Not Your Mother's Library Transcript

Episode 66: Color Our World

(Brief intro music)

Mary: Hello, and welcome to Not Your Mother's Library, a readers' advisory podcast from the Oak Creek Public Library. I'm Mary.

Rachel: And I'm Rachel.

Mary: Today, we have a special guest from our Children's Department, Amanda! She is here to talk to us about the upcoming Summer Reading Challenge. The theme this year is "Color Our World." In honor of this theme, the three of us are going to be recommending books and resources for all ages that center around creating and appreciating art in its many forms. Take it away, Amanda!

Amanda: Hi everyone!

Rachel: Woohoo!

Amanda: Thanks for having me—I'm excited to be here. I'll dive right into the Summer Reading Challenge. It is open to all ages and goes through Saturday, August 9th. After you register on either the Beanstack website or app, your name will be added to our beautiful mural that is on the big windows in the children's department.

Rachel: Oooh.

Amanda: After you log fifteen days of reading you'll be able to visit the library to pick up prizes. Kids will be able to pick out a book from our prize center, kids and teens will take home a state fair ticket, and there are a few other coupons depending on ages for everyone, all while supplies lasts. Come chat with one of us at a reference desk to find out more. After the main challenge is completed, participants will still be able to continue logging their reading, writing book reviews, and doing activities throughout the summer to earn more badges. We also have a lot of fun programs planned for the summer. We're going to have STEAM Labs, LEGO Club, Video Game Club, Art Club, middle school programs, Family Fun, a special weekly City Workers

Story Time with special guests from the city, Intergenerational Story Times, and all of our wonderful typical Story Times. (papers shuffling) We have flyers with all of these details or you can always check out the Oak Creek Library's website.

Rachel: To get us started with recommendations, I love to wax nostalgic on this podcast, so I simply must recommend Ed Emberley's series of drawing books. Even though my art skills have always been lacking in the extreme, I remember copying these step-by-step doodles for hours and having an absolute blast. That's the thing about art; you don't have to be quote-unquote good at it to experience the joy. "Using basic shapes [like] fingerprints and a few dots, scribbles, and lines, Ed Emberley shows would-be artists how to make all sorts of pictures." I recall drawing tiny bicycles and trains from "Make a World" and Jack-o'-lanterns from the "Book of Halloween." These have stood the test of time, too: Plenty of libraries still circulate copies even though the books were first published in the 1970s and '80s. Granted, they are newer editions…I may have personally been responsible for defacing a couple copies from my local library with colored pencils. I was, like, five years old, okay? You're supposed to nurture creativity in the young! Anyway, another great instructor is Ralph Masiello. His how-to art books are geared toward a school-age audience but, really, they are a helpful resource for anybody learning to draw. Learn how to bring your own creatures to life including dragons and dinosaurs, robots and aliens, bugs and fairies, and so much more.

Mary: Many of us are much more comfortable reading about and viewing art than actually creating it. When I say "many of us" I mean 'me'.

Rachel: (chuckles)

Mary: So, my first recommendation is "In Search of Van Gogh: Capturing the Life of the Artist Through Photographs and Paintings" by Gloria Fossi. This book walks the reader through Van Gogh's life using his paintings as milestones. In 1990, two photographers, Danilo De Marco and Mario Dondero set off to retrace Van Gogh's journey throughout Europe. Later, they turned to art historian Gloria Fossi to polish their findings into this excellent read. The historic travel path across Europe is well documented and makes for excellent reading as we learn how cultures, landscapes, people, and events inspired each of the artist's famous pieces. The book begins in

the Netherlands where Van Gogh was born and ends with his final days in France. There are over two hundred-fifty photographs including Van Gogh's art and both vintage and contemporary photos highlighting the passage of time. If you love learning about famous painters in this way, another great read is "Monet: The Restless Vision" by Jackie Wullschläger. Similar to Fossi's work, Wullschläger focuses on the social and cultural context Monet was operating within while inspired to paint his most famous pieces. According to the publisher, thousands of never-before translated letters and unpublished sources were used for the writing of this biography. That in itself is very exciting for any historian or casual lover of art. Readers will dive into the nineteenth century to find what made Monet special but to also get a taste of his life—how he went from living each day not knowing where he was sleeping that night to having a social circle that included Pissaro, Manet, Renoir, and the Prime Minister of France at the time.

