

Raising the stakes in Stanley Cup side bet

By Charles Desmarais

It seemed like a good bet at the time.

After the San Jose Sharks and Pittsburgh Penguins made it to the Stanley Cup Finals, Pittsburgh's Carnegie Museum of Art challenged the San Jose Museum of Art to a wager on Twitter: "If the @SanJose

Sharks win, we loan an artwork to @sjmusart. WHEN the @penguins win, they loan one to us."

The Carnegie is one of the country's great museums, with a collection of more than 30,000 works of art assembled over its 121-year history. By contrast, the San Jose Museum was founded

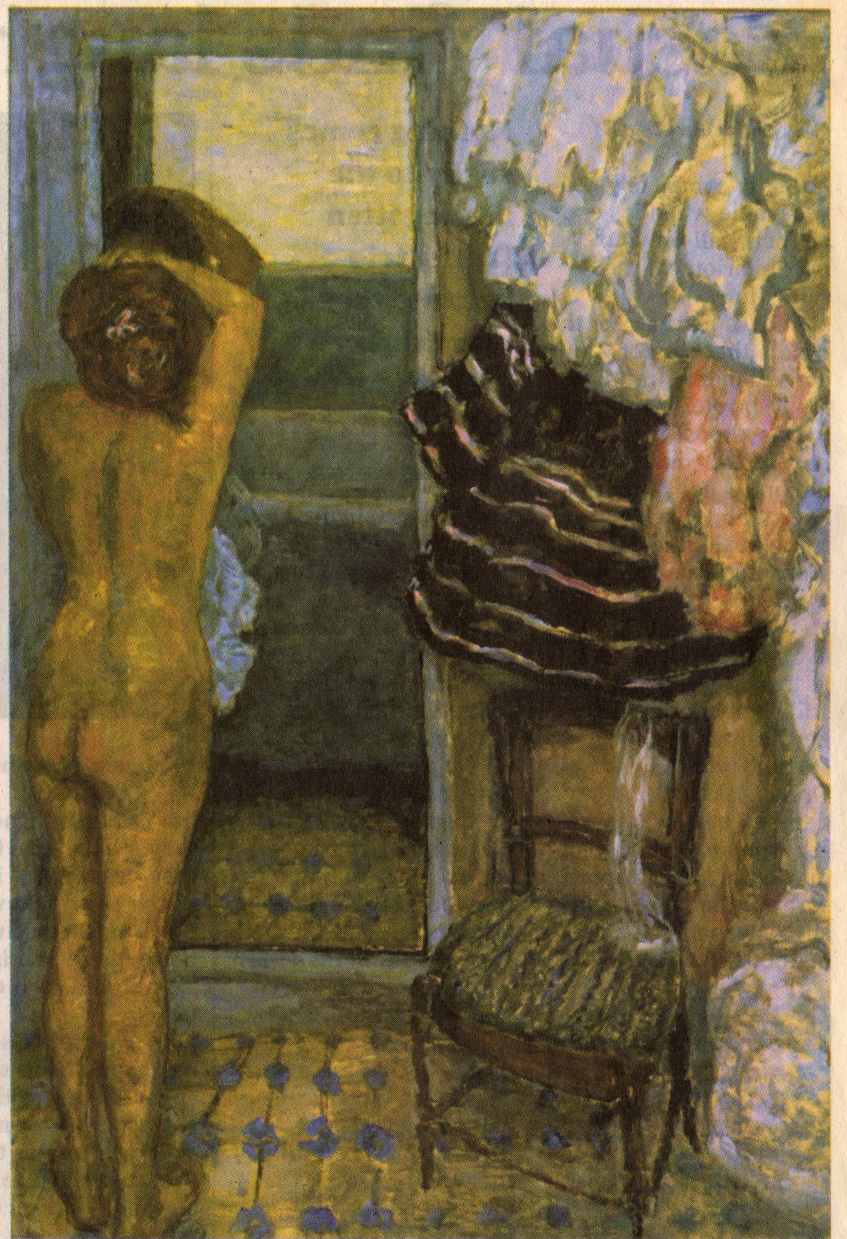
Museum Cup continues on E3



San Jose Museum of Art

Larry Sultan's "Mom Posing by Green Wall ..." would be loaned to a Philadelphia museum if the Penguins win the NHL title.

