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# The Solari Report

March 30, 2019

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## The Solari Report Food for the Soul with Nina Heyn



**Catherine Austin Fitts**



**Nina Heyn**



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**C. Austin Fitts:** Welcome to The Solari Report. This is Catherine Austin Fitts, and I am in Amsterdam on the canals with Nina Heyn, author of ‘Food for the Soul’, our favorite column on The Solari Report. I’ve wanted for many years to introduce you to Nina, and now I can.

**Nina Heyn:** Hello!

**Fitts:** Nina was my friend in the movie industry. She had a very successful career in both journalism and in entertainment, and she was always my go-to person for any advice on movies and any advice on culture.

Then when she left her last executive position, I said, “Please write a column for The Solari Report on culture.”

I knew that it would be good, but I never realized how fantastic it would be. So, she has written one for two years now, and I love it! It’s my favorite column and has even surpassed Peggy Noonan’s editorials as my favorite column. She is the reluctant columnist.

**Heyn:** I still am.



**Fitts:** So, start from when I first asked you to do the ‘Food for the Soul’. It was your idea; you named it.

**Heyn:** There is a reason I called it ‘Food for the Soul’. I think that our culture in general, is something that is my personal escape of medicine and meditation all rolled into one. No matter how depressing the news in the morning might be and whatever the problems might be throughout the day with the day-to-day life, this provides some kind of respite.

I was thinking that perhaps I could share it with other people, and it might do the same for everybody else. Instead of watching one more horrible news piece on television, maybe if you read for ten minutes about something completely different regarding art in some faraway country or some movie that has been released that is talking about something interesting, it may give you ten minutes of relaxation and joy and happiness in something that is totally unconnected to the daily grind we all have to experience.

**Fitts:** Some of the columns that you have written are about museums; some are about art; some are about movies.

**Heyn:** That’s why I called myself a ‘cultural scout’. I am trying to scout out for the readers an interesting exhibition that is taking place, possibly someplace that you will never get to. We are in Amsterdam, for example, and there is a wonderful exhibition, but it is not exactly next door for most people.



Sometimes it's about a movie that maybe just came out because it's the Oscar season, and I want to point out this is the movie that – for whatever reason – is interesting. Often it is a movie that is important because of the subject matter or because of where it comes from. I cover foreign films, especially Chinese movies.

I think that the 21<sup>st</sup> century, to a great extent, belongs to China. We all know that, and we all talk about it. But I think that the majority of people who are not living in China or who are not dealing with China daily are not very much aware of what this country, especially contemporary China, really is.

**Fitts:** Some of my favorite stories are what you have to go through to get to the Chinese-made movies in America.

**Heyn:** It's not easy. In the States, for example, you literally have to go all the way to Chinatown just to see the movie with some kind of subtitles or without them, and that is the only way to see them because they don't get released in America.

**Fitts:** One of the things that I love about 'Food for the Soul' is that I never know where the next story is coming from. You are all over the world.

**Heyn:** Neither do I! Whatever is inspirational is where I go. Sometimes I wake up in the morning and think about something, or maybe I have actually been watching some movie and think, "That might be something that is important."



I try to look for some trends. In terms of movies, I look for something relevant and important that just came out or something that talks about something that might be important to an investor, for example. It might be something about space exploration, or it might be something about the geopolitics. It might be about Eastern Europe that is not very well-known but is a major geopolitical factor.

I try to find something that might be relevant to a Solari Subscriber.

**Fitts:** You have written from your travels. You travel a fair amount, and you have written from Venice, Cannes, obviously Amsterdam, and Milan. So, you've been in the Netherlands and Italy, and you've written from China and Poland.

**Heyn:** Wherever I am going to be and there is a museum or an exhibition, I may write about it. Sometimes you find treasures next door. I wrote about the technology museum in San Jose because we talk frequently about Silicon Valley. I wanted to see what is being shown to the youths about Silicon Valley, and that was a very good museum that fulfills that function.

I was talking about the Tutankhamun exhibition, which is something that has been going around for close to 100 years, but it will soon stop because they have built a permanent museum for the collection in Egypt, and most of the exhibits will not travel anymore. So, that is one last tour that they are doing around the world, but after that, you will not be able to see that unless you go to Egypt – which is obviously not close.



**Fitts:** One of the things that I wanted to mention is that I often have you do the movie section for our Quarterly Wrap-Ups and the Annual Wrap-Ups. I say, “Nina, find me all the greatest movies on space,” or, “Find me all the greatest movies on megacities,” and it’s amazing what you find.

**Heyn:** Let’s discuss why you think that this is such a good idea to find a list of movies.

**Fitts:** In the 1990’s when I was trying to explain to people what was happening in the economy, I found that they just didn’t have time to read a lot of text material. However, what I could do is find movies that would explain a certain phenomenon, and could say, “Watch this for this and this for this and this for this,” and I could use the movies to teach in a way that I couldn’t use any other medium to teach.

Most people like to watch some entertainment every week. They will watch a fictional movie, or they will watch a documentary. So, if you want to communicate information, it’s a great way. You just have to tell them what is real.

I’m always telling people, “If you want to understand the US economy as of 1980, watch *Godfather I*, *Godfather II*, and *Godfather III*. Realize that it’s not only a movie; it’s your economy training program.”

I think it is very important if you want to experience any topic and learn about it that if you can have both fictional movies and documentaries to guide you, it is tremendous.



When we did the one on megacities, there was a documentary on Shenzhen. When you watch the documentary, you go there; you feel it; you feel what it's like. So, for people who can't necessarily spend half their life traveling, it's a great way to go there and experience the people and the feeling of it.

**Heyn:** I also think that since we are all very, very busy, this is a good place to start. In other words, my advice to people who are extremely busy is always, "Choose what you watch because we don't have that much time."

