El cuadro (The Painting)
Author:
Mª Isabel Sánchez Vegara y Albert Arrayás
Reader:
Margaret Jull Costa

The book centres around a painting in a museum. We never see the painting, but we're told that it's marvellous. So marvellous that VIPs are brought to see it and informed that the painting changed the course of modern art. As the book progresses, we meet the various people who come to see the painting: Art critics who have travelled thousands of miles to

view it first-hand, and who think it's like Rembrandt, or possibly Picasso. Restorers who ponder the care they will have to take not to ruin its marvelous colours. Art students who try to copy certain details. Visitors taking pictures of the painting. Perhaps the most interesting visitors, though, are the children, who don't care what the grown-ups think, and let their imaginations run riot. Some say it's an extraterrestrial giraffe, others a sea made of pizza. On the artist's birthday, an expert lectures the gathered journalists on the techniques used – Coloured pencils? Charcoal? Watercolour? A collage? The museum guides invite visitors to ask themselves what the painting means. Who was it dedicated to? How was the artist feeling when he painted it? What does it mean exactly?

But perhaps the only person who can answer that question is the artist himself. And that's you, the reader. The book ends with a blank page for the reader to make his/her own painting.

This is a very charming book. The illustrations are delightful and imaginative, and it's nice to have a book that pokes gentle fun at the pretentiousness of art criticism and the way certain paintings are almost idolised. Definitely worth translating.