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Graphologists' Hokum

Anyone who mistakenly believes that American management has escaped its historical obsession with quick-fix gimmicks and gadgets need only read the July 14 article on the growing popularity of graphology as a personnel selection device [Business].

Whatever, if anything, a sample of handwriting might reveal about behavior, it is laughable to read the claims of pseudo-scientific graphologists that their hokum "can accurately determine a candidate's personality, strengths and weaknesses, suitability for a job, addiction and risk tendencies, and even health disorders."

This most recent romance with handwriting analysis is not difficult to explain. Despite the lack of evidence that it can predict much of anything, the gullibility of managers—or is it desperation?—makes them fair prey for enterprising consultants on the make, especially if it's true that "an analyst can earn as much as a professional in the medical or legal fields." And, like phrenology and crystal-ball gazing, it surely avoids the inconvenience of going to a professional school for three or more years to become qualified in either field.

RICHARD P. SHORE
Washington

ghetto by bold Jews who started with only a few small handguns that some would call Saturday night specials. No army would dare have attacked, and no government would dare tyrannize a people, if half of its households owned firearms—including modern military-style semi-autos—as in the United States.

It is no accident that the United States has enjoyed the greatest freedom and is the oldest continuous government in the world. Our Founding Fathers planned it that way—and that freedom insurance plan embodied in the Second Amendment should not be lapsed because of the insane acts of a madman, whether his name be Patrick Purdy or Adolf Hitler.

NEAL KNOX
Executive Director, The Firearms Coalition
Silver Spring

What Art and Museums Are About

The current controversy over government funding of the arts goes to the heart of what art is about and what museums are about.

Among the many things that art does for us all is that it challenges us, it demands that we rethink our assumptions about every issue in life, from religion to politics, from love and sex to death and the afterlife. It is amazing how often those assumptions change as a result of this challenge, how often the unacceptable in one generation becomes one of the glories of the next. Thomas Eakins' images of the nude, Rembrandt's etchings of holy scenes in humble settings, Manet's "Olympia," Duchamp's urinal, Pollock's dripped and spattered "action paintings," German Expressionism, Rodin's "Balzac"—the honor roll of the reviled goes back many centuries. Whether this or that particular work of art, hated today, will be loved tomorrow is not really relevant; to rein in that free-wheeling creativity, that freedom to be offensive, is to destroy what art can offer us in the first place.

This whole controversy tends to misunderstand what museums are about, too. The single greatest achievement of American democracy may well be our educational system, and museums are an integral part of that system. In fact, along with public libraries, they are the most important place for those who are not actually students—in other words, most of us—to keep on learning. Museums are places where you can learn at any age, at your own pace, without getting tested and from the very best teachers.

And what is it we learn about? About good cultures and bad, about the art of democracies and the art of emperors, about religions still very much alive and those long dead and those we might not call very "religious" at all. To say that museums should not present the artistic expression of this or that culture—or of this or that point of view or religious, sexual or political orientation—is to deny what museums are all about and what education is all about. To say that we should study only the accepted—in other words, what we know already—is to

limit our horizons and guarantee our own mediocrity.

Government, and those who lead or influence the government, should be encouraging artists and museums and the educational system as a whole to be as broad and open as possible; only in that way can we grow; only in that way can our deepest values evolve, respond to the challenges of our own time and become stronger.

FRANKLIN W. ROBINSON
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How to Get Rich in Washington

Regarding the article "Kemp Orders Suspension of Third Housing Program" [front page, July 7]: I have never thought Republicans would become known for developing innovative programs, but they have created a new two-pronged approach to housing:

1. Allow severe mismanagement, giving profit to all involved except those for whom the program was intended.

2. Cancel the program because of its inefficiency.

This novel approach guarantees that absolutely no help is given to those in need. The Republican administration is proving quite creative in finding ways to enrich itself at the expense not only of the taxpayers but those for whom governmental programs were intended.

CATHY D. KNEPPER
Kensington

The Washington Post

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PHILIP L. GRAHAM, 1915-1963

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