



Claims Department

Welcome to 2024!

I'm excited for everything, but the big thing is that we're all still here, and there's a ton of stuff that's gonna be happening that will bring joy!

And anger and frustration and on and on and on...

So, what am I looking forward to?

I've talked about getting to go to wrestling and there are three shows coming up and they're big! Big for me at least.

The first is the Battle in the Valley, the New Japan Pro Wrestling show in San Jose. I went last year, when CM Punk showed up and we got to see the return of Mercedes Mone to the wrestling scene. It was also the first time I ever got to see a lot of folks live, including Eddie Kingston, Zach Sabre Jr., and my favorite - Kazuchika Okada. I'm psyched that I get to see it live again, and it's with a bunch of folks I know through the *Wrestling Observer Newsletter*. I'm excited as it was a great show and I love Japanese wrestling!

Then, I'm taking at least one of the kids to see a show in Santa Clara, the city of my birth! It's their first show, and I'm hoping it sticks. I literally have no idea when I went to my first show, but I know it was before I could read or write.

After that, it's THE CRUSH GALS!!!

That moniker will mean little to many of you, but if you were big into Japanese wrestling in the 1980s, you'll know it! They were also big pop stars in the country. They really put woman's wrestling in Japan on another page, both as a team and against one another.

So, I'm made of excitement!

If you have comments, drop a line to

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Also, we're celebrating the life and writing of the late, great Doug Berry. You can read the collection of his 2023 writing (and a few other things) that Chuck Serface, Doug's wife Kirsten and myself put together in *The Guy in the Giants Hat*. <https://claimsdepartment.weebly.com/doug-berry---the-guy-in-the-giants-hat.html>



The Museums I Need to See

I wanna get to as many of the important art museums in the US.

Sadly, I'm not nearly as far as I'd like to be.

There are something like 7,000 art museums in the country, and I've been to maybe a hundred-and-fifty. Now, I've hit some of the big ones, mostly in New York, Washington DC, LA, and San Francisco, and even in those cities I've missed some big ones.

Which ones have I hit? The Met, MoMA, SFMoMA, LACMA, the DeYoung, The Hirshhorn, The MFA Boston, all the Smithsonian museums (even worked at one!) and the Anderson collection.

But I've never seen so many important museums!

The Whitney - New York

I've been to a couple of traveling shows of masterpieces from the Whitney, but never to the actual museum. It's a wonderful collection, that's to be sure, but it's also one of the more impressive buildings, though not as impressive as the other major New York art museum I've ever touched.

I'm hoping I can get into their archives, too. Lots of incredible stuff in there.

The two big works there that have me (and that I've seen on-tour) are George Bellows *Dempsey and Firpo*, Jasper Johns' *Three Flags*, and there are a few newer pieces, Woody De Othello's *The will to make things happen* and *New Americana* by River Garza, make it the first museum I hit when I next get to NYC.

The Crocker

We all know I'm a massive fan of the late Robert Arneson, and the major holding institution of his work is the Crocker in Sacramento. It's not just Arneson that interests me, but it is a part of the reason why, because they have such a strong ceramics collection. The works they have of California artists, including such major names as Wayne Thiebaud, Elmer Bischoff, and William T. Wiley

Two works I really want to see include my buddy Mel Ramos' *The Atom* from 1962, and Roland Petersen's *Two Seated Figures*.

This is likely the first museum I'll make it to, and it's likely that it'll be this year.

The Santa Barbara Museum of Art

Another that I might make this year, and one that has a lot of California Art, which is something I see a lot, but there's so much variety in it, I just gotta try and see more. It's not a well-known museum outside of the state, but they've got some big names, Braque, Picasso, Miro, and Degas for example, and one that I really should spend some time in.

The Broad

Ah, Los Angeles. This is a fairly new museum, but it's got a helluva 20th century art collection, with everyone from Ruscha to Warhol, including a Single Elvis image which may have set off the spike in Andy's auction record.

The one here I want to see the most is their collection of Cy Twombly sculptures, though they've got one of the finest David Wojnarowicz pieces: *The Newspaper as National Voodoo: A Brief History of the U.S.A.*

The Getty

You'll notice that my tastes run exceptionally contemporary, and The Getty Ain't exactly known for its modernist holdings. And though I often divide art into 'Good Art' and 'Art pre-1900, they hold one of the pieces I love more than any other of the 1890s - *Mischief and Repose*.

It's a glorious piece by John William Godward. It's got that whole Mayfield Parish thing where the light seems to come from within. I just gotta see it in person.



The Guggenheim

I've been by it at least once, but never been inside.

