

MY KID COULD PAINT THAT -- ILLUSTRATED SCREENPLAY

directed by Amir Bar-Lev
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[Transcribed from the movie by Tara Carreon]

"Fascinating. A thought-provoking at the world of art."
- Steven Rea, THE PHILADELPHIA INQUIRER

My Kid Could Paint That
Visual Arts
\$22.98
310549
PROOF-OF-PURCHASE



In this thought-provoking documentary, Director Amir Bar-Lev tracks the overnight celebrity of little Marla Olmstead, a toddler who creates gallery-worthy paintings on the dining room table of her family home. A media sensation by the age of four, critics compare her work with Jackson Pollock. Sales of her paintings reach \$300,000. But, sadly, the bubble bursts. When a 2005 profile by "60 Minutes" suggests that Marla had help making her paintings, the finger is pointed at her father, an amateur artist and night manager at Frito Lay. Almost overnight, her family is ensnared in a web of accusation and denial—with the burden of proof placed squarely in their lap: Is Marla a child prodigy or an innocent victim of a hoax?

SPECIAL FEATURES

- Audio Commentary
- Back to Binghamton
- Michael Kimmelmann on Art

SPECIAL FEATURES ARE NOT RATED AND MAY NOT BE SUBTITLED OR CLOSED CAPTIONED



SONY PICTURES CLASSICS AND RAE INDIE FILMS PRESENT IN ASSOCIATION WITH RSC AN AIDS FILMS AND PASSION PICTURES PRODUCTION "MY KID COULD PAINT THAT"
DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY MATT DREY NELSON RYAN BILL TURNERLEY EDITOR MICHAEL LEVINE JOHN WALTER ASSOCIATE PRODUCER SARAH NOLAN CO-PRODUCER STEPHEN TUBIN
EXECUTIVE PRODUCER AND THE BIG BUCKHART KAZIN CO-PRODUCER ANDREW BLUMENFELD EXECUTIVE PRODUCER JOHN DATTISCH PRODUCED AND DIRECTED BY AMIR BAR-LEV

SOME OF THE INFORMATION IN THE GRID BELOW MAY NOT APPLY TO SPECIAL FEATURES

LANGUAGE	ENGLISH 5.0 (Dolby Digital)	5.1/5.0 DIGITAL SURROUND SOUND
SUBTITLES	ENGLISH, FRENCH, SPANISH, CHINESE, THAI	
CLIPPING	Mastered in High Definition	Approx. 83 Mins

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DVD VIDEO SONY PICTURES CLASSICS RSC AIDS FILMS AXIOLIMS

PG-13 PARENTS STRONGLY CAUTIONED FOR LANGUAGE

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my kid could paint that

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[Amir Bar-Lev] Hello, can you hear me, Marla?



[Marla] Yes.



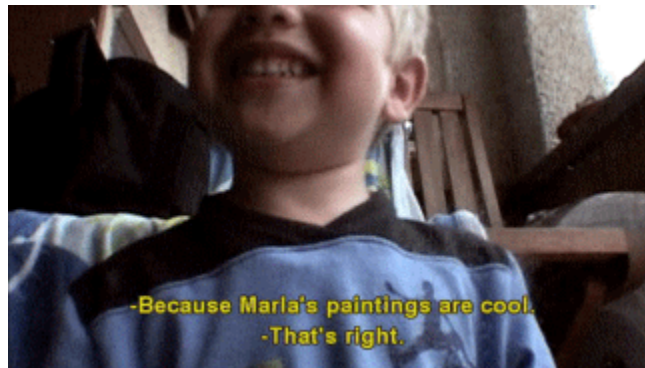
[Amir Bar-Lev] Okay. Here, you hold the camera. You can interview me. All right, ready? You can ask me any question you want.



Like, do you ever wonder why I come up here?

[Marla] Yes.

[Amir Bar-Lev] Why do I come up here?



[Zane] Because Marla's paintings are cool.



[Amir Bar-Lev] That's right. That's because Marla's paintings are cool. Exactly. Good answer.

[Marla] You have to play, Amir. You can't just use the camera.



[Amir Bar-Lev] You don't want to talk at all about your new paintings?

[Marla] No.

[Amir Bar-Lev] Why not?



[Marla] Because I don't.

[Amir Bar-Lev] Do you want to talk about the show?

[Marla] No, I don't.



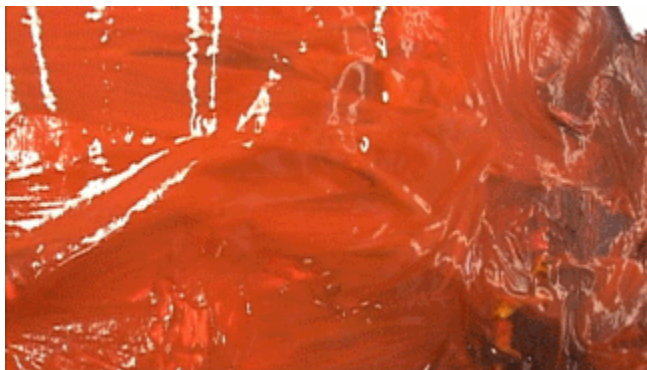
[Amir Bar-Lev] Do you want to ...

[Marla] Nothing, nothing, nothing, nothing. I'm not going to talk about anything.



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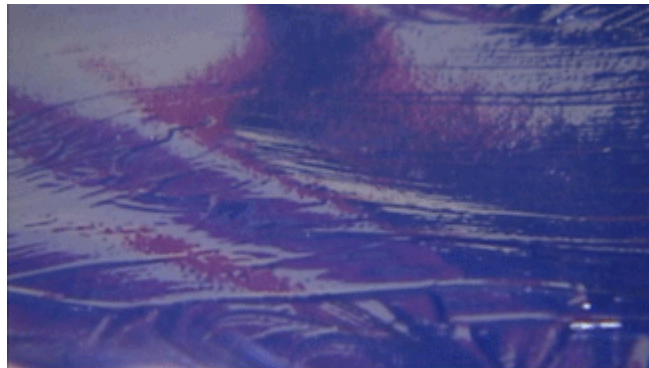
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My Kid Could Paint That

My Kid Could Paint That





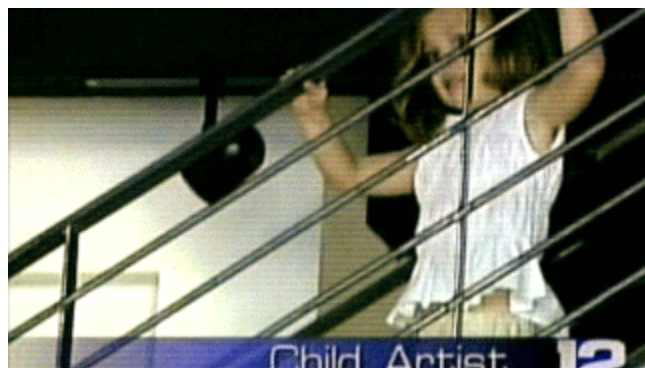
[Newsman] Most 4-year-old's artwork consists of pictures of Mommy and Daddy and trees, and all of them seem to look strangely alike.

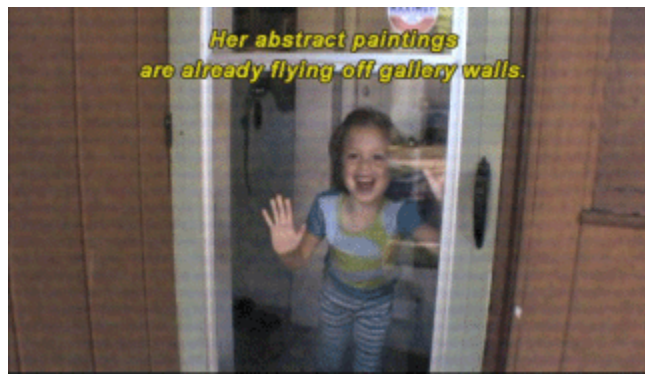


But not this 4-year-old. Take a look.



[Newswoman] She's only 4 years old, but Binghamton native Marla Olmstead is creating a whirlwind of attention with her art.





[Newswoman] Her abstract paintings are already flying off gallery walls.



[Newsman] And wait till you see how much her paintings go for.



[Newswoman] Ten of her abstract paintings have already been sold for thousands of dollars.





[Newsman] And bringing in some big bucks as well.



[Newswoman] \$5,500 a pop. Can you believe it?





[Newswoman] She's already sold 24 paintings totaling \$40,000.



Her 2-year-old brother Zane says, "That buys a lot of candy."



As for Marla, her parents say she's blissfully unaware.



A Film By Amir Bar-Lev



[Anthony Brunelli, Gallery Owner] Every person in this situation is perfect.



The family is charismatic. Marla, when you see her, she's a doll. The paintings are unbelievable. Even if a 3 or 4-year-old didn't do them, you'd like them.

[Amir Bar-Lev] Yeah.

[Anthony Brunelli, Gallery Owner] The fact that she is four makes it really incredible.

[Amir Bar-Lev] Right.

[Anthony Brunelli, Gallery Owner] They have this little 2-and-a-half year-old son, Zane.

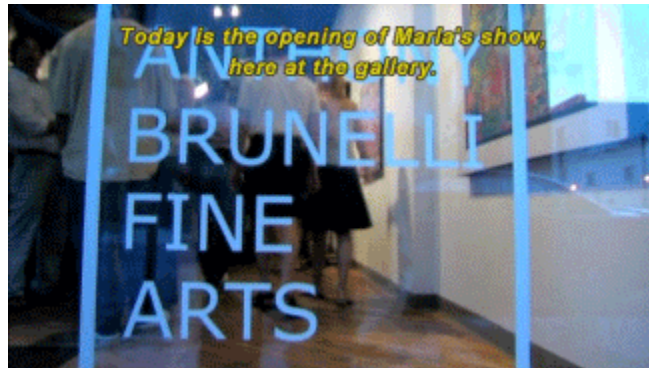
[Amir Bar-Lev] Yeah, yeah.

[Anthony Brunelli, Gallery Owner] Both him and Marla could be on Gap ads.





October 1, 2004, Binghamton, NY



[Amir Bar-Lev] Tell us what's happening today.

Anthony Brunelli Fine Arts

[Anthony Brunelli, Gallery Owner] Today is the opening of Marla's show, here at the gallery.





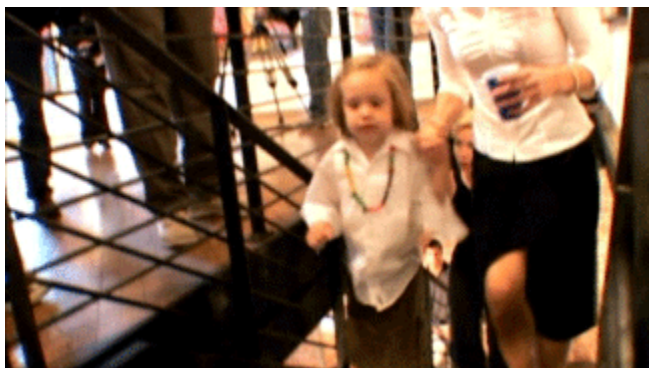
And it's just complete and utter bedlam with all the news crew that are here, and the people from all over the world that have come to Great Binghamton.



It's just pandemonium about this little girl and her work.



The fact that she's in Binghamton doesn't matter.



Doesn't matter if she's in Binghamton or SoHo, New York. People are calling and emailing from all over the world to buy her paintings.



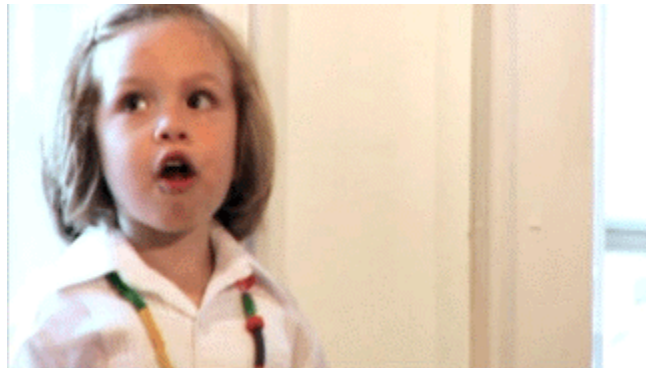
We sold three today, over the phone.

[Answers telephone] Hello.

The owner of the Houston Rockets just bought one, which is unbelievable.

[To telephone] I'm actually in the middle of an interview right now.

If you picked a name out of a hat of a TV program, they called.



I mean, from Conan O'Brien, Letterman, Oprah just called.

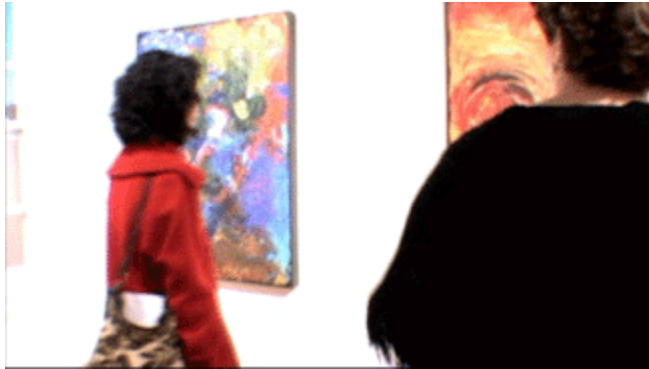


60 Minutes is here.



It's probably the most popular story in the world right now.





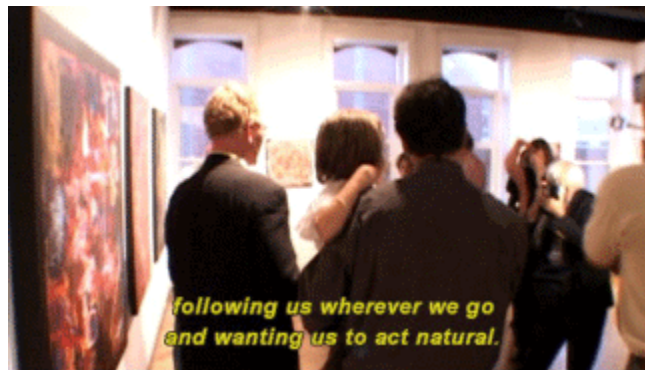
This is bigger than I had even anticipated.



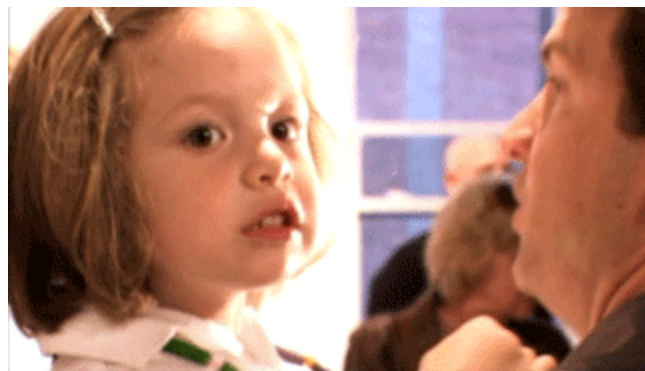
I will admit though, and I told this to the parents the first time that I saw her work, I said, "You're in for a wild ride. I hope you're prepared for this."



[Laura Olmstead, Marla's mother] If this never happened again, it might be okay. I might be happy. Cameras looking at us everywhere, they're clicking pictures,



following us wherever we go and wanting us to act natural.



[Man] One more time.



[Laura Olmstead, Marla's mother] People were asking her about the art. People expected her to expound on the art.



Even if she could express it, she's not interested in talking to a 40-year-old or a 35-year-old, or anything like that.



She'd just like to be around other kids and do kid things.



[Mark Olmstead, Marla's father] What kind of ice cream are you eating?

[Marla] Chocolate.



[Laura Olmstead, Marla's mother] Show me, Zane.

[Zane] No!

[Laura Olmstead, Marla's mother] You don't want to jump?

[Zane] No!



[Marla] I want to see the picture.

[Laura Olmstead, Marla's mother] Well, you won't be in the picture if you see the picture.



