

Shirley Whittington



Picture this. You're standing in an art gallery. Before you is a broken bicycle, painted matte black, and studded with old horseshoes.

"Such ironic symbolism," coos the lady next to you -- the one in the yak's hair caftan.

"Palpable tensions," murmurs her friend in the butterscotch suede jogging suit. "What incredible angularities!"

And what do you say? Nothing? You'll be branded as an uncouth yahoo who simply doesn't understand art.

You could clear your throat and say, "Is there a washroom here, did you notice?" but don't expect to be welcomed back.

Understanding modern art is not easy. I am looking now at a reproduction of a piece by Somebody Newman called Day One. Day One is an oblong patch of neatly applied red paint. Two sides are minimally bordered in orange. It's about the size of a Cashway Lumber plywood door and if I saw it in an art gallery I'd wonder what was behind it.

Now, I've read the book and I know what's behind it. Day One, says my book, is noteworthy for its "lack of recognizable image and the total elimination of subject." Further -- Day One is filled with profoundly

emotive qualities which show an august indifference to the problems of relating art to everyday life."

That's the sort of thing most people wouldn't be able to think of right on the spot. I mean, they could probably come up with it after they'd been home for a few hours and then they'd just smite their brows and say, "Gee, I wish I'd thought of that earlier."

Or take Lichtenstein's Brush Stroke With Spatters which looks the way it sounds and hangs in the Chicago Institute of Art. I would have to look at that for a long time before I could turn to a fellow gallery goer and say casually, "Don't you just love the way he has subverted commercial and artistic conventions and explored the space and mechanics of image reproduction with such deadly good humour?"

Just this morning I read about an exhibit in Germany which is called Documents 7. The most outstanding piece in the show is an outdoor sculpture. (That is why they call it outstanding.) It consists of 7,000 irregularly shaped oblong volcanic boulders transported from a nearby quarry and dumped in three piles outside the exhibit hall.

It should be easy to take this work of art for

Sure, but is it Art?

granite and assume that it was just some stuff left over in the building construction -- but no. This is a real sculpture and it is attracting a lot of attention.

Inside there are works like Mud Circles, applied by the artist to a white wall with earth he says he got from England's Avon River.

Or, there is the series of still life assemblages made from every day objects like small hair combs and Esso oil drums.

If you find that kind of art too static, you can go into Bernhard Leitner's sound room and lie down while six amplifiers bounce rolling thunder sounds around.

The point is -- what are you going to say about works of art like these? Even the newspaper reporter seemed stumped for words, although she did say the show was a rallying point for the avante garde from all over the world.

This is a problem for those of us who long to be part of the cultural elite. Unless you are able to murmur profundities as you contemplate such pieces you are apt to be considered thick, mute or too chicken to have an opinion.

This is why I have decided to open Aunt Shirley's Fake-it School of Art Appreciation, right here in my own house. (The focus will be on the avante garde. If you don't know what to say when faced with Blue Boy or Whistler's Mother, there is no hope for you.)

Take my Fake-it course, and never again will you stand before a collage of cigarette papers, sand and theatre ticket stubs -- mute.

Take the first exhibit -- Apres le dejeuner. This is an illusionist still life made up of a bunch of dirty dishes soaking in a pan full of Joy. Your Fake-it art guide will tell you "this incorporation of real materials and bubbling evanescence is almost unbearably lyrical and renders pure sculpture redundant."

Like that? Move on to the kinetic sculpture in the next room. You have to activate this one by opening the door of the refrigerator to view dietary remains illuminated by a greased spattered 40 watt bulb. Page 19 of the Fake-it book will tell you, "The quasi-gastronomic and socio-economic problems presented in this speculative piece remain a riddle. It is a spectacular trompe-l'oeil. But although the eye is fooled, the nose is not. The aura of dead food is inescapable."

Finally there is a big outdoor sculpture in the driveway called Oldsmobile, 1965. Lost for words? "'65 Olds. Two owners. Good cond. New Tires. Immac inside. Good motor. Orig upholst and much more."

Far fetched? Maybe so, but no more so than calling a red painted door "profoundly emotive and noteworthy for its lack of recognizable image."