Most of the things we do at 'Food for the Soul' and at the 'Going to the Movies' section, and in the film lists in all the Wrap-Ups is about us scouting out all the movies, television shows, and documentaries, and even TED Talks or YouTube films.

**Fitts:** Wow! Look at that!

**Heyn:** That is the Zuiderkerk, which has been painted so many times and is still amazingly gorgeous. If you live in Amsterdam, you live with art going to work.

**Fitts:** In 2015, I lived there for a month. All of my life I have heard many things about Amsterdam, but I never heard how beautiful it was. And yet I think that it is one of the most beautiful cities in Europe.



**Heyn:** Maybe it is appreciated. They say that tourism has expanded to a great extent. I think that comes across in the Dutch paintings that we have just seen. There are these incredible street scenes.

**Fitts:** Tell us about what we saw yesterday. Tell us about Rembrandt in the Rijksmuseum.

**Heyn:** We went to the mecca of the Dutch painting – not that Holland isn't covered with the wonderful museums that have many examples of paintings by the Dutch masters – but what we saw yesterday at the Rijksmuseum, which is the national museum of Holland, is the celebration of the 350<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his birth. They put together an exhibition that is called 'All the Rembrandts'. That museum doesn't have all of them, but most of the good ones.

They not only mounted the exhibition with 22 paintings that are in the possession of the museum and are the most magnificent paintings of Rembrandt, but also many drawings.

Rembrandt has obviously created thousands of drawings and several thousand of them are in the possession of Rijksmuseum. They have taken them out and put them on the walls, which is a once in a lifetime opportunity because they are so fragile. They cannot be exposed to light for long.

They exhibited them, and you have an opportunity to see something that you will probably never see again in your lifetime. It is an incredible exhibition.



**Fitts:** It was amazing. This is my second trip to the Rijksmuseum, and the first time that I went, they had that large self-portrait. It's really interesting because Rembrandt painted himself a great deal.

If you go into the Hall of Honor and see *The Night Watch*, and then you walk from *The Night Watch*, which is over to the left. So, if you are walking towards *The Night Watch*, it is towards the right.

I walked up to it – and I hadn't seen *The Night Watch* yet- and I was walking from the other side, and Rembrandt is one of those painters that in the picture or poster you don't see the real thing until you are in front of it. You just can't believe that someone can do that. It always leaves me speechless.

I said that he can paint the light in a human being; he can paint a person's field; he can paint their intelligence. You say, "Whoa! How did he do that?"

**Heyn:** It's called 'talent'. You see that very well.

We went to a museum in a small town called Leeuwarden, which is the capital of Frisia – one of the provinces of Holland – and there were two portraits there. One is a portrait painted by some Dutch painter, Saskia, who was Rembrandt's wife. It is a nice portrait, but it is only a picture. It's almost as if you are looking at a photograph of something.

Then there was a portrait of Saskia done by Rembrandt, which has life and emotion and style and colors and light. Everything is in it.



Those two paintings that are juxtaposed within the same small exhibition illustrate so well what the difference is between painting something and being an incredible talent that comes once in several hundred years and cannot be repeated and is not like any other.

**Fitts:** I hadn't realized it until I saw this exhibition that Rembrandt was a painter of people.

**Heyn:** We were talking about it. Amsterdam is beautiful, but it is very, very gray. So, to be a landscape painter in Holland is very difficult because most of the time the sun doesn't come through. Most of the painters – not Rembrandt – actually traveled to Italy for their obligatory year of painting landscapes. Rembrandt did not do that, but he is a master of psychology – of observing people. He is the master of people-watching.

You see at the exhibition hundreds of sketches of him sketching people doing something or people in the street or people interacting.

**Fitts:** It's not just the nobility who can afford to pay for a painting; it's everybody.

**Heyn:** Absolutely. He had his sketchbook and a pen with him all the time, and he was just sketching whatever he was seeing. He couldn't stop himself from observing people. Much of this ended up in his oil paintings, but an oil painting was a major undertaking because he would have to have a commission and paint and it takes a long time. Oil paintings require drying in between layers. So, if you are doing many layers, then you have to wait for it to dry. What do you do in between? You have to do something else, whereas a sketch is fast.



Sketches are affordable to people if they want to have it, but he also had the ability to note some gesture or look or some little thing. He has the scene with the woman and the baby. He has the scene that you liked so much – the goldsmith who is sculpting a mother with two children, and he is just lovingly working on it.

**Fitts:** I want to talk about your passion for this. It's one thing to go to the Rijksmuseum, and it's another thing to go with you. You are so excited about it, and you have this deep knowledge of all the different artists and the times and history. Following you around, one of the things that Robert (Dupper) was saying is that everybody around you started to ask you questions. The next thing we knew, you had a crowd following you.

Tell us about this passion. How did it start?

**Heyn:** I grew up with art. There was art on the walls and my dad was a painter. I remember looking at art books as a child. My mom wrote about art and culture. So, I always had it around me.

Many people grow up with it, especially in places like Europe. If you grow up here (Amsterdam), look around. If you go from your house that is here to a school that is across the canal, and you look at all these beautiful houses and little architectural details and then the paintings that are in the museums, you grow up with it.

**Fitts:** It was fantastic on our tour. There were so many classes of schoolchildren. The Rijksmuseum was filled, and the museum had special tutors who were Rijksmuseum employees who would take the class and the teacher around. The children loved it.



**Heyn:** Yes, the teacher would tell them, “Find the paintings with something,” or, “This group goes here and the other group goes here, and see who finds it faster,” or similar directions. It was very interactive in a sense that they were very engaged with what they were seeing on the walls.

What these Dutch children are looking at is their heritage; it’s their culture. They own that culture – to go back to what we wanted to discuss. This is their heritage. This is their life. That is something that probably should be given to everybody.