I don't focus on her as an artist. I don't look at her as an artist.



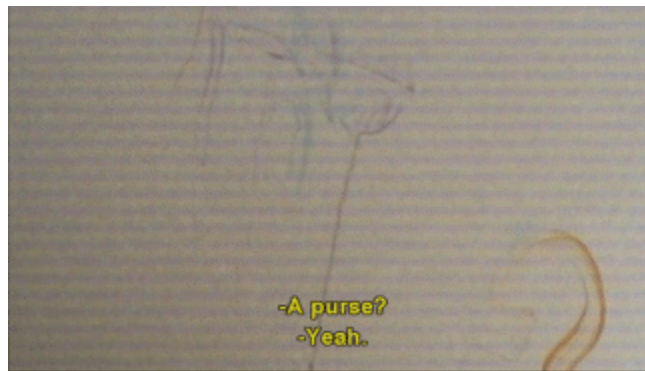
[Marla] My painting's not done.

[Laura Olmstead, Marla's mother] Oh, okay. Well, I'm running out of batteries so I have to turn it off,



but would you like to show me what that is?

[Marla] It's a purse.



[Laura Olmstead, Marla's mother] A purse?

[Marla] Yeah.

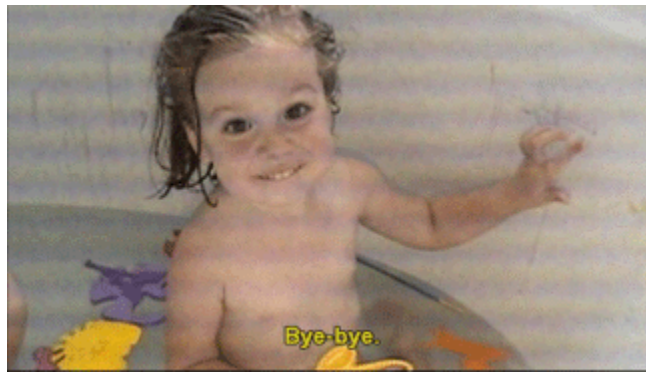
[Laura Olmstead, Marla's mother] You're very talented, honey.



[Marla] I'm making the purse, still.

[Mark Olmstead, Marla's father] Let's just kind of go over the whole story, like, how this all started.

[Laura Olmstead, Marla's mother] Yeah. We got really lucky.



[Marla] Bye-bye.



[Laura Olmstead, Marla's mother] Mark just happened to be painting.



And it wasn't something Mark was pursuing really aggressively, or doing a lot. He had done a little bit before, but never consistently.



[Mark Olmstead, Marla's father] Marla was watching me paint, and was very interested. Asked over and over if she could paint. "Dad, can I paint? Can I paint?" So, as opposed to sticking her in front of the television so that I could paint, I actually gave her a brush and some paper, and put her at the easel. And then, eventually, it got to the point where she did a big canvas. I wanted to see what she could do because the paper was kind of limiting for her.



Put her on the dining room table in her diaper and let her go at it.



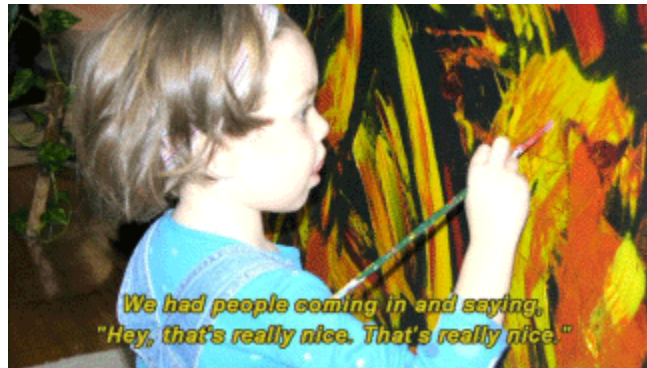
[Laura Olmstead, Marla's mother] I wouldn't know if anything was extraordinary or not.



We always thought they were beautiful.



She's my daughter. Of course I'm going to think they're beautiful.



[Mark Olmstead, Marla's father] We had people coming in and saying, "Hey, that's really nice. That's really nice."



[Laura Olmstead, Marla's mother] Our friend, Andy, he owns a coffee shop, and he just said, "Well, hey, why don't we show her?" He kind of said it with a grin,



like, "Let's hang it up and see what happens, it'll be funny."





[Mark Olmstead, Marla's father] Eventually, Andy has to call Laura and ask, "Hey, we need to put prices on this. People are asking about this art for real. "They want to know who did it, and they want to know how much it costs."



[Laura Olmstead, Marla's mother] We just kind of laughed. Like, this is a 3-year-old. What's going on? These people are so silly.



People were interested. Someone bought a piece, and we called everyone we knew.



"Marla just sold a painting. Can you believe it? \$250."



[Mark Olmstead, Marla's father] I feel very fortunate that other people took such an interest in Marla.



But, in reality, we didn't send this stuff out. Everybody came to us, as the story goes.



[Laura Olmstead, Marla's mother] I felt it was a fluke.



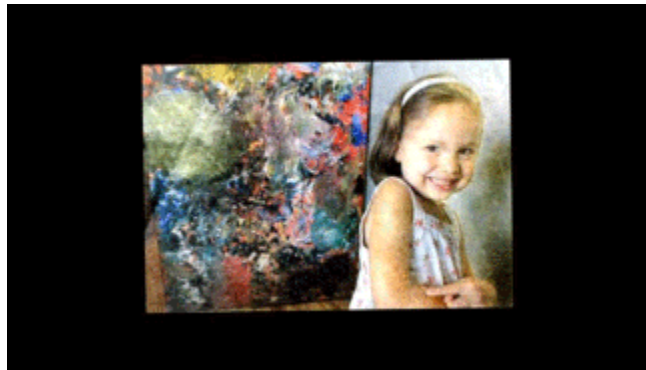
I made photocopies of the checks to save for her scrapbook, growing up.



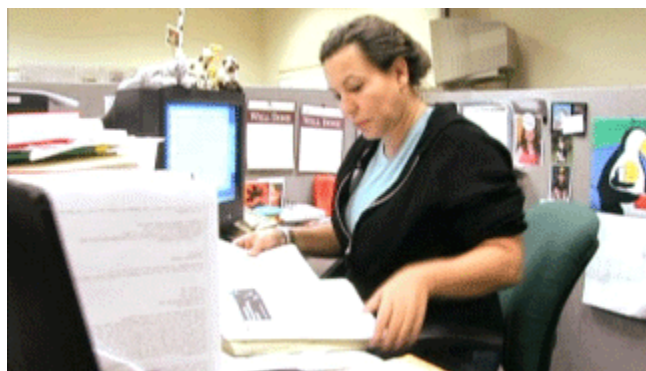
And I thought that would be the end of it.



If it had ended like that, we'd have been thrilled.



[Elizabeth Cohen, Columnist -- The Press & Sun Bulletin] The very first light that was shone on Marla was by my photographer for my paper.

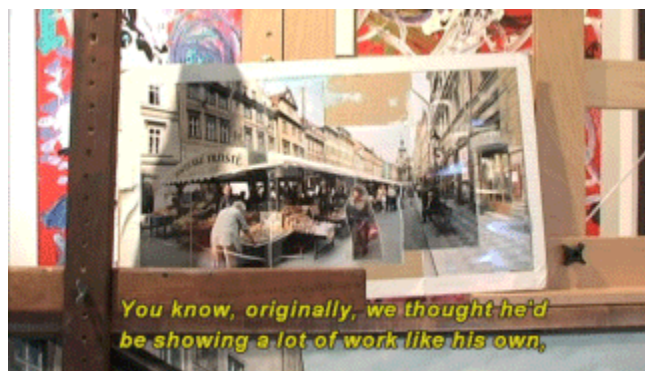


I wrote the first article.

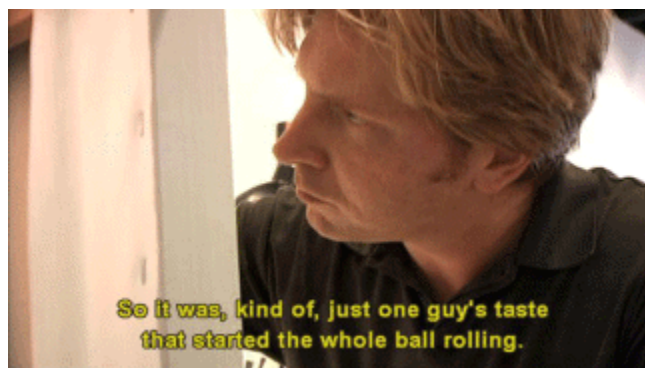
[Amir Bar-Lev] So, how did you get personally involved with the story of Marla?



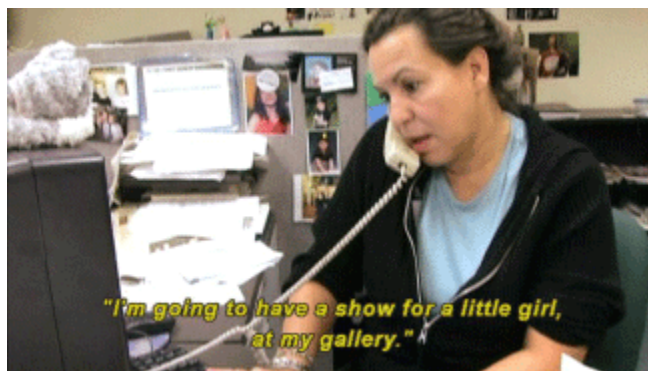
[Elizabeth Cohen, Columnist -- The Press & Sun Bulletin] Well, the way that I understand it, was a local painter, whose name is Anthony Brunelli, saw some of Marla's paintings at a friend's house, and he was just starting his new art gallery.



You know, originally, we thought he'd be showing a lot of work like his own, which is this hyperrealist work, this photorealism.



So it was, kind of, just one guy's taste that started the whole ball rolling. Anthony contacted me and said, "I have a story for the paper.



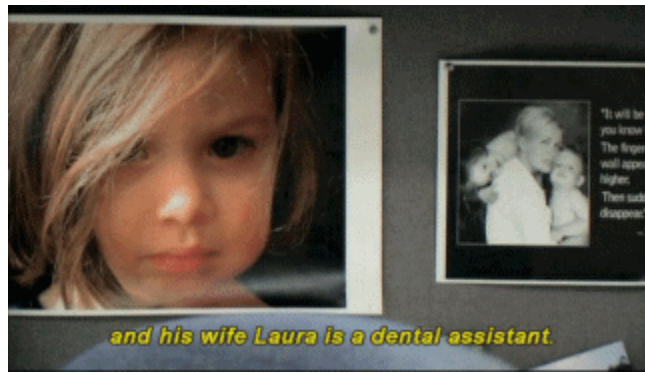
I'm going to have a show for a little girl, at my gallery." I said, "But why is that a story for me? 'Cause I'm not an arts reporter. I cover families and children and parenting issues."



He said, "Well, it's a story for you because this is really a story about a family." So he framed it to me as a family, human-interest story



about this night manager at a Frito-Lay factory who had this artist daughter,



and his wife Laura is a dental assistant.



They didn't know a lot about art, so this was all very left field for them.

Around this time, I met Laura.



I saw her as a person who was going to be in a story I was going to write.



Like a character almost.



But I also saw her as a mom, like myself, because we had children the same age.



I said, "Are you sure you want to do this?"



Because this could be something that affects your life and your family.



And it might not be all positive.



So maybe you don't want me to write this article. And you can just have this show here and go on with your lives as normal.



Needless to say, I wrote the story, and a week later, The New York Times picked up the story.



And it was like somebody had ignited a match under a fuse, and it started to burn.



I could see how negative things could come out of it.



And none of them were on the surface, but they were lurking.



[Laura Olmstead, Marla's mother] My primary concern, as a mother, is Marla's well being. If this ends today, all I really want for Marla is to be a happy, well-adjusted kid.



You know, I don't want people expecting anything of her that you wouldn't expect from another 4-year-old, because she is a regular, 4-year-old kid.



[Mark Olmstead, Marla's father] Did it, got it.



We would love to do things. We would love to exhibit in Europe and, you know, like ... that's where everything kind of started. We're both art fans. We're, by no means, art critics, or have a ton of knowledge, but we love that type of atmosphere and the whole thing. We've had a great time meeting all these great people. And that's selfish, I know, on our part, but we'd love it and I'd love to have Marla to have as many positive experiences as she can possibly have. Until the point ... if it's not positive, we're going to have to really consider what's best for her. And while it remains positive, you know, the sky is the limit.



Are you getting used to that camera right there? It's a nice camera. Say, "Hello, camera." Look at the camera and say, "Hello, camera."



[Marla] Amir, I think I got one.



That goes there, I think.

[Amir Bar-Lev] Yeah, that's perfect. So what's the name of your new painting?



[Marla] I don't know. It's not new.

[Amir Bar-Lev] I saw you did one that was all black. Is that your new style?



[Marla] That one was old.

[Amir Bar-Lev] Oh, yeah? How do you, like ... how do you know when you're finished with a painting? You just decide?



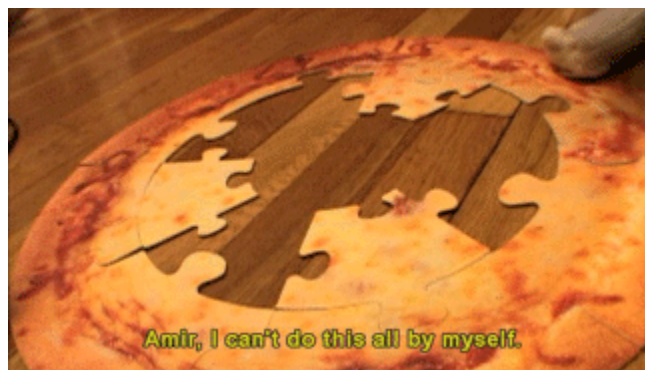
You say, "Done," huh?



[Marla] I don't say, "Done."

[Amir Bar-Lev] What do you say, "I'm done"?

[Marla] Uh huh.



Amir, I can't do this all by myself. You should help.

[Amir Bar-Lev] All right, I'm helping.



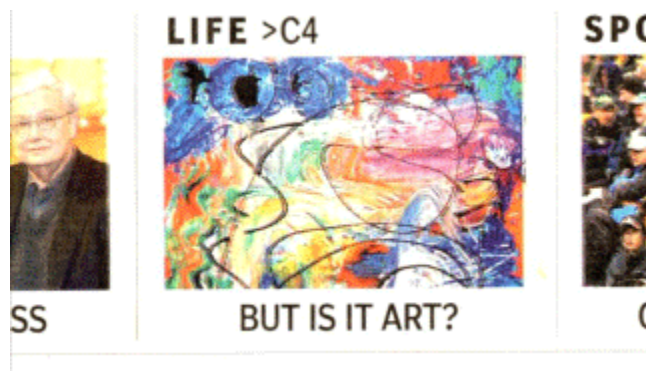
[Amir Bar-Lev] Michael, how did you get personally involved with the story of Marla?



[Michael Kimmelman, Chief Art Critic, The New York Times] Well, The Times wrote a news story about Marla, and after that, I was contacted by the Week in Review section, which often wants to have somebody come back and do something about those pieces during the week that had caught people's attention. That story certainly had.

