

The Style Invitational

THIS WEEK'S CONTEST

Week 733: Just Drop It, Okay?



BY BOB STAAKE FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

I-am-I Beach: The last resort spot for egotists.

BS-ervation: A stupid platitude, like "It's not whether you win or lose, but how you play the game."

After reading humorist Gene Weingarten's online chat on washingtonpost.com, in which the Empress wrote in about "jokes, humorous bservations, etc.," Indefatigable Loser Peter Metrinko was inspired to come up with this week's neologism contest.

This week: Drop the first letter from an actual word or term to make a new word or term, and define it. Its use in a hilarious sentence is also welcome. The new word may not be a well-known existing word. This contest has enormous scope; it'll be very easy to come up with something or other. So edit yourself: **Send no more than 25 entries.**

Winner gets the Inker, the official Style Invitational trophy. Second place receives the "No Plot? No Problem! Novel Writing Kit," a book-shaped box containing such keys to literary eminence as "Daily Novelizing Briefs" as well as "motivational materials, pop-talking letters and commitment coupons."

Other runners-up win their choice of a coveted Style Invitational Loser T-shirt or yearned-for Loser Mug. 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, Oct. 8. Put "Week 733" 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 Oct. 27. 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 is by Tom Witte of Montgomery Village. This week's Honorable Mentions name is by Dave Prevar of Annapolis.

REPORT FROM WEEK 729

In which we asked you to take a sentence from *The Post* and "translate" it into "plain English": A bunch of entries cited one or another verbose BS-ervation (see *This Week's Contest*) meant to assure the populace about progress in Iraq, security measures, etc., and translated it as "We're doomed."

4 (Job posting) The mission of the Office of the Chief Financial Officer (OCFO) is to enhance the financial stability, accountability and integrity of the Government of the District of Columbia. **Plain English Version:** Good morning, Mr. Phelps . . . (Brendan Beary, Great Mills)

3 "It was the one of the most different halves of football I've ever been around." **PE:** "It's too soon after the game for me to talk good again yet." (Russell Beland, Springfield)

2 The winner of the stationery made of Panda Poo paper: "Our overall evaluation is that real progress has been achieved," Jones told the senators, and then he qualified that judgment with words such as "uneven," "unsatisfactory," "overly sectarian" and "failed." **PE:** "After uneven, unsatisfactory and overly sectarian progress, our overall evaluation is that failure has been achieved." (Kevin Dopart, Washington)

AND THE WINNER OF THE INKER

"If the kind of success we are now seeing continues, it will be possible to maintain the same level of security with fewer American forces," Bush said. **PE:** "Sure, maintaining the level of 'insanely dangerous' takes almost no troops at all." (Russ Taylor, Vienna)

MORE TO-THE-POINT CONVERSIONS

Iraq Study Group report: "Good policy is difficult to make when information is systematically collected in a way that minimizes its discrepancy with policy goals." **PE:** "Bush cooks the books." (Kevin Dopart; Ned Stone, Atlanta)

FREE RAZR PHONES! PE: EXPENSIVE SERVICE AGREEMENTS! (Ira Allen, Bethesda)

"The economy was in strong condition going into the recent period of volatility, and while certain sectors like housing are undergoing a transition, overall economic fundamentals remain solid."

PE: "The poo hasn't hit the fan — yet." (Susan Shapiro, Annapolis)

"And — let's be honest here —"

PE: "And — let me sugarcoat this a little less than usual —" (Russell Beland)

Larry has been seeing "Carrie" for five years, and I don't want to hurt Larry or our friendship. **PE:** You got any tips on how to McQuickie my friend's squeeze without getting caught? (Lawrence McGuire, Waldorf)

British regulators said yesterday that they are prepared to allow the creation of embryos that are part human and part animal for use in medical experiments.

PE: Evolution has come to a spork in the road. (Phil Frankenfeld, Washington)

"I certainly want to win the gold, and in Beijing also." — Chinese gymnastics coach Lu Shanzhen

PE: "I certainly want to win the gold, and not die." (Chris Doyle, Ponder, Tex.)

"To the extent that we can move quickly to

denuclearization, we can move quickly to normalization."

PE: "This damn well better work." (Mae Scanlan, Washington)

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PE: We can Photoshop you right out of your skivvies. (Brendan Beary)

Fred Thompson: "I know that reform is possible in Washington because I have seen it done."

PE: "I've never actually managed to reform anything myself." (Russell Beland)

"Seeks intelligent, civilized man, 60+ for lasting friendship."

PE: "Is hopelessly delusional." (Kevin Dopart)

SO NP LRA
3 94 4.75
0 14 6.75
SO NP ERA
3 92 3.56
0 18 3.86
ta 2.



Detroit's Timo Perez, left, and Curtis Granderson celebrate their 6-1 win over the Seattle Mariners. Granderson had a historic night with his 20th ho

PE: Granderson had a historic night with his 20th "date." (Kevin Dopart; Clifford Fishman, Rockville)

Story about a toy recall: The items are small and "don't pose a lead poisoning risk in themselves."