Now, in a small way, with ‘Food for the Soul’ we are trying to do that. We are trying to provide the panacea for all the ailments of everyday life, but at the same time point out that art is something necessary for people to live. After you have taken care of food and shelter and some fundamental things, the next thing that people wanted in the caves was writings on the walls. They wanted art.

A human being cannot live without beauty of some sort. You might find this beauty in some decorated spear or painting on the wall, but people need art. We are art creatures. Anybody who thinks that they don’t need art is killing a bit of their soul.

I know that I can’t live without it.

**Fitts:** I always think of it as a form of nutrition that you must have. That is why I love the title, ‘Food for the Soul’.



**Heyn:** The analogy is that there is junk food and then there is good food. Junk food is extremely satisfying, but it is not very good for your body. The popular culture is very satisfying sometimes – a comic book or a popular movie. I do that just like everybody else does, but it's not enough.

Sometimes you need something that stretches you and makes you reach out. You need something that is a bit loftier and has a little more of mastery that goes in it. The Rembrandt or Da Vinci or whatever, is something that you have to be at least familiar with. Look at it, it's like good food; it's good for your soul; it's good for your mind.

**Fitts:** I'm with you. Following you around always stretches me. I think, "Why do I want to see that? I don't want to see that." Then I see it, and it's like, "Wow!"

We went to see the Fondazione Prada in Milan, and it was architecturally one of the most uplifting spaces I've ever been in. It was just beautiful. If you had described it to me, I probably would have said, "I'm not that interested, but I trust you. If Nina says that we have to see this, then we really have to see this."

It just stretches you. It was a very interesting experience for me.

**Heyn:** Milan is also a nice juxtaposition because Milan obviously does the historical – the Da Vinci, and the like – museums and palaces and churches and all this that is living next to very modern buildings.



So, Milan is transforming itself from a very industrial business and banking center to something that is becoming more and more a tourist destination, which is why we checked it out.

The Fondazione Prada building is a good example of something that has been recently built. It is a transformation from an old liquor factory into a prime modern art space, but the space itself is beautiful and modern and inspiring. It's worth checking out.

**Fitts:** Let's talk about owning the culture. I remember I was doing an interview with Dr. Joseph Farrell, and he was talking about the deterioration in politics and the economy in the US. He said, "Look, we have to stop worrying about that. We have to own the culture."

I'm an investment banker. So, when you say to me, "Own the culture," I have no idea what you mean. Own the culture? I trust Joseph, so I knew that he was right, but I didn't understand what he meant.

Of course, being an investment banker, the first thing that I thought was, "If I am going to own the culture, what is my action?"

The action that I came up with was doing a crowdfund to buy him a digital pipe organ. I wrote about this in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter Wrap Up. We went through the process, and I came out on the other side and I understood so much more about owning the culture.

I want to talk about owning the culture and have you describe to us what it means to you. What does 'owning the culture' mean, and why should we do it?



**Heyn:** Other than what we have talked about before – going to museums and watching movies that are a bit more ambitious or artistic than just the popular ones – it is something that enriches you personally, which we all understand. It is an antidote to all the negative happenings that are around us provided by the daily news and the daily grind of life.

In that sense, owning the culture is basically that you have an antidote to everything else that is occurring around you just to nourish the soul.

I'm also looking at what happens in American schools. There is such a panicky stress put on teaching children technology, science, business, and the so-called STEM program that is pushed into every single school. I'm all for it because we are obviously living in the technological age and the technology is just going to be taking up even more space in our lives than before. However, I am trying to project the future when all these wonderful graduates of STEM courses in college are eventually going to be heads of major companies. They will be affluent and they will be powerful, and they will want something else in life because everybody who is in that position sooner or later comes to culture. They either want to collect it because now they have the money to do so (and I have yet to see an affluent person who doesn't end up collecting something when they finally can) or because they are dealing with celebrities and the powerful and famous people of this world who are their peers at that point who will be into culture. They have to be able to converse and have an intelligent conversation, or they will be sponsors of some cultural activities like festivals or exhibitions or sponsored programs.



**Fitts:** It will be a very important part of their lives.

**Heyn:** It will be, however, if you have never learned about culture and to appreciate it and understand it as a child or as a young person because you were into technology and mathematics and physics and STEM education, then how are you going to catch up?

**Fitts:** When you rise to the top of the money world and once you are at the top of the money world, the question is not: How do I make money? That is not how you think. What you think is: What kind of world do we want to create, and how do we create it? How do we then engineer the incentive system so that everybody will automatically help us create it?

At that level, it's not about making money; it's about values and meaning. What has meaning?

I've said a great deal in The Solari Report that the reason I think space is so important is because the leadership has made a concerted decision to want to become a multi-planetary civilization.

I know what they do; they sit around in a room – because I used to be in that room – and say, “How do we make everybody want to become part of a multi-planetary civilization? Okay, Hollywood guys, your job is to go out and make 100 movies that make everybody want to be an astronaut or be on Mars. Put Matt Damon on Mars, and make everybody think that he is a hero because he went to Mars and back.”



At the very top level, if you can't think in terms of what has meaning and how we nourish our meaning, then at any function, whether it's design or architecture or Wall Street or money, it has no meaning. When I was on Wall Street the biggest financiers of the art in New York were the bankers because they are dealing at that level.

**Heyn:** That is what I mean. Art and music appreciation have been part of school programs much more in the 20<sup>th</sup> century than in the 21<sup>st</sup> for various reasons that we all know. I'm saying that if it is not provided by the school, then you have to take responsibility yourself and sometimes drag your children and yourself to the museum .

**Fitts:** If they only go to the museums that they read about in 'Food for the Soul', they won't be disappointed.

**Heyn:** We try to pre-digest many of the things and find out interesting things and fun things and places to go and things to check out already.