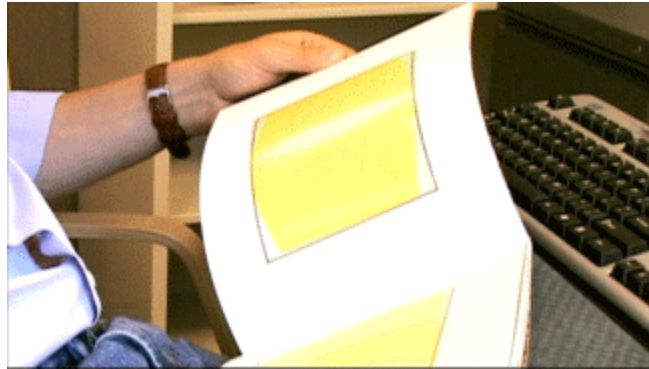
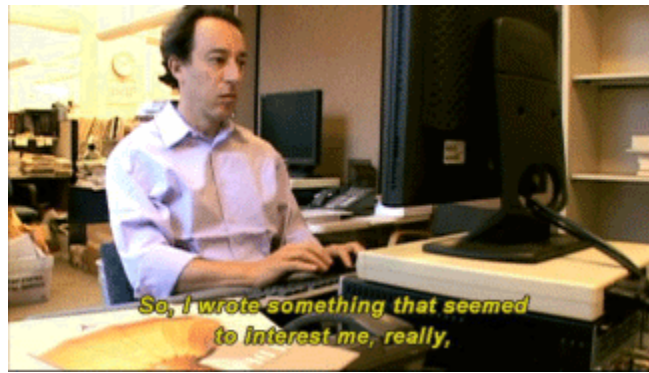


[From the brush of babes: A Four-Year-Old's fame as a painter raises anew the question "What is Art?"]



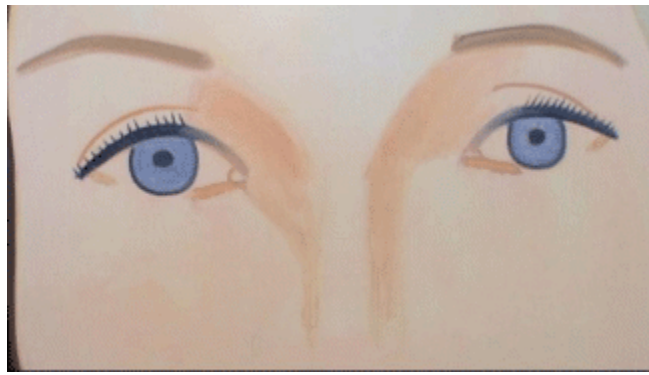
In a case like Marla, because it touches on all sorts of deep-rooted issues about whether modern art is real or not, it has a kind of strange, hypnotic appeal to it.





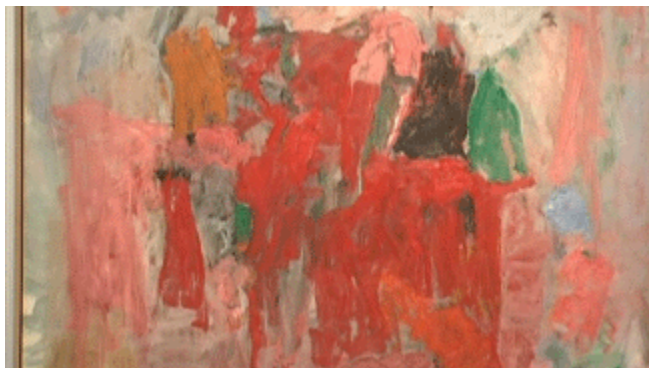
So I wrote something that seemed to interest me, really, about the complications of abstract art, why people don't seem to really feel that there's some way of judging what's good, what's bad.







There is this large idea out there that abstract art, and modern art in general, has no standards, no truths.





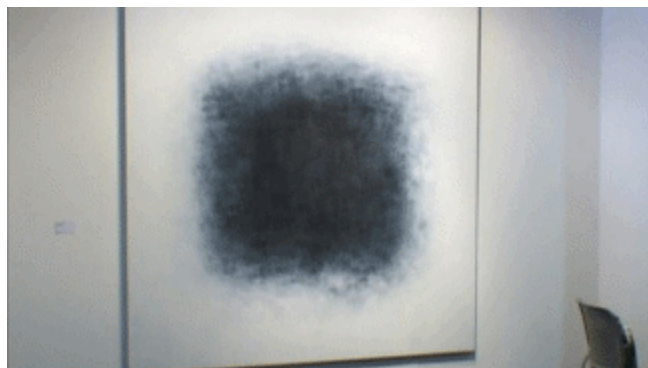
And that if a child can do it, that it, sort of, pulls the veil off this con game, and shows you that somebody who's 4 years old



can do something that's every bit as good

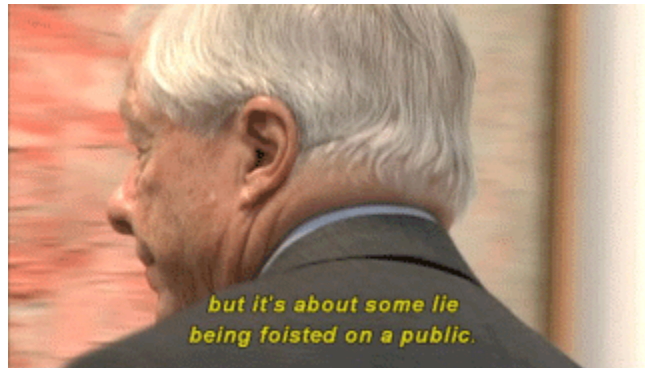


as what a famous artist who sells pictures for millions of dollars could do.

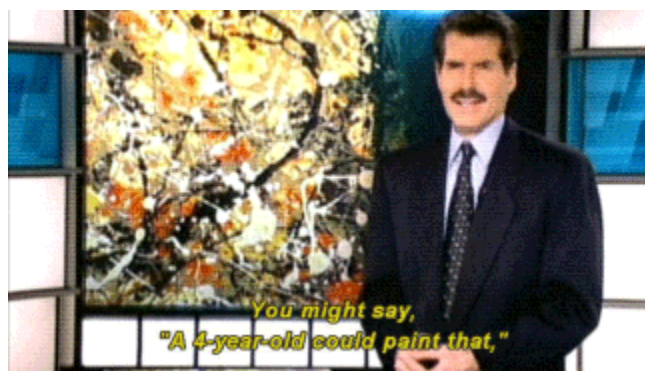




That idea that art is not really about some truth,



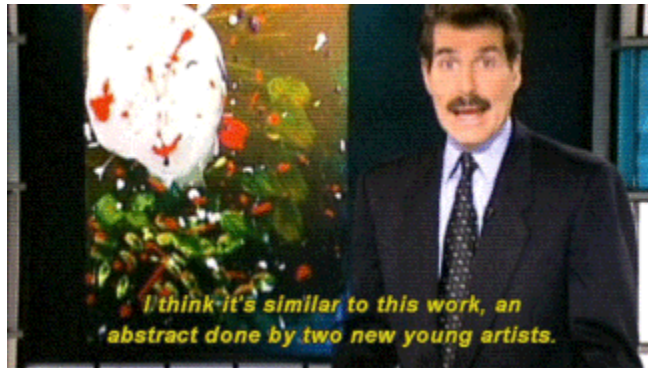
but it's about some lie being foisted on a public.



[Newsman] You might say, "A 4-year-old could paint that,"



but, in fact, it's a famous work of abstract art that sold for more than \$10 million.

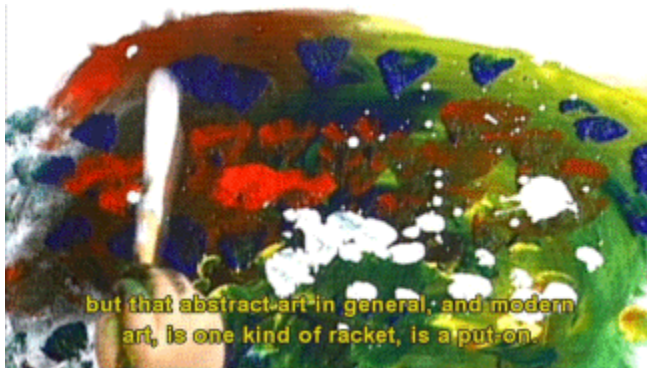


I think it's similar to this work, an abstract done by two new young artists.





[Michael Kimmelman, Chief Art Critic, The New York Times] There's a debunking quality to it, that this seems genuine and honest,

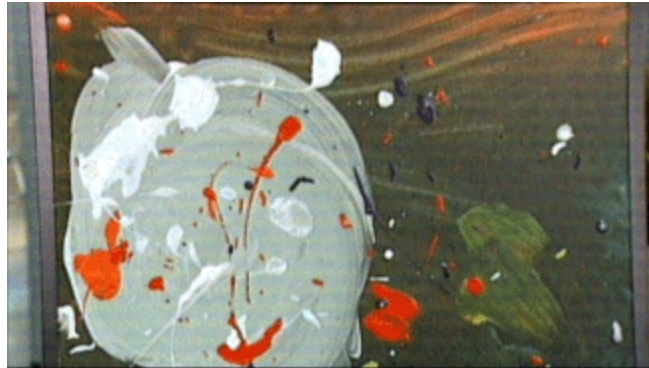


but that abstract art in general, and modern art, is one kind of racket, is a put-on.





[Newsman] He, and many others, love this work.



[Man] It's a competent execution of abstract expressionism.



[Newsman] This was done by a 4-year-old.



[Man] Okay, there you go.



[Newsman] But there you go, what? I mean, what makes it art, then?



[Michael Kimmelman, Chief Art Critic, The New York Times] If you take an artist like Pollock, you know, everyone basically figured this is the ultimate example of modern art gone crazy.



It's a guy dripping, splashing paint.



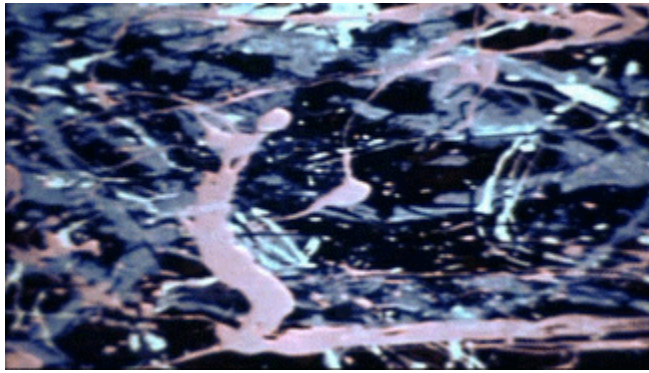
Pollock literally invented a whole new way of painting.



The photographs of him just dripping and splashing, walking around these canvases made it look that much more like he was really not an artist.



[Elizabeth Cohen, Columnist -- The Press & Sun Bulletin] My mother had a thing against Pollock.



She hated his paintings because she felt like every time she saw a Jackson Pollock painting, it was saying, "You're stupid and I'm not, and there's people smarter than you that get me."



She felt personally insulted by his paintings.





[Art World Sensation. Voice: Ed Herlihy] ... aping the intellectuals, in an art form that most mere humans can't even begin to comprehend.



[Michael Kimmelman, Chief Art Critic, The New York Times] If you put a paintbrush in the hand of any animal that has the ability to move something, it will produce something that looks like abstract art. It's the ultimate joke. A chimp could do it. An elephant could do it. It's ridiculous.



But money is the ultimate, sort of, distorting thing.



[Christie's] Good evening, ladies and gentlemen.



Welcome to Christie's, and to this evening's sale of post-war and contemporary art.

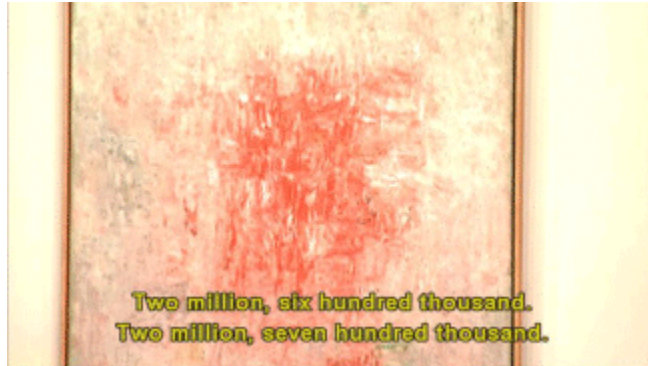


\$1 million to start it.





And \$1 million, the latest bid here, now. \$1 million.



Two million, six hundred thousand. Two million, seven hundred thousand.



Seven million, five hundred thousand. Seven million, six hundred thousand.

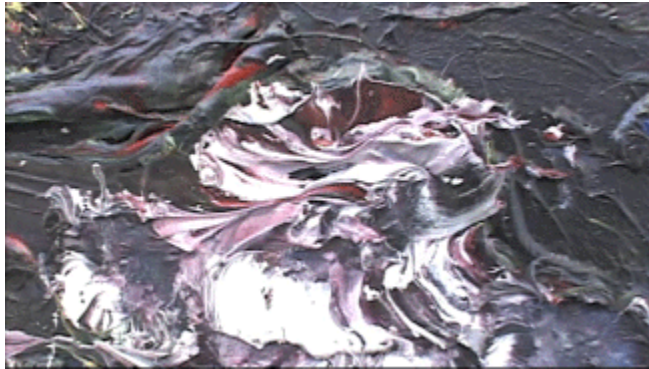


Fourteen million, five hundred thousand.



[Michael Kimmelman, Chief Art Critic, The New York Times] People just think you gotta be crazy to pay that kind of amount for what looks to me like something anybody could do.





[Christie's] For you, madam.



For you, sir.





For you, sir. Selling here, fair warning at \$20 million. Selling for \$20 million.



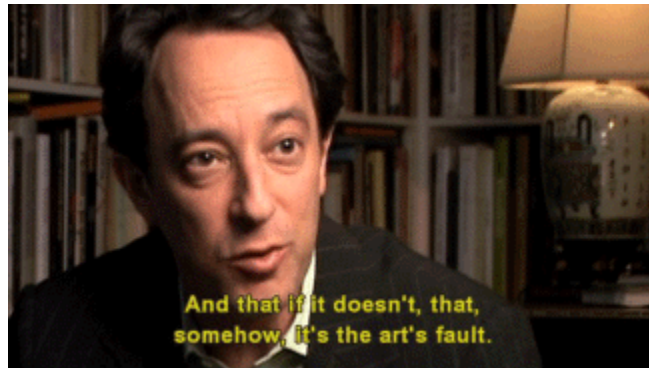


[Michael Kimmelman, Chief Art Critic, The New York Times] I think one of the fundamental problems that people have with art, because a lot of it used to be transparently clear,





it was telling a story, that there's some assumption that art has an obligation to explain itself to you.



And that if it doesn't, that, somehow, it's the art's fault.



But modernism wanted to tell a variety of stories.



Now, it continues to tell stories. There's narrative in all sorts of art.



If we're talking about, let's say, abstract painting, there are still stories being told.



They may be stories about the characters who made these pictures,



and that was the case with Pollock. He became this kind of mythic figure.

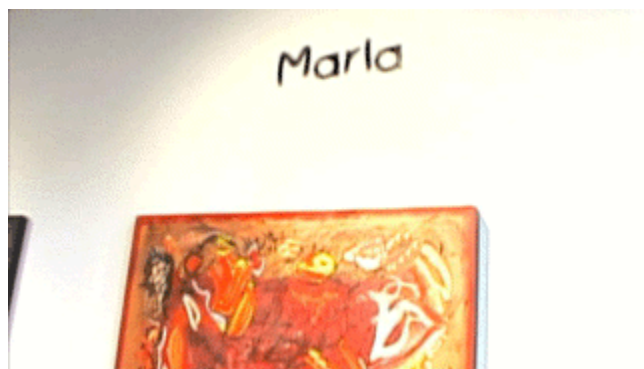


Or, in the case of Marla, they may be stories about some child.



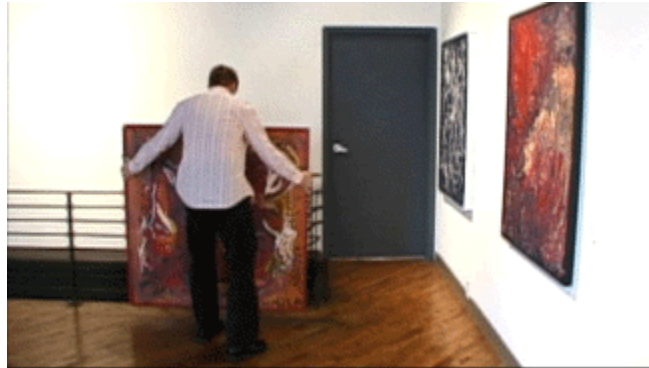


And that story may be what captures people's attention.





