

The Dangling Carrot

With writing by Peter Dornauf, 2023



JAMES R FORD

Dangling Temptation

Peter Dornauf, 2023

Down the ages, warnings have been posted about the corrosive effect of accumulating wealth and the lure of gold, that glittery substance. Something deceptive about glittery things has been noted by everyone from Shakespeare to Led Zeppelin, counselling people to check, since “all that glitters is not gold”.

Gold is the genuine article, but it can itself be a stairwell to hell. Look no further than the Book of Proverbs – “He who trusts in riches will fail”. Or from the Son of Man himself expounding on how hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of heaven. That life does not consist in the abundance of possessions is something both he and Cynic philosopher Diogenes would have agreed on. In Thomas More’s *Utopia*, in order to encourage contempt for the shiny yellow stuff, citizens of this perfect State were forbidden to wear any, but criminals were forced to – rings, necklaces, crowns. A clever stratagem.

A similar kind of ruse was practised in the art world when Italian artist, Maurizio Cattelan, created an 18-carat gold toilet that was installed in New York’s Guggenheim in 2016. He aptly entitled it, *America*, and 100,000 Americans promptly turned up to use the fully operational piece of plumbing. He probably had Duchamp’s *Fountain* in mind, another satirical piece from the House of Dada. And true to form, the thing was stolen when installed in the bathroom at Blenheim Palace, England.

James R Ford follows in the footsteps of such an illustrious art legacy with his appositely constructed sculpture, entitled *The Dangling Carrot*; a life-size replica of the vegetable, cast in bronze and gilded with 22 CT gold leaf. Dangling from a golden chain attached to a golden branch, it embodies an interesting ambiguity. On the one hand, alluding to reward and inducement for services rendered without exception,

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James R Ford, 2022-2023
Bronze, brass, 22k gold leaf
900 x 600 x 40 mm approx.
Edition of 5 + 1 AP



while on the other, conjuring negative images of avarice and corruption that might include, among others, rich King Tantalus from Greek mythology, who was punished by being forced to stand in a pool of water beneath laden fruit trees, whose low hanging branches are always just out of reach.

Symbol of ostentation and greed, this piece of bling, dangling temptation, is comical and witty in its aspect, playing on the verbal pun of carrot/carat, thereby making its point without the tiresome and often laboured earnestness that can sometimes come with contemporary art.

This is a timely piece given the recent revelations regarding the inequities in society, where the rich pay a disproportionately less amount in tax compared with the rest who foot the larger part of the bill.

The notion of the golden carrot reminds one of that other golden fruit, the apple, the one of discord the goddess Iris used to create mayhem among the deities. Fruit and veg wrapped in tinsel therefore have good pedigree and Ford taps into the trope to great effect.



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