

WORLD OF ART

By Tim Feeney

Copyright © MMXVIII by Tim Feeney, All rights reserved.

CAUTION: Professionals and amateurs are hereby warned that this Work is subject to a royalty. This Work is fully protected under the copyright laws of the United States of America and all countries with which the United States has reciprocal copyright relations, whether through bilateral or multilateral treaties or otherwise, and including, but not limited to, all countries covered by the Pan-American Copyright Convention, the Universal Copyright Convention and the Berne Convention.

RIGHTS RESERVED: All rights to this Work are strictly reserved, including professional and amateur stage performance rights. Also reserved are: motion picture, recitation, lecturing, public reading, radio broadcasting, television, video or sound recording, all forms of mechanical or electronic reproduction, such as CD-ROM, CD-I, DVD, information and storage retrieval systems and photocopying, and the rights of translation into non-English languages.

PERFORMANCE RIGHTS AND ROYALTY PAYMENTS: All amateur and stock performance rights to this Work are controlled exclusively by Heuer Publishing LLC. No amateur or stock production groups or individuals may perform this play without securing license and royalty arrangements in advance from Heuer Publishing LLC. Questions concerning other rights should be addressed to Heuer Publishing LLC. Royalty fees are subject to change without notice. Professional and stock fees will be set upon application in accordance with your producing circumstances. Any licensing requests and inquiries relating to amateur and stock (professional) performance rights should be addressed to Heuer Publishing LLC.

Royalty of the required amount must be paid, whether the play is presented for charity or profit and whether or not admission is charged.

AUTHOR CREDIT: All groups or individuals receiving permission to produce this Work must give the author(s) credit in any and all advertisement and publicity relating to the production of this Work. The author's billing must appear directly below the title on a separate line where no other written matter appears. The name of the author(s) must be at least 50% as large as the title of the Work. No person or entity may receive larger or more prominent credit than that which is given to the author(s).

PUBLISHER CREDIT: Whenever this Work is produced, all programs, advertisements, flyers or other printed material must include the following notice: ***Produced by special arrangement with Heuer Publishing LLC.***

COPYING: Any unauthorized copying of this Work or excerpts from this Work is strictly forbidden by law. No part of this Work may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form, by any means now known or yet to be invented, including photocopying or scanning, without prior permission from Heuer Publishing LLC.

HEUER PUBLISHING LLC
P.O. BOX 248 • CEDAR RAPIDS, IOWA 52406
TOLL FREE (800) 950-7529 • FAX (319) 368-8011

A WORLD OF ART

By Tim Feeney

SYNOPSIS: Three people must decide what is the best art in the world. More than just their reputations are at stake.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(2 females, 1 male)

SUZANNE (f) Gallery manager.

MARCIE (f) Sculptor, part-time waitress.

JONATHAN (m) Painter (oils), part-time appraiser.

DURATION: 10 Minutes

TIME: The present

SETTING: Small break-room in the back of an art gallery which includes a small table surrounded by three folding chairs.

PROPS

- ☐ Purse with cigarettes and matches
- ☐ Pencil
- ☐ Napkin
- ☐ Tissue

COSTUMES

Contemporary. Jonathan should wear a shirt with a pocket.

AT RISE: *SUZANNE enters followed by MARCIE and JONATHAN. JONATHAN stands by the entrance, SUZANNE sits at the table and MARCIE stands up stage of the table. SUZANNE fumbles with her purse for a cigarette and lighter.*

MARCIE: Please don't, Suzanne.

SUZANNE: I really need one.

MARCIE: I really can't take it right now. How many times have I told you that will kill you?

JONATHAN: I really don't think cancer is the greatest of our worries right now.

SUZANNE replaces the cigarette and lighter in her purse. MARCIE rubs SUZANNE's shoulders from behind.

MARCIE: We've got to find a way to relax. We can't do this if we are all strung out.

MARCIE sits across from SUZANNE. JONATHAN sits at the open spot. They look at each other a moment.

JONATHAN: This is all quite a lot to handle at once. I mean, the fact that they are here is simply mind blowing. That itself is a monumental shock. But then, the ultimatum? And for some reason it all falls upon us. Why us? Who are we?

MARCIE: Yeah, why are we the last chance?

SUZANNE: You know, if this is going to be handed down, shoved down our throats... I think I would prefer it be us who makes the decision. Gives us at least some sense of control.

MARCIE: Responsibility, you mean. If we screw this up we'll be responsible for the end of the world.

JONATHAN: I don't think anyone will hold it against us. For very long.

MARCIE: I don't understand how they picked us. What makes us so special?

JONATHAN: There's nothing special about us. We're random. It's all just a big game to them. They flipped a few pages in the galactic phone book and found us.

SUZANNE: Well, it doesn't really matter who, how or why now, does it? All we have now is what. What are we going to do about it? We've only got a few hours to put together a presentation, we'd better get started.