[Anthony Brunelli, Gallery Owner] This show just ended. This show is coming down,



which is really sad, I mean, because it's so beautiful.



I'm just really satisfied with the amount of attention she's getting



all over the world.



Probably the one place that they haven't done anything is Iraq.



Everybody kept saying, "Tomorrow it will slow down, or next week it will slow down." It really hasn't slowed down a bit. I mean, she's sold out completely, so there are no paintings available.



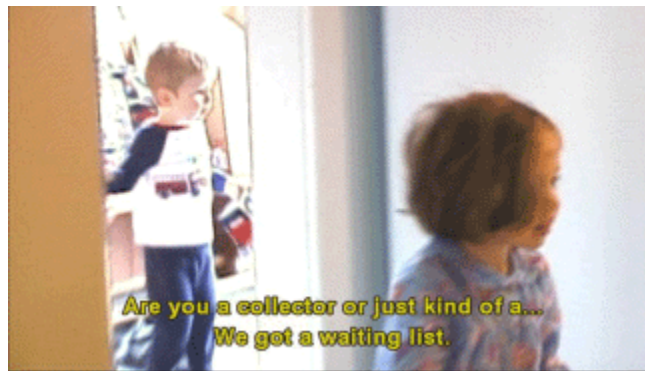
We have a list of over 70 people right now that want her paintings, that are from all over the United States, and all over the world. Taking all the red dots off.



It's the most red dots I've ever had on a wall.



That means it's sold.



[Mark Olmstead, Marla's father] [On the phone] Are you a collector or just kind of a ... We got a waiting list.



[Anthony Brunelli, Gallery Owner] If you figure all 70 people, right now, at this point, wanted a painting, I don't know how long it would take her to do it.



And I don't know if she could even meet the demand.



You know, Mark has to be there to help her, to prepare and set things up. It's really a team, in an essence, that you can't just say, "Okay, Marla, go off and paint," because it's just not something that can happen to a 4-year-old.



Otherwise, she'd be painting walls. We wouldn't be able to sell the walls.



[Laura Olmstead, Marla's mother] I should call Mark and tell him I'm going to be a little late.



Hi, it's me. I'm going to be a little late. We're going to do a quick interview. So I'll be home around 1:30, quarter of two. Bye.



[To Toll Man] Thank you.

[Amir Bar-Lev] Have things let up much since when we saw you last?



[Laura Olmstead, Marla's mother] It's hard for me to even wrap my brain around what's happening now.



Even ... I'm going to say in the past four or five days, I finally made peace with what my life and my daughter's life is right now. The fact that my daughter is, like, a semi-famous person, and the center of attention and things like that. And that, to me, is so much to deal with.



[Mark Olmstead, Marla's father] [On the phone] I told my friends, I said, "You guys want to make an investment? Marla's going to be selling her paintings."



This is when she did the first show in August.



[Laura Olmstead, Marla's mother] It's hard because my husband and I work opposite shifts, and there's not a lot of time to communicate with each other during the week. So we almost have to have little policies in place, because, almost always, one of us is confronted alone with making a decision.



[Mark Olmstead, Marla's father] [On the phone] We got called by Crayola last week. They're like, "We'd like to maybe use Marla in something, or do something with her, commercial-wise." And Laura's like, "I don't think that's Marla."



[Laura Olmstead, Marla's mother] So we're kind of deciding the things that we think are best, and deciding what's an absolute no. Absolute no's are usually, like, media in the house. People wanting to film her paint, from news organizations, things like that.



You know, people that blow into your life, are here for half a day, and blow out. And you never hear from them again.



Are we going to make our child uncomfortable for that? No. It's not worth it.



[Mark Olmstead, Marla's father] [On the phone] That's how the first few paintings sold, was that people heard the story about Marla on the dining room table, in her diaper, painting. And they loved the story as much as they loved the art.



[Zane] When I was a baby, I ...



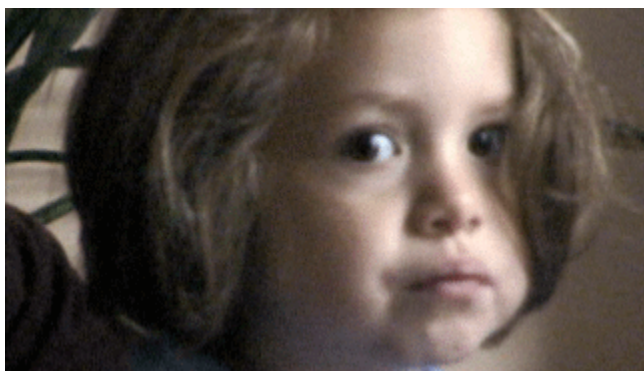
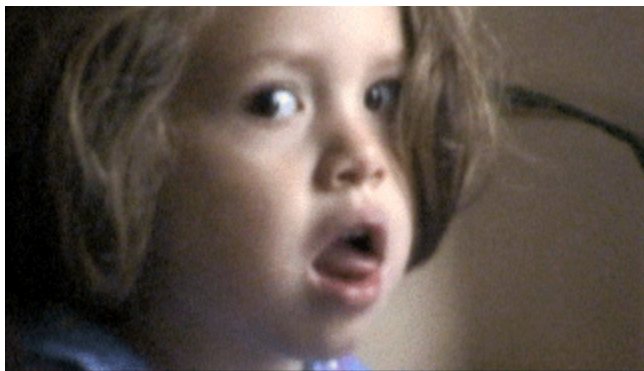
When I was at the hospital ...



When I was in mommy's tummy,



I was painting on the table.



[Laura Olmstead, Marla's mother] All of a sudden there's been this huge amount of pressure just put on you to continue. And I don't know if that's in her.



Painting, to her, is really, really natural, and we need to keep it as natural as we can. And once all this importance is placed on it by other people, I think it's going to take away some of the joy she gets from it.



[Mark Olmstead, Marla's father] We'll have to figure all of that out. She couldn't possibly produce what the demand is right now. The demand may subside somewhat, which I guess it will. We'll see what happens after 60 Minutes and everything else.



[Laura Olmstead, Marla's mother] You know, Mark deals with it a lot better. Or he's a lot more comfortable with all these ideas.



He doesn't see any bad side to it at all.

[Mark Olmstead, Marla's father] Do you want to do some painting or no?

[Marla] No.



[Mark Olmstead, Marla's father] Well, Daddy will set ... I'll set everything up. If you don't want to paint, you don't have to. Or you can do it, if you want to.



We need to get your little outfit.



Where did we put your little denim dress?

[Marla] I don't know.



[Mark Olmstead, Marla's father] You can do whatever you want with those paints.



[Laura Olmstead, Marla's mother] She's an uncomfortable kid, in general, and a sensitive kid. Her teachers told me she's the quietest one in the class.



She doesn't loosen up very easily. You know, she's just a little introverted.



[Mark Olmstead, Marla's father] That's a lot of paint.



[Laura Olmstead, Marla's mother] When she paints is maybe one of the only times when you just see her fully release herself.

[Marla] What color did it make? Is it green?

[Mark Olmstead, Marla's father] Looks green to me.



[Laura Olmstead, Marla's mother] She's at her most natural when there's no camera, and she's not the center of the attention. Once you measure something, you alter it. And this is true, in a really big way, with a 4-year-old painting.



[Marla] Is it green enough now?



[Mark Olmstead, Marla's father] Oh, that's nice.



This is what happened last time we shot.

[Marla] Here!

[Mark Olmstead, Marla's father] This is not ... no, this is not normal. Oh, man.



You guys are killing me.



[Amir Bar-Lev] I'm sorry.

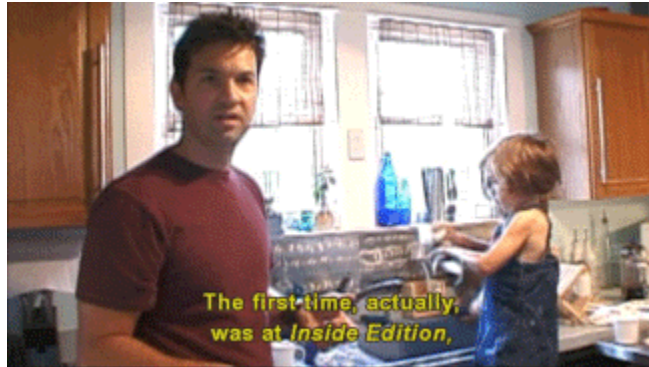


[Mark Olmstead, Marla's father] No, that's all right. I get frustrated when she does it, because the only time she reacts ...



differently is when the camera is in front of her.





The first time, actually,
was at *Inside Edition*,

The first time, actually, was at Inside Edition, where they all just ... She did exactly the same thing.



She poured paint on top of paint,
on top of paint, which she does,

She poured paint on top of paint, on top of paint, which she does, but usually she goes at it with a spatula or whatever.



Right, baby?



She's still oblivious to it, doesn't care.



And you know what?



She'll go back at it and make ... She'll just go over it and make it nice, in all likelihood. At least, that's what I've seen.

[Marla] I'm still messy, I'm still messy.

[Mark Olmstead, Marla's father] But it's rare that she gets to the mud point.



[Laura Olmstead, Marla's mother] I don't know if this creativity is just a normal part of what a 4-year-old does. I don't know. I'm not one of those people who feels like she is a prodigy. And I don't feel like she's not. I have the agnostic view of it. I just choose not to think of it. I appreciate that the art is beautiful, but I can't even think beyond that. So it's probably a defense mechanism.



[Elizabeth Cohen, Columnist -- The Press & Sun Bulletin] I remember the first time I met Laura, she said, "My daughter is not a child prodigy." She hated that word, "prodigy." Because she could sense, just through pure instinct, that it was a very fine line between prodigy and freak.





[Michael Kimmelman, Chief Art Critic, The New York Times] The kind of appeal of a figure like Marla ties into our bizarre obsession with child prodigies. This fascination we have with the child who somehow exceeds all conceivable human expectations.

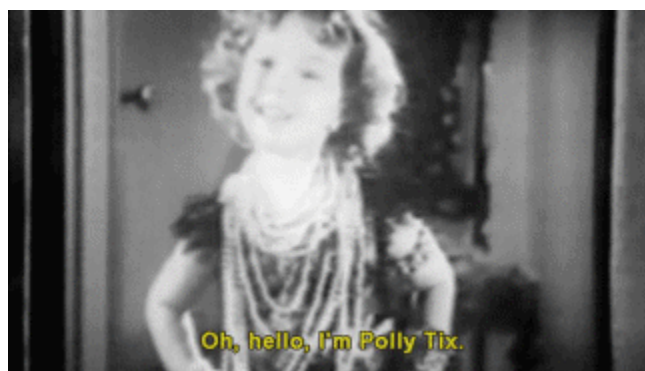




If a kid seems to be performing on an adult level, then it's like a magic trick.



[Elizabeth Cohen, Columnist -- The Press & Sun Bulletin] There's something charming about seeing a child masquerading as an adult.



[Shirley Temple] Oh, hello, I'm Polly Tix.



Boss Flynt Eye sent me over
to entertain you.

Boss Flynt Eye sent me over to entertain you.



Everybody likes it when a little kid dresses
in grownup clothes, in their parent's outfit.

[Elizabeth Cohen, Columnist -- The Press & Sun Bulletin] Everybody likes it when a little kid dresses in grownup clothes, in their parent's outfit.





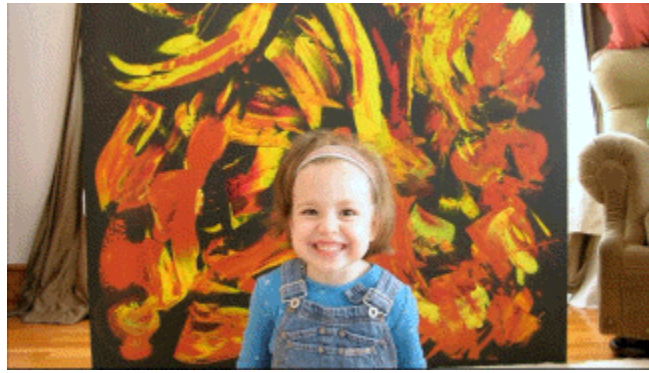
And this is a child masquerading as an adult, through painting.



There are very adult moments in Marla's paintings, which I think is why people like them.



They're really big, very bold, colorful.



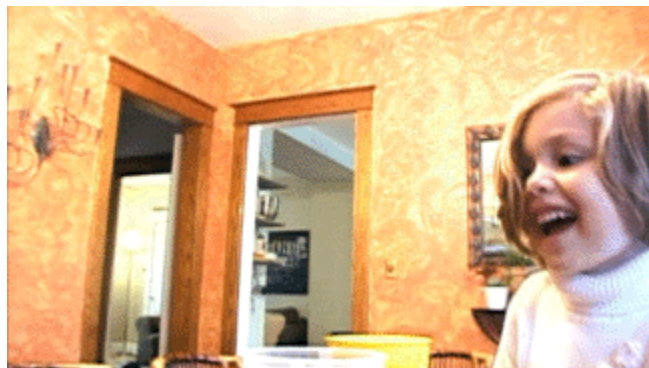
They're just so grown-up and mature.



[Jackie Wescott, Marla Collector] I don't know what to tell you. I'll probably start to cry.



I wish I could capture the spirit that I had when I was a child, those wonderful, blissful moments.





To be innocent. That's what it was like to be a child.



I would give anything to have that back again. So that's what Marla has right now.



[To her students] Any questions?



I've had my own art school for 23 years. I teach a lot of adults, a lot of children, but I've never seen anything like this.



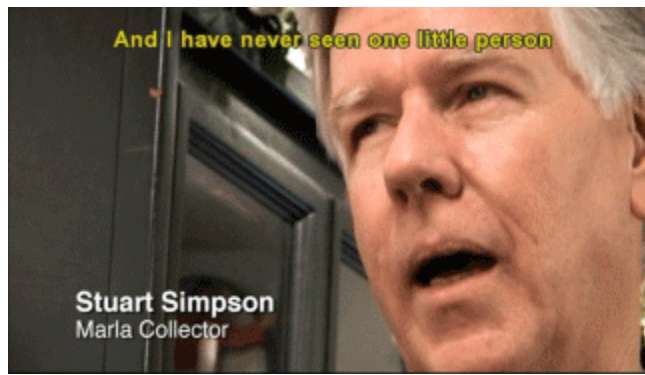
I think that she definitely has a gift. Something that's very advanced, that I really can't explain. You know, such as Mozart. In fact, Mark had asked me if I would want to teach his daughter, and I said "No, not at all."



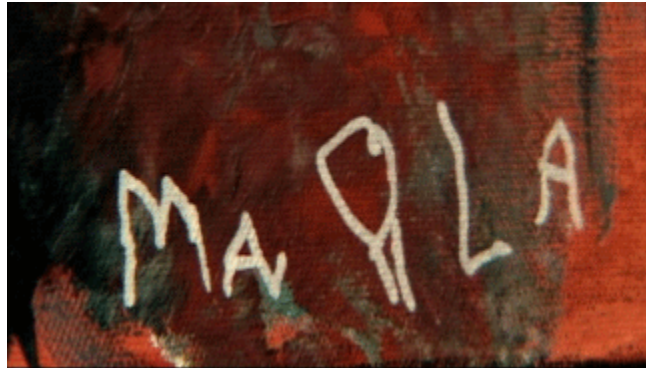
Why mess with something that's so wonderful?



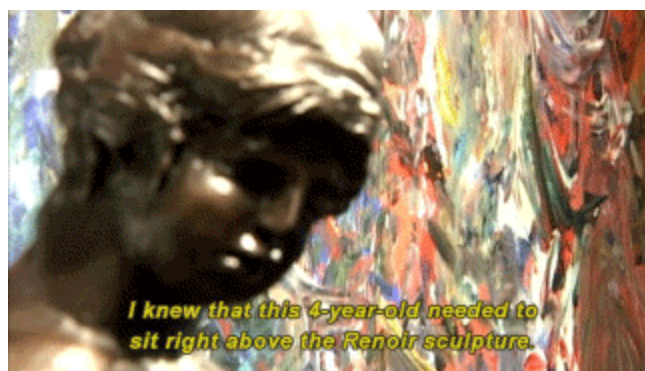
[Stuart Simpson, Marla Collector] I'm 60. I've been around the block. I've been in and out of art and galleries and stuff all of my life.