PE: They only pose a lead poisoning risk when in a child. (Jay Shuck, Minneapolis)

Sen. Mitch McConnell: "It is my hope [Larry Craig] will be remembered not for this but for his three decades of dedicated public service."

PE: He will be remembered for three decades of public services. (Howard Walderman, Columbia)

Fill in the blank spaces in the grid so that every vertical column, every horizontal row and every 3x3 box contains the numbers 1 through 9, without repeating any.

PE: Fill in the blank spaces until you realized you went wrong a long time ago, then swear and throw the damn thing away. (Brendan Beary)

Entries may be edited for taste or content.

PE: We are funnier and more sophisticated than you are. (Beverley Sharp, Washington)

Complete auto care starts with our \$17.99 oil change.

PE: For only \$17.99, we'll tell you that you need new shocks, struts, brakes, exhaust system, valve cover gaskets, water pump, CV joints, wiper blades and, of course, tires. (Russ Taylor)

Anti-Invitations — sugarcoated interpretations of actual plain speaking: FEMA stopped testing occupied trailers after March 2006, when it initially discovered formaldehyde levels that were 75 times the U.S.-recommended safety threshold for workplaces.

PE: "We've found no additional evidence of elevated formaldehyde in the last 18 months," FEMA officials said. (Russ Taylor)

The New York Times and other newspapers vied with trash-TV talk shows hosted by the likes of CNN's Nancy Grace, a biased wacko-feminist, and MSNBC's Joe Scarborough, a right-wing blowhard, in a race to the journalistic bottom.

PE: A robust exchange of ideas emerged from a diverse mix of media sources. (Russell Beland)

Next Week: Time-Wastes for Everyman, or Even Trivialer Pursuits

Milan's Best Were Very Good, Indeed

FASHION, From C1

form flowers on yards of silk and organza. There were close-ups of brush strokes rapidly transforming the back of a shoe's heel into a tiny still life.

As the videos continued to show the artists at work, the first models walked out in the results of their labor. They wore flared trousers and sheath dresses that looked as though they'd been constructed from the frayed canvas of an abstract expressionist painter. These first pieces were covered in subtle brush strokes of ivory and ecru, using color to create texture and depth.

There is always a rhythm to a Dolce & Gabbana show, a building of excitement through color, ornamentation and silhouette. As the show progressed, the clothes became more boldly painted, more lively and more daring. There was a red-and-gold-brocade cocoon coat with a sheer overlay of black tulle. Short skirts with the sharp knife pleats of a lampshade were dappled with paint. Sophisticated sheaths with elegant seams looked like watercolor paintings. High-heeled oxfords were constructed of brocade or painted in riotous colors. Patchwork patent-leather frame handbags clashed pleasantly with the bold strokes of color in the dresses.

And then, just when one thought the collection was about recklessness and creative volatility, out would come some subtle little dress with barely a whisper of color, or a perfect white T-shirt in the most delicate layers of white tulle. And one couldn't help but think, yes, I'd pay a king's ransom for that because it is exquisite, because it is surprising and because it really does take one's breath away.

When Dolce and Gabbana combine their passion with just the right amount of control, when they combine sex appeal with romance, the result is magnificent.

This wasn't a collection aimed at pushing a dialogue about aesthetics farther along. This was sheer beauty of a sort that when one looked at a model walk out in a voluminous gown with mounds of trailing black tulle under yards of gloriously hand-painted, claret-colored silk, one was not tempted to sniff, "Who would wear that?" It doesn't matter. It doesn't matter in the least. Just looking at a dress like that is pleasure enough.

Jil Sander

Fashion can be like that sometimes. It can make a person want to simply stand back in admiration, happy to know that somewhere out there someone is making such beautiful things. Fashion can also make a person dream about transforming her life into one that can accommodate hand-painted tulle or, in the case of the work that Raf Simons presented at Jil Sander, a life that requires audaciously cropped jackets in safety orange, skinny pants in fuchsia and long stretch tops in the color of Welch's grape juice.

Simons's show, on Tuesday morning was dynamic and stunning. He attacked staid assumptions about proportions, and he transformed color into pure roiling, throbbing energy.

He experimented with color's intensity by using both opaque and translucent fabrics, sometimes draping models in long, sheer tunics in shades of tangerine and cantaloupe. Underneath, they wore strapless tops that mimicked blazers with their sleeves chopped away.

The Jil Sander brand has always been embraced by a woman who wanted to convey power and control in her clothing but who also saw herself as a kind of iconoclast. There had to be a certain artfulness in her clothes, a sense that she possessed a special insider knowledge about style and that she was an intellectual, rather than that dreadful character known as a "fashionista." Simons preserves that aura, but he doesn't allow the clothes to get bogged down under the weight of heavy, dour thoughts about how clothes should function and what they should convey. There is a welcome playful joy in these clothes that doesn't compromise dignity. Because of him, a woman in orange and hot pink can move just as agilely and authoritatively through the world as one outfitted in all black.

