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It's a Good Thing: Martha Stewart Just Sent Walter Robinson a Mash Note Over His Bedsheet Paintings

by Brian Boucher
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Walter Robinson *The Executioner Blood Vendetta*, 2017; Courtesy of the Artist and Vito Schnabel Gallery.

Beloved New York artist and critic Walter Robinson gained the notice of lifestyle maven Martha Stewart after she saw some of his paintings at Vito Schnabel's gallery in St. Moritz, Switzerland's famous holiday resort. She even wrote him a letter praising his paintings on bedsheets, works that combine Robinson's longstanding love of pulpy book covers and Stewart's passion for thread counts.

The painting that caught her eye, *The Executioner Blood Vendetta* (2017), features none other than a sheet from Stewart's "Whim" collection, featuring a jaunty image of a camel patterned across the cotton percale.

Robinson, a New York legend who was the founding editor of *Artnet* magazine, the precursor to artnet News, posted on Facebook today an image of the one-line letter, which was accompanied by a gift of some of the very same camel sheets he used as a canvas.

His paintings on bedsheets recall several postwar and contemporary artists' use of similar materials, including

Robert Rauschenberg's *Bed* (1955), Tracey Emin's *My Bed* (1988), and more recently, Rodney McMillian's impasto abstractions on bed linens. Robinson, noted perhaps as much for his criticism as for his art making, gained notice in 2014 for his *Artspace* article "Flipping and the Rise of Zombie Formalism," which coined a widely adopted catchphrase that describes a current trend in artistic production that "brings back to life the discarded aesthetics of Clement Greenberg."

Stewart is known to be a fan of contemporary art, having, just for one example, tweeted about her enjoyment of artists like Yayoi Kusama and Robert Therrien while visiting Los Angeles's Broad Museum.

"I met her once at the Chelsea Hotel on the roof at a cook-out hosted by the artist Sheila Berger," Robinson told *Artnet* news. "I said to her, 'I watch your show while on the treadmill at the gym,' which was true. She seemed to like that."