And I have never seen one little person affect the art community, and people around the world, as much as this little girl has done, and continues to do.



When I bought the paintings, I knew exactly where they were going to go. And my wife agreed.



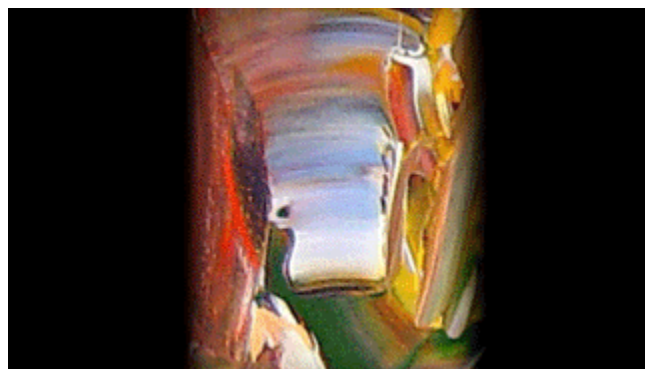
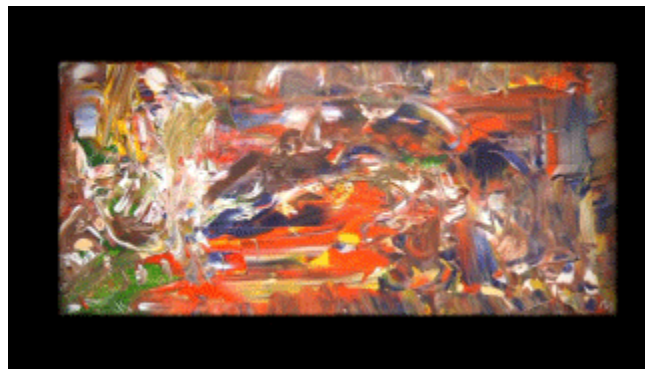
I knew that this 4-year-old needed to sit right about the Renoir sculpture.



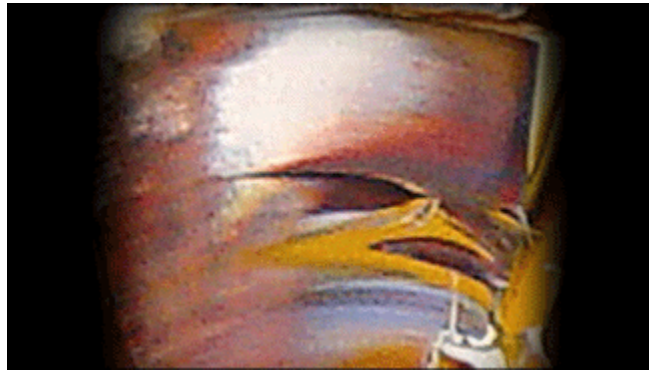
So we have the young master and the old master, all in the same corner and just kind of co-mingling.



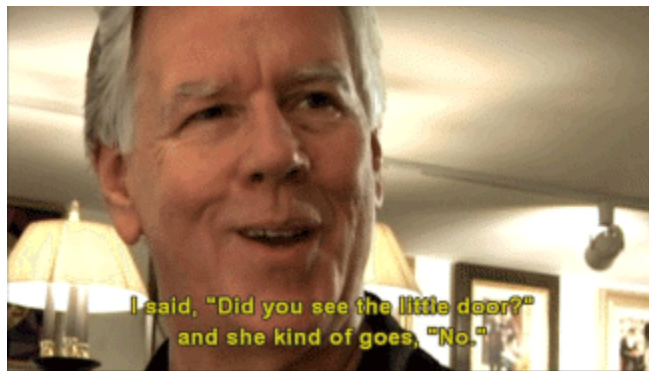
Truth be known, I would have paid any price for Bottom Feeder. I was that much in love with it.



What I love about Bottom Feeder is there's a green pathway leading up to a blue door, and on the left side, you can see there's a person looking out into this blue sky. And on the other side, on the right side of the doorframe, there's another person looking back in.



And then, I looked a little more closely and up above the doorframe, the doorjamb, you can see a very clear baby's face, with a forehead and the nose and the eyes, like a sonogram. I don't know what that means. I'm not sure. I mean, I have my own spiritual thoughts about it. I asked about it, at the time that Marla was there.

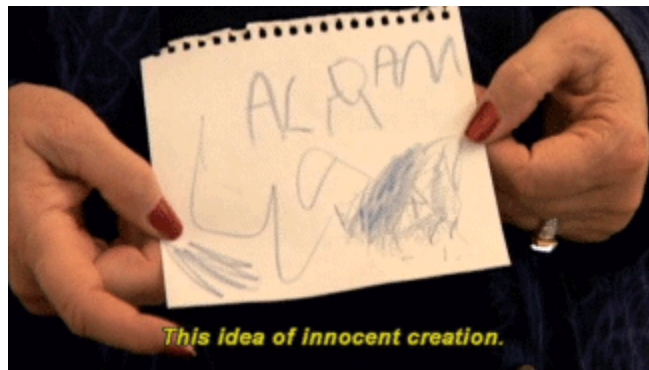


I said, "Did you see the little door?" and she kind of goes, "No." Marla, you know. And then off she goes.





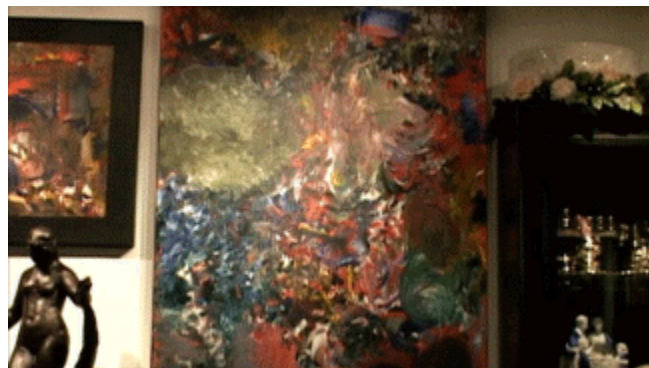
[Michael Kimmelman, Chief Art Critic, The New York Times] There's a spiritual element to it, which appeals to people.

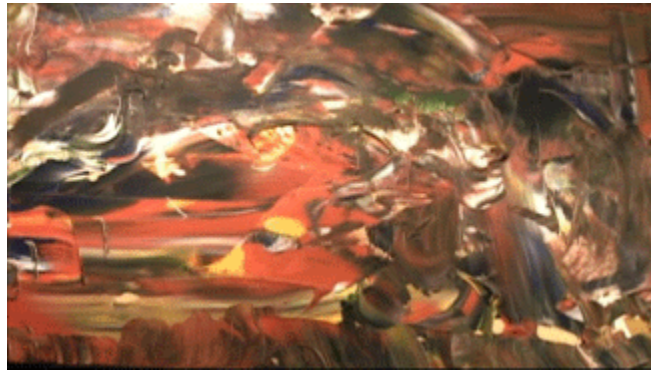


The idea of innocent creation.



People could read all sorts of things into her pictures, that there was some force at work, something larger than even Marla.





So this child is speaking almost as a medium.



And her innocence also says something about the ultimate cynicism of the art world.





There's a lot of art that's been made, especially in the modern era, which is about alienating its viewership.



The idea of actually, kind of, sticking it to the very people who are supposed to be patronizing it.





Probably the worst thing you can say about an artist is everything this artist does is joyous and wonderful, and openhearted and just simple and free.



In certain circles, that might sound like you're not serious.

I think, probably, some of the appeal, though, to a large public, of the Marlas of the world, is that it seems pure, innocent joy,



no cynicism, no irony, no sarcasm.



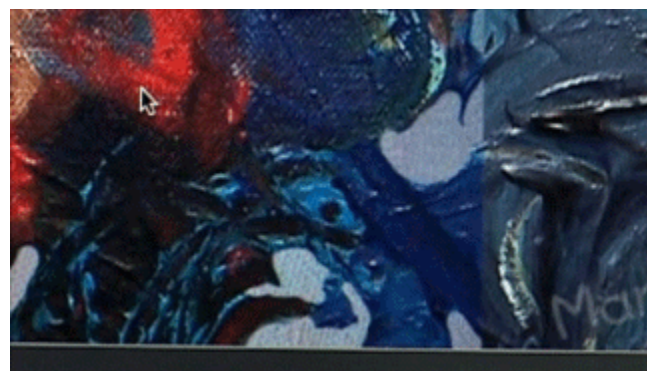
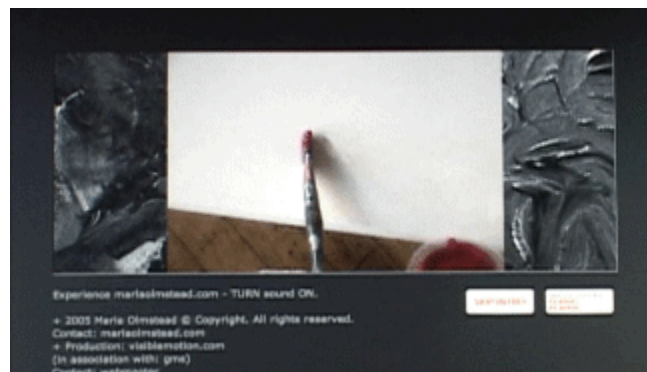
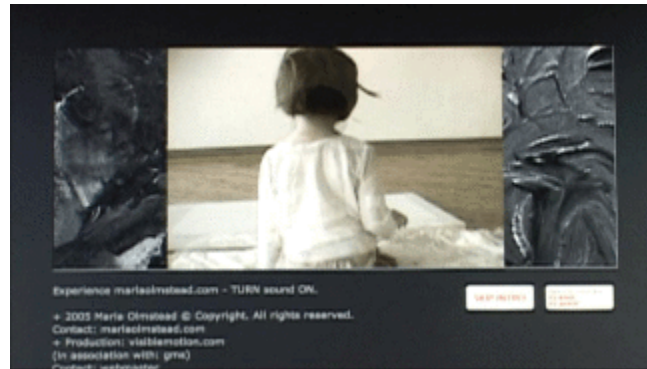
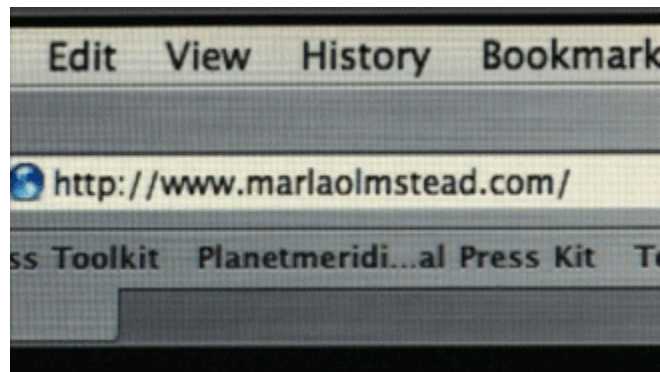
None of that kind of stuff that goes along with modern art.

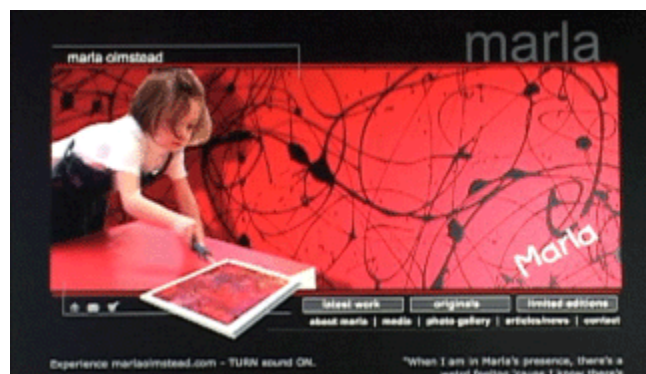
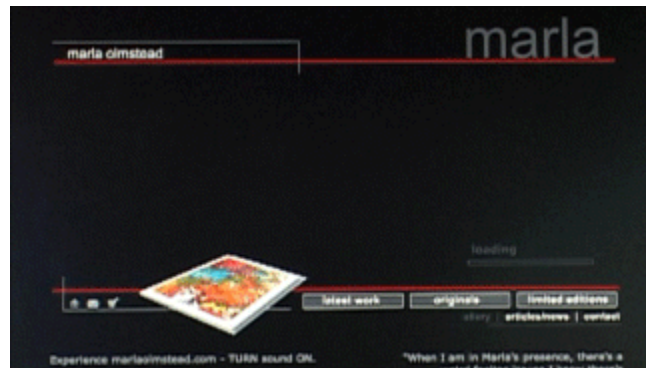
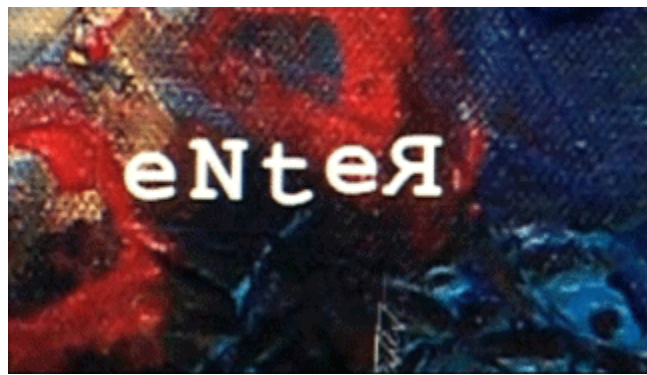


You know, nobody's saying, "Fuck you," in this picture.

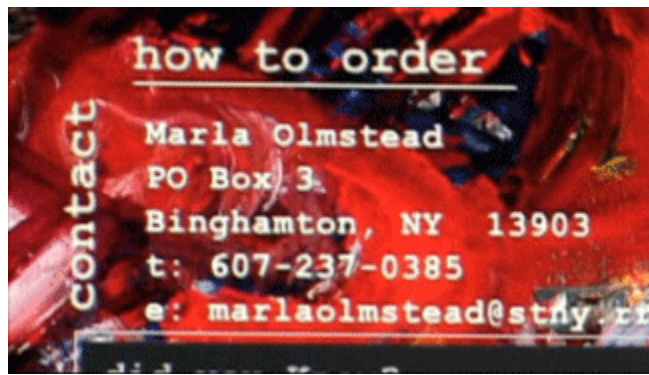


They're just saying, "I'm a happy girl who loves painting."





[Elizabeth Cohen, Columnist -- The Press & Sun Bulletin] I remember one time I talked to him on the phone ...



and I was like, "Anthony, what's going on?"



And he said, "We're doing 24-hour Marla here. It's all about Marla now."



[Mark Olmstead, Marla's father] Hey, we're in New York. New York City. Welcome to the Big Apple.



[Zane] No, not the big apple.

[Mark Olmstead, Marla's father] The big what? The big zucchini? What is this called?

[Zane] New York City. New York City.



[Anthony Brunelli, Gallery Owner] None of us, neither the parents, Mark and Laura, nor myself ...



had really anticipated this. The average in New York City for oil paintings is around \$5,000 to \$8,000.



The fact that Marla is already up to \$15,000, in a short period of time, is really quite amazing.



She's literally double of what the average is.

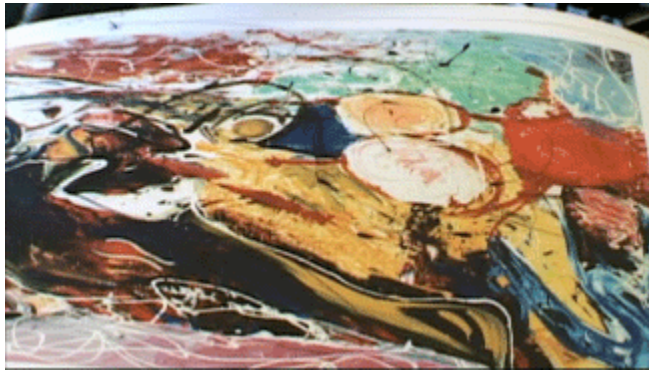


There's been a ton of people that said that they would love one, but they can't afford it, or if we ever did prints.



