




# SIGHT UNSEEN

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*dramaturgical study guide*







Ben Brantley of The New York Times wrote that Margulies' plays have never been merely satire. His plays "are usually about how time and memory transform feelings, relationships and the perception of the past."





Sight Unseen

By Donald Margulies

Winner of a 1992 Obie award

Jonathan Waxman is the artist superstar, plunged into the exorbitant hype of the American art world, where a publicist is as necessary as a brush and canvas. Just before his works are celebrated at an exhibition in London, Jonathan journeys to the village where his former lover, Patricia, lives with her British husband, Nick. Archaeologists working on a dig, their spare existence is spent sifting through a Roman rubbish heap to discover the past. In their cold, remote house, Jonathan discovers an early painting of Patricia he'd done when they were young. The subsequent struggle for the painting embodies the unreconciled passions of the past. Patricia has never forgiven Jonathan for leaving her, Nick despises Jonathan and the kind of art he produces, and Jonathan has never been able to recapture the inspiration and purity he felt when he painted Patricia. In taut scenes that dart from past to present and back, the characters are forced to deal with the unanswerable question of anti-Semitism, the legacy of the Holocaust and assimilation, the sadness of lost love, the role of the artist and the location of the human soul at the end of a ragged century.



## Play Order

This play is written in a “plot order”, which does not follow the specific “chronological order”

The play has 8 scenes total

Chronological order of scenes:

8

4

3

1

5

7

2

6

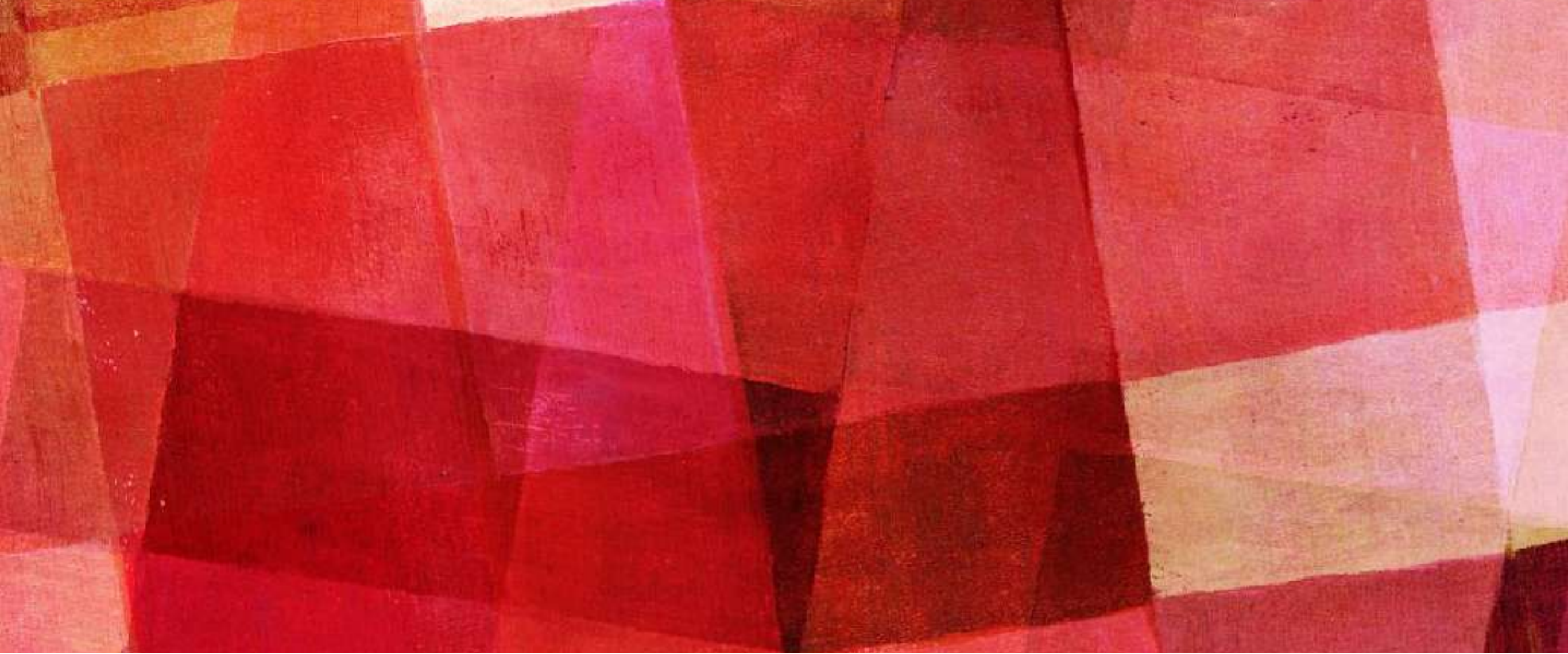


## Play Order Cont...

### Scenes in Chronological order

8. 17 years ago. Jonathan's painting studio, in an art college. New York.
4. 15 years ago. Patricia goes to Jonathan's home in Brooklyn.
3. 1 hour from start of play (scene 1). English farmhouse. Nick and Patricia talk about Jonathan's soon arrival.
1. The present. Farmhouse, Nick and Patricia's home. Jonathan's arrival.
5. A few hours after scene 1. The farmhouse. Just after dinner.
7. A few hours after dinner. The farmhouse. All parties have gone to bed.
2. Four days later. An art gallery. Grete, a German reporter, requests an interview with Jonathan.
6. An art gallery. The same interview continued.





# ARTIST AND THEIR PAINTINGS

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*The following Art is discussed throughout play*







# MONA LISA

.....

Leonardo da Vinci





# SISTINE CHAPEL

.....

The Last Judgment

Michelangelo





# LES DEMOISELLES D'AVIGNON

.....

Pablo Picasso





# VASE WITH PINK ROSES

.....

Vincent van Gogh





# JOSEPH BEUYS

.....  
*I Like America and America Likes Me*























# ANSELM KIEFER

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*Heroic Symbols*





















# THEMES

Art

Truth

Nudity in art

Provocative

Death

Racism

Beginnings

Past

Identity

Archeology

Coping mechanisms

Religion

Recognition

Flesh vs Bones

Intentions

Rape

Hypocrisy

Wealth



## QUESTIONS RAISED BY SIGHT UNSEEN

Is art good or bad? What makes it so?

Why do art? Are there risks?

What makes something inspired?

Where does passion or adoration come from?

Nick speaks the title of the play, is this significant?

What is the actual job of the artist?

When is one successful?

What is the effect of one's history/culture on being able to find happiness in the future?

What is the difference between objectifying the physical body and showing genuine affection?

How do beauty standards play into how we see people and what we see as desirable?

What is the Christian's responsibility to sexuality on stage?

Discuss the differences in running from religion vs hiding behind one?

Where do we draw the line on showing sin vs revealing truth about humanity? Does the Bible shield its readers from graphic details at times?