They have one of the great Louise Nevelsen's on the planet - *Luminous Zag: Night*. It's incredible, seemingly doing a lot more than many of her other works, which I am also in love with.

The High of Art

Not one of those that came to mind when I would think of art museums, it turned up in a search I did while working on my Public Art issue, and found that they have an INCREDIBLE Calder, one of the finest. I love Calder, I mean who doesn't, but this one tops all of the others I've seen in the wild!

The Skirball

The largest Jewish-focused collection of art in the US, I believe. It's incredible and they've got a Peter Krasnow piece called *The Wanderers* that just does it for me! This is a museum that is a totality museum, where very few of the individual pieces are a draw, but the total museum itself, including the non-art stuff, is what brings you in.

The Seattle Art Museum

While they have an incredible Calder, it's really all about the Howard Kottler work *Kottler Posing as a Cubist*, which is an absolutely magnificent piece and one of the first pieces of Kottler's I ever saw on-line.

The Philadelphia Museum of Art

Nude Descending a Staircase.

Without question, this is the one I really need to see in person. I've seen one of Duchamp's re-creations of the work (I wanna say No. 3) but to be in the same room with it would be incredible. There's other stuff, including a couple of Nauman works, including a great neon, and a Renoir I really like!

The Houston Museum of Fine Art

The 12th largest art museum in the world, it's got a super-strong collection of contemporary art, and especially the fact that it's got so much recent material. Tuan Phan, Herman Bas, and an

absolutely incredible piece called *Peeping Freedom Shutters for Olga Shapir* by Pipilotti Rist, an artist whose work I've become a big fan of lately.

The Cleveland Museum of Art

One of America's most visited museums, and in a city with a changing culinary scene, it's got a few really good pieces, but the building is amazing. Another one of those that doesn't focus on Contemporary work, but certainly still draws me in. The big stuff they've got include George Bellows stuff, and I love the Ashcan artists, and some of Picasso's Blue Period paintings.

The Detroit Museum of Art

It's the Diego Rivera frescoes that are the big draw for me, but they've got a couple of important van Goghs as well. Frankly, I think the Egyptian and Medieval sections are pretty cool, but those frescoes I really wanna see!

The Huntington

Gainsborough's *Blue Boy*.

That's the biggest painting in the Huntington, and there are a few Pop art pieces that are really worth making the trip alone. The gardens are supposed to be amazing as well.

The Art Institute of Chicago

Every time I go to Chicago, I say "I'm gonna go to the Art Institute" and it never happens! Not even when I was there for WorldCon, though I did see the Public Art in Chicago.

I've never seen *Nighthawks*. I've never seen *American Gothic* or *Sunday in the Park with George* painting. It's an incredible collection and one that I really need to see.

I am planning a trip to Chicago in 2025.



Andre 3000 Did an Avant Garde Jazz Album

I like Jazz.

You know this, right? I mean, I've written about Miles Davis, about Thelonious Monk, about Dave Brubeck. I even took a History of Jazz class in college, got an A and became friends with Tony Cinamo, a trombonist, critic, and radio host who was a little legend in the Boston scene.

I love avant garde music. Minimalism is my jam, Glass and Reich and Mumma and Riley Oliveros and Cage and and on and on and on. I love the Tape Music of the 1960s and 70s, the early electronic stuff from Morton Slobotnik and Steve Reich. I love the early drone stuff from Eno.

I also love Outkast. They're one of those units that just puts out incredible stuff across the board, and the biggest contributor to that is Andre 3000. He's a musical genius, probably most comparable to Prince in his level of musical understanding.

A rare breed. His hits like *Hey Yeah*, and *I Like the Way You Move* are clear examples of his musicality and the overall production of Outkast's albums show even more depth.

But I never would have expected an Avant Garde Jazz Flute album out of him.

New Blue Sun is a remarkable piece of work. The songs are long, ten-plus minutes each, and there's little of The Groove in them, though you can kinda sense it. There's also not a ton of flute, as its loop-driven, almost a call back to the stuff that was coming out of the San Francisco Tape Music Center in the 1960s. It's an ambient record, but one that doesn't feel like Suzanne Ciani or Windham Hill stuff, but something informed by those same things within a modern popular music ethos.

The first track, *I Swear, I Really Wanted to Make a 'Rap' Album But This Is Literally the Way the Wind Blew Me This Time* even went on to the charts. It's more than 12 minutes.

It's chill-out music, perhaps, but it's not Enya. That's what's incredible. Yes, he plays the flute, but it's played more as ornamentation. He gets some unique sounds out of the instrument too.

All in all, I think it's a minor triumph and am glad I gave it a chance!