MARCIE: My head is spinning like a merry-go-round! I don't know where to start.

JONATHAN: OK, I'll start – Louvre.

SUZANNE: The Louvre? Just the Louvre?

JONATHAN: Yes! It's got everything, how could we lose?

SUZANNE: What about the Met? The Smithsonian?

MARCIE: The National Gallery? The British Museum, Palace Museum? Guggenheim, D'Orsay, Field, Van Gogh, Art Institute? Does that cover everything? What if we miss something?

SUZANNE: Wait. Those are just objects. What if they mean to include performing arts?

JONATHAN: What? Are you kidding me?

SUZANNE: Arts. They said arts.

MARCIE: Let's see, Julliard, Bolshoi, Shakespeare, Kabuki, Lyric Opera, London Philharmonic Symphony, Mozart, Nutcracker Suite...

JONATHAN: Stop!

MARCIE: Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, Dragon Dance, Blues Fest, Punch and Judy.

JONATHAN: Fine! Stop already.

SUZANNE: That is all art too, that has to be considered.

JONATHAN: Sure, fine, while we are at it let's throw in baseball, cricket, soccer, football.

SUZANNE: Fair enough. That can be considered performing arts.

JONATHAN: Tattoos and mud wrestling.

MARCIE: I'll give you tattoos, but I am not so sure about mud wrestling.

JONATHAN: I happen to think it is beautiful art.

MARCIE: Only when your eye beholds it.

SUZANNE: Maybe we can add it at the end of the list if there is any room left.

JONATHAN: Oh yeah, let's make a big long list and then throw a dart to select one.

MARCIE: Yeah! How are we supposed to decide which is the best form of art? I mean, look at Jonathan. If he flew in here and demanded art, he'd be happy with women's mud wrestling. Do we feel safe assuming that they would be as simple-minded? We can't know what they would like without knowing more about them.

JONATHAN: We decide on what we think is the one perfect form of art and their version of Chuck Barris gongs the hell out of it and they come back here and fry us to a crackly crunch with their Death Star.

MARCIE stares at him, her mouth open.

MARCIE: When did this all become a big joke to you?

JONATHAN: It's not a joke! I am agreeing with you. Whatever we pick, odds are we are screwed.

MARCIE: You don't have to make stupid jokes about it.

JONATHAN: But it's OK for you to insult my taste in entertainment?

SUZANNE: Please stop, both of you. Let's not fight between us. I know this crazy situation has us all on edge.

JONATHAN stands and pushes his chair into the table. He steps away.

SUZANNE: We have to keep our heads. This isn't hopeless, we still have a chance to get out of this. I don't know why our gallery has been chosen, but I know that each of us is exceptionally qualified to meet this challenge. Maybe they've been watching us for some time and decided we are the best.

JONATHAN: Yeah sure, whatever. Artists don't work well under pressure. Being a day or two from starving to death is bad enough, but being a few hours from global obliteration... it's distracting, it ticks me off.

SUZANNE: Come back here. Marcie has a good point, let's discuss it.

MARCIE: What point?

SUZANNE: You said we can't provide a good answer for them if we don't know what they are all about. Let's figure out what we know about them.

JONATHAN: Nothing! Unless you have had some close encounters you haven't told us about, we don't know anything about them. One day, Planet Earth, swaddled in the comfortable infantile faith of a universal onesie, the next day to wake up under the business end of a galactic fly swatter.

MARCIE: They were completely unknown until they landed yesterday.

SUZANNE: Well, Jonathan, you're an appraiser for Sotheby's for pity's sake. Can't you make observations on them and come up with a feel for their characteristics?

JONATHAN: They're flipping space aliens! I don't know how they think! I don't know if $1+1=2$ for them. Do they know what mauve is? They seem to have grey and green down, but I haven't seen any other colors. They all wear the same ugly uni-shade shift. And, they're all bald, even whichever of them were female. There just isn't much there to work from.

MARCIE: What if we ask to board their ship? We can get a look at the ship's design, their personal quarters.

SUZANNE: That's a good idea, Marcie.

JONATHAN: Their ship's design is a tin can! It is just a cylinder, neither aerodynamic nor aesthetic nor ergonomic. Hardly more imaginative than a rock.

MARCIE: You're not being helpful, Jonathan! Your anger is just stressing me out! *(Moves away from the table.)*

JONATHAN: Dammit, Marcie! I'm an artist, not a cosmoxenothropologist! I don't know what else to do! *(Collapses onto a chair.)*

SUZANNE: We need to walk in their shoes, Jonathan. We need to imagine what it is like to be them. To see this from their point of view. I think that is the best way to choose an art that they would like.

JONATHAN: And I think it is impossible to do in a half of a day! Remember the part about how they are from another planet we didn't even know existed until they got here and threatened to kill us?