It's all a case of baffleleg for art's sake.

Bill Smiley



I DON'T know where you were on the 24th of May weekend, but I know where I was. I was in a towering rage.

Remember what a rotten weekend it was -- cold and rainy right through? Well, I could have taken that. I had plenty of papers to mark.

No, it wasn't the weather that put me in a towering rage. Have you ever lost your car keys? Well I have. Have you ever lost your cool? Well I have. Have you ever thought your wife was an idiot child, trying to drive you clean wild? And as the old song goes on . . . and the ump-dump-da-da-dump and the ump-dump-da-da-dump and so on, (from the Thirties, called Have You Ever Seen a Dream Walking)? has it.

Oh, we're not completely stupid. We have two sets of keys for the car. At least we had. So there was no real problem. Except that when we looked for the second set, they were nowhere to be found.

And my wife was the last one to use the car. And I have witnesses to prove it. So who lost the keys, eh?

At first there was no panic. They were around somewhere. After all, two sets of car keys can't vanish into thin air. Merely a matter of looking around a bit, checking her purses and other normal places she might have left them.

On the drizzly, cold Sunday, we sat around for a while, she in her dressing gown and I in a huff, waiting for her to remember where she had put the keys, for safekeeping.

That woman has this infuriating habit of tidying up. She puts things away so carefully that they don't turn up for five years.

Last time it happened, it was the key to my safety deposit box with all those gold bars and diamonds in it. We searched the house from stem to gudgeon. It finally cost me \$25.00 to have the old lock drilled out, a new one put in, and a set of keys made. Naturally, the old one turned up later -- in an empty cookie jar.

But this was a little different. There was nothing much but some old papers in my deposit box, and they could have sat there for years. But this was a car, the only fairly new car we'd ever had.

At first I thought she'd dropped the keys on her way in. Checked that. The neighbours must have thought I'd finally gone right around the bend, seeing me out there prowling around the lawn, nose to the ground like an ant-eater, pulling up shrubs and weeds, peering under stones.

Suddenly, I thought, "Somebody's found them, and stolen the car!" (Our garage, a collector's item of leaning wood and dirt floor, is about 50 feet from the house, and you can't

Oh, those missing keys

tell at a glance whether the car is there or not).

Rushed to the garage. Car sitting there, chuckling. Searched underneath, with flashlight. Felt behind the seats. Raked the dirt floor. Felt under the seats. No dice. No keys.

By this time I was fuming a bit, just a little smoke coming out my ears, but enough for friend wife to see. She scuttled upstairs and began searching drawers, jacket pockets, jewel boxes, even shoes, knowing her own propensity for finding a safe place.

I sat down, read a book, and steamed away like a freshly-dunked lobster. "Let her search. Do her good. Damned idiot thing to do. Why can't a woman be more like a man?"

By the Sunday evening, there was panic. Last time I'd lost my car keys, about 20 years ago, I'd had to have the locks drilled out and new ones installed. Cost me about \$20. With inflation, I reckoned this one would cost me over \$100.

I'd sit there, pretending to read, but my mind probing the hiding places in the house, which were myriad. She'd sit there, trying to retrace the subterranean thinking that made her put them in a "safe" place.

Then one of us would jump up. She might run to the attic, or I to the basement. All we ended up with on every excursion, was bumped shins, scratched wrists, and further frustration.

Monday, the tension was almost unbearable, as we darted about the house, up and downstairs, like an old silent movie comedy, when we were struck by another possible inspiration, and checked out the grandboys' toys in the old crib, or the box her sewing patterns in it. I know I searched the same places eight times each, and so did she.

Holiday. Garage closed. No help there. But it was not all in vain. A number of things turned up, including a missing gold ear-ring and the new keys to my safety deposit box, which had gone missing a few days before.

By dinner hour, we weren't speaking, but still popping up, now wearily, to try one more place. We have a big house, which contains about 40 huge items under which a set of keys could have been kicked by accident. They were all moved, slipped discs popping as we heaved out stove, fridge, chesterfield, etc.

On the Tuesday morning, I dolefully called a colleague for a ride to work, then called the garage, to get the bad news: car towed away, locks drilled out, new locks, new keys. I could see the bill soaring.

