



Wednesday, September 30, 2009

Art That Fits on the Head of a Pin



LAS VEGAS -- Willard Wigan peered at one of his sculptures, a brightly painted tableau showing Alice in Wonderland at a tea party with the March Hare and the Mad Hatter. "There was a tragedy when I first tried making this piece," he said. "I inhaled Alice." That's plausible, since the figure of Alice is just one-third the size of the period at the end of this sentence. This is art that can only be seen through a microscope, yet it is faithfully and intricately rendered. The March Hare is holding a tiny gold teacup. There are crinkles in the tablecloth. Mr. Wigan, a 52-year-old Briton, is dyslexic and did poorly in school. Even today, he can barely read or write. Yet, he creates some of the smallest sculptures in the world, relying on nothing more than a scalpel and a microscope to see what he's carving. His entire piece of Apollo 11 astronaut Buzz Aldrin standing on the moon fits on the head of a pin. His Statue of Liberty is made from a speck of gold. A recent carving of the Obama

family is mounted inside the eye of a needle. Mr. Wigan says he used an eyelash to insert the president into the right slot. Mr. Wigan has made about 160 of these sculptures. Small is big, and not just for Mr. Wigan. Craftsmen in India, China and elsewhere have been carving or writing on grains of rice and sand for years. But now a handful of artists are going smaller still, often applying the tools of nanotechnology to control matter at a molecular level. Artist and scientist Cris Orfescu manipulates chemicals and creates nano-sculptures, which he then blows up into large artworks with an electron scanning microscope. The Web-based Nanotechnology Art Gallery showcases the tiny work of two dozen scientists-turned-artists. A U.S.-based computer scientist has made a map of the Americas by folding bits of DNA. Mr. Wigan eschews machines and relies on pure dexterity. As a 5-year-old in Birmingham, England, he built tiny wooden apartments for ants because he wanted to give them a nice place to live. He then made them hats and shoes. His mother challenged him, he says. "Go smaller," she told him. So Mr. Wigan did. He has become a millionaire in the process. Prince Charles, Mike Tyson and the Marquis of Bath own microscopic sculptures made by Mr. Wigan, which can cost more than \$40,000 apiece. A set of 72 such works was acquired by former British tennis player David Lloyd and was insured for £11 million, or about \$17 million, in 2007. Mr. Wigan's sculptures usually sit on the head of a pin or inside the eye of a needle, which is then placed inside a transparent dome and illuminated with powerful lights. Batteries -- and a built-in microscope -- are included. [\(Read Full Story\)](#) Slide show of his works [here](#).

Elephants Find Recession Work Washing Cars



WINSTON, Ore. -- People from all around Oregon and even overseas are flocking to a car wash in Winston, Ore., one that promises not to clean cars. The draw of the car wash isn't how clean the car is though, it's who - or what -- is doing the cleaning: elephants. Wildlife Safari was looking to make some more money in the down economy, so trainers there decided to teach a new skill to their three African elephants: Tiki, Alice and George. They taught the elephants, who could already paint, to wash cars. They took to it immediately. "What's really cool with our elephants is what started this whole thing, and that's that they love to play in water. They just love to have fun themselves," said Dan Van Slyke, executive director at the park. Trainers said the elephants basically treat the car

wash as a long game. If they do get bored, the trainers call in another elephant to take over. Van Slyke said he attributes a big spike in summer traffic to the elephant car wash and people looking to stay local, but still have fun. "The reason that there's been such a spike this summer during this bad economic time, is people still want to recreate. Still kind of want to get away from problems. But they want it affordable and they want to feel that they're actually investing in something that has a value," said Van Slyke. Carol Matthews, the elephants' on-the-job supervisor, said she's seen many people come back for another wash despite the fact they guarantee cars won't get clean. "They've definitely drawn a lot of people into park. In fact that we've had lots of people come back and do it again and again cause they had to bring their friends and families," said Matthews. Video link [here](#).

