Going Bananas

by

*Eyes Right*

**Springfield, VA –** I have long held the theory that everyone is crazy. Obviously, there are degrees of this condition, but I am yet to meet someone who does not, at least occasionally, make some very strange decisions. My most recent EXHIBIT A comes from the Sotheby’s auction house in New York City where a Chinese art collector, Justin Sun, purchased an art work for $6.2 million. Of course, obscenely large sums of money spent on art is not new, and is often not crazy, but….the “art” in this case consisted of a banana (a real one) affixed to a white wall with a piece of silver duct tape in a diagonal direction upward from left to right. For those of you navigationally inclined, it goes from 240 to 060. I rest my case on my “crazy” assertion.

The artist is an Italian named Maurizio Cattelan. He first showed this work five years ago at a showing in Miami Beach where it has continued to attract crowds. It was originally sold in a group of five such bananas for about $750,000. Even seasoned art auctioneers at Sotheby’s were surprised (pleasantly, I assume) when the bidding soared past a million before the lucky Mr. Sun won at $6.2 million to buy one of the “pieces.” Ironically, the title of this art work is “Comedian.”

For that 6.2 large, Mr. Sun received a certificate of authentication and a 14-page sheet of instructions outlining how to replace the banana, how to ensure that it is curved in the correct orientation, and how to properly affix the duct tape (which must be silver). Apparently during one earlier showing, someone grabbed the banana and ate it. Mr. Sun paid in crypto currency (he founded one of the crypto platforms) which Sotheby’s gladly accepted on behalf of the previous owner who was unnamed (but probably was the guy seen laughing on the way to the bank).

There is even now a digital token called $BAN and, I am not making this up, over 23,000 digital wallets now own this token. Again, I rest my case.

Of course, the initial reaction of most who hear this ridiculous banana story/scam is disbelief, followed, I am sure, by “Why didn’t I think of that?” But as the unseemly amount of money involved began to sink in, I found myself thinking of alternative uses of that $6.2 million. How many meals could be provided for homeless shelters? How much good could easily flow if the money (obviously discretionary funds) had been directed to any number of charities which do actual good works?

Obviously, these same questions could be asked of many expenditures, including some of mine (buying a 30 ft yacht back in 1967 just before I deployed overseas on a submarine comes immediately to mind). Others, with considerably greater wealth, buy their own yachts, sometimes larger than many Navy ships. The point is that there are many people throughout the world who make outlandish purchases, *often strictly* *because they can*. In this light, the banana gambit is still crazy, but falls on a spectrum of rich dude actions mindboggling and almost immoral to many of us.

Another aspect of “banana-gate” is the dollar value of art and who determines it. My experience has been that the worth of any artistic work is mostly subjective. Recently, while working on a children’s book with an abstract artist, I learned that there are some who will gladly pay $6000 for one piece of her work – and she is not (yet) famed within her discipline. The auctions at Sotheby’s routinely produce sales several orders of magnitude beyond such pocket change for those in attendance.

My advice is to hop in your car, swing by the supermarket and Home Depot to pick up bananas and duct tape to create your own Comedian look-alike. For five bucks, that empty space on your living room wall can be transformed into a valuable work of art. And donate a few additional dollars to your local shelter – you can have the best of both worlds. Happy Thanksgiving!

I thought you might like to know.

E-R