

Joanne loved most of all the paintings of the Dutch still life masters and specifically the ways they depicted lemons. Lemons alone could move her to an otherwise rarely felt emotional depth.

**1 I'll get to the others later but I felt compelled to start here. It's probably less than an inch wide in the picture but the effect of that punch of yellow is impossible to ignore, that stippled flesh that looks like the poor citrus had a grave chill like feeling spooked by a ghost or someone's ill thinking towards it. The edges almost hardened as if all the surrounding paint came on top and around this form, trying to work in layers to build the piece to equal the lemon within it, the perfect little closure.**

**9 Flattened golden yellow in the shape of a small potato, oval but with a slight bump at the bottom at the 1/3 point like a  $y = 1/20 x^2$  parabola and one  $y = 1/2 x^2$  placed horizontally at the middle right. There's a smooth outline of the outside shape and bumps on its left and right sides. The bump on the left is a triangle with a line like a smiley face. two black dots next to the bump on the left, evenly spaced, and one next to the parabola on the right. There's one more dot at the bottom right. The dots are all surrounded by a darker, golden yellow outline.**

Anywhere she could go and observe any painting of a lemon, no matter how small, she went. Standing for hours studying the layers of paint and how much care and accident were accounted for, how the light was handled, the color of the shadow, the gesture of the peel in its composition, the illusion of moisture.

**12 Pale in color with texture. The smooth skin, with enlarged pores, of course, is replaced by a nubby look. It seems to be the brightest spot in the painting. Makes me long for a time when lemons didn't look so artificial and wonder when lemons became so free of texture on their exteriors.**

**21 A lemon with a flat cross-section that looks like it was cut with a knife. It's cruel. The painter used a very saturated color since the light reflects off the lemon, which now looks like blood flowing from a corpse at a murder scene. The other half of the lemon looks wistful, as if longing for the half that was cut off, raising its face and shedding dark light, like a jilted lover. The dark shadow looks like a face full of worry and anxiety. Is it my mood that the reflected light from that depressed lemon looks like tears? 34 The shadow was more pronounced than the thing itself. A gray crescent tinted with yellow, and a soft ochre edge which lifted the rind up off its surface as if to say come squeeze me you swooning loon. So I leaned in with a pucker. And Lo and behold, The kiss mark was the same shape. Though A smaller version.**

**121 It's a dark lemon. Held in place but alone. There is a green to it but it's not a rotten thing. It reminds me of a cake or a cracker. There's a glittering brightness like it's in a cave and the light is unnatural, fluorescent. I don't know it's thoughts but it could be a tomato or an orange and it seems sour and bitter like a personality. It is physically trapped but independent like it could leave at any point. And it's real, very clearly what it's intended to be but not detailed. Just enough strokes to make the shape. 142 The lemon is spilling out its red interior. The lemon is spreading across the canvas. It's so thin, almost just a crack. I know a lemon to be yellow but many are other colors like anemic red and running.** She took extreme care in noticing every possible detail, filling up her eyes and trying to seal it into her retinas. She called and wrote to any expert she heard of or read about for references until she felt certain she had seen every lemon painted between 1590 and 1670. She progressed forward in time and expanded her regional exploration. She went to any home, museum, wall, warehouse, anywhere in any part of the world to see a painting of a lemon, moving forward through history and geography she spent seven years seeing lemons.

**155 The lemon is sitting on the edge of the table. There is a curling ribbon of the lemon peel which is off the table. The top of the lemon is attached to the rind. Part of the peeled lemon is peeled down to the fruit and part of it to the white coating, the pith? The lemon image is dominant in the painting, although off to the side.**

This is it! The drama of an object can make other objects less important, and without it, there is no life. Lemons often provide that drama.

**197 an obvious citrus in a cinematic yellow, but not even on canvas. painted thick on an envelope like a pedestrian in a hurry. and it bulges on four sides like corners or a cross.**

**200 Insignificant little brush strokes kick out wispy sparks of white and highlighted edges like sharp teeth. A deep ochre seeming inappropriately dark and far from nature unless perhaps it was dried out after a good period but hadn't yet begun to turn to black. What kind of condition is this that gives such a lemon. Could be due to poor care and age, climate shifts in the painting itself perhaps or in the fruit observed.**

She made no visual record but wrote extensive descriptions of each lemon, never mentioning the artist, the painting's title or date. She couldn't discuss art history, track the changes in the progression of painting over time or pinpoint the specialties of one artist's approach compared to another.

**201 Its glossy skin conceals its form beneath such a lovely shape. Its interior is somewhat visible, much like an open wound. It's inside gleams in my eyes like the sun, casting an umbrella-like shadow over my face. Its skin is so dazzling that it appears as though its white vibrant hue is dancing before my eyes.**

**202 This lemon has a most accurate and symbolic lemon shape. If I wanted a lemon's shape here it is. It's a bit grey though. May not be good to eat. It is ink and lined. There might be pain here, or maybe just indifference. Or maybe it's a symbol for something a secret that I won't know because I only search for the fruit of it.**

**209 Freshest crisp illusion of that cut flesh. Maybe I am seeing a little bit of cool blue in the meat of it where the rind, so bright seems to be pure cold yellow with varying amount of white. No significant shadows as if lit in a department store case. 263**

**oh this lemon is a body bulging. it is orange and thick and impasto and freckled with depth. I am sad to see it falling but it's so large and the paint so thick and splotched it will be fine.**

Each painted lemon was a new experience, adding to her culminating experience of studying a two dimensional representation of the cultivated citrus fruit.

