



# EPISODE 101

## Downton Abbey: The Exhibition

Released April, 2018

### TRANSCRIPT

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*Intro: Hi everyone and welcome to The Enchant Me Podcast. I'm Kim Selby and I'll be your host as we go looking for creative inspiration every day life. In each episode, we'll talk about a quick one or two hour excursion we go on that's meant to feed our creative spirit and refill our reservoir of internal inspiration. Our excursions are based on the concept of the 'artist date', one of the tools in "The Artist's Way", a book by Julia Cameron that's a great book to read if you're looking to bring more creativity into your life no matter what form you find it. So let's get started.*

Hi everybody and welcome to episode 101 of *The Enchant Me Podcast*. I'm Kim Selby and I'll be your host for the next year 20 to 25 minutes or so while we talk about our very first artist date that we went on. I'm really excited to be here. I'm really excited about this podcast and I just want to say thank you for taking a listen and I hope you like what you hear and hopefully you'll come back and listen some more.

I just want to say one quick thing before we really get started. If you have a read or if you ever plan to read "*The Artist's Way*", one of the rules of the artist date is that you go on it solo. Most of the time I will be following that rule, but from time to time I am going to mix it up and maybe bring a friend or a family member and this particular episode is one of those times that I'm not by myself. Once we dive in you'll find out why.

So in my family over the last few years, we're finding it harder and harder to find Christmas and birthday gifts to give each other. You know after a lot of years of giving presents you kind of run out of ideas. People "don't need anything", "they don't want anything", they just become harder and harder to buy for over the years and what we found is - and I'm not sure how it started - but we started giving each other experience presents. Maybe it's a day out at a favorite restaurant, or maybe it's a quick road trip to a museum that so-and-so always wanted to visit or maybe it's a concert ticket. My sister and I like to give each other concert tickets and sometimes we don't have good luck. It's kind of funny, she gave me Lady Gaga tickets one year; I gave her Janet Jackson tickets one year and both of the concert were canceled so we stopped giving each other concert tickets. We like to find different ways to just kind of get out there and do stuff with each other instead of giving, you know, just a regular gift.

So for Christmas this past year I was looking for something fun to get my mom who is really, really hard to buy for and I came across a ticket site and I happened to stumble upon an ad for a show in New York called *Downton Abbey: The Live Exhibition* and that immediately caught my eye for a of couple reasons. For one, she loves the show. For two, I love the show. And three, it was in New York and we both love to go to New York. I used to work in New York, I worked there for years, I don't work there anymore. I live in New Jersey now and I still love to go into the city, so I thought this is the perfect gift. I'll get these tickets and we'll go and make a day of it and will go check out this live exhibition about the show that we both love.

Now if you're not familiar with the show, the show is a series that was broadcast on PBS. It started in the UK in 2010 and then came to the states in 2011 and ran for six seasons. The show is a historical drama series so anyone who likes period pieces will love it and if they haven't already found it - I find that hard to believe - but it's definitely him worth checking it out. The series revolves around the Crawley family and their staff as they are trying to navigate life in Post-Edwardian England, living on an estate called *Downton Abbye*. All the storylines are about their relationships, running the house and running in the family, and how history is affecting both of those groups.



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The series is set between 1912 and 1926 so it's really talking about real historical events. The Titanic, the war and the Spanish Influenza... Lots of different events are taking place that are shaping and changing both the family and the staff and over six years and it really covers a lot. Don't get scared off by the fact that it's Post-Edwardian England; don't get scared off by the fact that it's a time in real history. The heart of the story is really all about family dynamics, love, heartbreak and drama, drama, drama. It's a really, really great show.

So I picked this activity as my artist date for a couple of reasons. First of all, it was the perfect amount of time. We were there for about an hour and a half and you could've spent more time, we could've spent less. It was a little bit crowded so I think you could've done it in an hour if there weren't so many people. The second reason why I liked this for an artist date is because this was something where the date and time were purposely picked. You know, we have to commit to it. We had to buy a ticket; we had to pick a date; we had to commit to a particular block of time - the ticket was timed - so it was really intentional. It was really something we committed to and couldn't back out of because a lot of times, you know, what happens is you decide to go on an artist date and you don't necessarily commit to it and you find yourself finding something else you have to do; finding an errand you have to run that becomes more important. This was really deliberate and I thought it was a really good way to start this off by really sticking to the structure of the artist date as it is found in *"The Artist's Way"*. The third thing is that it was perfect to help fill the creative well so to speak. To go out and immerse yourself into something creative.

