

Art Matters

Valentines and the fates of flirts



By Janet Sellers

Valentine’s Day is just around the corner on Feb. 14. It’s a day to exchange gifts, particularly for giving a thoughtful gift to one’s sweetheart. In our culture, point-blank asking what the giftee wants has been taboo for some time. Somehow, asking what a person wants makes the giver look less thoughtful. But this shouldn’t be so!

When artwork is a gift, it can be a heartfelt, authentic gesture. Since taste and personality enter into the equation, the joy is optimized with a preplanned surprise. Maybe that is why many valentines were secretly delivered.

How to buy art for a gift

February is a great month to buy art as a gift. The key is to know the giftee’s desired artist or artworks. We have several art venues in town and local artworks online, too, so that could have art inspirations worth pursuing. The secret to success is to go together with the giftee and visit the art in person. Or together check out the online offerings, which most artists have today. Ask in-

sightful questions such as, “Do you know of an artist or artwork that would be nice to have?” Or “I’m thinking of getting a painting or a sculpture, what do you think is a good idea?” Or “Let’s go art shopping, I need your input.” That would optimize success to please the intended.

Artful Valentine cards

Valentines aren’t just for sweethearts. They are thoughtful, warmhearted reminders of affection and caring, especially in the cold of February. Artist-made valentine cards are always unique and will likely become a keepsake memory for a long time. The earliest surviving card was written in prison, from Frenchman Charles the Duke of Orleans. Imprisoned in the Tower of London in 1415. He wrote the following to his wife: “Je suis desja d’amour tanné Ma tres doulce Valentinée.” Which translates to: “I am already scorched (literally “tanned”) of love, my very gentle Valentine.”

In the 1600s, Shakespeare wrote, “To-morrow is Saint Valentine’s day, all in the morning

betime, and I a maid at your window, to be your Valentine.” York Castle Museum has a valentine exhibit called “The fate of flirts” spanning 200 years, and a pre-printed one from 1797 decorated with Cupid and flowers and the verse around the borders read: "Since on this ever Happy day, All Nature’s full of Love and Play, yet harmless still if my design, ’Tis but to be your Valentine."

In Georgian times, exchanging Valentine cards had become quite normal, and the practice really took off in Victorian times in England, as the penny post launched in 1840. Even then, not every Valentine card held sugary words, and to this day, kids of all ages send greetings of jest, fun, and frivolity amid the romantic efforts of some.

Janet Sellers is an artist, writer, teacher, and public speaker who enjoys realizing her imagination into making artful things. Happy to share her art and artful ideas, she can be reached at JanetSellers@ocn.me.

Snapshots of Our Community

Palmer Lake Outdoor Classic, Jan. 6



Above: The Annual Palmer Lake Outdoor Classic took place on Jan. 6 on a frozen Palmer Lake. Lewis-Palmer, Pine Creek, Cheyenne Mountain, and Chaparral high schools competed in the event. Chaparral’s Wolverines defeated Cheyenne Mountain 4-3 and then beat the Lewis-Palmer Rangers (pictured at left) 5-4 to win the Classic. *Photos by Creighton Smith.*