**321 SO PLUMP, I take time here because it's just so plump. Like her cheeks were when she was a baby. Plump and bright, the color is solid, no variation for light or dark, no sense of shadow or gravity, just an immense swollen plumpness. Incredible bloat. 322**

**bright and pale yellow with a near compliment of purple pink. puffy and fluffed. i feel a little seasick from looking at this one if i'm honest but i promised a lemon.**

**332 the lemon has a very rounded shape and the two ends are pronounced. Gold predominates with a mottled patch where the light would hit so that the realism of the lemon is abstracted. Shades of brown and green and touches of white highlight the lemon in space. What a cheery creature it is.**

**333 The perfect shape of a lemon, round and smooth, but with a protrusion on one side and a semicircle on the other, plus two beautiful leaves. Vibrant yellow with hints of orange and red. The color tone is warm, and there is a feeling of looking at the sun. The colors look healthy, with bright warm tones paired with bright green leaves without feeling dead. 337 the lemon is swelling and it is a watercolor so it is deep in the paper, settled. there is only peace in this fruit. the paint is thicker on the edges, and pools. in the center it might not be there at all.**

Occasional references to the medium were noted, especially later in her explorations when the traditional oil paint on panel was no longer the standard.

She never answered to her fascination when prompted as to why but would launch immediately into describing a specific painted lemon in piercingly and numbingly vivid detail.

344 Almost flattened, as if some invisible weight presses evenly down on it. A harsh line in a muted yellow green wraps the equator of the form. Almost sticky, as if painted with molasses. This one smaller than some of the others seen here. At the leftmost point of the fruit which is partially obscured by the effect of foreshortening I can see a vague shadow that indicates a soft light, maybe from a window blocked by tree branches. A tiny bit of red orange pulls the shadows at the base up. The white highlights really obvious as a finishing addition, seems to insinuate another source of light inconsistent with the observed light.

421 The colors are vibrant and seem to be scratched on the paper. There are scratch marks in a dark brown that look almost like wings and there is something very free about the execution

422 Lemon is in a bright color and looks flat. No shading, only a black line for the shape. Truncated.

437 if i were a lemon this is the one i would be in this instance. scribbled and poured, many colors, almost a sunset but absolutely a citrus.

There was no apparent reasoning, only evidence of her commitment. Insight into her experience leaked through her journal entries, documenting her unrequitable search.

447 As if to refute my notion that lemons are mostly cheerful, I encounter one that looks very formal and albeit light in color, it is somewhat somber. The lemon skin is very textured in the painting and in the reflection. The more you look at it, the lighter the patches near the end of the lemon become.

It seems to have a calm countenance and it is not a lemon for a summer day but for a spring day when it is still chilly and one longs for the good weather to begin. I always get sick in March and April, is it partly from longing?

473: a lemon is cut in half while the insides of both face you. seeds are still intact and the leaves are still attached. based on the thickness of the skin and the greenish yellow tone, the lemon looked just ripe enough to make lemon water.

recipe: squeeze the left half into a glass, add hot water and then cold water until it fills up.

repeat with the second half once the first glass is finished.

620 The lemon dips down into the plate and has a reddish hue for shading with a line which works quite well. There is a wart like imperfection on the side of the lemon. The stem is bending down toward the plate. It seems to have been placed on the bottom because it is lacking in perfection. Yet, it is front and center. I love lemons when they are reflected on pewter as the yellow and gray work so well together.

660 Punctured with little pin pricks the surface induced my sense organ-touch -as if reading brail -I pondered the raised points. My eyes darted across the soft waxy surface as I read the texture. Hundreds of pricks to form this singular oblong pimpled orb. The color, creamy and demure—as if posturing as unpasteurized butter. “This is rich and full of fat” I thought. The... edges surrounding the surface of the form oozed with a gel medium-the kind used to create a gloss finish when mixed with oil paint. I pursed and puckered my lips as if I had just sipped something sour, “Myers” I whispered.

After seven years and several meandering and zigzagging trips around the globe, Joanne had visited and recorded over three thousand painted lemons and met at least that many people during that time.

680 another red lemon. my search has given me quite a spectrum of understanding. no thing is just one definition. me neither? acrylic and heavy. it's absolutely red. nearly purple or a rust.

