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A Booklist Blog

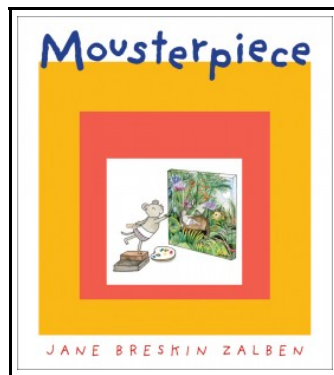
Middle-school librarians Cindy Dobrez and Lynn Rutan prove that two heads are better than one when it comes to discussing YA and children's books

◀ [Lost and Found by Bill Harley](#) [The Skull in the Rock by Lee R. Berger & Marc Aronson](#) ▶

Friday, December 7, 2012 11:51 am

[Mousterpiece by Jane Breskin Zalben](#)

Posted by: Cindy Dobrez and Lynn Rutan



Cindy: Grab your art teachers and show them [Mousterpiece: A Mouse-Sized Guide to Modern Art](#) (Roaring Brook 2012). Janson the mouse lives in a museum and one night she stumbles into the Modern Art wing and, oh my! "Her little world opened." She began to make her own paintings, copying the paintings she found on the walls there. Adults will probably be familiar with most of the originals from Seurat's pointillism and Picasso's cubism to the abstract work of Kandinsky. Young readers will enjoy Mouse's enthusiastic creating process with paint splashing as far and wide as Jackson Pollack on a good day! She also tries her hand at collage and sculpture.

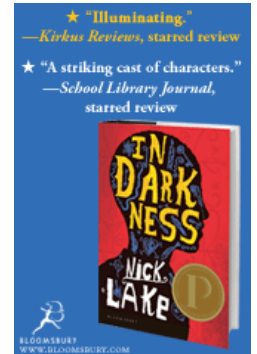
Janson is named in honor of [H. W. Janson](#), author of [The History of Art](#) that Zalben

studied from in college. Like Zalben assuredly did in college, mouse studies from the masters and then finds a path to develop her own style as an artist that makes her happiest of all. Love.

Lynn: I love books that offer something for a wide range of readers and this little gem does just that. Young readers who just like to draw to readers with a broader exposure and knowledge of art will ALL find this an wonderful journey. The story can be enjoyed as an appealing little tale about a mouse, as an introduction to modern art styles or as a charming walk down that art appreciation class memory lane. My favorite page in this book, though, is one that shows the people who come to Mouse's exhibition and their reactions which range from "Is this art" to "Genius" to "I have to go to the bathroom!" I love the idea presented here that enjoyment of art is uniquely individual and that there really is no CORRECT answer. Art is different to each of us and that's OK. I'm sure many kids will be intrigued by the different styles of painting and will want to explore more thoroughly but if all they take away is the idea that art is fun and individual, that is terrific.

I also appreciate the resource at the end of the book, Janson's Favorite Artists. This is a key to the paintings in the book by page and provides information on the artist and something about the style of the painting. The focus group loved this and we spent a lot of time flipping back and forth to find out more about the painter and paintings. We read this book just after the close of an annual event in Grand Rapids called Art Prize so it was especially interesting to us. In it's fourth year [Art Prize](#) is a art competition

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decided by popular vote. The entire area turns out in vast numbers to view, discuss and vote on the entries and West Michigan talks of nothing else for three or four weeks every year. The local schools take their students, families go, dating couples go, and everyone views and discusses and debates and argues and each year it has gotten bigger and bigger. Mouse would be proud!

This entry was posted on Friday, December 7th, 2012 at 11:51 am and is filed under [Art teachers take notice](#), [Picture Books](#), [PreS-Gr. 2](#). You can follow any responses to this entry through the [RSS 2.0](#) feed. You can [leave a response](#), or [trackback](#) from your own site.

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