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Happy 75th Birthday to "The Little Prince"

Today marks the 75th Anniversary of Antoine de Saint-Exupéry's The Little Prince (originally published in French as Le Petit Prince).

Captivated by its seemingly simple story and illustrations, artists have long been inspired by Saint-Exupéry's tale in the Sahara Desert of an unknown narrator and mysterious young traveler from the stars.



“What makes the desert beautiful,' said the little prince, 'is that somewhere it hides a well...’”

The story however, like all pieces, did not begin with creations out of thin air. Though the French writer, aristocrat and avid aviator did not consider himself an artist, Saint-Exupéry's was constantly sketching subjects both from his mind and those around him. Much of his inspiration can be seen in the novel's simple illustrations, such as a friend's poodle in the lamb or his own dog as the tiger. Looking to his surroundings, he drew on what he knew, including those close to him and other art. Though not confirmed, there is suspicion that the author used himself and his wife as muses for the Little Prince and Rose character, and may have been inspired by Han

Christian Andersen's *The Little Mermaid* (some drawing similarities between the children both venturing into a new world for love).

Though written over seventy years ago, the little book continues to inspire and be loved by readers across the globe. One of these reasons may be for its enduring message, namely “The thing that is important is the thing that is not seen”. Though the narrator (and Saint-Exupéry) has little faith in his artist's abilities, he nevertheless endures in his sketches for the *Little Prince*. Oddly though, his two most important drawings don't completely show their subjects. A cobra in the beginning (which looks like a poorly drawn hat) is an elephant having been eaten by the snake. A wooden crate is actually the lamb which is inside (with grass to eat, as the narrator reassures the *Little Prince*). Speaking directly to art, the narrator says “A rock pile ceases to be a rock pile the moment a single man contemplates it, bearing within him the image of a cathedral.” Though a self-professed “un-illustrator,” Saint-Exupéry clearly explains how an artist sees things not only as they are, but what they could be.



“The house, the stars, the desert -- what gives them their beauty is something that is invisible!”

It is that something that is grasped onto in art. To use the language of Saint-Exupéry, the creator is someone who has “tamed” his or her subject, and given it meaning: “It is the time you have wasted for your rose that makes your rose so important.”

From both a written and visual perspective, Saint-Exupéry's *The Little Prince* is an artistic masterpiece that surely will continue to inspire the next generation of artists, and their children as well. Truly, art does beget art.