MARCIE: You're not even trying! Why can't you even give it a try before accepting defeat?

JONATHAN: UGH! You just don't get it! It is useless, we are just so different from them in every single way! They are so far advanced from us. They travel intra-galactically, we can barely make it to the moon. They communicate via telepathy, we still have 100 different languages and most people refuse to learn more than one.

MARCIE: But art is universal! Cave people 40,000 years ago were making art that we can appreciate now. Aren't we unbelievably so far advanced from Paleolithic cave people? But, still, we can recognize the beauty of their simple artistic drawings.

SUZANNE: So we just have to imagine what space-faring, mind-reading strangers would find interesting and refreshing.

JONATHAN: Oh well, hey uh, they all just wear bleached burlap sacks, shave their heads bald, and live in caves of mud. For fun, they build stupid ugly spaceships out of stupid ugly soup cans and travel all over the stupid ugly galaxy blowing up other planets just because they've lived boring lives on their boring, colorless, stupid ugly planet as they evolved over the eons from a blob of boring, stupid ugly amoeba! How's that for an appraisal?

MARCIE: I don't think screaming and shouting and insulting them is going to help, Jonathan!

JONATHAN: I am tired of this! All we've done is create a list of thousands of forms of art that I am sure they are incapable of comprehending. How are we supposed to choose the one form of art that will satisfy these unimaginative ass-hat clowns?

JONATHAN slams his hands on the table and stands up, violently upturning his chair. MARCIE breaks down into tears.

SUZANNE: Whoa, wait! That's it!

MARCIE: What's it?!

SUZANNE: Marcie.

SUZANNE gives MARCIE a tissue from her pocket and leads her back to her chair. SUZANNE picks up JONATHAN's chair then sits in her own.

SUZANNE: Jonathan.

JONATHAN: What?!

SUZANNE: You're right. Sit down.

MARCIE: He's right about what?

SUZANNE: Well, first, he's right that these visitors from outer space are bland.

JONATHAN moseys back to his chair.

JONATHAN: Damn straight! They haven't a creative bone in their slime green bodies.

SUZANNE: And, second, I think that is why they are here. They've evolved technologically, but not artistically.

MARCIE: So they want ideas from us?

SUZANNE: I think so. Maybe they woke up one day and realized that warping around the galaxy just wasn't fulfilling. That though they had the power to zip from star to star destroying planets with their laser death rays, their lives were empty. Missing the communication of emotion, tension relief, pleasure of creation for intrinsic value.

JONATHAN: They are still evolving.

MARCIE: That's not a bad thing. They came to us for help!

SUZANNE: Right! That's what they are doing.

JONATHAN: Then why all the bullshit about destroying the planet if we don't provide the perfect example of art?

SUZANNE: Art is a form of communication. Communication is a form of art. But they don't know what art is, they don't know how to communicate very well. Hey, politics is an art, they don't know how to influence people or work to create a consensus.

MARCIE: OK, OK, then maybe they are not saying they will blow up Earth if we don't give them art that pleases them. They are really asking us to teach them about what art is.

JONATHAN: So being dull and unsophisticated, their clumsy attempt to convey the importance of their need was to equate it with the threat of planetary destruction. That's quite a dearth of tact, wow. Let's add creative thinking to the list.

MARCIE: So, instead of choosing just one thing that is the perfect example of art, we present them with an array of all the forms of art that make life so stimulating here on Earth!

SUZANNE: Exactly! So, let's gather up all those examples and get that list going.

SUZANNE reaches into her purse and pulls out a pen and a napkin, starts writing. JONATHAN facepalms.

JONATHAN: So we are just going to give them a napkin with a list of art forms on it?

SUZANNE: What? You have a better idea?

JONATHAN: (*Stunned disbelief, nearly apoplectic.*) Well... I think it odd to write the fate of the whole world on a napkin.

SUZANNE: You'll just have to take good care of it.

JONATHAN: Me?

MARCIE: (*Very quickly.*) I nominate Jonathan to present the list to the aliens, all in favor?

MARCIE and SUZANNE: Aye!

MARCIE: You win, Jonathan. Remember, if you get space sick on their ship, use your sleeve.

JONATHAN: What do you mean, 'on their ship'?

SUZANNE: Obviously, after you get them to understand what art is, they are going to need you to help them create it. We don't want them to go home and struggle with such a new concept, become frustrated and then return lasers blasting.

SUZANNE stuffs the napkin in JONATHAN's shirt pocket and MARCIE helps drag JONATHAN to his feet.

JONATHAN: What? Why me? (*They push him to the door.*)

MARCIE: Why? Because you'd be just what they need, an appraiser. When they paint their Mona Lisa you can tell them how well they've done. Just remember they have death rays.

SUZANNE: You probably should shave your head and wear a potato sack, you don't want to look stupid-ugly to them.

They exit and CURTAIN.

THE END