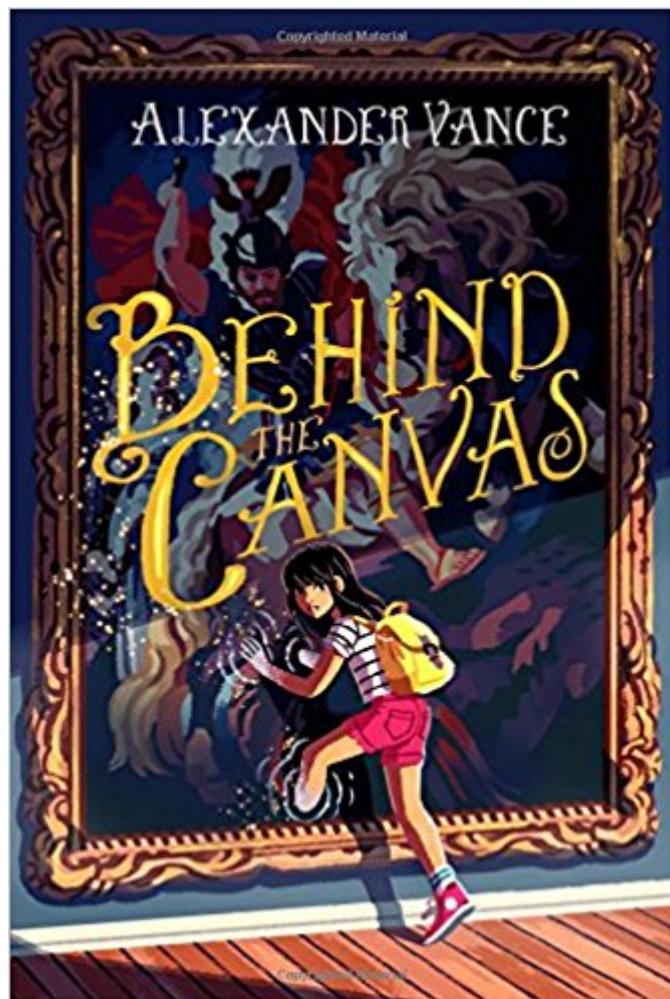


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# Behind The Canvas



## Synopsis

There is a world behind the canvas. Past the paint of the canvas is a realm where art lives, breathes, creates, destroys. Claudia Miravista loves art but only sees what is on the surface, until the Dutch boy Pim appears in her painting. Pim has been trapped in the world behind the canvas for centuries by a power-hungry witch, and now believes that Claudia is his only hope for escape. Fueled by the help of an ancient artist and some microwaveable magic, Claudia enters the wondrous and terrifying world, intent on destroying the witch's most cherished possession and setting Pim free. But in that world nothing is quite as it appears on the surface. Not even friendship.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Gr 5-8 •Aiming to do for art history what Rick Riordan's "Percy Jackson" series (Disney-Hyperion) has done for Greek mythology, Vance's novel follows its 12-year-old protagonist, a budding artist named Claudia Miravista, into a world where famous artists and art iconography come to life as dynamic, idiosyncratic characters. When she unexpectedly spots a living boy, Pim, peering out from the background of a painting at the local museum, Claudia is unexpectedly drawn into both a friendship and an interdimensional conflict, which requires her to join Pim in a mysterious realm built by the imaginations of every major artist since the Renaissance. Initially bogged down by a great deal of explanatory setup (necessary to make such an abstract conceit stick), Vance's story flares to life when Claudia crosses into the canvas for the first time. Soon, she's trading gossip with the Mona Lisa, befriending one of C.M. Coolidge's poker-playing dogs, and running from a

particularly frightening Max Ernst creation—“all to free Pim from the clutches of an evil artist-witch named Nee Gezicht. Helped along by tongue-in-cheek footnotes from a fictional art encyclopedia, adventurous readers will end up learning a great deal about art history along the way.

VERDICT A conventional misfit-turned-hero tale elevated by an inspired concept.—Abigail Garnett, Brooklyn Public Library

“Readers will end up learning a great deal about art history along the way . . . an inspired concept.”—School Library Journal “This well-paced mystery offers a pleasing protagonist and a very unusual setting. Vance cleverly injects the story with a bevy of secondary characters, many of whom readers will recognize from European paintings and popular art, and humorous footnotes from a fictional art-history textbook balance the tension. Themes of trust and loyalty figure prominently in this story, which explores what it means to be a true friend.”—Booklist

Behind the Canvas is one of the best in its genre. Alexander Vance combines excitement, deep knowledge of art, and insight into the workings of a young teenager’s mind and heart for a rollicking good read. His “footnotes” from a mythical art expert are definitely the spoonful of sugar to make a lot of art history go down. The action doesn’t let up throughout the book, the villains are creative and scary, but not disturbingly so. All in all, I highly recommend this book not only for the young adult age group, but for any adult who enjoys a good fantasy.