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT



Carnegie Museum of Art

A better offer to Pittsburgh might be Lawrence Gipe's 1989 "Painting # 3," left; San Jose might enjoy Pierre Bonnard's "The Full Length Mirror" (1910).

Museums face off over a potted plant

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as a smallish gallery in 1969; it has grown by leaps and bounds since then, but no one would call its 2,000-object collection anything more than ambitious. So, for the Bay Area museum, what was there to lose? SJMA tweeted its response: "Great collection ... Can't wait to see what we'll get."

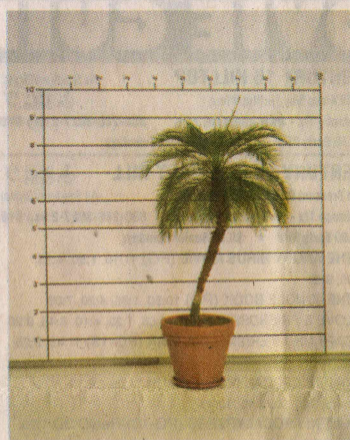
That was last week, before the Sharks dropped its first two road games in the best-of-seven series. And now we are committed to the Twitter hashtag #MuseumCup. Tweeted @cmoa, "2 down, 2 to go, @sjmusart! We're clearing wall space for the artwork you'll be sending when the @penguins win."

Should we be worried? Well, the odds may be against us, but let's consider the stakes. When the Seattle Art Museum and the Clark Art Institute in Massachusetts

made a Super Bowl bet last year (these competitions come up with increasing frequency), the deal was an 11-by-17-foot Albert Bierstadt for a Winslow Homer masterpiece. On Wednesday, the Pittsburgh and San Jose museums gave me the first look at their ante, and I think we've been snookered.

Someone could write a dissertation on the significance of the artist Mel Bochner (actually, someone has: Derek Weiler's 607-page "Serial Aesthetics and the Concept of Technique: Mel Bochner and the 1960s" earned him a doctorate from New York University in 2013). He's a major American artist.

But context is everything in art, and I'm ready to start a pool on how loud the ridicule will be when, if it ever comes to that, Sharks fans get a load of Bochner's 1969 work, "Measurement: Plant (Palm)." Because, for all the weighty conceptual subjectivity the artist brings to his body of work, the piece is still,



Carnegie Museum of Art

"Measurement: Plant (Palm)," by Mel Bochner.

objectively, this: a potted plant.

And what does Pittsburgh get if its team wins? A very nice photograph — in fact, an important one from the late Larry Sultan's "Pictures From Home" series. Set adrift from the series, though, and without the knowledge that the photograph

is a work of fiction, "Mom Posing by Green Wall and Dad Watching TV." (1984) is a thumb in the eye to sports fans, a tale of a lonely baseball widow and her heedless spouse.

Susan Krane, director of the San Jose Museum of Art, makes clear that it's all in good fun, pointing out that "we're talking about a team whose mascot is a stuffed shark." Still, I propose we renegotiate. Given Pittsburgh's history as an industrial capital, and the Carnegie's spectacularly rich collection, San Jose should offer Oakland artist Lawrence Gipe's brooding portrait of guarded prosperity, with its red-lettered motto for winners, "Possession."

And there's plenty I'd love to see come here, but I imagine a good one to bring to Sharks Territory might be by an artist to whom the Bay Area has recently been exposed. Someone like Pierre Bonnard, whose "The Full Length Mir-

ror" from 1910, with a voluptuous nude admiring herself, her crinolines cascading from hooks on the wall, would surely please.

Update: After this article was posted online, but before it went to print, the Carnegie Museum of Art tweeted, "Thing is, Bochner's from #Pgh & Bonnard is not!" Shifting rules notwithstanding, my proposal was to renegotiate the arrangement. In that spirit, San Jose could ask for a nice Andy Warhol, Mary Cassatt or Philip Pearlstein. Or perhaps a small work with big impact that I am partial to, the African American master Romare Bearden's "Pittsburgh Memories" (1984), a colorful collage that would be a blue-collar pendant to the Gipe critique of privilege.

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