**Van Gogh's Paintings Attacked by Climate Activists**

Van Gogh's sunflowers painting was recently a subject of discussion following the environmental protests by individuals from the Just Stop Oil organization. Two women donned the Just Stop Oil t-shirts, entered London's National Gallery, went where the painting was located, opened tomato soup cans, and poured their contents onto it. The women later glued themselves on the wall. As a result, the painting joins other famous paintings that have been the subject of a string of familiar protests. The most notable ones include Veemer's "Girl with a Pearl Earring" painting, where a protestor glued his head on the art piece; the Mona Lisa painting, whose picture frame was smeared with cake, and Monet's "Grainstacks," where mashed potatoes were chucked at it (Buckley, 2022). Despite the hullabaloo surrounding the Just Stop Oil protests, the attack on Van Gogh's Paintings was justified as it was a unique way of raising concerns about change.

**Background of the Event**

According to Just Stop Oil's spokesman, numerous paintings worldwide are protected, yet little or no effort is made toward climate change (Jones, 2022). The painting was the subject of the latest wave of protests by the organization following the announcement by the UK government of issuing new licenses for oil exploration. The government paid no regard to expert warnings on instigating new oil projects and their detrimental effects on humanity.

The UN warns that the world will soon be unlivable if countries disregard their pledges to advocate for reducing greenhouse gas emissions (Borestein & Jordans, 2022). Besides, the current investments in the fossil fuel industry pose more risks to the climate, with experts stating prevention of emissions is cheaper and more feasible than adopting technologies to mitigate the degree of greenhouse gas emissions.

The attack on Van Gogh's painting was a protest against the protection offered towards artworks, compared to global heating, whose effects resulted in extreme weather conditions. Aside from the minor damage on the painting's frame, the picture remained intact, yet this elicited wider media coverage than roadside protests (Buckley, 2022b). The climate change crisis has resulted in the loss of lives of numerous people through floods, heat waves, wildfires, and droughts. Notably, the energy crisis in the UK is bound to cause 13% of the average household income to be used in home energy and fuel, especially following the decision by the European Union to avoid Russian oil (Buckley, 2022b). Thus, the cost of living is projected to increase with the use of fossil fuels.

**Purpose of the Event**

The Just Stop Oil protestors hoped to raise concerns about climate change by sparking a discussion on whether the protection of a painting should take more precedence over dealing with the intentional destruction of the planet. In addition, climate activists intend to enlighten the public about government negligence towards the increasing issue of climate instability. For this case, the Van Gogh painting, whose approximate worth was $84.2 million, was selected to bring to light how efforts are made to protect the piece of art, yet people remain unconcerned about the effects of climate change.

**Thoughts About the Situation**

There is a need for immediate action toward mitigating the effects of climate change. Van Gogh's art was selected because of the symbolism it offered and not only because it was famous and easily accessible. According to Just Stop Oil, the painting and the soup (which symbolizes cheap food) were selected to epitomize how climate change significantly affects poverty-stricken people.

The sense of protection and defensiveness the Van Gough painting stirred after the soup incident formed the basis of the arguments posed by Just Stop Oil. The organization questioned why an attack on a painting caused significant disappointment compared to calls for action toward climate change. Vincent Van Gogh used to be a poor artist who struggled to make a living, similar to most families, due to the high living costs prompted by climate change (Jones, 2022). His artwork was thus a prime target for the protest to make people aware that the government cares less about their well-being and the environment but is only concerned about material things.

Just Stop Oil protestors argue that while attacks on art were considered an inconvenience, the effects of climate change affect one billion migrants, not to mention the high number of deaths recorded. Life is more important than art. Thus, the high cost of living, influenced by the oil crisis, should be addressed. Most households cannot afford fuel, let alone heat a tin of soup. Many would have to decide between heating and eating, an issue that can be easily addressed by switching to renewable energy.

**Conclusion**

The attack on Van Gogh's sunflower painting by climate activists was justified. The painting assault got more traction than any other attempt to raise awareness of the climate change crisis. Awareness of the effects of the UK's government licensing on fossil fuel exploration would not be achievable without such drastic action. Notably, there is an urgent need for environmental protection, and ignorance will be to the world's detriment.

**References**

Borestein, S., & Jordans, F. (2022, April 4). *UN warns Earth "firmly on track toward an unlivable world."* CTV News. <https://www.ctvnews.ca/climate-and-environment/un-warns-earth-firmly-on-track-toward-an-unlivable-world-1.5846935>

Buckley, C. (2022a, October 28). *Targeting artworks*. The New York Times. <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/10/28/climate/climate-protests-museums-paintings.html#:~:text=In%20October%2C%20activists%20in%20London>

Buckley, C. (2022b, October 26). *When soup and mashed potatoes are thrown, can the earth win?* The New York Times. <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/10/26/climate/art-climate-protests-monet.html>

Jones, A. M. (2022, October 14). *Headlines, outrage and art: Climate activists use Van Gogh vandalism to make us question our priorities*. CTV News. <https://www.ctvnews.ca/climate-and-environment/headlines-outrage-and-art-climate-activists-use-van-gogh-vandalism-to-make-us-question-our-priorities-1.6110246>