

The Style Invitational

THIS WEEK'S CONTEST

Week 713: Painings



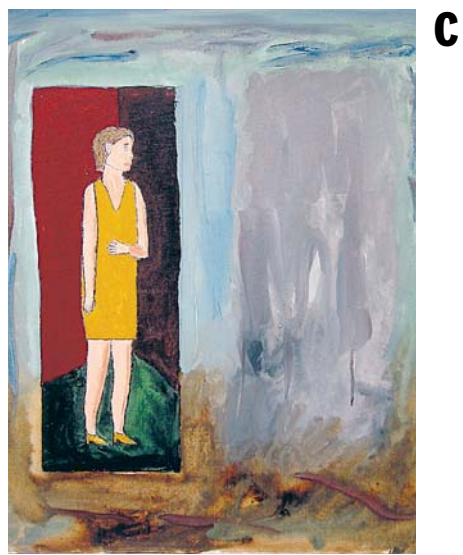
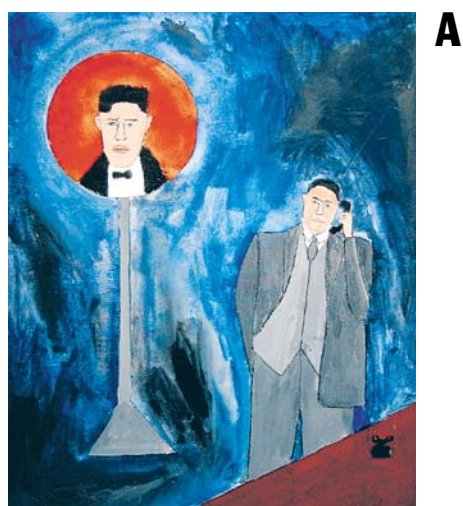
Portrait of the Artist: Here's Fred's self-portrait from Week 662, "Looking Down at My Feet," which won the Inker in last year's "Humiliate Yourself for Ink" contest. Fred is a generous-sized man.

If you Google "world's ugliest painting," with quotation marks, right at the top of the list will be the now-famous "Woman With White Face, Red Hair, Scary Mouth and Little Tiny Claw Hand," painted many years ago by Loser Fred Dawson of Beltsville, who donated it as an Invitational prize in 2005, whereupon the winner gave it back to us, setting off another contest.

All of this fame went to Fred's head, which prompted Fred to go to Fred's shed and dig out three more paintings he made in the early 1970s, which seems to be his surrealist period. At least we knew what the red-haired woman was supposed to be. **This week: Name and interpret any of these three paintings.** A 50-word description would be a long entry.

Winner gets the Inker, the official Style Invitational trophy. And the winner also gets a couple of what the first runner-up gets, because they're just amazingly cool: these genuine, usable 39-cent Style Invitational postage stamps featuring the World's Ugliest Painting (below), created by Loser Stephen Dudzik of Olney on the Zazzle.com Web site. Fred also gets some of these stamps, and so does the Empress, just because.

Other runners-up win a coveted Style Invitational Loser T-shirt, Honorable Mentions (or whatever they're called that week) get one of the lusted-after Style Invitational Magnets. One prize per entrant per week. Send your entries by e-mail to losers@washpost.com or by fax to 202-334-4312. Deadline is Monday, May 21. Put "Week 713" in the subject line of your e-mail, or it risks being ignored as spam. Include your name, postal address and phone number with your entry. Contests are judged on the basis of humor and originality. All entries become the property of The Washington Post. Entries may be edited for taste or content. Results will be published June 10. No purchase required for entry. Employees of The Washington Post, and their immediate relatives, are not eligible for prizes. Pseudonymous entries will be disqualified. The revised title for next week's contest was suggested by both Dave Prevar and Kevin Dopart. The Honorable Mentions name is by Mark Eckenwiler.



BY FRED DAWSON



The prize: The only stamp that looks better after canceling.

REPORT FROM WEEK 709

In which we sought some changes to the tax system, to tax forms, etc. A lot of entries focused on various pet peeves; they were summed up by this one from Jeff Brechlin of Eagan, Minn.: Take more money from people I don't like.