**Fitts:** There it is – the poster for the 'All the Rembrandts' exhibition! I love that poster!

**Heyn:** This is what we have just seen, and I highly recommend it to anybody who can actually get here. It's a fantastic celebration.

**Fitts:** You told me a story about Steve Jobs and calligraphy that I think is a wonderful example of what you are talking about.



**Heyn:** It is a very well-known story that is repeated in his biography and in some interviews. To remind everybody or let people know who haven't stumbled upon it, Steve Jobs did not go to a regular college because he didn't think that it was something that would dovetail with what his interests were, which was a very smart and independent thing for him to do. But what he did do was attend a college in Oregon, which was a very famous liberal arts college called Reed College.

He took some classes in calligraphy, which is probably the last thing that somebody who is technologically-minded would take. So suddenly, a boy from California is interested in calligraphy, which is an old-fashioned art. He took those classes, which is culturally purist.

It so happens that the only reason we have this beautiful design of everything in early Apple products – the clean lines and the fantastic fonts and everything so precise and beautiful and artistic and so different from everything else that the computers at that time were – was because of his calligraphy class.

**Fitts:** The design was critical to Apple's success.

**Heyn:** Absolutely. It comes from those calligraphy classes. It is a classic example of someone who is nothing but technology and STEM and the leading edge of technological advancements oriented, and who goes back to culture and uses the culture in some of the most creative ways. That would be my advice to people who say, "I'm not that much into museums," which I can totally understand.



My advice would be: It doesn't have to be an art museum because there are wonderful museums that have collections of old weaponry or technological museums or exhibitions that are of archaeological research. It could be something that feeds other passions and interests other than only paintings.

**Fitts:** I love watches, and there is a watch museum in Zurich. It's tiny, but it has an amazing collection of watches that are centuries old.

**Heyn:** You can feed whatever interest you may have. It could be a dog museum or a map museum. It could even be an exhibition of anything in any large museum like the Rijksmuseum.

That is number one: Find a place that is actually going to provide some inspiration or a business idea or a hobby that you never had before or something that you want to explore later on.

**Fitts:** I would also say it this way: I think that the reason we have to own the culture is that politics and the economy and all these other things, they flow out of culture. So, if your culture isn't rich, these other things will never work, and they will never work well.

**Heyn:** We live in the 21<sup>st</sup> century where there are so many things that do not depend on us because we cannot control technology that well. We can use it, but we cannot control it. We cannot control finances because there are big banks and other things beyond our control as individuals – to a great extent. But what we can own is our one-on-one relationship to culture.



When you see a movie, it is your own personal experience and emotion. If you watch a series and it gives you some kind of insight to history of maritime development or espionage or the history of costumes or whatever, that is your own personal gain and knowledge that no one else can interfere with.

If I go to a museum and look at this incredibly beautiful painting that I always wanted to see and never had a chance to see, and then I finally see it and discover that the painting was completely different from what I imagined – because that is what happens very often –this is owning the culture. This is one area where you have some power of having your own personal discoveries and joys that do not require anybody else’s intervention, and it doesn’t require that much money or technology or anything; you just go to the museum or pay \$10 and see a movie, and you have your own world that is nourishing and inspiring and feeding whatever needs one might have.

**Fitts:** Another thing that you talk about in ‘Food for the Soul’, which I love, is the economics of whatever you are writing about. Not always, but particularly on the movies. You have an understanding of the whole industry and the economic process.

When I started about ten years ago to first look seriously at the stock market, one of the things that struck me is, between the time that I was on Wall Street and then the time I started to go deep into the economics, fashion, entertainment, design had become a much bigger portion of the equity markets – both in the United States and globally. I was stunned.



In my world on Wall Street, a pocketbook company couldn't have a billion-dollar value. You had to make chemicals or toothpaste. (Colgate-Palmolive was one of our clients at the time.)

I was stunned because the percentage of the market cap came from all things beautiful – from beauty. So, when Macron said last year that the French has no one culture, I thought, “Is he crazy? Is he trying to kill the French stock market? What kind of investment banker is Macron?”

It is because it has become obvious what a huge part of the economy it is.

**Heyn:** Yes and no. I always want to talk about it because the film industry is my world, and it is definitely an industry – precisely because, as you say, it is a very crazy industry. If I can go on a tangent for a moment, in no other industry can you invest \$100 million on a Thursday, and on a Friday morning when the film comes out, you have absolutely zero return. You've just lost \$100 million in production plus \$200 million in marketing costs. There is no other industry that I know where you have that kind of risk.

It is something that could be a ‘gift that keeps on giving’, as you can see with major franchises. Someone comes up with some kind of an intellectual property – whatever it is-whether it is a comic book or even a little tale of *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, which is what Walt Disney came up with in 1935 and it is still making billions upon billions today.



**Fitts:** It reminds me of going into the Sistine Chapel at the Vatican and realizing, “Oh my God! It’s packed with people. It’s the ‘gift that keeps on giving’.”

**Heyn:** Look how many millions are going to go through the Rijksmuseum.

**Fitts:** It’s unbelievable.

**Heyn:** Culture in general, is a big business because of the uniqueness of works of art. That is why they charge such incredible prices. Every work of art is unique, and there is only one. That excites everybody’s imagination, and that is what drives prices. Anybody who actually owns a piece of art knows that the price is always going to go up – unlike any other commodity in the world. It is not going to lose value; it is almost impossible.

On the other hand, when people get very, very excited with a movie that has cost \$100 million, and then it didn’t make enough money and everybody gets upset, for a consumer that movie is worth only \$10. That means that is what you will pay at the box office. It doesn’t matter if that film cost the filmmaker \$50 million or \$500 million to make it and market it. That has absolutely no relationship to what the viewer is experiencing. They only spend \$10 at the box office.

Forget about the cost of the movie. It is something that people get seduced in when they watch it on the news. “They said that the movie is not so good.”



