

# The Violent Kind

by Neil Serven

The sticky part for me, Mrs. Wuertz, is that when “things got out of hand” with your husband, as you put it, that out-of-handedness took a chunk out of the Cy Twombly mounted on my side of the wall.

[...]

*How* it happened isn't my beeswax. But it *did* happen. Knocked the thing right off, and on the way down it unfortunately caught the corner of my hi-fi console. Now there's this unsightly rip here, see that? That's the risk with untreated canvas.

[...]

See, that's what I mean by *sticky*. This is a work of art that someone made. It cost me—I'm embarrassed to say this—but it cost me four thousand dollars. I was living in New York when I bought it. That was—I want to say '89? Hard to appraise now, with the art market screwy as it is, but I know it's more than four thousand. But my point is, this isn't a Thomas Kinkade. It's not like you can pay me fifty dollars and I can drive to the Twombly store and buy another Twombly.

[...]

No, because he's dead. Recently, in fact. One of the last good postwar guys, quite honestly. Other than Jasper Johns, who's left? Ellsworth Kelly's still working, if that's your speed. Who's picking up the slack in our wired and decadent twenty-first century? *Don't* say Julian Schnabel, my god.

[...]

Movie? No, I don't think he ... *oh*, right. No, you're thinking of Jackson Pollock. Ed Harris, right. No, Pollock was drips, not scribbles. Got locked into that method too tightly, in my opinion. From across the gallery, you walk in, you know it's a Pollock. It gives you an excuse not to really *look* at it. What gets me is these kids who buy Pollock posters for their dorms when Pollock was all about *texture* and *layers*. You *saw* the topography—how one drip had to reroute itself slightly as it piled atop another. You *saw* the

smoothness of the puddled paint. How does a poster show that?  
Good film, though. Marcia Gay Harden as Lee Krasner. Amazing.

[...]

You're right! It *does* look like something your two-year-old niece could do. That's the genius of Twombly! He finds *intensity* in a simple scribble. It looks like a mistake, right? The violent kind of mistake we are prone to making when we're thrown for a loop. What Twombly does is immortalize that breathtaking moment.

[...]

Quite the shiner you've got there.

[...]

How about this. Let me talk to my restorer, he'll give me a quote, then you can discuss it with your husband. I know it's uncomfortable, but on principle I don't think I could leave this alone. Otherwise, you know how it is: things boil under and resentments take hold and that's no way for neighbors to live. Frost was right: good walls make good neighbors. Although ours are pretty thin, aren't they? I might bring that up with the condo board at the next meeting.

