



“A WORKINGMAN’S ART REVIEW”

Written by Gary Cifra in 1995

PAINTING TITLE: “LI’L LAMBY PIE AND THE PHILISTINE BROTHELMONGER”

COLLOQUIAL TITLE: “THE NON-COMMISSIONED CHICKEN HAWK AND HIS LOLLYTOT QUAIL”

MUSEUM CATALOG TITLE: “THE GRANDMASTER OF UNFORTUNATELY ANOTHER TRADE, PONTIFICATES HIS ART APPRECIATION KNOWLEDGE TO AN EAGER NOVICE WHOSE EXPERIENCE FACTOR IS ABOUT TO EXCEED EVEN THAT OF SOCRATES”

ARTIST: ROBERT WILLIAMS

While this powerful and dramatic piece includes images of bestiality, pedophilia, the Devil, and a bombed out city, it is not without its' subtleties.

Let's begin by mentally removing all the extraneous components: the Devil, the sheep, the soldier in the blue circle, and the black and white design in the lower left-hand corner. What remains is a desolate field drenched in moonlight. Apparently an extremely naïve young girl has decided that this balmy evening is a perfect time and place for rendering a vase of flowers in oil paints, in the nude.

The characterization of her naiveté is not limited to her ignorance of the objective dangers lurking in this war torn landscape. Notice that one of the flowers in the vase has wilted. "Oh my, this will never do!", she thinks. On the canvas, she has restored the rose to its' former horticultural dignity.

Into this oddly serene vignette has ventured a journeyman Zouave soldier. Zouaves, known for their viciousness, invented the practice of cutting off the ears of their vanquished foes as trophies.

One might think that an agent of this brutish vocation would immediately assault the nubile young miss. Not hardly! While he is a purveyor of violence by trade, he is not without an appreciation of its' more ethereal nuances. Yes, the brutal deflowering of this maiden is inevitable, but first he will bask in the sublime innocence of his intended victim. The lilting soprano of her prepubescent voice, the trusting eyes, even the brush of pigtailed across her delicate shoulders. Only with a full comprehension of the fragile sensibilities of her tender charms will he be able to fully savor the defiling that remains, exquisitely, just a heartbeat away.

If you find this meticulous examination of such a heinous act to be repulsive, try to remember that this kind of thing is certainly taking place this very moment somewhere in the world. Remember too, that your tax dollars will have financed some of it (i.e. the U.S. financing of the Taliban, Sadaam Hussein, Pinochet, Pol Pot, and many more brutal regimes). If you're horrified (and you should be!), turn your outrage into action. But please, take issue with your elected representatives, not with the intrepid eye of the artist.

Let's move on to the cartoon representation of this badly matched couple. In contrast to the Zouave, the philistine warrior in front of the blue circle is a lout. There will be no foreplay or nuance in this amorous tryst. There before him stands a perfectly eminent receptacle for the engine of his ardor. Not only is it moist and warm, but some inventive craftsman has fashioned a wooden cut-out of a "real" woman to flavor his fantasy.

For those viewers concerned about animal welfare, take note that the object of his affections seems, by her demure pose, a willing participant. And why not? Their goals and expectations of the "love act" are basically the same: the immediate gratification of a

physical urge. If you can look past the “species thing”, they actually make quite a nice couple!

Truly, this impending mayhem could only be fully appreciated by the supreme connoisseur himself: Satan. I don't believe that a human face could ever express such abject delight, and certainly not in the hands of a lesser artist.

On the technical side, this painting may seem cluttered, but in fact it is perfectly balanced and cohesive. The icy, jagged and forbidding tangle in the lower left-hand corner is a perfect contrast to Satan's terrible visage in the opposite corner. From the left, the sheep, and behind it the philistine, and lurking ominously behind that, the Devil, sends the viewer's eye diagonally retreating across the upper part of the canvas. Across the lower part of the canvas, the “corridor” extending from the two central figures beyond the bombed out city moves the eye backwards and to the left. The moon, of course, adds an even stronger diagonal line toward the two principal characters.

As usual, Williams has carefully researched the uniform of the Zouave soldier and it wouldn't surprise me if the sheep is recognizably from a breed indigenous to the home of the philistine warrior.

To sum up, this dynamic painting has movement, depth and great acting. The tranquility of the scene between the Zouave and the young art student is juxtaposed brilliantly to the impending spectacle of savagery that remains forever locked away (thank goodness!) in this canvas.