Sometimes I write about a film, and I think that it is a fantastic movie – for whatever reason. I try to point out that this is an interesting movie because of A, B, and C. “You may like it or, you may not like it, but check it out because there is something important about it.”

People say, “Yes, but the movie tanked at the box office.”

My response is, “That has absolutely no meaning.”

**Fitts:** I agree.

**Heyn:** There is no ‘good’ or ‘bad’ art; art just is. It speaks to you or it doesn’t. It’s the same thing with the movie. Either you like the movie or you hate the movie. I’m just trying to point out that maybe it’s important.

**Fitts:** If you look at market capitalization, I think that it reflects the extraordinary human desire for beauty.

**Heyn:** I think it’s something that we have as an innate need in humans. The beauty is different with every person. There is a reason we say, “Beauty is in the eye of the beholder.” Maybe something is beautiful to you, and it is absolutely ugly to someone else, but we have the need to have something else.

**Fitts:** One of the reasons I knew that I would never last long in Washington was because, when I was the Assistant Secretary, we were building elderly housing. It was called the 202 Program, and I looked at the designs of the building and said, “These buildings are ugly. Let’s get an architect and make them beautiful.”



They said, “No. They are purposefully ugly.”

You reduce the value of the building by making them ugly. You spend the money, and you immediately reduce the value of the building. It’s very bad for the financial soundness of the building. I said, “Why would you do that?”

They said, “Because we are subsidizing people with taxpayers’ money. Politically, it’s essential that the buildings be ugly.”

**Heyn:** So that people don’t feel envious?

**Fitts:** Right.

**Tour Guide:** (The Tour Guide gives descriptions of certain features or makes comments during the tour -There is the De Nederlandsche Bank.)

**Heyn:** That’s where the real power is, right?

**Fitts:** It’s like a little BIS.

**Heyn:** I’m sure that bank has something to do with all the art paintings. They store it and invest in it. They finance it, of course.

**Fitts:** You were helping me at the beginning of the year with our chronology. Every year we do a chronology just so we can anticipate the events of the year. It was through that process I discovered that this year, 2019, was going to be the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary for Leonardo Da Vinci and the 350<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Rembrandt.



I called you and said, “Nina, we have to do something!”

The first thing that you did was write a wonderful column on Leonardo Da Vinci.

**Heyn:** It is the first of the series because we have decided that we are going to do a year of Leonardo at Solari for 2019, and we are going to talk about various aspects of his legacy and the exhibitions and what is said and known these days about him and how he is important and inspiring for us right now. Then we are going to do the same thing with Rembrandt.

**Fitts:** You had already covered his painting in Krakow.

**Heyn:** Which I consider the most beautiful painting by Da Vinci, bar none.

**Fitts:** Tell us about it.

**Heyn:** The odd thing is that when you go to a place like Milan and see that painting- called *Lady with Ermine*- in various posters and shown in some museum stores, it is the most beautiful painting by Leonardo, but it is not in Milan. It is actually in Poland. It is in Krakow, and rightly so, because it was purchased by Prince Adam Czartoryski in the year 1800 for his collection. The problem is that it is very well-known, and he actually saved that painting from an extremely bad fate because it was purchased from a family who was just trying to get rid of it.



That painting has had a very tumultuous history, which is essentially the history of Europe. He had to take this painting from Poland during an uprising that took place in 1831. So about 30 years after the painting was brought into Poland, it had to be taken to Paris so that it wouldn't be destroyed during the uprising. It kept going back and forth.

Unfortunately at some point, it ended up in Poland again in the 1930's when Poland regained independence, which also did not last long. So, what happened was the Czartoryski family – which was one of the aristocratic families of Poland – had taken it to Poland, and it was displayed in the national museum in Krakow in the 1930's. What they did not plan on was Hitler invading Poland in 1939. The first thing that Hitler did was give the order to take the painting and take possession of it.

It was kept by the Nazi governor of southern Poland in the castle, and then when the German started retreating towards the end of World War II, the painting was taken to Germany together with a beautiful Raphael painting. The Raphael painting, which is a very famous painting of a young man, has not been found. It is lost.

The Ermine was found by the Monuments Men, if you recall the movie.

**Fitts:** Oh, yes. It's the George Clooney movie.

**Heyn:** Like the Altar of Ghent, the Ermine was found. There is a very famous picture of one of the Monuments Men in Germany holding the painting when they found it in one of the salt mines or whatever mine they found it in. I think it was in Altaussee.



So, that painting has had this incredible history of being lost, hidden, and a movie could be made just on the history of this painting - what this painting went through and the incredible luck that we still have it 500 years later. It is one of the most beautiful paintings of Cecilia Gallerani, who was the mistress of Ludovico Sforza, the patron of Da Vinci. So, it is a painting of a woman in love with his patron.

The ermine, which is this beautiful little white rodent that she is holding, is a play on words on the name of Gallerani and also because it's in the coat of arms of Sforza. So it has a hidden meaning. Renaissance paintings often had hidden meanings.

It is a beautiful painting and is one of the most beautiful paintings in the world.

**Fitts:** So we went to Milan. Tell us what we learned about Leonardo in Milan and what we saw.

**Heyn:** What we have learned is something that is well-known, but it gets reinforced when you go to Pinacoteca Ambrosiana and see the display of these incredible, technical drawings of machines that he was inventing or improving – the textiles for hydraulics and for the presses. These are basically technical drawings by someone who is at heart, an engineer and an inventor and a scientist. He also happened to paint.

**Fitts:** “He also painted.”

**Heyn:** This is what he said himself, but you can see that.



There is one beautiful painting of a musician that is displayed in Pinacoteca Ambrosiana. But there are also traces of Da Vinci everywhere in Milan. There is a statue of him, there are other museums, and there are the people who talk about him as if he were still living there and walking the streets.

