

Steve Cartwright

Writing a Cheque

Quality is perhaps subjective
And yet I put it to you it is not
There is a measure
The first requirement I suggest
Is that the thing of which we speak
What e'er it is
Is functional - it does it's job

The second then is that this functioning
Is not impaired by weakness, sudden failure,
pieces dropping off
It's functioning dependable.
Not filling you with doubt if it can do its job
Perform its role.
You need to know it can
You must not fret about it's capability
Be sure next time you use this thing
It will not fail
It will not let you down.

The third, and this is the subjective bit
Is that it is a thing of beauty
Not too ornate, fastidious by design
Aesthetics need to mirror how it functions, what it's for
Sometimes it comes with age
Say how a spade perhaps assumes a certain shape
Where work has rubbed it smooth
It's perfect functioning enabling time to add aesthetics to the lowly spade
So that you now can see, can feel, can know it as a thing of lasting beauty

You sense it too in old Victorian jewellery
The way the jeweller sets the stone
The way inscripted patterns dance their form on metal
The way that velvet buffs them up
The way that gold and silver shine.

Soft furnishings well made, also portray this charm
Say how a piece of silk or lace
Assumes a certain charm, as threads embroider shape or colour into their symmetry
Delight springs to the eye
And to the touch, the feel, then to the heart.

And calligraphy of course
The soft ink cloying on the thick soak of fine paper
The fifty's five pound note or writing pads of paper tissue
So delicate you hesitate to make your mark
The red and dripping melting wax that stamps the crest
That seals the bond.
How perfectly the letter knife, its ornate blade
Will slice its way into the paper's edge
What joy communication of this metre brings
The ritual also bringing further celebration to these beauteous sacred things
And then the sacred fountain pen

It's links with quill
It's blotting paper sea-saw wodge
Its ornate wells of ink and sand
Its arching gold or silver nib
The characters it oozes out to stand upon the parchment page
Calligraphy - high art a slowing down
A doing well
Not biro rage

Old leather goods, they too have this
Old chintzy suites that slumber in the drawing room before the fire
And chesterfield's, their gleaming leather worn and cracked and paper thin
Their studded backs once slightly stiff, now bulging out,
inviting you to come on in and sit you down
Old armchairs with their splaying bulldog legs that spread the weight
They will not budge or let you down
Or carvers shining with the rub of years of arses sitting down
They've stood the test of time
Stood firm and sprightly, almost still young
Perhaps its in the way their stays are shaped and sprung
It's always builded in and needs to be

And so, at last to cheques
Well, lets bring all these features in
Let's have a fountain pen with silver nib
Perhaps a lid of mottled tortoise shell
Embossed with silver and with gold
A lid, that with a gentle reassuring snap
Clicks off and slides so naturally into its resting place upon the top
So easily it soaks the inky liquid from the well
It fills, it dips, it soars
It is the rightful proper marker of this thick and gorgeous card-like page
A scrolling script will soon be rolling on this cheque
The measure of my trust
Integrity writ large upon the book
Embossed with red and gilded lines
It is a bond, a deed, a proper thing
A thing that smacks of surety

This book of cheques is not a blue and plastic thing with holding shaft
That grabs the stubs that has a see-through wallet for the credit cards
It is a soft and bounteous leather thing
With latch and stud to keep it shut and sound its coming when the clasp is snapped
It shines with use
It says to me and you
I am a proper thing
Organic, built to last
A thing of beauty sure and fast
It's grown with me
My DNA is part
It nestles in the pocket near my heart
And when I draw it out to use
I do it with the gravity of love
That you can feel and see and know
For as I hope I've shown
A thing that does its job
Is built to last
And recognises beauty, an essential thing
'tis only then when these three themes, their wondrous skills impart,
what 'ere they make, they elevate it to a work of art