- 4** Require IRS auditors to use pre-warmed probes. (Mark Eckenwiler, Washington)
- 3** Oil companies should have to pay by the gas station system: with 1/10 of a dollar added to each tax dollar they pay. (Mel Loftus, Holmen, Wis.)
- 2** The winner of the vintage *Captain and Tennille* poster: The future dependent deferral option: You can designate a big portion of your taxes to be paid (with interest) by your grandchildren, or other people's grandchildren, after you are gone — thus making the government's favorite budgeting strategy available to anyone. (Russ Taylor, Vienna)

AND THE WINNER OF THE INKER

The Filing Status choices on the current 1040 are outdated and don't cover enough possibilities. Add some new options, like these that I found in the April 15 Style section: European-Born Divorced Professional White Male; Beautiful Sexy Sweet Single Asian Female; New from Iowa Single Hispanic Female; or Grand Old Tiger Divorced White Male. (Ernie Staples, Silver Spring)

INFERNAL RESIDUE

On the "Pay to the Order Of" line of your check, you will be permitted to write "Those Blood-sucking Bureaucrats." (Art Grinath, Takoma Park)

Special Prosecutor Fund: Check here if you want \$3 to go toward investigating the person elected with the \$3 you contributed when you checked that other box. (John Chamberlain, Silver Spring)

Any expenditure made while thinking good thoughts shall be considered a charitable donation. (Rick Haynes, Potomac)

The Game of E-Tax Chicken: The last 100 taxpayers to file before midnight on April 15 get double refunds. But of course, if the server backs up and the return doesn't get through till after 12, then you have to pay the big late fee. (Chuck Koebel, Houston)

Remove the tax-exempt status of all religious organizations, except those belonging to the one true religion. (Kevin Dopart, Washington)

Add a tax on bottled water to fund the cleanup of America's rivers and lakes so that they are good enough to drink and people won't have to spend money on imported bottled water because tap water will do just fine thank you. (Stephen Dudzik, Olney)

For the presidential checkoff, you are also required to indicate your candidate. Then, for the four years after the election, the entire federal surplus or debt is divided among those who backed the winner. Talk about accountability. (Larry Yungk, Arlington)

We should tax acts of terrorism against the United States. With all the death and destruction terrorists bring, it seems only fair to make them pay extra. (Russell Beland, Springfield)

Don't change a thing. The current system is perfect. — L. von Sacher-Masoch, Lemberg, Austria (Mark Eckenwiler)

The 1040 instructions say, "We welcome comments on forms." Those IRS people shouldn't say that if they don't mean it — at least they didn't much like the comments I wrote all over MY forms. (Peter Metrinko, Chantilly)

Make tax returns due April 1. (Barry Koch, Catlett, Va.)

Taxpayers who cannot see the obvious truth that their boyfriend is completely wrong for them and that I'm the one who really cares about them may claim the Blind exemption. (Jon Milstein, Falls Church)

There's actually a Schedule SE that has to be filed for church employees who made \$108.28 or more. Is that ridiculous or what! Obviously, the figure should be \$108.74. (Peter Metrinko)

If the basis of a member of a consolidated group in a share of stock of a subsidiary exceeds its value immediately before a deconsolidation of the share, the basis of the share is not reduced to an amount equal to its value. Hee, hee! I crack myself up sometimes. — M. Dukakis, Boston (Jay Shuck, Minneapolis)

To simplify calculations, allow taxpayers to round all figures to the nearest \$1 million. (Mark Eckenwiler)

Next Week: Aw, Shoot! or Pot Shots

ASK AMY

Dear Amy:

A young person who described himself as an "agnostic" wrote to you with the problem of sharing in the religious practices of his family (such as saying grace and going to church). He may have an easier solution than the non-directional grace that you suggested (although that is not a bad suggestion).

You are correct in your assessment that this is an important part of his spiritual journey and intellectual development.

One of the major problems in societies everywhere is the tyranny associated with the image of "God" held by adherents. While organized religions create concrete answers to the question "Who and what is God?," in truth we really don't know.

William James would argue that the religious reformers were constantly reformulating their image of God.

My suggestion to the young man is for him to expand his notion of God well beyond that of his family members and seek a glimpse of the transcendent that we all sense is there. He can do this comfortably by recognizing that his speculations are as valid as those holding impressive religious credentials — mainly because they are a part of his vision of the universe.