**Fitts:** I know it is somewhat similar, but it's basically like Elvis in Memphis.

Tell us about the water locks.

**Tour Guide:** (These are all water locks inside the Amstel River. The Amstel River used to be blocked with the sea locks, but on this side they also blocked the river itself. Nowadays they still use it, even though they are very old, to flush the canals. So, three times a week they close everything down – the whole river – at night. Then in the morning they will open it gently, and because the water is a little higher, it will flush clean the canals.)

**Fitts:** It's an amazing system.

**Heyn:** They are masters of water management. I wish that they could teach the world what they know.

**Fitts:** The first thing that we did when we got to Milan was a walking tour, and saw *The Last Supper*. Tell us about *The Last Supper*.

**Heyn:** First, you tell us about the incredible experience you had..



**Fitts:** *The Last Supper* is one of those paintings where it's completely different in a photograph or a poster than in person because Da Vinci can paint the light in people. It's also very human; it's not staged or stiff.

Each person is very human. Of course, naturally my greatest interest was not in artistic, but really 'seeing' it when you observe the painting in person. When you are facing the painting, the person to Jesus' left is Mary Magdalene. It is obvious that it's a woman, and yet the tour guide is telling me that it's John the Baptist.

I thought: "I live in a world where the official reality is so completely patently false. I can't believe that this wonderful, marvelous tour guide literally has to say with a straight face that that person is a man when clearly they are not." But it's so much more obvious in person.

Anyway, I was 'blown away'. I thought that *The Last Supper* was absolutely beautiful. I found it to be a very inspiring experience.

**Heyn:** I totally agree. It's exactly the same feeling that I have very often when I go to museums. I have an image thanks to art books or a movie that a painting is going to be whatever size or whatever look, and then I see it and it is completely different. The texture is different or the size is different or the colors are different.

This is something that we know is extremely damaged. Unfortunately, Da Vinci was the author of his own demise in this respect because he used tempura paint, which is based on egg whites, and does not apply very well to plaster.



He was experimenting, but unfortunately he was experimenting with *The Last Supper* and not with something a little less significant.

So, the painting is not in very good shape, and it is hard to see the colors. But even with the incredible damage that has been done to the plaster, you still see huge, beautiful figures of people who are in a very natural way. They are not painted in a conventional way.

**Fitts:** It is a real supper.

**Heyn:** Yes. They are sitting there, and are having an interaction. Jesus is in the middle speaking, and there are some groups of apostles who are saying, “This can’t be,” and they are arguing within themselves. There are others who are shocked. There are others who are turning away from the idea. There are others who wanted to deny it.

He painted it in a most unconventional way because at the Last Supper scene, the table with the twelve apostles and Jesus in the middle, has been a convention of painting for hundreds of years. It was not something that was new. What was new was how he composed these people. He threw all the conventions out the window and painted it his own way.

I do agree with you that if you know nothing about who these people are in the painting and know nothing about the Christian religion and walk up and look at this painting, the person on the left of Jesus Christ is clearly a beautiful woman who is his companion/partner/wife/whatever.



They are together, and they are the central people in the painting. Everybody else is simply around them. This is so patently obvious.

I know that the tradition is different, but I cannot buy it when I look at this painting; this is not how he painted it. No matter what the intention was, this is not how he painted it.

**Fitts:** One of the stories that we talked about in regards to Da Vinci was his medical notebooks. Da Vinci was an engineer and a scientist. We saw the Codex Atlanticas, which is what remains of many of his workbooks. Tell us a little about what you said about his medical notebooks.

**Heyn:** This is something that is presently extremely well-known. He is researching into anatomy that he has done by actually doing dissections rather than relying on any texts that were passed on from one generation to the next, which were inaccurate. He decided to do what he did with everything else in terms of research – namely, to do the research himself and come to conclusions himself.

In terms of anatomy, there was this wonderful marriage of someone willing to spend decades studying the tissues himself, and also being able to draw them extremely accurately, and someone who would spend a great deal of time trying to figure out what the actual blood flow is within a body and what the structure of the heart is.

What I find to be such a tragedy is that once he discovered all these things – which have been proven to be correct. In fact, some confirmations of the correctness of his research were done as late as the 1960's. Obviously now, we can definitely confront it because we can do an MRI, which was not available in the 1960's.



The problem is that his notebooks have never been published. So, all this knowledge that he gathered in the 16<sup>th</sup> century has not been available for the subsequent 500 years to anybody. That is the saddest thing here. The research was done, it was extremely correct, and it could have been so helpful for the generations of surgeons and doctors.

**Fitts:** So, we have 450 years of pain that didn't have to happen.

**Heyn:** Correct.

**Fitts:** For lack of one publisher.

**Heyn:** Exactly. Culture and knowledge should not be lost; it should be supported by everybody and everywhere because it serves the greater good of humanity. That is all I am saying. These wonderful notebook pages were just stuck. Some of them were dispersed all over the world, and some were kept in musty libraries. Some were collected as separate pages by various collectors who would literally slash the pages because they liked the image.

We have seen in Codex Atlanticus this lovely page that we both like, which is a very accurate map of Europe with the outline of Italy and Spain and France. It was extremely well done.

**Fitts:** I loved that one!

**Heyn:** It is on the same page where he is also having a small sketch of the flying machine. So maybe, he was trying to figure out if that machine flew from A to B.



**Fitts:** I know what he was trying to do; He was trying to figure out how he could get around Europe cheaply.

**Heyn:** Exactly! The peculiar thing is that when you look at this lovely map, you see this blank rectangle there, which was repaired. What happened is someone cut out England – maybe an Englishman who just wanted to have a map of England by Da Vinci.