So we're going to do prints of Marla's work now.





So that's a great way to reach a wider audience, and to fulfill the need that people have to have one of her works in their collections.



[Man] One, two, three.



Attagirl. Okay, that's it.

[Anthony Brunelli, Gallery Owner] So ... I mean, it's also another way for Marla, herself, to make some money.



In a matter of time, she's going to be selling paintings for a hundred thousand dollars.

In a matter of time, she's going to be selling paintings for a hundred thousand dollars. You know, I can't see it not happening.

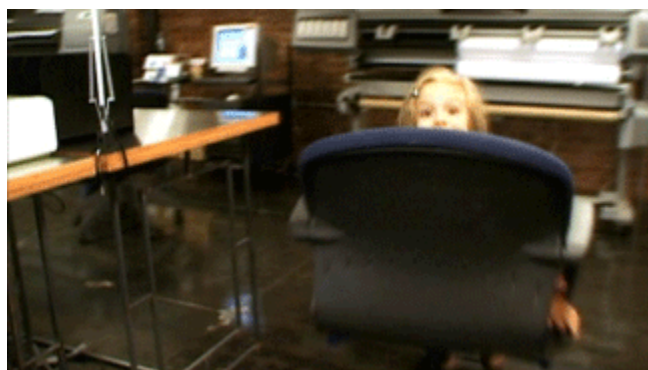


It could be something that, 20, 30 years from now, they become priceless.



They become such a thing like a Warhol.

They become such a thing like a Warhol.



She has that ability.



[Laura Olmstead, Marla's mother] I'm trying to picture her as an 18-year-old, and what she will have wanted me to do.



Will she have wanted to be on The Today Show? I don't know.



[Woman] Two car seats in the limo. That deserves a photo. That deserves a photo.



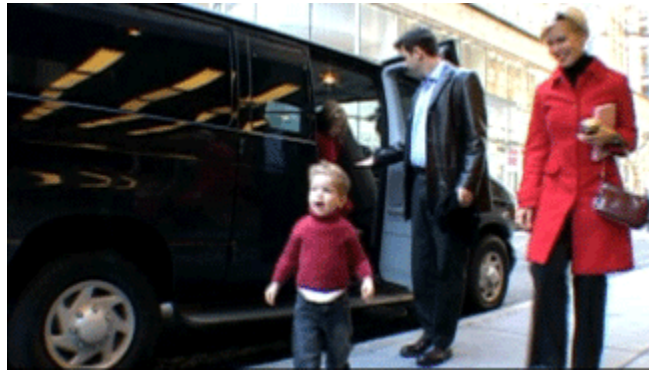
[Mark Olmstead, Marla's father] We're in the big limo. We've become accustomed to the limousine rides with car seats.



[Woman] Hi.



[Mark Olmstead, Marla's father] You like the limo, honey? Zane, do you like the limo?



[Laura Olmstead, Marla's mother] Mark's always wanted to be in the spotlight, and Tony's always wanted to be in the spotlight. I've always been more comfortable on the side.



And giving an interview, "That's enough, we don't need to do any more."



It's ridiculous. Give us a break."



And the guys are like, "Come on, do it, do it, do it."



[Anthony Brunelli, Gallery Owner] There were a few situations where, you know, we've talked about it, and we're like, "Okay, well, we think this is a good idea."



We just have to figure out a way to approach Laura with it, and spin it in such a way that she understands it."



[Woman] They're going to ask you questions that we've asked you on the phone.



Jane's going to say things like, "What did you think when you saw her first picture?"



Did you think it was extraordinary? Did she get better as she painted more?"





[Mark Olmstead, Marla's father] These kids have been in New York City, over the past month-and-a-half, three times. Which is pretty cool. A lot of these experiences are just awesome. We're doing our best to document everything.



Oh, that's a good smile right there.



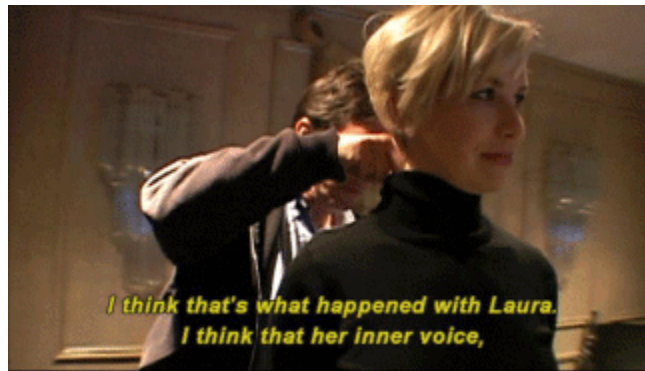
[Laura Olmstead, Marla's mother] It's actually kind of a comfort, because now when we go do these things, we sort of know what we're doing.

[Amir Bar-Lev] Would you consider it fun?



[Laura Olmstead, Marla's mother] No.

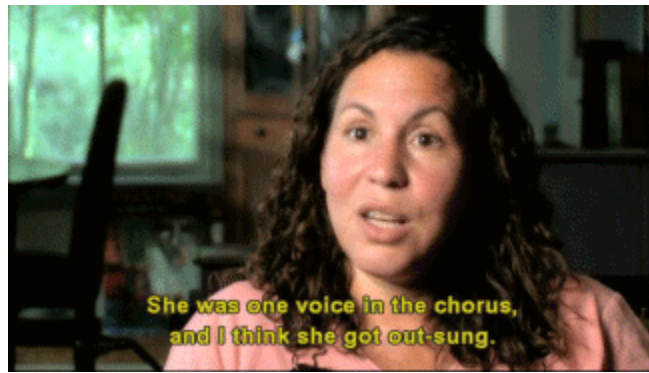
[Elizabeth Cohen, Columnist -- The Press & Sun Bulletin] You know how sometimes you have a feeling, an instinctive feeling, and you don't follow it? And then sure enough, down the line, you know your instinct was right?



I think that's what happened with Laura. I think that her inner voice, her inner mother, was saying, "Let's don't go down this road."



And she got, kind of, talked into it by everybody around her.



She was one voice in the chorus, and I think she got out-sung.



[Jane Pauley] Parents, Laura and Mark, are up here with me.



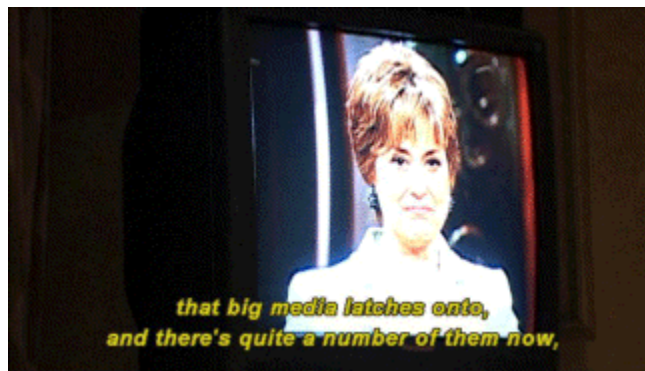
Wow, your heads must be spinning.



[Laura Olmstead, Marla's mother] That's true. They are.



[Elizabeth Cohen, Columnist -- The Press & Sun Bulletin] The way I saw the Marla story was, it was one of those stories ...



that big media latches onto, and there's quite a number of them now, because they have to fill time and sell advertisement.



It's like a hungry monster. It can't get fed enough.

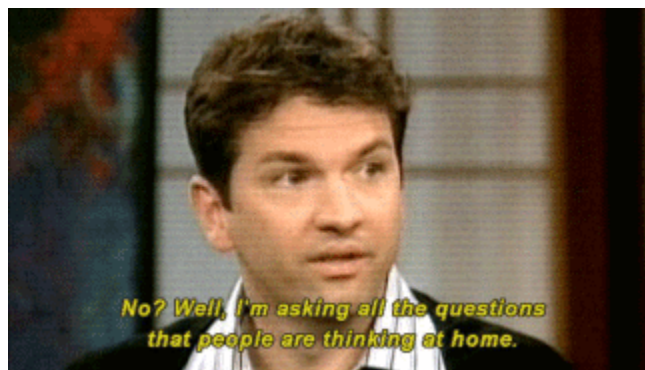


So a story like this comes along, this is lunch. This is what they wait for.

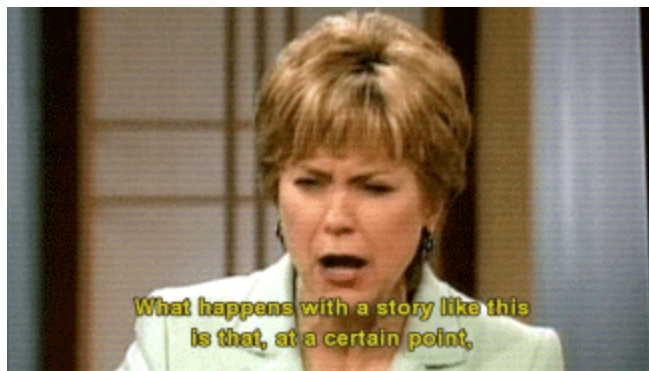


[Jane Pauley] Do you help her paint?

[Mark Olmstead, Marla's father] No.



[Jane Pauley] No? Well, I'm asking all the questions that people are thinking at home.



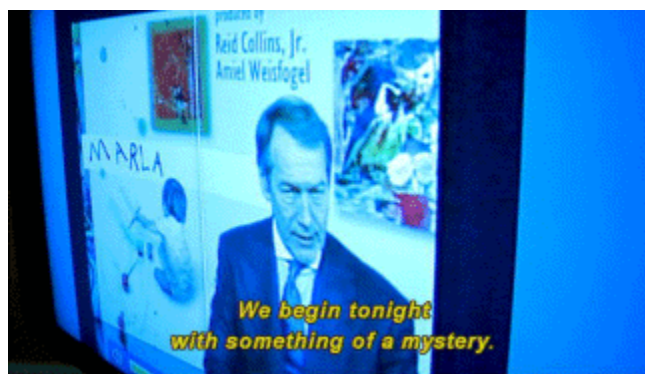
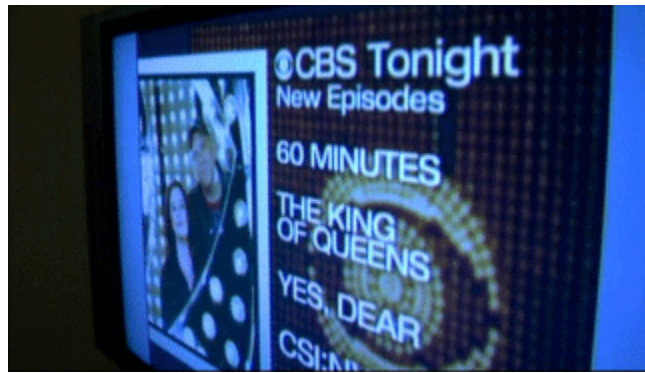
[Elizabeth Cohen, Columnist -- The Press & Sun Bulletin] What happens with a story like this is that, at a certain point, because of the nature of media, the story itself has to change to maintain the interest of the public.



I think that's what Laura was afraid of.



February 23, 2005



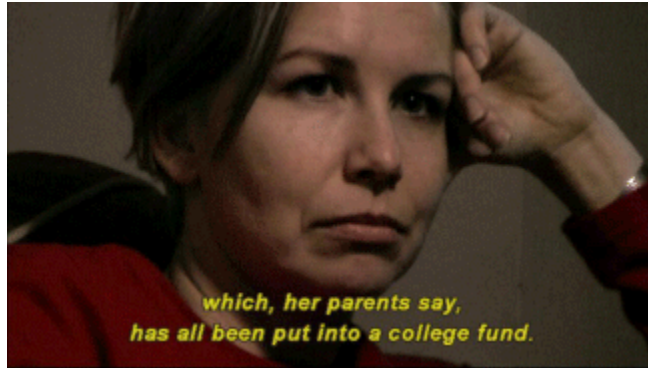
[Charlie Rose, 60 Minutes] We begin tonight with something of a mystery.



It involves a 4-year-old girl who lives in Binghamton, New York. Her name is Marla Olmstead, and in most ways she is just like any child her age. She goes to pre-school, plays with dolls, and she loves to draw and paint. But Marla's paintings end up in homes across the country.



She has already earned more than \$300,000 ...

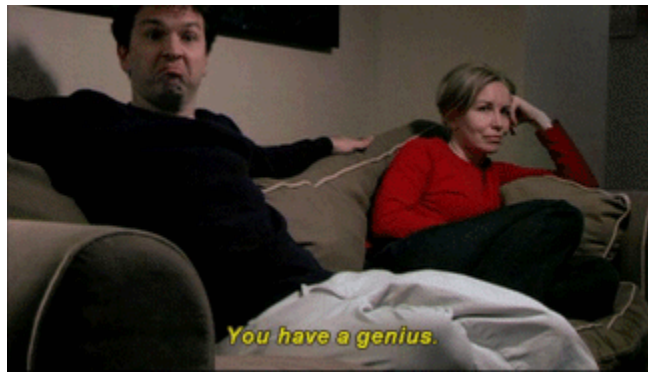


which, her parents say, has all been put into a college fund.



With some 200 buyers on her waiting list, Marla Olmstead stands to make millions. So, just who is the little girl behind ...

Anthony Brunelli began hosting shows for Marla. So what do we have here?

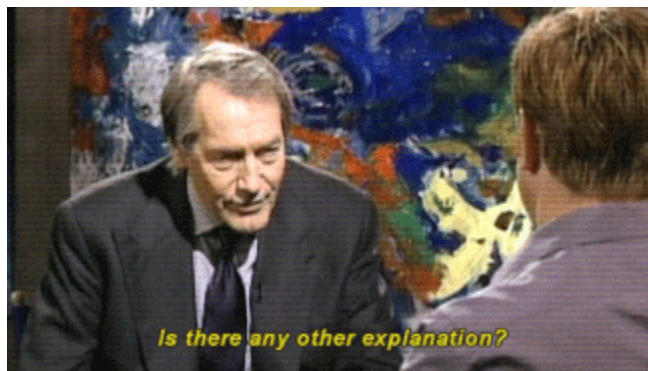


[Anthony Brunelli, Gallery Owner] You have a genius.

[Charlie Rose, 60 Minutes] A genius?

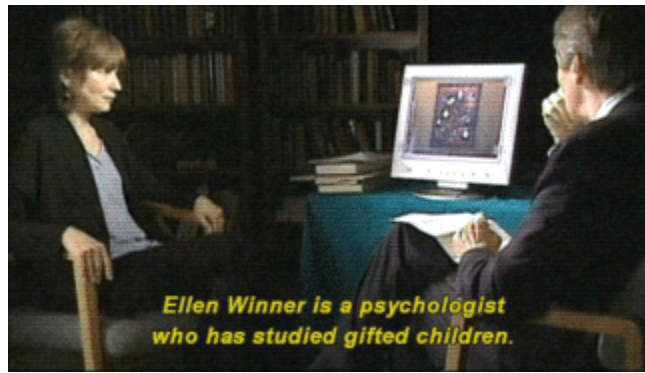


[Anthony Brunelli, Gallery Owner] Yeah.

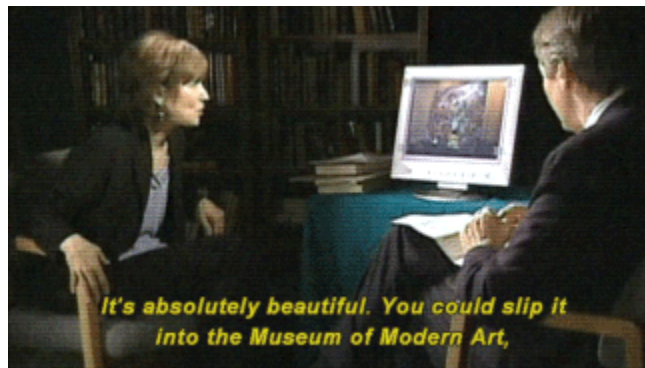


[Charlie Rose, 60 Minutes] Is there any other explanation?