John

Thank you for bringing William James into the conversation. I'm embarrassed that I have quoted Celine Dion in this space but have so far neglected this important 19th-century American philosopher, whose writings on religious inquiry are still fresh.

Adolescence is a time of exploration and inquiry. Questioning the idea that God exists is, yes, developmentally, intellectually and spiritually important. Families should engage in this sort of conversation rather than deny it.

Dear Amy:

I read the letter from the 15-year-old agnostic who was having problems with family mealtime graces, and I had to let you know about a great book. It's called "A Grateful Heart: Daily Blessings for the Evening Meal From Buddha to the Beatles," by M.J. Ryan (2002, Conari Press).

The graces are about being thankful, without necessarily directing that thanks to any one entity. My son and I are Unitarian Universalists and I've found it to be a wonderful tool at mealtimes.

Dawn

I've heard from a number of Unitarian Universalists who echo your support of non-religious graces.

Dear Amy:

You have printed a number of letters addressing the issue of appropriate ways to thank caregivers in rehab and nursing facilities. I think my 95-year-old mother came up with a good solution. After several weeks of rehab care, she wanted to express her gratitude to certain staff members. She decided that she would donate a book in their honor to the rehab center library. She wrote a nice note inside the cover and put the book on their shelf for others to enjoy. (The book was the recent biography of Roberto Clemente; she had discussed baseball with her occupational therapist and others during her stay.)

Daughter of a Thoughtful Mom

I absolutely love this. I especially like the fact that your mother contributed a book that she was certain the staff would enjoy.

Happy Mother's Day to your mother and to all mothers. May your day be full of baseball, bonbons, babies or whatever you most enjoy.

Write to Amy Dickinson at askamy@tribune.com or Ask Amy, Chicago Tribune, TT500, 435 N. Michigan Ave., Chicago, Ill. 60611.

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Marcelo Brito, right, getting a leg up on Omar de la Cruz during last night's Mixed Martial Arts Championship at the D.C. Armory.

We're Going Where for Mother's Day?

MMA, From D1

Championship.

"This is her Mother's Day present," said Patrick Stoner, nodding to his wife, Mary, as their 7-year-old son, Christopher, caught a nap between them before the festivities began. The couple, who are in the Army, drove in from Fort Belvoir to support a buddy in the military police who was competing.

"We watch the fights on Friday on Spike TV so we knew what to expect," Patrick said.

Then there was the D'Angelo family — mom, dad, two boys — who turned it into a group outing. And the two buddies from Rockville who were trying to scalp tickets to the Nationals game down the street, saw the crowd headed into the Armory and just decided what the heck. And the martial arts junkie who is trying to get his girlfriend to like the sport, so he dragged her along for the second time. ("Some people come for the blood," confided the woman, Tanya Marsh.)

Then there was the guy who



Jessi Coll, Tony Nobelo and David Smith taking in the action at the D.C. Armory. "Some people come for the blood," one fan said.

brought his three kids — and some of their friends — because even though he dislikes violence, he figured it would provide a good life lesson.

"The more you expose them to things like this, the better off they are in making decisions," explained

Roberto Pacano, whose family lives in Olney.

Those looking for a circus atmosphere didn't really get one — it didn't help that event officials couldn't get a license to use the "cage" that bouts are usually fought in, so there was only a ring — but

there was a bit of a crazy, boxing-ring atmosphere, though much more tame.

"In Vegas, it's way crazier, but this is good for the first time" in the District, said Johnny D'Angelo, a security guard from Fort Washington. "It's better than a regular boxing crowd. It just seems like a nicer crowd."

Nice, perhaps, but not entirely normal. "I came for the whole venue," said Hank Greene, a software developer from Annapolis. "I came to see the cast of characters, and there have been quite some characters floating around."

Mostly, though, that was all about cleavage and stilettos, dark glasses indoors, lots of diamond this and gold that. Dresses that looked like they belonged in Vegas. But then again, look one row over and there was daddy and his little boy, or a suburban mom snuggling up to her husband. The only category that seemed to be totally absent: little girls. Apparently, mixed martial arts isn't that big with the "Hannah Montana" set.

PHOTOS BY ANDREA BRUCE — THE WASHINGTON POST