



La bergère a des oreilles - Oil/huile - 14" x 18" - 2013 - Private collection/Collection privée

Hoarding/Stashing "Art" ? How? Why?

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Bernard Poulin
Painter, Writer, Teacher

In response to a New York Times article, entitled: As Art Collections Grow, So Do the Places That Stash Them - By Daniel Grant - Nov. 13, 2018, I offer the following:

The amassing, stockpiling, squirrelling away of artworks is reminiscent of a "Midas touching" of things considered worthy; not because of the actual fact of their worth but rather because our appraisal of such "products" is based on a monetary rather than on an aesthetic or sensual evaluation of them.

In essence, the hoarding of products, of physical things, of objects called "artworks" (that we mistakenly call "art") is nothing more than a playtime activity of those who immerse themselves in the

game of growing the value of artworks (via locking them away for safe keeping) like the cultivation of mushrooms in a dark space. In so doing, they hope to harvest a greater yield through a limited access to the presence of those artworks rather than through an increased experiencing and appreciation of their most valuable potential asset: i.e. : the art within the artworks.

But then, are investors daring enough to accept the questioning of their investment? What if there was no art, no impact emerging from within the artwork for which they have spent large amounts of money? Of what worth would that artwork be if it was suddenly deemed to be no more than a Tom, Dick or Harriet's Sunday daubings? Of what value would their "investment" then be?

As inferred above, artwork is a created product, a made thing. Distributors of that product (galleries, fairs and auction houses) speak highly of its "performance capabilities" often without being able to confirm that the miles per gallon promised are the eventual miles per gallon possible. There is a selling game. And what these "authorities" often fail to explain is that the worth of an artwork does not lie in its physical capacities but rather in its intangibles - the enigma of the art within those physical products we call paintings and sculptures or "artworks".

But back to the main point - How does hoarding achieve the intended worth and value increase purportedly inherent in "art"? Is it art we are hoarding or artworks? Let's be frank. For all intents and purposes, artworks are just vessels. Undoubtedly intended to be wondrously constructed, they are made up of composed and combined elements which seek to give a structured purpose to the decorated physical object - a purpose we might call "becoming" a temple. But despite all the efforts which go into making such a temple, it's not the temple that is important. It's the icon we desperately hope will choose to be hidden within. And therein lies the conundrum.

Artworks are generally bought, sold and traded - as stated above - on promises made. What buyers buy are the rock within which a diamond "may" reside. What they do not buy with certainty, especially when it comes to investing, is the fact of that diamond. Understandably, an investor's greatest fear is to have purchased a lot of "nothing". To invest in it "possibly" being there is never as good an investment as one which "pretty well assures us" that a diamond is there. But then, reassurance in that arena literally demands we not be the only one looking at the piece over time. Wishing it to be all we need it to be is not enough.

Nonetheless. . .

As long as artwork purchased is hidden away, it does maintain a superficial aura of mystery, of value increasing. But then, is there anything within that object, that decorated box that is actually gaining in worth or value? And if there is, will the artwork retain whatever it has within it if we endlessly hoard and hide it? Probably. . . But as an investor, would I want to bet against my own investment? Would I want to muse on the possibility that this intangible, this enigmatic existence might fade away to nothing because it does not have what it needs to exist : the eyes of onlookers?

All this to say, artworks can be bought and traded. Art cannot. Why? Because it is not a "barterable" something. It is an enigmatic statement which "sometimes" resides within artwork. It is an independent soul. Of its own it "may reveal itself; emerge on its own. And when it does, its main purpose is to reach out, touch and move whomever is open to its mysteries. And this wondrous-

ness it does freely; gratis. It bears repeating : Art has never been, cannot be, nor ever will be owned or traded by anyone.

A prime example is the Mona Lisa. Though the painting itself, "the thing called Mona Lisa", belongs to the Louvre, only the physical representation of her is the negotiable property of the museum. The connection between the essence of Mona Lisa and a viewer, the mystery of its universal fascination is owned by no one. She, as art, belongs to us all, regardless of whether we own the physical image of her or not. Taken in, she is in us.

In the end. . . art, as enigma, comes to own a piece of us more than we can ever own any portion of it. No matter how many artworks we hoard, the results are always the same. : being object rich through the acquisition of the most expensive paintings and hiding them from view in order to give them a higher value is valueless; is worthless. The purpose of artwork is to be displayed, to house discoverable secrets, puzzles and mysteries. The purpose of those is to mesmerize, to remind us of how powerfully wondrous we humans can be. And our purpose is to either be the creators of such riddles, the ones being awed by them and/or the ones who share them.

Bernard A. Poulin