

THE CRITIC  
By  
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THE CRITIC

A One Man Show

THE CRITIC

*Comes on stage looking both  
pompous and hurried.*

There is an empty frame  
hanging on the wall.  
Beneath the frame is a  
card which would  
normally display the  
title of the work, the  
artist, and the year it  
was painted. This card  
says 'Empty'.

Good evening ladies and gentlemen...My name is Cecil B Cook. Art critic extraordinaire. Perhaps you have seen my column in our esteemed local paper. No? Well, that's hardly surprising. They always bury the thing in the classifieds...which is alright if you're looking for low income housing but for rarified air such as mine, I need my own entertainment page. I need to be syndicated. I could educate the world. To make ends meet, I also write about food. I get to go to restaurants and criticize their food and they let me in for free. Same thing with art. The more I slam the thing, the more free passes I get. If I trample on a Van Gogh, Gaugin offers to pay me to rip up his latest Masterpiece. Oh, I know what you're thinking. Silly bugger doesn't know they're dead. I know they're dead, alright. But they'll live longer than most of these-so-called modern artists. You wouldn't believe the...crap I have seen hanging up in restaurants. They should hang the chef. Food is something that fills you up...Art...doesn't. It is...what is the word? Ephemeral. It is a whisper in the wind. It leaves you hungry for more...I realize I am using a cooking analogy here, but I am a renaissance man and why make a mess of one thing when you can make a mess of two. I see that people have flown in from all across North America and beyond to hear me speak. Are you in for a treat. To hear me speak, I would do the same. Before I show the latest Hans Fober

*The Critic pronounces it  
Fobear*

piece, let us take a moment to wrestle with the aged and infirm question. What makes art...art? Any moron can take paint and brush and turn out...something. Is this chair art? Is a soufflé art? What makes art, art? I will tell you. If I say this chair is art, then it is art, same with the soufflé. If I say this Hans Fober piece is not art, then sadly for it, sadly for the painter, it is not. It becomes what? An empty frame. And why is that? Why do I get to make the decisions? Is it because I am more intelligent than you, that I have more taste, that I am uncommonly cultured? No. It is because I am an art critic and I dictate what passes for art in today's artless society. If you want to tell the world what is art, then get your own column. So again we come to the Fober. And as you can plainly see, Fober is a minimalist. A post modernist minimalist. An nihilistic postmodernist minimalist, in fact, according to an article I wrote last year, you may consider him, and please feel free to do so, a nihilistic revisionist post modernist minimalist. Look at those brush strokes, so light, the brush barely treads on the canvas, you almost do not see them, and the canvas; let me talk about the canvas, so light and airy a thing it is almost not there...Note the title...Empty. A fitting title for today's untitled masses. A fitting description of mankind's soul, sold to the devil. Listen. Listen. There, hear it, Shh...Nothingness is delivering its face to us, delivering its babies, Silently screaming babies. Behold the texture. So...what is the word I'm looking for. Man's inhumanity to man. This is so end of the world, so empty. Hear it in the word. Empty. Fober has done it again.

The Actor sighs and  
sinks physically in  
stature to that of an  
old woman. He looks at  
the audience and smiles

OLD WOMAN

Oooh. Henry; look at all the people. Hello...Oh, you're not a very chatty bunch. Is this where the painting is? See, it's advertised in the program. Hello, Is anybody alive out there? I feel like I'm talking to myself. Is this where the famous painting?...Oh, is this it? Look dear, there it is.

The Actor then hitches  
up his pants and holds

onto them as if afraid  
they might drop to the  
floor at any moment.

OLD MAN

What's his name?

The actor resumes the  
woman's stance, and so  
on throughout the  
interaction between the  
two characters.

OLD WOMAN

Who?

OLD MAN

This painter

*Punching the program*

Eh? What's his name?

OLD WOMAN

Fober.

*She pronounces it Fawber as  
does the Old Man*

OLD MAN

What?

OLD WOMAN

Hans Fober...What do you think?

OLD MAN

What?

OLD WOMAN

It's a Fober.

OLD MAN

Who?

OLD WOMAN  
Fober...

OLD MAN  
Why was there no discount?

OLD WOMAN  
What?

OLD MAN  
They should have a discount for seniors.

OLD WOMAN  
I would have liked a discount.