Amanda: All right, so, my first recommendation is a picture book called "10 Cats" by Emily Gravett. Now, I am a big fan of cats, so that is also why I chose this book! It starts off with ten cats and the mother cat whose fur is white. Then, with each page we are counting her kittens while mother cat is sleeping. The kittens get into cans of paint and, in the end, the mother cat is no longer just white. It is a very cute read and also a great concept book with colors and counting. A readalike to this book is called "Where's My Cat?" by Seymour Chwast. This picture book takes an ordinary item on one page and turns it into an animal on the next page. So, for example, a comb turns into a tiger. This book encourages readers to guess what animal they think is coming next and shows how one object can be transformed into something else.

Rachel: Let's take a break from books for just a minute. There are two online resources that I really, really want to recommend for fanatics. I will add links to both of these in the show notes. Okay, one is the Met Museum website. Not so much the exhibit side as their advanced collection search. It covers over five thousand years of history and contains nearly five-hundred thousand works of art. If you are looking for a particular piece, artist, style, or even medium, look no further! For example, I really dig Caravaggio's stuff from the Baroque era; it's brutal and moody, and have you seen that man's tenebrism? But let's just say I wanted to peek some of his earlier sketches. All I have to do is type in his name to be greeted with a slew of prints from

his portfolio. Better yet, the Met provides information about each one's overall size, date of commission, the provenance…anything you could want. Narrow the search as much as you like or just sift through all the results as a whole. Alternatively, you can browse the Met's website by category. I suggest looking through the "Arms and Armor" section, "The Costume Institute," and "Medieval Art and the Cloisters" for some divine inspiration. They even offer images in the public domain for students and aspiring artistes. The other resource is for any adventurous types out there who live in the United States. I'm a big believer in going out and seeing art with your own eyes, if possible, instead of from behind a digital screen. But there are countless museums and galleries…where do we start? Locally, of course! Art-collecting.com has pages upon pages listing museums, non-profits, and other organizations open to the public. Pick a state, scroll through the list, and click any link to find out more. Their comprehensive guide is user-friendly and always up to date. So, whether you're traveling and need a day of enrichment or are looking for something closer to home, I recommend this as your starting point.

Mary: Now again, I'm not an artist, but sometimes after watching enough episodes of "The Joy of Painting with Bob Ross," I feel like I could dabble in the painting world. If you know the feeling, you'll love my next recommendation. It's "Painting tools & Materials: A Practical Guide to Paints, Brushes, Palettes and More" by Elizabeth T. Gilbert. Sometimes you want to just paint but aren't sure where what to use or why you would want to use it. Gilbert has you covered for that. The book walks you through the pros and cons of each type of brush, pallet, and canvas. You will be able to confidently use whatever tools you wish after reading this book. Now, if painting is too daunting for you—it can be so permanent!—I would recommend "The Sierra Club Guide to Sketching in Nature" by Cathy Johnson. Now, this book was published a little while ago, in 1997 to be exact, but the techniques are still valuable. If you've just needed some guidance on how to start drawing a beautiful landscape in pencil, check out Johnson's work.

Amanda: My next recommendation is a middle-grade graphic novel called "Art Club" by Rashad Doucet. The main character named Dale is in middle school and has been given an assignment on what he wants to be when he grows up. His answer: anything having to do with comic books and art. His love of art started when his grandmother introduced him to comic books. Dale wants to prove to his principal that doing something with art can be a future career. This fuels

his mission to start an art club at his school. The characters are likeable and the illustrations bring you into the story. A great read for anyone who likes art and comics. A readalike to this graphic novel would be the series “Cat Kid Comic Club” by Dav Pilkey. Many of the characters from “Dog Man” make an appearance in this graphic novel series. Cat Kid starts a comic club and you get to read each participants comic that they create. If you are a fan of “Dog Man,” then this is the series for you.

Rachel: That’s all we have time for, listeners. The show is on summer break next month but will return before you know it! Please remember to check the show notes for a list of everything we three just covered. Subscribe to Not Your Mother’s Library or write us review if you have a minute. Until next time, happy reading.

Amanda, Mary, and Rachel: Bye!

(Brief outro music)

Mary: In 1990, two photographers Danilo De Marco and Mario Don…oh, I practiced. I practiced!

Rachel: That’s hard.

Mary: Okay.

Rachel: Those two names in a row…that looks hard. (laughs)

Mary: D…Danilo De Marco and Mario Dondero. (clears throat)

Rachel: Say that ten times fast.

Mary: Right?!