**Fitts:** There have been many times throughout history when continental Europe has tried to cut out England.

**Heyn:** I am not commenting on Brexit.

**Tour Guide:** (When you were talking about Rembrandt, *The Night Watch* is *De Nachtwacht* in the Dutch language. This may be nice for you to see because we are in Old Town. This is the old part. There you see the hotel that has a round corner. The rounding used to be a defense tower. Do you see the Doelen Hotel? That is also a tower. Between those two towers there used to be a wall. Later, they built these houses. Also, the hotel was built later

“Now I want to show you the block on the top of the Doelen hotel and the two people to the left and the right. You will recognize those two from *The Night Watch*.)

**Fitts:** That is the captain and the lieutenant from *The Night Watch*.

**Heyn:** Captain Cocq and his lieutenant.



**Tour Guide:** Actually, the painting was painted inside that building. That building used to be where the shooting club was housed. Since the guys from the shooting club did not go Rembrandt, he had to visit them in there. So that is why he painted it there.

**Heyn:** This is a hotel that we should stay in!

**Fitts:** So what is the action? If I listen to this and say, “Okay, I get it. I need to own the culture,” everybody is different, so it is different for everybody, but what does somebody do? They would say, “I want to own my culture. What do I do?”

**Heyn:** First of all, ignore people who are going to tell you that you have to know something about art in order to appreciate it. In order to write about it or do something professionally with it, then it would be nice to have a little knowledge and experience about it and whatnot. But if you just want to appreciate it, there is no such thing as ‘good art’ or ‘bad art’; art just is. It either speaks to you or it doesn’t, so just go for it. That is number one.

Number two, since time is short and everybody is busy, choose what you see. Don’t see everything just because it’s being streamed.

**Fitts:** There is a lot of bad things out there..

**Heyn:** Time is short, and life is short. We try to help by pre-scouting various interesting things to see and to watch.

**Fitts:** Right. You only write about things you like.



**Heyn:** Yes. I don't write about things that I'm not recommending because, what is the point? So that is another piece of advice. Since there is not much time, just choose what you see. Ignore the need to actually know something. You don't need to know anything to enjoy art. Go to museums. Sometimes you can bring the children and use them as a pretext. They don't have to be art museums; they could be any kind of museum.

If you are in a museum, I would highly recommend going to the bookstores because they are extremely inspirational. Museum bookstores usually have better books than any other place that you can find, so you could just browse. They could give you ideas – business ideas or investment ideas or hobbies or any kind of exploration.

I wrote about this. Sometimes the most interesting thing about a museum is its garden or its bookstore or the outside of the museum or the terrace. It's not only the museum itself, but what is inside.

**Fitts:** Last year I was in Mexico City, and they have a 'History of Mexico' museum that is fantastic, but the gardens all around it outside are as spectacular as everything that is inside.

**Heyn:** That is a perfect example. They have the stone art in the garden.

If you find something that is interesting, like a TV show that you are streaming, then this also can be a very good source of information about whether you should invest in it and whether you want to travel there or find out something more about it. Do you want to live there?



There is a great repository of information that is hidden in all these movies and shows.

**Fitts:** You learn much about your history that you didn't know.

I really do want to encourage everybody to learn about Da Vinci because he is going to be the 'Hero of the Year' on The Solari Report, and the entire world is celebrating Da Vinci. So, we are going to do more on Da Vinci, and I do want to encourage everybody to dive in. As you know, I think that— if you look at the people who brought us out of the Dark Age it was a surprisingly small group of people- Da Vinci was clearly one of them.

I think that he is a very appropriate hero for our times today. I feel that we have a group of people trying to drag us to a dark age, and I don't want to go there.

Who has done this before? Who has pulled us out of a Dark Age, and how do we do it?

Tell us more about some of the other Da Vinci things that we are going to do this year.

**Heyn:** Other than reporting back about the great events that happen in Milan, there are two fantastic exhibitions that are coming up that I am going to talk about. I don't know if we will be able to cover them all. One of them is going to be an exhibition on his paintings in the Louvre. There are about 17 paintings that have been confirmed they are his paintings.



So, the Louvre is going to show at least five or six of them, and this is going to be a major feast because normally you don't see that many paintings in one place.

London or the Queen's Gallery in the Buckingham Palace has an upcoming exhibition of Leonardo's drawings from Codex Windsor. So, these are at least two big exhibitions that we will try to cover or talk about.

I also want to talk about one more thing regarding Da Vinci.

**Fitts:** When you worked in an office, what did you do?

**Tour Guide:** (Credit management.)

**Heyn:** You are talking to a banker!

**Fitts:** I probably know more about financial fraud than any human being you've ever met.

**Tour Guide:** (Do you think we will ever be able to solve that fraudulent system?)

**Fitts:** It's a political problem. In other words, there are many different ways of solving it.

**Tour Guide:** (Is it political, or is it also inside the people?)



**Fitts:** If you are going to solve it, you have to run the planet with transparency. The problem is that when you have secrecy in a system, secrecy creates enormous power and privilege. Nobody likes to give up their power and their privilege, so how do you get out of something that is like an addiction? Secrecy is an addiction because it can make you so much money.

There is a percent that should be classified in secret, but it's overseen by the governance structure which is voted for and approved. In the United States, that is not the case. So, the United States has really gone way off course because the vast majority of the money is now secret.

**Heyn:** I think that we should mention the fact that when you see those young people in the museum, – and it's not necessarily just in European museums because it happens in American museums every day of the week to a certain extent – this is a form of owning culture. When you go to a museum, you support it, and, not only do you get something for yourself – an experience or a pleasant afternoon learning something or seeing something beautiful – but it is also part of the cultural heritage and national heritage, whatever it is that you are looking at. That is something that should belong to everybody. That is why I am so happy when a city has a lot of museums that are vibrant and robust and functioning, is providing a counter way for the lack of culture.

**Fitts:** When I saw the children at the Rijksmuseum, they were so proud of being Dutch. They were as though, “I'm Dutch! I'm great! Dutch people do great things!”