OLD MAN  
They should have a discount for seniors.

OLD WOMAN  
You said that.

OLD MAN  
What?

OLD WOMAN  
About the discount; You said that.

OLD MAN  
Said what?

OLD WOMAN  
Eh?

OLD MAN  
Said what?

Who said what?  
OLD WOMAN

You said what.  
OLD MAN

I said what?  
OLD WOMAN

Yes.  
OLD MAN

What did I say?  
OLD WOMAN

I don't remember. It's hot in here.  
OLD MAN

I got corns.  
OLD WOMAN

Huh?  
OLD MAN

Corns...I got them.  
OLD WOMAN

Are they fruits?  
OLD MAN

Who? The painters?  
OLD WOMAN

OLD MAN

No the corn...Are they fruits?

OLD WOMAN

I dunno but they hurt.

OLD MAN

Who do they hurt?

OLD WOMAN

Me. My toes.

OLD MAN

What's wrong with your toes?

OLD WOMAN

They hurt. And I don't like this heat. Some damn fool must have turned it up. Can't be good for the paintings. Aren't you hot?

OLD MAN

It's Global warming.

OLD WOMAN

Where'd you hear that?

OLD MAN

Global warming. It was in the paper.

OLD WOMAN

When?

OLD MAN

The Americans don't support it.

OLD WOMAN

Don't support global warming?

OLD MAN

They don't believe in it. They don't want it.

OLD WOMAN

Do you like the picture?

OLD MAN

Who did it?

OLD WOMAN

What?

OLD MAN

The painting...Who did it?

OLD WOMAN

Fober. I told you.

OLD MAN

Told me what?

OLD WOMAN

Fober. The painter. His name is Hans Fober...Says here he got a Canada Council grant.

OLD MAN

Oh Canada Council I see...hmmm. What's that?

OLD WOMAN

What?

OLD MAN

Canada Council. What's that?

OLD WOMAN

Can we go? My feet hurt.

The Old Woman gradually straightens and turns into the artist Hans Fober who quickly makes himself disheveled, and picks up a rolled up canvas that has been preset on stage.

HANS FOBER

*He pronounces it Foeber.*

Uh hello...My name is Hans Fober...I'm sorry I'm late. My car. Well actually I had to take the bus. I don't really have a car. My sister's, but that's another story, and she was in Toronto today. So, somebody sees me on the bus...A fan I think. Hey Fober, he says, you owe me twenty bucks. I got off at the next stop. Walked the rest of the way. I am very happy, excited to see you all. Its alright, I have taken my medication so no wild outbursts today...Artistic temperament. My wife; Lucille, you remember her. Hi Lucille. She left me because I didn't have a real job, well, I did have a real job. I worked for the government, in an office, well, not an office, a cubicle really, and I made 40,000 dollars a year, taxpayers money. That was my real job. Now I paint, and I make twelve thousand dollars a year, taxpayers money. One I guess is a real job because it is in an office in an office building. And I paid taxes. I paid taxes so other people could work in real jobs just like me. I...I really liked working in the cubicle. Course I had a break down. It was sort of embarrassing. In front of everyone. Painting was good therapy, allowed me to get in touch with myself. You know; Who am I? That sort of thing. What deep dark secrets lurk in my own personal abyss. Did you see me on Bravo? No, that's okay, nobody else did either. Myself and a bunch of other artists, we meet for the daily soup at St. Georges. Musicians, writers...Painters just like me. I go there for the glamour. Well, I guess I should talk about my painting, after all, you don't want to hear about me, my

personal...well, you know...I started painting this, a while ago, months I think, and I had this really friggin' annoying case of painter's block! Deep breath. Deep breath. Look at that. The medication is working. Nothing would come into my head. The canvas was empty. And I had this show...Weeks were turning into days. Life was speeding up, out of control. Now it would be a lie to say that I stood in front of my canvas all that time. Mainly what I did was watch tv. Shows, and do crossword puzzles and do everything but actually paint this stupid picture. So, I, uh...I did the painting this morning. There's nothing like a deadline to prompt one to work. Anyway, without further ado...Here it is...My picture...

*The Painting is awful*

I'll just stick it up over here...Like this...The art critic...Was he here? What did he talk about? Does anybody mind if I grabbed something to eat?

*fin*

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