This TV show, being it was a period piece, the costumes are so specific and the jewelry so specific. Everything is artistry. Everything had to be created. Everything had to be re-lived and re-birthed, essentially, and I really thought that this would be a great way to enjoy an activity that was very visual, very artistic. It involved writers and actors and set designers and food stylists and all of these creative industries and creative disciplines and craftsmanship that had to come together to create this great show. The music. It was really interesting; the theme music was playing throughout the exhibition and if anybody knows the show, the music is really, really recognizable and to just walk in and hear that theme song, it really put you there. Put you at Downton Abbey. Put you in England. Put you on the countryside. It really was a full sensory experience of the TV show.

The exhibit itself was tucked into a building on 57th St. between Broadway and Seventh Avenue which is just south of Central Park. And, you wouldn't necessarily know it was there unless you were looking for it. There were a couple of windows that had some costumes set out and a couple of panels advertising what was going on inside, but for the most part, I feel like it was a little bit of a hidden treasure. A little bit of a hidden find. I think we did see one ad for the show as we were walking towards it. Walking north on Sixth Avenue up towards Central Park. One of the former phone booth kiosks that are now out of home advertising spaces - I remember seeing a big picture of Lady Mary as we were walking - but for the most part, I don't know if I got a lot of attention, although it was pretty crowded when we got there which was back in March - end of March - it was the last week of the show and has since been extended into September so people are definitely going; I just thought that there might of been a bigger display on the street.

Once you went inside you were greeted at first by video of Mr. Carson and then buy a hologram of Mrs. Hughes, two of the most beloved characters on the show who then ushered you into three floors and maybe 15 or 16 or 17 different rooms that showcased all of the different aspects of the show. It was fun to see them again and to hear their voices and to hear Mrs. Hughes' set of keys that always jangled as she wore them around her waist. And it was a really fun way to enter.



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The real star of the whole show, in my opinion, was the costumes that they had scattered throughout the three floors. They were beautiful. The dresses and the tuxes and the suits and the different styles of dresses that they wore throughout the series. Whether it was day wear or formal wear or leisure wear, they had many categories of different types of outfits and they had a lot of them. I would say there were at least 50 to 60 different costumes including three of the four wedding dresses featured in the show.

The other thing that I thought was really impressive were the sets that they had re-created. They re-created the kitchen that was housed downstairs, where the servants lived, of course, because that's where the servants worked. They worked in the kitchen and everything had to be brought upstairs the family home. They had re-created the servants' dining room table which seated - I counted - sat 14 and they had re-created the formal dining area for the family which - and again I counted - 16 with probably room for about 20. The formal dining room was set with beautiful place settings, beautiful flowers, beautiful candlesticks, beautiful flatware. It was really interesting to read some of the placards that they had up that talked about the uniforms and talked about the way they cooked.

One of the other sets they had was Carson's office where a lot of the drama went down. Which is actually called Carson's *pantry*. I did not know that Mr. Carson, being the butler, his office was called the pantry, hence, *butler's pantry*. I thought that was interesting - I learned something there. I think the best set that they had was - something that I don't know if you could call it a set - but it was the bell board that is featured prominently in the beginning of the show and it's featured prominently in the servants' area. Because what happens is when one of the family members need something, they would ring a bell. The bell board was comprised of 16 different bells that were labeled by the room they were connected to. So if anybody needed anything, whether they were in the dining room, or one of the bedrooms, or the parlor, they would ring this bell and the servants would know that they were being summoned to that room. That was always a big fun part of the show - when the bells will ring because everyone would scatter and we would know that something was about to happen.

So how does this excursion based around the TV show tie into the idea of the artist day and did it accomplish what we wanted to accomplish by going somewhere and spending some time? I think this was successful outside of the fact that it was just an enjoyable afternoon. I left that show with three main takeaways.