Fire Call Hits Close to Home for 911 Dispatcher



QUINCY, Mass -- From baby deliveries to unexpected deaths, Mike Bowes, a 911 dispatcher from Quincy, Massachusetts, has handled a wide range of emergency calls. But Monday night, the 44-year-old received an unexpected call from his neighbor: His own house was on fire. The 911 call came in about 10:45 p.m. Monday, a little more than an hour before Mike Bowes' shift ended. My neighbor's house just blew up, the caller said. "What's the address?" Mike Bowes asked patiently, just as he did with every emergency call for the past 11 years with the Quincy Police Department. The caller frantically relayed the address, Bowes' home address for 20 years. "It was shocking," Mike Bowes said. "I thought she was kidding. It's a long shot. I mean, what's the chances it will be your house?" Out of 90,000 people who

reside in Quincy, Massachusetts, a suburb of Boston, Mike Bowes' was the home in flames, and he had answered the emergency call. Thoughts raced through his mind: Are my parents OK? Are the neighbors safe? What about my stuff? Following procedure, Mike Bowes transferred the call to the fire department. Soon, dozens of calls about the fire from other neighbors began to pour into the control room. One of the callers was his mother, Elizabeth Bowes, 68. She and her husband, Donald Bowes, 72, had escaped unharmed. About 10:45 p.m., Elizabeth Bowes was reading a novel in the kitchen when she heard the explosion and saw flames shoot through the kitchen window. She ran to wake her husband in a first-floor bedroom. There was also a landlord living in upstairs. Firefighters arrived within minutes and helped her to safety. Within five minutes of receiving the call, police escorted Mike Bowes to his home. He could see the fire light up the dark sky from afar. Anxious neighbors gathered in the park nearby. He was relieved to find his parents together on the sidewalk. "My parents are alive; my neighbors are alive," he said. "It's an inconvenience, but we'll get through it." In another coincidence, one of the first firefighters to arrive on scene was Mike Bowes' cousin, Tom Bowes. Tom Bowes, a firefighter for the past eight years, scrambled into the house to salvage old albums with wedding and baby photos amid the flames. But everything else -- the clothes, electronics and furniture -- were destroyed. No one was injured in the fire, and

firefighters have yet to determine what caused the blaze. They say it started in the garage, about 15 feet from the home. Mike Bowes says his job prepared him to deal with the challenging circumstances. Bowes and his family are living in a hotel, and local police officers and firefighters have donated clothes and money. "A lot of people think dispatchers are strange because I've been joking about what happened," he said. "I say, 'If I'm not laughing, I'll start crying.' This is what I have to do."

Man Recovering After Septic Tank Rescue



Ohio -- An 80-year-old Delhi Township man says "thanks" to his neighbors and their dog for saving his life. The top of Paul Paff's septic tank collapsed Tuesday afternoon and dropped him about ten feet into a pool of stinky muck. Today, he's all cleaned up and took a few minutes to talk to Local 12's Joe Webb. Paff is still in University Hospital but he's in great spirits and is likely to go home this afternoon. Aside from a bruise under his left eye, Paff looked pretty much unscathed this morning. He says he toughed it out because he's "one tough old German." Paff says he went out to look at his septic tank at his home on Pontius Road because it looked like the top of it was caving in. When he did, it collapsed and dropped him inside, about ten feet below the surface. That was about two o'clock in the afternoon. Paff says he was in about three feet of muck and starting to get very cold. He cried for help but that didn't work. Three hours later he heard something outside the hole. It was his neighbor's dog. Murphy, a nine year old mixed breed, began barking furiously at the hole... making enough noise to convince his owner, Stacey Walsh, to go outside and check. That's when she found Paff in the hole. Walsh called 9-1-1. The neighbors were told to put blankets in their clothes dryer to warm them up. Those were passed down to him to keep him warm. After about 5 hours in the muck, Paff was flown to University Hospital. The hospital says he was cold but not hypothermic. The bottom line is he's okay. [Video link here.](#)

Englewood man, 82, does NOT owe paternity payments on 2-year-old after all

ENGLEWOOD — Octogenarian great-grandfather George Tedders of Englewood won't have to pay child support for a 2-year-old after all. On Tuesday, the state notified him by mail that he was off the hook. "He's taking it fine. He's happy he won't have to go to jail," said his wife, Hope. Tedders, 82, was notified last week by the Charlotte County Sheriff's department that he was a defendant in a paternity suit filed in Nevada. But the George Tedders being sought was described as a 6-foot-1 black male. The Englewood Tedders is 5-foot-4 and white, and long beyond the age of new parenthood. "When we handle an interstate case, we rely on that state to provide us with the correct information," said Renee Watters of the Florida Department of Revenue. "This has been dismissed and hopefully all is well." The Tedders say it would be nice not to have to shell out \$250 billed in legal fees. Either way, George Tedders says he's learned his lesson. "Stay away from young girls!" he said.