Ellen Winner is a psychologist who has studied gifted children. We showed her several of Marla's works.



[Ellen Winner, Psychologist] It's absolutely beautiful. You could slip it into the Museum of Modern Art

...



and absolutely get away with it.

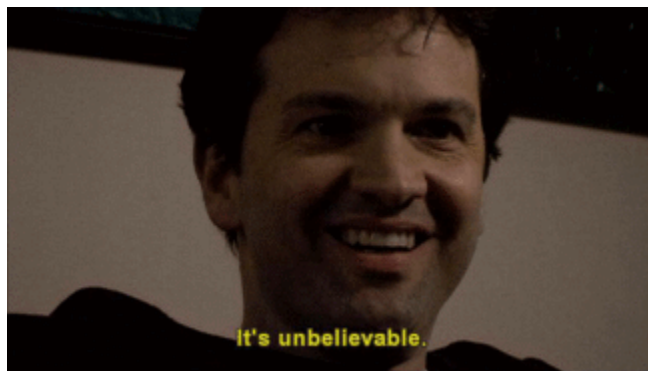


[Charlie Rose, 60 Minutes] Are you serious?

[Ellen Winner, Psychologist] I think you could.



[Charlie Rose, 60 Minutes] People would say it belongs here. This is the work of a gifted artist.



[Mark Olmstead, Marla's father] It's unbelievable.

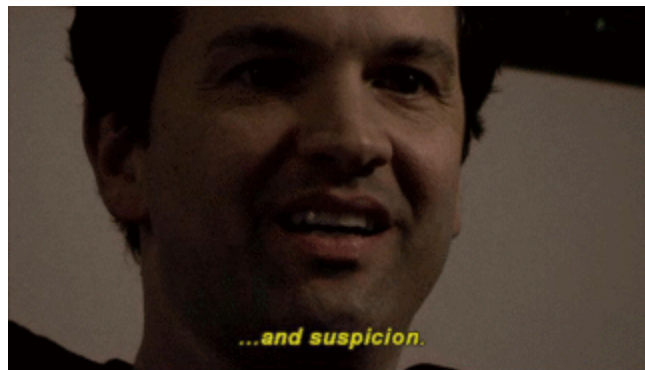


[Charlie Rose, 60 Minutes] We showed her more than 50 minutes of videotape shot by us, and by Marla's parents.



Winner's enthusiasm immediately turned to concern ...

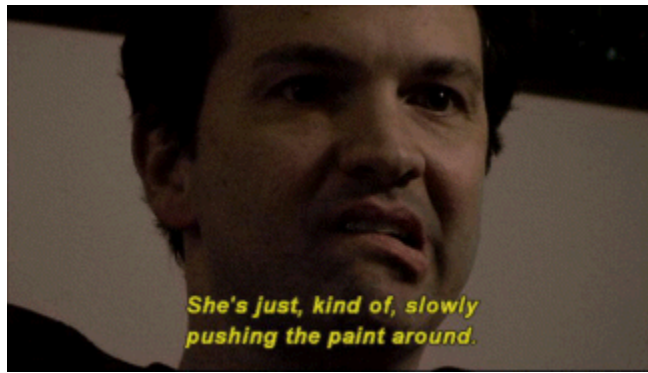
[Ellen Winner, Psychologist] This is eye opening to me to see her actually painting.



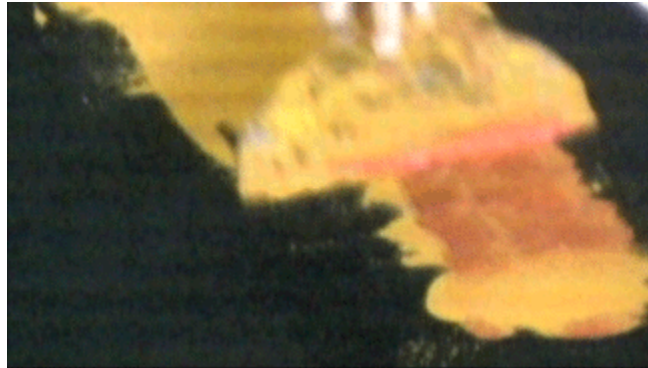
[Charlie Rose, 60 Minutes] ... and suspicion. Eye-opening in what way?



[Ellen Winner, Psychologist] Because she's not doing anything that a normal child wouldn't do.



She's just, kind of, slowly pushing the paint around.



[Charlie Rose, 60 Minutes] After our interview, the Olmsteads agreed to let us place a concealed camera where Marla paints, so she wouldn't be distracted by its presence.



It took Marla about five hours of painting



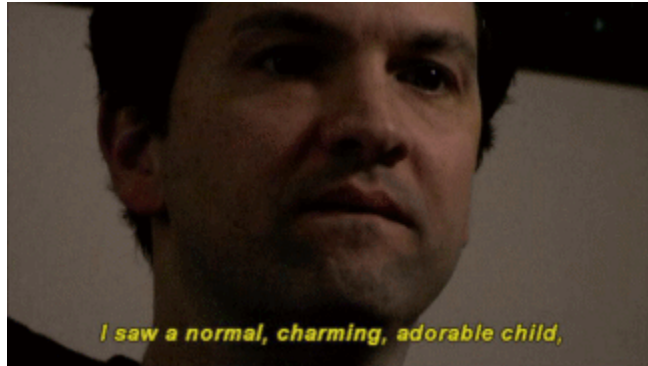
spread over the course of a month to come to this point.



[Mark Olmstead, Marla's father] It's not bad.



[Ellen Winner, Psychologist] I saw no evidence that she was a child prodigy in painting.



I saw a normal, charming, adorable child, painting the way pre-school children paint. Except that she had a coach who kept her going.



[Charlie Rose, 60 Minutes] That coach is Marla's father, who's often present when Marla paints. He can be heard on this tape, directing her, sometimes sternly.



[Mark Olmstead, Marla's father, on TV] Paint the red! Paint the red! You're driving me crazy. Paint the red!

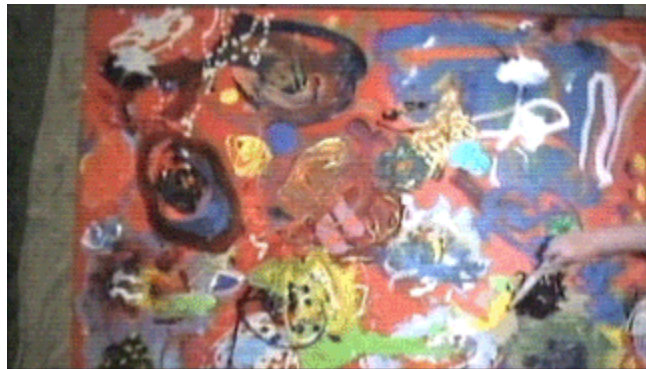


[Mark Olmstead, Marla's father] "You're driving me crazy. Paint the red.

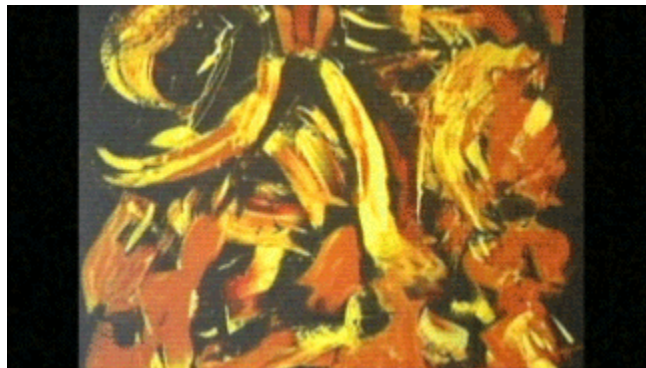
[Mark Olmstead, Marla's father, on TV] If you paint, honey, like you were ...

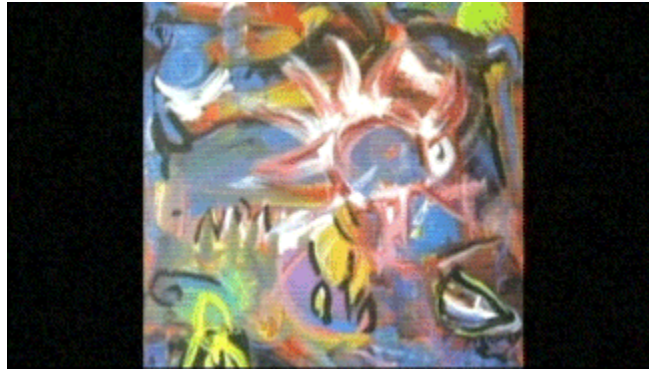
[Marla] Please!

[Mark Olmstead, Marla's father, on TV] This is not the way it should be.

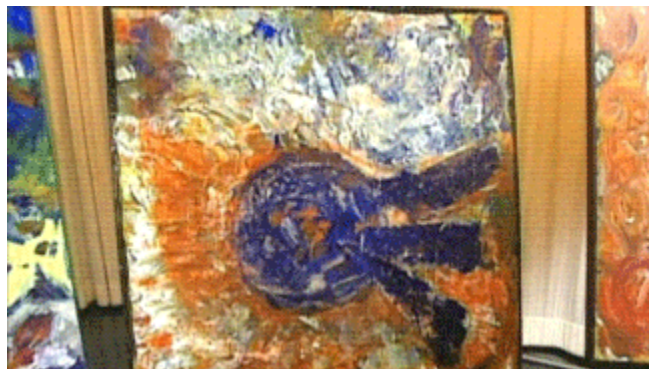
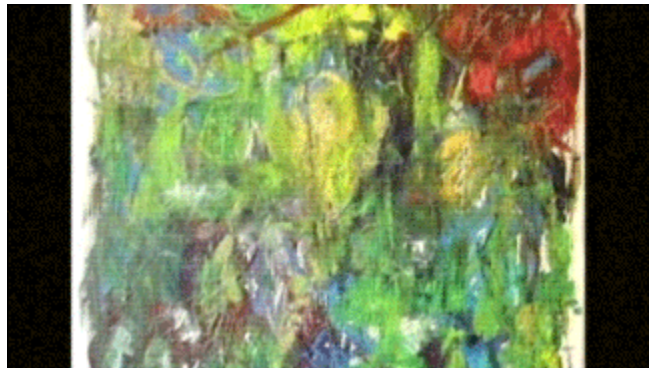


[Charlie Rose, 60 Minutes] Her parents told us this painting was a struggle for their daughter, saying she seemed stuck.





Still, during the month or so that the hidden camera was in their home, they claim Marla was able to finish these four other paintings off-camera, with no problems at all.





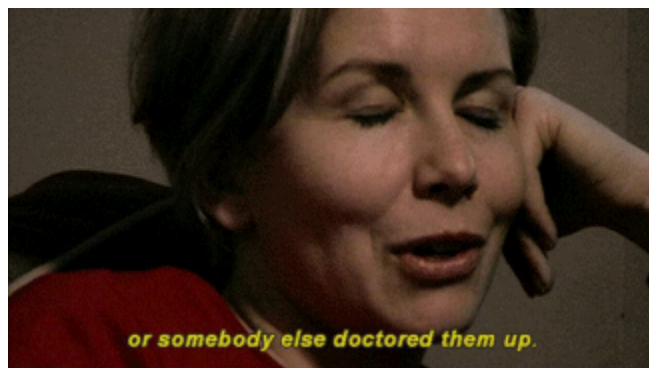
Ellen Winner also believes the painting captured on our tape is less polished than some of Marla's previous works. How do you explain that difference?



[Ellen Winner, Psychologist] Well, I can only speculate.



I don't see Marla as having made, or at least completed, the more polished-looking paintings, because they look like a different painter. Either somebody else painted them, start to finish ...



or somebody else doctored them up.



Or Marla just miraculously paints in a completely different way ...



than we see on her home video.



[Charlie Rose, 60 Minutes] Marla is having her first West Coast gallery opening later this week ...



and it will include this painting, captured on our hidden camera ...



which has already been sold for \$9,000.



[60 Minutes: King of Queens, Next]



[Elizabeth Cohen, Columnist -- The Press & Sun Bulletin] I was pretty shocked.



It was really ugly journalism.



To think that Charlie Rose would spend a hour on network television ...



undoing someone who is 4 years old, and her family.



You've got nothing better to put on a primetime news show?



[Laura Olmstead, Marla's mother] You know, when she says, "Your kid's not a prodigy," and I was like, "Thank God."



[Elizabeth Cohen, Columnist -- The Press & Sun Bulletin] What kind of thing is this for a family to go through?



[Laura Olmstead, Marla's mother] But it is what it is.



[Elizabeth Cohen, Columnist -- The Press & Sun Bulletin] They really were in over their heads.



And I'm sure they must feel a little nervous, now, about you. You know? I mean, it's kind of similar.



[Elizabeth Cohen, in different dress, different location] I don't think anybody really knows what you're going to do with the story.



Stuart Gallery, Los Angeles, CA



[Anthony Brunelli, Gallery Owner] We've had this show planned in L.A. for a couple months.



So it's really ironic that the Wednesday before the opening is this 60 Minutes footage.



I think it will be fun. There will be a kind of a festive, party atmosphere.



We're not going into this with negative attitudes. We're going into this looking at it as partial vacation, getting away. What a great time to get away.



[Mark Olmstead, Marla's father] We're looking forward to the whole thing. I think it's gonna be fun. And I think it's ... It'll be a good thing, a good event, after our big event with 60 Minutes. Let everybody come see Marla's work.





[Laura Olmstead, Marla's mother] [To Marla] Too many people?

[Marla] Where are we going now?

[Mark Olmstead, Marla's father] We're going to go to Stuart's. Why are we going to Stuart's?

[Marla] To have a party.

[Mark Olmstead, Marla's father] What kind of party?

[Marla] I don't know. Just a party.

[Mark Olmstead, Marla's father] An art party?



[Marla] I don't know.

[Mark Olmstead, Marla's father] Whose art's on the wall? Tony's?

[Marla] Me.

[Mark Olmstead, Marla's father] You, that's right.



Some day, it will be Marla and Zane. Zane's going to be a sculptor. Right, Zane?



[Marla] He already paints.

[Mark Olmstead, Marla's father] Zane will do interpretive dance.



[Marla] One of the ...



one of my paintings ...

[Amir Bar-Lev] That's my specialty.

[Mark Olmstead, Marla's father] You have to see it.



Especially when you're drinking, right? Well, look at you, you sharp guy. Did you run out of space, sharp-dressed man?

[Marla] Dad? Dad?

[Mark Olmstead, Marla's father] Yes, love.



[Marla] He painted one. I didn't paint it.

[Mark Olmstead, Marla's father] Zane does paint. You're right.



[Marla] I didn't paint any part.

[Mark Olmstead, Marla's father] What's that?



[Marla] Zane just painted the painting.



[Mark Olmstead, Marla's father] Cool.

[Marla] I didn't do anything on it.



[Mark Olmstead, Marla's father] Zane's a painter, too.



[Marla] The green one is Zane's.





Clearly, Marla Olmstead has the sense of wonder and innocence

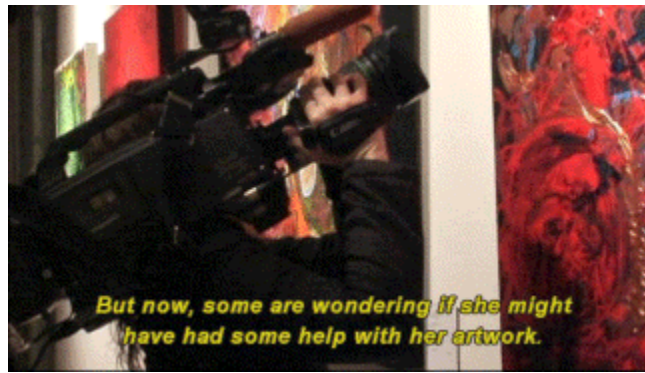
[Newswoman] Clearly, Marla Olmstead has the sense of wonder and innocence ...



you'd expect from any 4-year-old.

you'd expect from any 4-year-old.