Dutch people sail the world and trade with countries all over the world! Dutch people paint fabulous paintings and make beautiful buildings!”

There was so much pride. They were so proud to be a human and to be Dutch. “This is ours.”

You could tell they really think of the Rijksmuseum as belonging to them. “This is ours; we are Dutch.”

I said to you that if somebody tried to take *The Night Watch* out of the Netherlands, I can’t imagine what would happen. There would be the equivalent of the storming of the Bastille. They would all be down there preventing it from happening.

**Heyn:** Going back to us in general – every one of us – and how we can own culture, I believe owning culture is not physically owning anything but making an effort to travel somewhere and look at and enjoy whatever it is where we go to.

Sometimes it’s wonderful because it’s a trip to Paris, and we go to the Louvre. But even if it’s a trip to San Jose and we saw a lovely museum there, that is fun too.

**Fitts:** Sometimes subscribers say to me, “The world is so depressing now. I can’t take the time to enjoy things. How can you feel joy when these things are going on?”



I say to them, “No, that is exactly why you need to feed your soul. Feeding your soul creates the faith that you use to create your life. So, if you are going to create your life, you have to create the ingredients that you are going to use to create it. So, you have to feed your soul.”

**Heyn:** I feel it’s just the opposite. The more that depressing things are around you, the more there is a need to say, “No. I’m not going to let it get to me. I am going to go out and enjoy something beautiful for an hour in a day. This is mine.”

**Fitts:** When I saw the *Book of Kells* in Dublin, realizing that the monks had spent hundreds of years creating something that had extraordinary integrity and beauty. I can hear my mother’s voice saying, “If you’re going to do it, you should do it right” The *Book of Kells* reminded me of how the debasement really distracts us from taking the time to do something that has extraordinary integrity and the importance of having integrity in anything that we do, and doing things with integrity.

I find that both Leonardo Da Vinci and Rembrandt, - Da Vinci is somewhat my favorite- give you such inspiration. I saw that in the children. They were thinking, “This is excellent, and I’m part of something that is excellent, and I can be excellent.”

That is my reaction every time I look at anything that Da Vinci ever did, and my reaction when I look at Rembrandt. I love to stand in front of *The Night Watch*. I can stand in front of that painting for a long, long time.

It’s inspiring, and it reminds me that we really ought to seek excellence, and we are perfectly capable of it.



**Heyn:** There's something to say about both artists being extremely uncompromising because if you take Rembrandt, for example, at some point in his life he was poor, not that much appreciated as an artist anymore, lonely, and did not have any commissions. He was given a commission to paint a large picture for the city of Amsterdam, and he chose to paint one which was something of interest to him. It was a biblical scene, but it was portraying an old man who has one eye closed because he is blind in one eye. He doesn't look very good. It is an extremely expressive face, and this is something that he wanted to paint, so he painted it this way.

Inevitably, the city of Amsterdam was not very thrilled with his decision, and they decided that this was not the commission they were going to pursue. He did the preparatory drawing, but it was never finished.

So, here is a man where the easiest thing would have been to paint something pretty – a nice biblical scene with beautiful colors and rich fabrics and everything that he was an exquisite master of. All he needed to do was to paint it, and he would get the money and get his recognition and respect back, and everything would be fine, but he wouldn't do it. Artistically, that would have been a compromise which he did not want to do.

It is something to be admired because not every artist decides to do that. It takes a 'lot of guts' to make that kind of decision in your life. For an artist not to paint or for someone not to do something else, it takes a huge amount of courage to make that decision.



It is an inspiration as well – as a person and as an artist.

Speaking of history, this is the bridge that was made in 1754.

That is what people from all over the world come here for.

**Fitts:** We all want to know what is on your bucket list, which is long.

**Heyn:** It's a very long list. I have never met a museum that I didn't like, and I have never met an artist I didn't like.

**Fitts:** There was one that you didn't write about.

**Heyn:** Yes. I saw an exhibition recently that I made a considerable effort to see for Solari, and then I decided that if you can't say anything nice, don't say anything at all.

**Fitts:** You pulled a Rembrandt!

**Heyn:** I didn't write about it, but concerning what we are going to be covering for Solari, we are definitely going to talk about Da Vinci beyond *Mona Lisa*. We all know *Mona Lisa*, but there are many other things that we can discuss that people may not have had the chance to find out about.

We are also going to talk about Rembrandt – not only because we want to celebrate his legacy, but also because there are so many wonderful treasures that are worth discovering.



We are going to talk about movies that are in the pipeline that are interesting and worth pursuing.

**Fitts:** You have to confess how many movies you watch a year.

**Heyn:** If you add in the TV shows and student films and documentaries and any other kind of audio-visual material, it is probably close to 1,000 a year – which most people probably would not have the patience to do. But that is the function of a scout. I will pre-scout 1,000 movies and choose two or three or five a year.

**Fitts:** And you find delicious things! I love your column. I told you that I always read it before it publishes – not because I want to check it, but because I just want to check it out.

I can't thank you enough. I can't thank you enough for this introduction for the subscribers because I think that if you look at how I feel stretched by your presence in my life, and everything that I have learned from you, including on this trip, I feel younger and more open and more surprised. I feel like I've eaten.

**Heyn:** But that is not me; that is the arts that you were exposed to. I am just your guide.

**Fitts:** You are my scout. But when you are not around, I end up diving into many bad things that do not feed my soul. If I just follow you, I don't need to think about it. I hate to say that, but I will follow you.



Nina Heyn, thank you so much. On behalf of all Solari, thank you for what you do for us. You bring us “Food For Our Soul”.

**Heyn:** You are most welcome.

## MODIFICATION

Transcripts are not always verbatim. Modifications are sometimes made to improve clarity, usefulness and readability, while staying true to the original intent.

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