Prada

As designer Miuccia Prada prepared to present her spring collection Tuesday evening, guests stood in a disorganized mob behind metal barricades. One by one they shimmied through the crowd to face the security guard who scanned their invitations, which were embedded with a bar code. Stop the gate crashers. Stop the fur protesters. And lend the whole experience an air of secrecy



PHOTOS BY MARIA VALENTINO FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

No shock, no thunder: From left, a Burberry dress, a sack frock by Marni, and Gucci's bubble-gum car coat — which played with 1950s good girl/bad girl stereotypes — all left little to surprise runway watchers this week.

and importance. A fashion revolution just might be happening inside.

The audience sat on blocks of plastic foam painted grass green. The walls were painted with illustrations that looked as though they'd been taken from a botany textbook — with a few especially indiscreet nymphs thrown in for amusement.

The models walked the labyrinth of a runway wearing elaborate patchwork shoes with sculpted heels. They wore trousers as light as pajamas with legs that flared from the knee-like bells. Curving jacket collars were outlined with ribbon. And the fabrics were covered in evocative prints of flowers that were more likely to have come from the "Little Shop of Horrors" than FTD.

Skirts with soft pleats stood away from the body as if they had been inflated by a soft gust of wind. Knits incorporated the odd — even ugly — shades of orange, brown and green that Prada has favored over the years.

Some of these clothes are beautiful. Many of them are eccentric. Some of them are provocative. But every last garment on the Prada runway was intriguing.

Marni, Alberta Ferretti et al.

Other designers who presented their collections this week offered moments of great beauty, flashes of



Sculpted heels stepped intriguingly into view at the Prada show.

inspiration and teasing hints of intrigue. And occasionally, I could only wonder if designers were tired, distracted or simply off their rockers.

At both Marni and Alberta Ferretti, the designers did what they do best, with few surprises. Marni designer Consuelo Castiglioni offered a collection of sack dresses and full skirts, with the addition of a bit of Day-Glo geranium pink instead of relying solely on her usually subdued palette. Ferretti's dresses were soft

and easy with embellishments and prints that referenced antiquity. At Fendi, Karl Lagerfeld's best work was represented by his long white dresses — while everyone else had been obsessed with short hemlines — with painterly bull's-eyes, circles and rings.

Roberto Cavalli, who has rarely seen an inch of gold trim he couldn't use, presented a restrained collection of prairie dresses and long, white day dresses with delicate tucks across the bodice. While the references on the runway were to the West, his setting — in the form of a giant mural encompassing three sides of a rectangular tent — appeared to be Versailles. Somehow this all made sense to Cavalli, who had no problem with a model in a suede bathrobe coat emerging from a backdrop painted to look like the hall of mirrors. Folks, feel free to puzzle that out over cocktails.

At Gucci, Creative Director Frida Giannini was inspired, as usual, by rock-and-roll, as well as the portraits by Francesco Scavullo from 1948-1984. (Homework before shopping: See Scavullo's photographs of Janis Joplin and Barbra Streisand.) Giannini introduced what she called the "Frida" pant." Her show notes described the pants as "relaxed on top, narrow and tight on the bottom," which sounded horrifying. But the

pants are not as loose on top as one might imagine and not as calf-hugging as one might fear.

Her hemlines are short, and the floral patterns on dresses and tops are actually patchwork rather than prints, which gives them more depth and makes them look more luxurious. A bubble-gum-pink car coat and biker jackets play with the '50s stereotypes of good girls and bad girls. And the gold patent-leather stilettos with ankle cuffs are sure to make a woman feel sexy and fabulous, even as she's tumbling off a curb in them.

The evening wear was less enticing, as the gowns always seemed to have one detail too many. There were distractions of a more disconcerting sort at Dsquared, where the designers Dan and Dean Caten — known for their denim and outerwear — set out to highlight their dressmaking skills. The brothers sent out mod day dresses, cocktail dresses embellished with crystals and evening gowns cut like caftans. The short dresses just barely covered the models' derrieres, but the models have very nice legs and don't have to bend over on the runway. In the bodice, however, the designers seemed not to have understood that women — even models — like to have their nipples covered when they're out in public.

Christopher Bailey showed an overwrought collection for Burberry in which every dress and military coat appeared to be ruched, gathered, embroidered, fringed or otherwise assaulted. Bailey even stuck a studded belt around these frocks, making the models look like they were the result of some aesthetic copulation between Miss Kitty and Sgt. Pepper.

The Versace collection that was on the runway Thursday night combined the slippery sexiness that defined the label under the direction of the late Gianni Versace with the more streamlined super-woman femininity that Donatella Versace has brought to it. But it didn't seem to have enough of either sensibility to give it a spark. The dresses, with their open backs and high hemlines, did not exude wealth and sexual power but rather hinted at sleaziness and vapidty.

That perception was exacerbated by the models. Most of them, in an effort to walk with authority, either stalked like zombies or sashayed with such awkward vigor their heads bounced like dashboard bobbleheads.

The models failed the clothes. And the clothes were not strong enough to stand on their own.

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