They told me to give them the last six numbers of the car's ID number, and they could cut keys. "How long will it take?"

"Have them to you in about an hour." They did, it cost peanuts, and our marriage is still viable. But it was mighty shaky there for a couple of days. And the keys haven't turned up. Poltergeists?

Investor's Inquiry



by Charles Colling

Transfer of Securities

When transfer of ownership of a security is required, certain procedures must be followed. Under normal conditions, the bond or stock certificate when properly endorsed or signed off is delivered to the transfer agent of the company and a new certificate is issued in the name of the new owner, both the old and new certificates are carefully recorded on the transfer books of the company.

The old certificate is destroyed and the new certificate delivered to the new owner.

These certificates are legal documents

evidencing ownership of the shares of the company and when they are sold or otherwise transferred to another name, the certificate must be signed off exactly as it is recorded on the front.

For example, Sarah Jones will not suffice for Mrs. Sarah Jones, nor will David Smith suffice for David E. Smith.

The appropriate place for such signature and witness thereof is usually at the bottom of the certificate. Do not, under any circumstance, attempt to fill in the top portion of the certificate where it says "I hereby assign

A 'must' to follow

and transfer unto..."

This space is for the registration instructions of the new owner and if filled in by the seller causes much inconvenience and sometimes costly affidavits to sort out who actually belongs to what!

I know of one case in particular where a gentleman merely wanted to transfer a certificate from his name to that of his wife.

After signing his name in several places and his wife signing as witness in several places and then somebody else's name as witness to the witness, it was utterly impossible to tell whose name it was meant to be transferred into and the trust company involved steadfastly refused to make the

transfer.

If you have the slightest doubt as to where to sign or how to sign, check with your bank or investment dealer. It could save you an awful lot of time and unnecessary expense.

Charles Colling is the resident manager of Yorkton Securities Inc. in Midland. In sending in questions to be answered, please remember Securities Commission Regulations will not permit opinions or recommendations on any specific securities.

All other signed inquiries will be answered as soon as possible. In all answers only the inquirer's initials will be used. Address all questions to "Investor's Inquiry", c/o The Midland Times, Box 609, Midland, Ontario.

You and Your Credit



by Paul Mattar, Credit Bureau of Midland, Penetanguishene, Collingwood

I had a discussion with a young lady who was to be married. She personally had not had much credit experience but she did have a bank credit card and two or three open accounts with local clothing stores.

Our discussion was prompted by the fact that her husband to be was not a good manager of his finances. In fact to use her words "the way he pays his bills is just awful."

The big question in her mind was "Can my forthcoming marriage affect my credit status, especially since my fiance has not had

good paying habits?"

This is the answer I gave her: - Your ability to obtain credit can be affected, particularly if your husband has a poor credit history. Of course his credit status can also be affected if your history is poor. But credit grantors should not let one spouse's poor status have any great influence on the other's ability to obtain credit than if the situation were reversed.

Nor should one spouse's poor credit history be the sole consideration in determining the other's credit worthiness. When you and your husband make a major purchase such as a car, or a home, from joint income, credit

Managing one's finances

grantors will combine your credit histories and consider you as a family unit. In this situation, one spouse's poor credit history can lessen the value of the other's good one.

You might ask if you can obtain credit in your own name? The answer is yes. If you have the acceptable qualifications, you can obtain credit in your own name and accept the responsibility for all debts you contract for.

If you rely on your husband's income, however, credit grantors will often request that you husband co-sign any credit application, etc., thereby making him responsible for the debt if you do not pay. Even if you have your own income and an established credit history, your husband's signature may be required for a major credit transaction.

On such a transaction it is common practice to require the wife as a co-signer.

Credit grantors are not being discriminatory when they ask for a co-signer. They want to make sure that each spouse is aware of the other's credit obligations. Of course joint responsibility for payments of the account is accepted when you give your signature.

This joint responsibility must be remembered in the event of marital breakup or bankruptcy of either party.

If you have specific topics or questions you would like to have discussed, just write to "You and Your Credit," P.O. Box 176, Midland, Ont., or call Paul Mattar at 526-5468.