The first one being that I think there is a lot to be mined from a seemingly dull exterior. And what I mean by that is you take a TV show or a book and you put it in a time that is maybe stereotypically boring. It's the English countryside; it's a family; it's, on the outside, just a regular every day group of people going about their business. Doing what they do, living their lives, running their businesses. But when you really start to peel back the layers, you realize how much is really going on. And by that I mean the relationships between the families and the staff, independently and together. I thought a lot about that, and when you think about it, there are so many things that just seem boring or people who you may think are boring or events that you maybe have to go to for work or for your personal life. Sometimes if you peel back the layers a little bit you realize there's something more, there's there something else. There's a different heartbeat that's beating. When you start to realize that I think it helps you start to look at a lot of things differently and once you start to look at things differently and it's hard to stop. A lot of what artists do, whether they realize it or not, is all about curiosity and it's all about trying to understand something a little more deeply than you normally would. You might have an



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author who is writing a piece of fiction, or piece of nonfiction, and either way whether they're creating it from their imagination or if you're creating it from a topic that they're familiar with, it's all about understanding it better and putting the words on paper to understand it a little bit better. I think a lot of visual artists are putting things, whether it's on canvas or on paper, or photography, they're making those images to try and understand what they're seeing. I think the idea of trying to see what's underneath the ordinary is a really interesting concept and is something that could just serve us well in our every day lives and maybe take a second look at something you wouldn't normally.

The second takeaway that I got from the show was that a lot of times you may just see the big picture. Whether it's a movie or it's a book or again maybe it's something in your every day life or in your work life, but when you look at the big picture, it's usually made of a lot of different smaller pictures. Where in this show, there are so many different components that went into making it. I keep coming back for some reason to the food stylist and I don't know if it's because I have a friend who used to work for a catalog company. I went with her to her office one day; I went to visit her and they were shooting food. And the stylist was there and the way the stylist was putting together the plate of food - and I don't remember what it was - but I do remember that there were mashed potatoes and she was glazing the mashed potatoes with something - it might've been watered-down Elmer's glue - and it was just to perfect the look of the potatoes when the flash from the camera hit it. If you think about how detailed and how specific that one component of the magazine spread is, it's really hard not to see how so many details go into something like the TV show that is set in England in a manor house, over six years, across generations, and across important benchmarks in history. Even the kitchens alone had their own set of people working to make sure that the food looks right and the food was accurately portrayed and I find that fascinating. It ties into my first point with there's a lot to be found by mining down a little bit and from looking underneath, looking behind the curtain. A lot of times you don't realize how much work goes into something that looks easy, and that was my second takeaway.

My third takeaway, and I think this one is maybe the easiest one to digest, or the easiest one to carry with you. I think the first two are maybe a little bit more ambiguous. My third takeaway is that no matter how many times something similar is created and whether that's a painting or drawing or a photograph of a sunset or an abstract work of art on canvas... No matter how many times something similar is created, and in this case it's a television show set in a specific era in a specific location, there's always something unique about an individual's creation. Julian Fellowes, the gentleman who wrote and created Downton Abbey really created something unique and something special and I think that is an important takeaway.

When someone sits down to create a scrapbook or to work on a new recipe, how many ways have people made meatballs over the years? Or how many people have cross stitched a pillow? But it doesn't matter because the way you make it, and the way I make it and the way everybody makes it will be unique and will be their own way. And just because of that it's worth doing. It's worth taking the time to make something and to tap into that creative side because we are so encumbered with every day tasks and every day responsibilities taking an hour or two a week to do something that feeds that inner child or inner artist; it's definitely worth it. Maybe it will change your perspective on other things too. That's for you to decide what that thing is. In my opinion, that's why we do it. That's why people try to tap into their creative side and try to keep a project going to try to start something that they loved 10 or 15 years ago or when they were a kid and always wanted to pick it back up again. That's why I'm doing what I'm doing. And that's why I'm going on these artist dates - to try and keep that spirit going and to try and keep propelling myself to keep making.



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So all in all the Downton Abbey Live Exhibition was a success. The show has been extended into September so you still have a chance to go check it out if you think it might be something you be interested in. I do have some photos that I took inside the exhibition up on [theenchantmepodcast.com](http://theenchantmepodcast.com), so if you're interested in seeing some of the photos check, that out too.

Thanks again so much for listening. We hope you come back and visit us again soon. We have some cool artist dates lined up that we'll be sharing with you and we'll be posting new episodes on Tuesdays. I'm Kim Selby for The Enchant Me Podcast. We'll see you next time.

*Outro: So that's it for this episode of The Enchant Me Podcast. Please join us next time as we again go looking for creative inspiration in every day life. Don't forget, you can always visit us at [theenchantmepodcast.com](http://theenchantmepodcast.com). You can follow us on Twitter @theenchantmepod, or on Instagram @theenchantmepodcast. The Enchant Me Podcast is produced by Kim Selby and Storm Your Brain, LLC. Thanks again for listening. We hope to see you again on the next episode of The Enchant Me Podcast.*

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