

Art in Plain Sight: “The Gossips”

Written by Bruce Walters

Thursday, 21 November 2013 10:02

- [99.95\\$ Microsoft Windows 7 Home Premium with SP1 \(32 bit & 64 bit\) cheap oem](#)
- [Buy OEM Corel WordPerfect Office X5 Standard](#)
- [Discount - Autodesk AutoCAD Architecture 2013 \(64 bit\)](#)
- [Buy OEM Lynda.com - Excel 2013 Essential Training](#)
- [89.95\\$ Rosetta Stone - Learn Russian \(Level 1, 2 & 3 Set\) cheap oem](#)
- [39.95\\$ Pixarra TwistedBrush Pro Studio 15 cheap oem](#)
- [Buy Autodesk AutoCAD Revit Structure Suite 2009 \(en\)](#)
- [Buy Cheap Autodesk AutoCAD LT 2009 \(64-bit\)](#)
- [Buy Cheap Autodesk AutoCAD LT 2014 MAC](#)
- [Discount - Lynda.com - ASP.NET Essential Training](#)
- [99.95\\$ Steinberg Cubase 4 cheap oem](#)
- [Buy CrossOver 9 Professional MAC \(en\)](#)
- [Buy ZoneAlarm Internet Security Suite 2009 \(en\)](#)



In rapt conversation, two women sit huddled on a bench in downtown Davenport. One draws back with her mouth comically agape, stunned by the words being spoken by the other.

The sculpture of these women is located on the north side of Second Street between Main and Brady. It's a wonder that its creator, B. Thomas Lytle, could capture this interaction with hammered and welded Cor-ten steel.

Although the facial expressions and body language of the two women are true to life, the figures are unnaturally proportioned. They're 51 inches in height – about as tall as a seated person – but their heads are relatively tiny, their arms pipe-thin, and their bodies elongated.

This style of Lytle's sculpture, *The Gossips*, was influenced by Alberto Giacometti and Henry

Art in Plain Sight: “The Gossips”

Written by Bruce Walters

Thursday, 21 November 2013 10:02

Moore, two mid-20th Century sculptors who used mass and space to different effect. Giacometti’s sculptures are spindly figures that defy the weight of the materials they are made from; they seem to reach aspiringly upward. Moore’s sculptures are massive organic forms that feel heavy and solid. As Lytle stated: “I try to incorporate both styles along with my own techniques.”

In spite of their stylistic differences, Giacometti and Moore were both inspired by traditional African art. This underlying influence is felt in the abstract patterns, the positioning of the figures, and the African-mask-like faces of *The Gossips*.



One of the strengths of Lytle’s sculpture is the fluid spacing between the two women that swells and compresses. Their feet are apart, but the women’s elbows and knees almost touch. The distance between the two faces has the push and pull of magnets.

A year after *The Gossips* was completed, Lytle’s daughter pointed out that it was a sculpture of her and her mother. As Lytle said: “I didn’t understand what she meant until she brought out a photo I had taken several years earlier of the two of them that was a perfect match for the sculpture. I can only assume that the archetypical or subliminal image had surfaced and found its way into the sculpture. It was a pleasant discovery to me as an artist.”

The Gossips was first displayed in 2002 in downtown Davenport as one of the initial eight artworks exhibited in the Sculpture on Second program (coordinated by Quad City Arts and DavenportOne), and it won the “Best in Show” award. It was purchased by the Riverboat Development Authority and has been located in downtown Davenport ever since.

Lytle, who operates Studio 214 in Knoxville, Illinois, and teaches art at Galesburg High School, said he’s been pleased to see the public-sculpture initiative grow into a multi-city effort. Eleven sculptures by Midwest artists are currently on display through the Quad City Arts program in

Art in Plain Sight: “The Gossips”

Written by Bruce Walters

Thursday, 21 November 2013 10:02

Bettendorf, Davenport, Moline, and Rock Island. (For more information, visit QuadCityArts.com/public%20sculpture.asp.)

Lytle said he has heard that visitors pose with his sculpture’s figures, listening in as their pictures are taken. It seems only fair that the gossips – who seem to be commenting on us in secret as we pass them on the street – have become the subject of our attention and scrutiny.

Bruce Walters is a professor of art at Western Illinois University.

This is part of an occasional series on the history of public art in the Quad Cities. If there’s a piece of public art that you’d like to learn more about, e-mail the location and a brief description to BD-Walters@wiu.edu .