

**Mark Daybell**  
**How could you?, 1999**

There were many different and unique artworks on display at the Orange Coast Art Gallery. Each reflected the hands and mind of the artist, whether it was artistic expression coming from the inner psyche, vision of the artist or coming from social art trends. There were many that caught my eyes and invited further scrutiny. However, I found one I thought was "art-some," a close-up photograph of a man's face within a frame next to a pair of shoes.

At first glance, the photographic picture of a man's face close-up was easily recognizable and invited curiosity from passers-by. One could only sympathize with his helpless expression, which draws directly to our human emotions. This provokes our attention and concern, unlike other artworks, which are more abstract and harder to understand. This artwork touches on the universal language of human emotions. One could say this artwork expresses the man's inner helplessness. But the next question is why?

Within this photographic work of art, I realized it questions important social and historical values because it reflects the changing male-gender, status-role of our present time. The male and female are becoming ever more equal. Males are expected to contribute to family activities, taking on family chores normally reserved for the wife. This changing aspect of the male role softens a man's personality, confusing and conflicting between the hard of soft side of his role. Surrounded by the traditional roles and ever changing social expectation of what a man should be.

The portrait of the man's face placed next to a pair of shoes suggests his presence; he appears trapped within the frame of the picture. His body is not revealed. This omission of the body seems to suggest the social oppression on the man's life and his male character role. I guess a man is not permitted to express his feelings, to do so is considered unmanly. The picture and the shoes also create "montage" associations that make us think about the man's life and his male role. If he did not include the pair of shoes, it would be harder to associate and therefore be unable to satisfy the rational part of us.

From what I learned, the piece of art was placed together with the shoes on the ground subordinate to our point of view to further emphasize and communicate his helpless and social changing role.

In terms of style, I think it is an excellent work of art; well thought out and well presented. The piece of art excites our emotions and provokes our thinking and reflects upon the male's gender role and our oppressive society. It definitely is a historically valuable work of art.

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