if you look long enough—truly look— you can transcend ordinary reality." Her voice faltered, as though her words resisted definition. "I don't know what that means," she admitted, almost to the painting, almost to herself. Silence returned—not empty, but waiting.

Wan-Sze exhaled, long and low, his patience thinning to a thread. He turned toward the exit, where light from the outside world spilled in—warmer, less certain. "Why don't we," he said, already halfway gone, "just transcend this conversation?" No one followed immediately.

Behind them, the digital projection held its ground— wordless, unmoving, yet somehow fuller now, as if their questions had entered it and found no way out.

– T Newfields

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