

It can be argued that cannons have negative aesthetic because of their destructive capabilities. But many have found experience with a cannon to be quite educative. And they point out that the successful use of large numbers of cannon has never failed to lead to a celebration. Which brings us full-cycle back to the ancient Chinese.

And as for joy, he says, looking his relatives straight in the eyes, it's wherever you find it along the way.

This man moved all his relatives to that part of the country which records the greatest number of sonic booms. This is what it will sound like when the world ends, he said. After a while you won't even notice it.

Sure. Great. Whimpered his relatives.

His father came to visit. He accepted his son's monogrammed, pre-Castro, Cuban cigar. When it went off he shit in his pants. The relatives all smiled wanly. Everyone shits in his pants the first time.

On the explosives aesthetics index an exploding cigar with shit in the pants rates a four. An explosion leading to pure joy (for exploder or explodee) rates a ten if there are two corroborating witnesses.

But this man says getting a ten is almost impossible. Only through involvement in the bang does one experience the most intense explosive joy. And the closer one is to the bang, the less chance of his surviving to reap the educational and celebrative benefits of the experience. One approaches the top and bottom of the aesthetic index at the same time. Such moments are instantaneous, awareness of them is never reached.

The ultimate explosive experience requires that everyone in the world would be involved in the bang at the same time. Like if a giant flaming star, thousands of times larger than the Earth, were to come hurtling out of the heavens and mow us down.

That, he tells his relatives with a wink, is how the world will really end.

IN THE UTILITY CLOSET -- FOR CARL LARSEN

In the loneliness of the utility closet the tousle-headed mop has begun to fantasize a relationship with the plumber's friend.

The plumber's friend is my child, thinks the mop. She has her father's wooden handle and will soon grow thick white hair like mine.

Late at night the mop awakens to shouts and running feet. The door to the utility closet flies open and the plumber's friend is yanked from her side.

The mop herself is flung to the kitchen floor. Later she sees the plumber's friend returned to the closet. Then she is stumbled over, kicked and cursed, taken down the hall and made to sop up the goo.

When they are together again in the dark utility closet, the mop regards her silent child. The plumber's friend has a bad smell and is dripping water on the floor.

My child, my child, weeps the mop.

-- Joseph Nicholson

Flemington PA

LOVE AMONG THE SILVERWARE

my wife said, i am making sweetbuns,
get the jar of honey down

and i said, where is it

in the cupboard, said my wife

i opened up the cupboard
and the jar of honey said,
i love you, carl

no, said my wife, i love you,
carl

and the jar of honey and
my wife both looked at me

and i said, i love you too,
honey