688 Two halves of what is presumably one lemon- the cross sections are similar enough in size and shape. The open sides face us, though the left half turns slightly towards the light, which originates from the left, making the internal skin of pulp and tiny juice bags glistening. The right half, turned slightly away from the light, has innards lit only by diffusion, giving it a greener hue. They are rendered rather roughly, and so the mess of seeds and fiber at the center of each is vaguely defined. Only slight irregularities in brushwork and color suggest a bumpy rind sporting brown spots- which are perhaps simply shadows. The lemon's exterior is barely visibly and clearly not the focus, however. There is a general mood of romanticism and warmth.

When she met Ivan her list of identified painted lemons had been whittled down to the last five, all of which were part of the private collection of Sue, a photographer and food writer living in southern Arizona close to the Mexico border.

712: Lord knows I have been in deep and unrequited love with objects in the past, and my early obsession with kiwis—the perfect size of their seed, the sweet sensations that greets you upon consumption, and the tart flavor that chases the tongue—left some disturbed. But my relationship to the lemon has always been apathetic. For most of my life, I favored the lime. Its skin, thinner; its taste, more acute; its size, dependable; its nature, honest. So you understand now, why my collapse at the Rijksmuseum was unexpected.

It is a painting with an outstanding composition of late breakfast for which he is known—cups tilted and empty on the table, linens crumpled, half-eaten bread abandoned. And the painter's line is divine—it leads you straight to my impending love. A decapitated lemon rests on the edge of the table. Its head is attached and dangles over the edge as the rind neck twist in descent. This violence exposes the lemons innards for which I long. But you see as soon as I began to fall in love, I collapsed. When I came too, I was in an unfamiliar location with unfamiliar faces and unfamiliar machinery. I never tried to find the painting again for fear of the result. I now contain my love for the lemon internally, giving way to a shudder when our eyes meet in the aisle.

Joanne knew that there were more paintings out there but had decided to spend a couple of weeks in a neighboring town to rest and reflect. 721

The lemon is dreamlike, cloudy and bright. Its skin, almost like fabric, bunches to a darker point at the visible end. The reflective brushstrokes are rough while the skin is smooth. Layer after layer of transparent oil paint in red and yellow and green cling to the canvas. The fruit has a sort of halo, a ring of light and shadow surrounding it and distinguishing it from whatever is around. It is imperfectly shaped, and perfectly a lemon

777 I can't quite tell where the edges are, but this brush stroke that curves down, I think, traces the shape of the lemon. Am I seeing a hint of brownish yellow in the charcoal colored oil paint only because I know this is supposed to be a lemon? Maybe because I am robbed of the signifying color of the citrus fruit, I read this painted shape as an unremarkable oval, undistinguishable from the flat background. I am not even sure that the faint suggestion of the shape that I focused on is actually outlining a lemon. Are these lighter specks of gray supposed to be highlights on the rind? Do these horizontal daubs of the darker gray suggest peels curling away from the fruit? Oh, why so gray?

846 There is a bowl of fruit positioned on the upper middle right side of the painting. Lemons I think, but for a moment I am not sure since the one sticking out at the 11:45 position is mostly green. But no, it's certainly not a lime – the size isn't right, nor the shape. Underneath the green (is it due to shadows or just a pre-ripened color?), you can see the quintessential lemon shape, bulging out in the middle yet still ovoid, with the telltale tapered tip (the shape being the only thing typical on this lemon). The stem end is hidden in a pile of plain old yellow lemons sitting in a blue and white bowl amidst leaves and purple ribbon. I find the chaos of the pile with its yellow, green, and purple oddly comforting amidst the disorder of the painting, there is something about that bright purple and yellow that makes this green lemon present. This green lemon is not even bright lime green, so how is it that without its typical sunny yellow color it is still lemon. The color, instead, is a muddle, the yellow and green have both become drab yet I can't keep my eyes from wandering back to this spot. Its effort to not stand out makes it even more lemony. It sits up amongst the rest of the lemons, in danger of leaping right out of the

bowl, and the brushstrokes of its outline are a loose purple-brown (similarly muddled like the yellow-green). It looks like the artist tried many times to get the tip of the lemon right, almost like trying to paint a nipple.

**956** Lemon is cut, a fifth off of it. Someone was at first unraveling the lemon but someone decided to cut it. The seeds are still in tact. The small part cut off is sitting beside the lemon but the guts of the lemon and the peel is separate from each other. The peel is still intact by a strip that was peeled.

Some parts of her journey required a pace that she might have been able to keep up with in her twenties but now in her late sixties, she wanted to move a bit more slowly.

#### **Index of Joanne's Journal Authors**

**1, 200, 209, 321, 344, 680: Anonymous**

**9: chungshin**

**21: Olivia Jung**

**12, 155, 332, 421, 422, 447,**

**620, 644: Davant Dodson-Rosenberg**

**34, 660: Laura Bernstein**

**201: Dallas Wilkins**

**121, 142, 197, 202, 263, 322,**

**337, 437: Amalia Wilson**

**333: Phoebe Landis**

**473: Lemon Liu**

**653: Taryn Tomasello**

**688: Clara Law**

**712: Ketter Weissman**

**721: Tatum Schmedlen**

**777: Liz Park**

**846: Denise Markonish**

**956: Scarlett Mazzola**

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