

Don't Touch the Art

by *Lori_Borgman*

If you are thinking of going to a modern art show anytime soon, you might want to consider taking your own chair.

The husband and I recently toured a minimalist exhibit, which is an art show that looks like the gallery moved all the art to another location except for the pieces that were too heavy and too large to load on the U-Haul.

The first piece of minimalism we encountered looked like a side-by-side refrigerator-freezer knocked on its side. (Movers can be so careless.)

On first approach, the block appeared to be a resting spot for gallery visitors wanting to set a bag down or simply "sit a spell."

A man in a dark suit, who had been standing motionless in front of a large expanse of blank wall near the entryway, and whom we assumed was part of a 3-D art display, suddenly came to life when the husband brushed up against the large block.

"Don't touch that, sir. It's art."

Who knew?

On closer inspection the big box had a basin of sorts inside it that was the shape of an old clawfoot bathtub. No running water, no bath beads, just a tub in a box. Art.

From there we wandered over to a small black cube with a slash in the top of it, parked in front of a window framing a beautiful view. It looked like a wonderful place to sit and gaze, but we were catching on now. Again, my eyes shift to the man in the suit.

“I once sat on a seat just like this on an Amtrack train to Seattle. But this isn’t a seat, is it?”

“No,” he said. “And, truthfully, I’m not sure I get it either.”

From there we moved to a water flow that had a large granite boulder beside it. On the side facing the water, a chunk of rock had been carved from the boulder creating a perfect resting spot.

“Don’t even think about it,” I whispered to the husband.

“But it is titled Rock Settee in the brochure,” he protested.

“Yes, but if we’ve learned anything about minimalism, it is that nothing is ever what you think it is. Why do you think most of the exhibits are titled ‘Untitled?’ The artists aren’t even sure themselves.”

The next rooms we entered were both engaging and enlightening. Three fluorescent light tubes wedged in a corner: Untitled. A pile of lemon drops wrapped in silver cellophane, heaped on the floor: Untitled. Four boxes of aluminum and Plexiglass: Untitled. My aching feet and sore back: Untitled.

The Untitleds took the show by a 3:1 margin.

We rounded the corner to a stairwell and on the landing in front of a narrow window was a simple metal sculpture with four legs, a flat seat and a blue back. We stopped to admire the angles and overheard an unsophisticated passerby guffaw that it was a folding chair. Oh, for want of an imagination.

After winding our way through the rest of the exhibits, each of which was intriguing in its own untitled way, we emerged into a stark courtyard ringed with crushed white rock. The rock encircled a slab of concrete which held a long molded white plastic form and several smaller ones. We circled it twice noting how the overhead sun heightened contrast between the rock and the shadows.

“Simple yet bold,” I said to the husband.

“A study in whites,” he responded.

“Wonder what it’s called,” I mused.

“Untitled?” asked the husband.

“No,” said the man in the suit, again walking by. “It’s called a patio. Have a seat and make yourselves comfortable.”

Lori is now hesitant to sit on anything other than a straight back chair or certified recliner. Comments may be sent to her at lori@loriborgman.com.

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