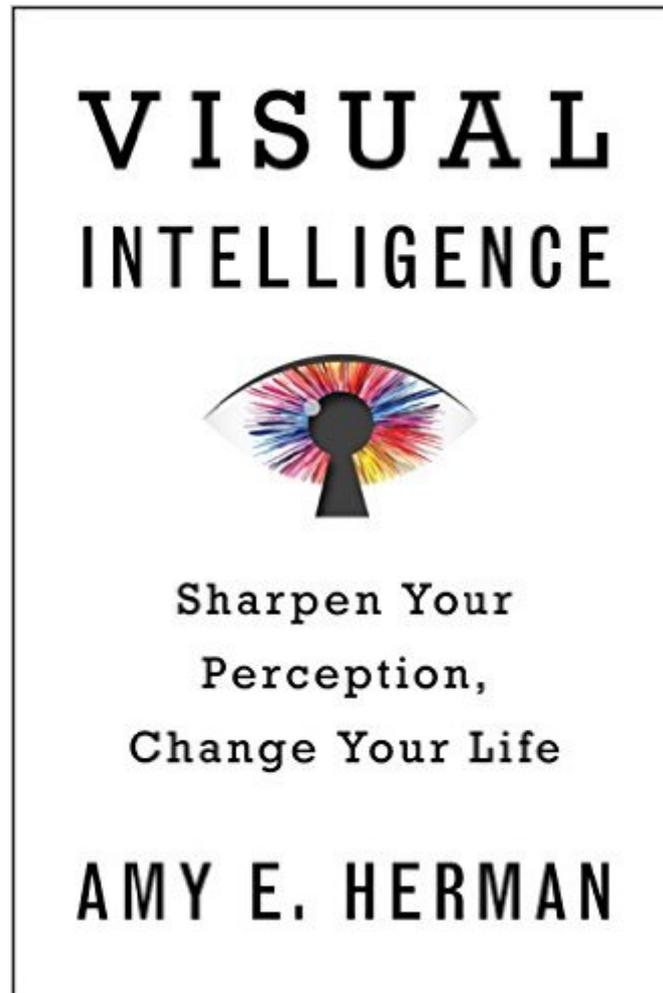# Visual Intelligence: Sharpen Your Perception, Change Your Life

Synopsis

An engrossing guide to seeing â " and communicating â " more clearly from the groundbreaking course that helps FBI agents, cops, CEOs, ER docs, and others save money, reputations, and lives. How could looking at Monetâ ™s water lily paintings help save your company millions? How can checking out peopleâ ™s footwear foil a terrorist attack? How can your choice of adjective win an argument, calm your kid, or catch a thief?Â Â Â In her celebrated seminar, the Art of Perception, art historian Amy Herman has trained experts from many fields how to perceive and communicate better. By showing people how to look closely at images, she helps them hone their â œvisual intelligence,â • a set of skills we all possess but few of us know how to use properly. She has spent more than a decade teaching doctors to observe patients instead of their charts, helping police officers separate facts from opinions when investigating a crime, and training professionals from the FBI, the State Department, Fortune 500 companies, and the military to recognize the most pertinent and useful information. Her lessons highlight far more than the physical objects you may be missing; they teach you how to recognize the talents, opportunities, and dangers that surround you every day.Â Â Â Whether you want to be more effective on the job, more empathetic toward your loved ones, or more alert to the trove of possibilities and threats all around us, this book will show you how to see what matters most to you more clearly than ever before.

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Customer Reviews

The first time I visited the National Gallery in London, I went on a docent tour. The docents weren't

volunteers: they were art students and teachers who really knew their stuff, and I believe they were paid. That's where I learned to look at art.The guides didn't try to cover the whole museum. They spent lots of time with a single piece of art. Many of them began with the question, "What do you see?"Since then I've been back many times and each time I appreciated what the guides were doing. And when I go to a museum myself, I don't dash through in a frenzy. I've spent lots of time - not hours, but close - with objects that particularly engaged or puzzled me. And I do the same with historical and archeological museums.So I had some idea where Amy Herman was coming from. She takes it to another level and she asks different questions. An art guide will ask about the artist's intention. Why did the artist choose these colors? Where does our eye go? Why is this object in the center of the painting - does the artist believe it's important?Amy encourages us to look at details, to notice the traces of wine in a glass and remember how many objects were on a table. She encourages the reader to look - really look - at a work of art to increase your powers of observation. The idea is that after studying works of art, you'll take those powers of observation to real life. She cites dozens of examples of groups of people who increased their skills after taking her courses.As a reviewer with an advance reading copy, I had trouble going through the exercises. The art works will be in 4-color reproductive form in the final published work; reviewers get grainy black and white.

This is a fascinating book and, being a photographer, a writer and a student of police procedures (for writing purposes), I found a lot of the information familiar, but still helpful. It was nice to see the whole idea of visual observation woven into a very coherent and fairly comprehensive narrative. The author has built a career on teaching a lot of the principles she outlines here at various seminars and, after many years teaching the topic of visual observation, gathered them into a book--a good idea.A lot of the information here applies very well to photography and photographers and, in fact, I think photographers would get a lot from reading this book. The concept of looking at familiar subjects to see things that are out-of-place, for example, is something that photographers rely on a lot to make interesting photographs from ordinary subjects. I once found a silk butterfly stapled to a telephone pole and photographed it and someone on Facebook told me that it had come off of some kind of wedding decoration and so I gather someone held their reception near where I found the butterfly. Looking at scenes to see what is missing or out of place is another example: police and detectives will all tell you that the shoes a person is wearing will tell you more about a person and if he belongs somewhere than anything he says. In the movie the Shawshank Redemption Tim Robbins character walks through a prison wearing a pair of brand new wingtip shoes and no one notices--because most people pay no attention to someone feet. A pickpocket is far more likely to

smile and hold a door for you than an ordinary stranger.

This fascinating book outlines principles that Amy E. Herman has used to train many officers of the New York City Police to become more sensitive to seeing details -- first of the art works at the museum and then, and officers consistently report "immediately" -- how that training translates to police work.The book has made me aware that I "see" many things without seeing them, really. A useful habit, of course; there is so much to see everywhere that there is value in seeing only what is relevant. The details of the upholstery of my car may be fascinating, for example, but checking my mirrors every ten seconds and keeping my eyes on the road ahead is much more useful in the short run.But later, Herman argues, and demonstrates in this beautifully written book, that studying the upholstery at my leisure, in detail, and yet with a tight time limit, will make me a much more attentive driver.This was one of the most useful books I've read in a couple of years, and I plan to re-read it and apply several of Herman's suggestions. In fact, I'm to see if the Frick will offer this course to its donors. I signed up and just got my membership card this morning.In the meantime, I've been working on the exercises. In the final copy, apparently, there will be full color paintings with no other context; I couldn't use the black and white versions so made my own little gallery. That involved downloading just the paintings from the Frick's website, and arranging them on my computer screen, without artist, title and other information. As close as I could get to her "rules", and the exercises went very well.It's also been very interesting to read the newspaper reports collected on Herman's website.

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