This is a great story. I’m hoping there will be a sequel.

This review originally published in [...]. Rated 4.5 of 5

Claudia Miravista loves it when her class takes a trip to the art museum because Claudia loves art. But when she sees a boy go in and out of view in some paintings, she is ridiculed by her peers when she tries to tell them about it. But the boy, Pim, is real, and Claudia learns that there is a world behind the paintings and because she is “Artisti” she has the ability to also travel in the land behind the canvas and possibly help Pim. Pim was trapped in the land a century ago by a witch. In her journey behind the canvas Claudia faces the witch and meets a number of famous artists. This is really a remarkably original fantasy. The fact that we get some art lessons adds to power of the book. Author Alexander Vance does a really nice job of world-building here with the realm inside the paintings. The inclusion of some famous artists (without saying directly who they are) is a great touch (and as Rembrandt is one of my favorite

classical artists, seeing him here definitely had me smiling). The characters of Claudia and Pim are really great. They definitely capture the curiosity and go-to-it-ness of middle schoolers. And while the mystery of Pim and the witch is on the simple side, I think that there is enough here to really capture the interest of young readers. And while the entire world is about art and art history, most young readers may not even realize that they are getting a pretty good art lesson while reading this book. Even non-art lovers will likely enjoy this journey. One of my favorite parts of the book are the footnotes. At first, one might read the footnotes as boring, dry historical notes about some of the art periods and artists, but in fact while informing the reader, they are also quite humorous. Written as though they are excerpted from an art history book, they really add a humorous element to the book. For instance: JOHANNES VERSPRONCK (CA. 1603–1662). Portrait artist from the Dutch Golden Age. He was known for having a fine eye for detail, which required making his sorry subjects sit for days at a time. This would explain why no one is smiling in his paintings. Still, his Portrait of a Girl Dressed in Blue would be featured on Dutch banknotes centuries later. More than 39 million banknotes printed—not many artists can brag about that kind of circulation—not about having their artwork squished in wallets under millions of Dutch buttocks. (Excerpted from Dr. Buckhardt's Art History for the Enthusiast and the Ignorant.) All in all, this is really a fun read and I love anything that might get our youth interested in art. It is highly recommended. Looking for a good book? Behind the Canvas by Alexander Vance is great adventure in art for younger readers and will likely educate the reader without the reader realizing it. I received a digital copy of this book from the publisher, through Netgalley, in exchange for an honest review.

There are a lot of references to artists and art alike throughout “Behind the Canvas,” but that shouldn't keep people from checking the novel out. Author Alexander Vance has added footnotes for each of these important elements at the end of each chapter, and they're much more interesting than normal footnotes. I think my favorite elements in “Behind the Canvas” come in the transition from painting to painting. I can only imagine what it would be like to cross the border and have such an abrupt change. The amount of detail Vance includes makes each scene come alive, whether you know the painting/artist or not. The premise of “Behind the Canvas” is clever and interesting. And though the novel is a stand-alone, there are infinite possibilities in which Vance could explore and expand the universe he's created.\* My review is based on an advanced reader copy provided by the publisher via NetGalley. My thoughts are my

own.

I received a free copy of this book from Netgalley in exchange for an honest review. Claudia loves art. She loves to draw and loves looking at paintings and learning about the artists that painted them. One day she discovers a boy with vivid blue eyes in a painting that starts talking to her. She learns that he can move from painting to painting and they quickly become friends. After discovering that he is not a figment of her imagination and is in fact a real boy trapped behind the canvas by an evil witch, she vows to do whatever she can to help him, even if it means traveling behind the canvas and coming face to face with the witch herself. I love the unique premise of this book. As an artist (whom hasn't painted anything in a couple of years) I love the idea and the thought of a world that is created by artists painting is so unique and fascinating to me. I enjoyed the quirky footnotes that covered artists and styles that I haven't thought about in years. I enjoyed the characters, even down to Cash, a dog from one of those poker paintings that I've never been a big fan of. It was easy to feel their emotions throughout the book. My only complaint is that so little of the world of paintings was discovered when there are endless artworks to peruse, but that is just my love of art wanting more.

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