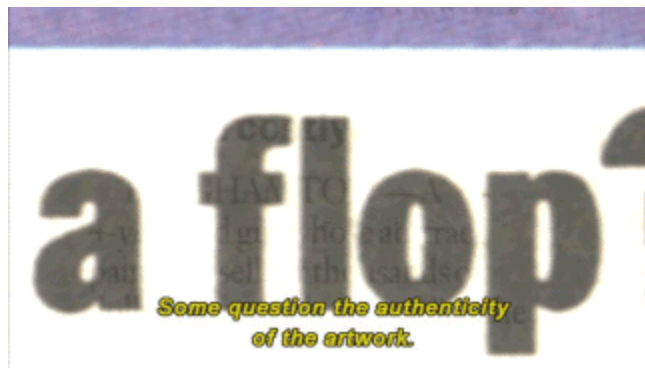


But now, some are wondering if she might have had some help with her artwork.



[Prodigy Schmodigy]

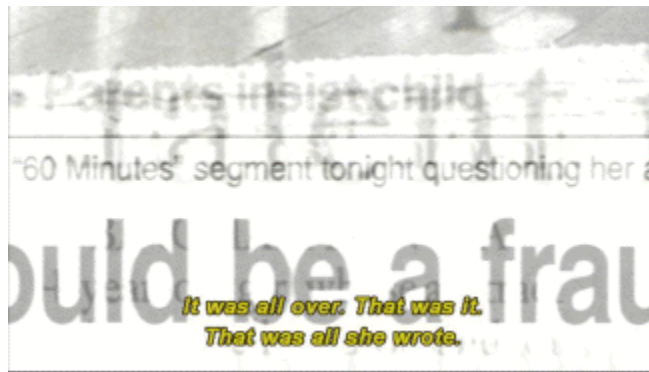
[Newsman] Is 4-year-old painter, Maria Olmstead, a prodigy?



[Newswoman] Some question the authenticity of the artwork.



[Parents insist child painted costly artwork]



[Elizabeth Cohen, Columnist -- The Press & Sun Bulletin] It was all over. That was it. That was all she wrote.



All these papers, around the world, around the country, carried the story.



It was like, the father is the painter.





[Mark Olmstead, Marla's father] No, I don't paint for her. Yes, I've urged her.



The one time I did it was in the basement, with that camera.

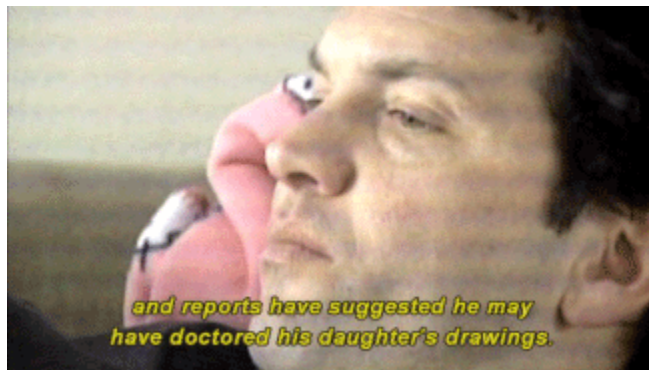


And I was not myself and I was awful, and I felt terrible about it.



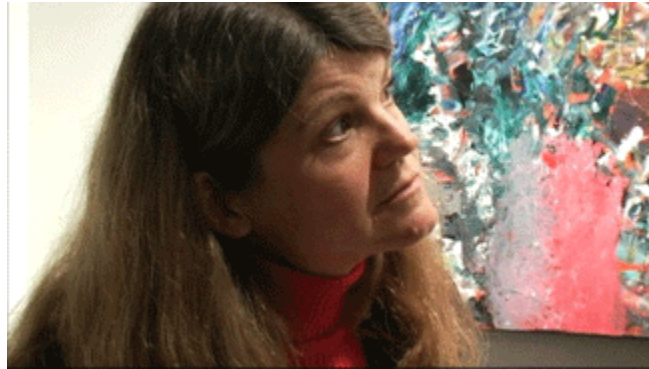


[Newswoman] Marla's dad, Mark, also dabbles in paint ...



and reports have suggested he may have doctored his daughter's drawings.





[Mark Olmstead, Marla's father] We're not going to fall into that type of trap again.



[Anthony Brunelli, Gallery Owner] A bunch of collectors called, who had bought paintings, and, obviously, they need to be reassured.



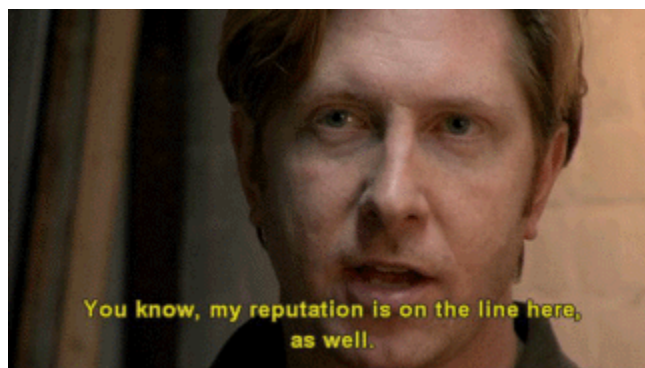
[Jackie Wescott, Marla Collector] I don't even know how to put it into words, because words really cannot describe how I'm feeling.



[Mark Olmstead, Marla's father] Marla has been the sole creator of her work.



[Laura Olmstead, Marla's mother] No one has touched any paint to her canvasses.



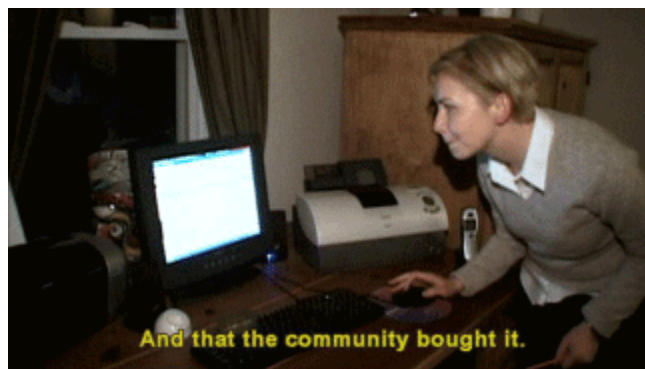
[Anthony Brunelli, Gallery Owner] You know, my reputation is on the line here, as well.



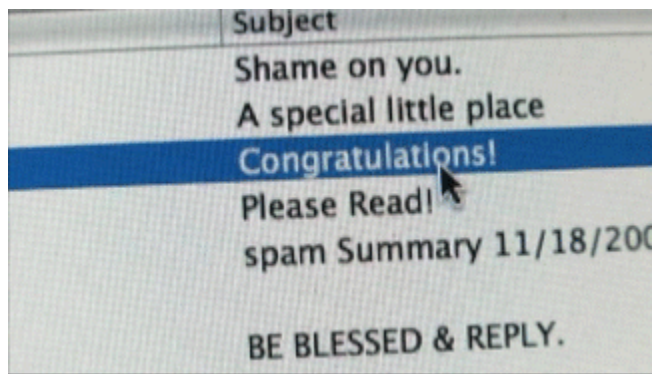
[Elizabeth Cohen, Columnist -- The Press & Sun Bulletin] Laura told me she felt like they just had a black mark on them around town, now.



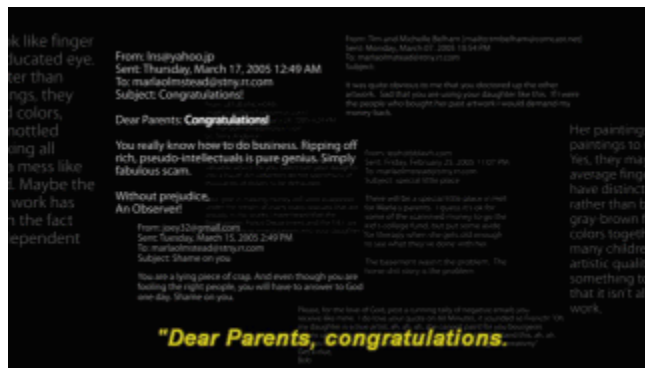
She said she really felt like they were almost demonized.



And that the community bought it.



[Subject: Shame on you.
A special little place
Congratulations!
Please Read!
spam Summary 11/18/2005
BE BLESSED & REPLY]



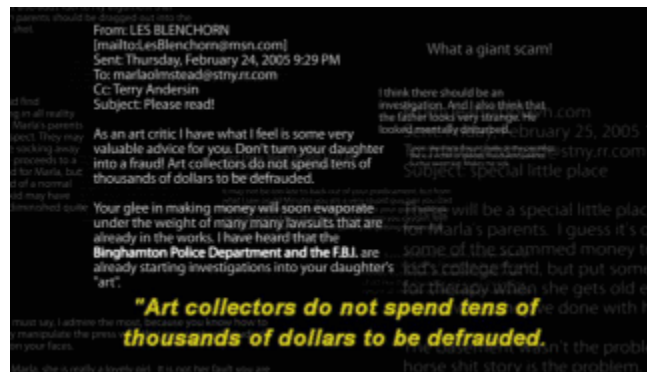
[Ins@yahoo.jp] "Dear Parents, congratulations! You really know how to do business. Ripping off rich, pseudo-intellectuals is pure genius. Simply fabulous scam. Without prejudice, An Observer!"

[joey32@gmail.com] You are a lying piece of crap. And even though you are fooling the right people, you will have to answer to God one day. Shame on you.

[leah@bblavh.com] There will be a special little place in hell for Marla's parents. I guess it's ok for some of the scammed money to go the kid's college fund, but put some aside for therapy when she gets old enough to see what they've done with her. The basement wasn't the problem. The horse shit story is the problem.

[Tim and Michelle Belham, tmbelham@comcast.net] It was quite obvious to me that you doctored up the other artwork. Sad that you are using your daughter like this. If I were the people who bought her past artwork I would demand my money back.

[Anonymous] Please, for the love of God, post a running tally of negative emails you receive like mine. I do love your quote on 60 Minutes, it sounded so French! "Oh my daughter is a true artist, ah, ah, ah, she cannot paint for you bourgeois peons under the glare of a hidden camera. We cannot understand this, ah, ah, ah, this has never happened before to her, you are ruining her creativity. Get a clue. Bob.



[Les Blenchor, LesBlenchor@msn.com] As an art critic I have what I feel is some very valuable advice for you. Don't turn your daughter into a fraud! Art collectors do not spend tens of thousands of dollars to be defrauded. Your glee in making money will soon evaporate under the weight of many many lawsuits that are already in the works. I have heard that the Binghamton Police Department and the FBI are already starting investigations into your daughter's "art".

[Anonymous] I think that there should be an investigation. And I also think that the father looks very strange. He looked mentally disturbed.

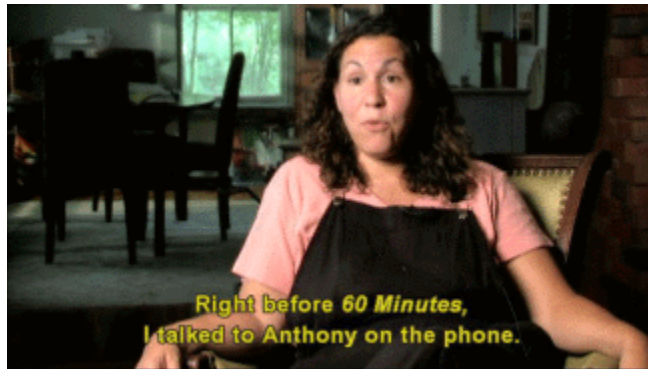
[ljones@rogers.com] It may not be too late to back out of your predicament, but from what I saw on 60 Minutes you are a very stupid guy (yes you Dad the real artist) and you will probably stick to your guns until you are so far behind bars that they have to pump you oxygen. Well Marla can visit you in prison and paint you getting serviced by Leon, your 300 lb. "boyfriend."

[Anonymous] Marla's parents apparently gave her a helping hand in the creation and finishing of the paintings. I really don't care if they do or not, it's just sad that they compete with their own 4-year-old daughter if that's the case. Gee mom and dad, if its abstract, why are you messing with it, and telling her what and where to paint? Or maybe they just couldn't cut it in the art scene themselves, so they needed a gimmick? Who knows.

[Anonymous] Looks like Marla doesn't really do the paintings. She is a victim of greedy, fraudulent parents. Such a sweet kid. Makes me sick.

[Anonymous] Wow. Basically Marla's parents created them all and she is a big fake. People will do anything for money but anyone that would use their own child like this should be put in jail. I hope they return all the money the paintings have sold for.

[Anonymous] The sad thing here is the only one who is being hurt here is Marla while her parents cash in and capture the glory of attention ... shame on them. I hope someone in the media see my posts and view the tapings again ... SHAME!



[Elizabeth Cohen, Columnist -- The Press & Sun Bulletin] Right before 60 Minutes, I talked to Anthony on the phone.



And he said, "I'm thinking of running for Mayor of Binghamton. Some people have approached me, and I think the arts are going to be what saves the city."



After 60 Minutes, he was thinking about leaving town.



[Binghamton Public Access] Hey, how's the Marla artist going?

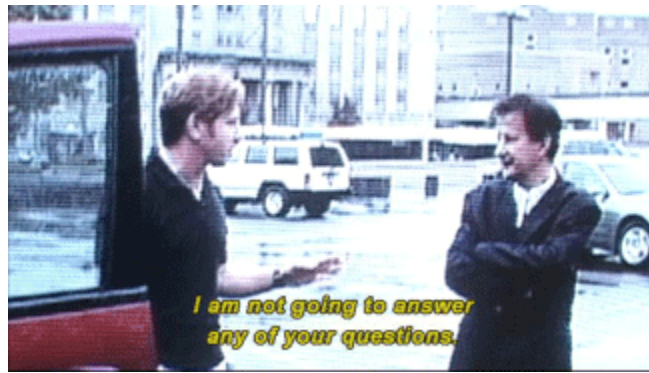


Still selling a lot of Marla paintings, Anthony?



[Anthony Brunelli, Gallery Owner] Turn off the camera.

[Binghamton Public Access] Do you think that Marla really paints those?

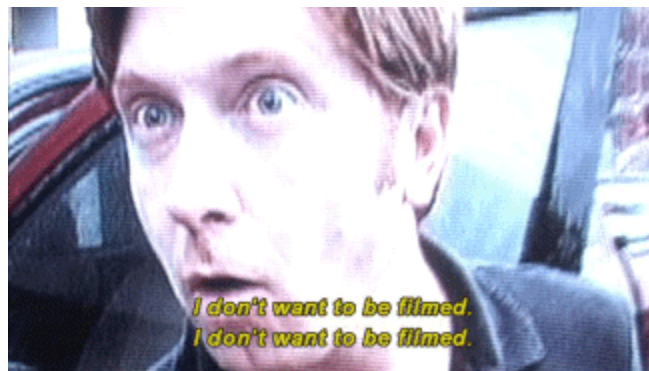


[Anthony Brunelli, Gallery Owner] I am not going to answer any of your questions.

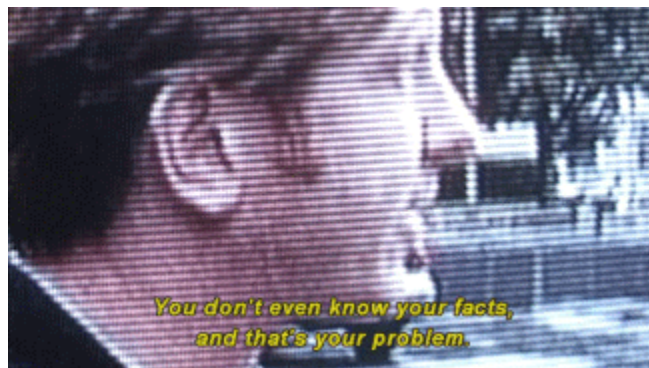


I don't need to answer you.

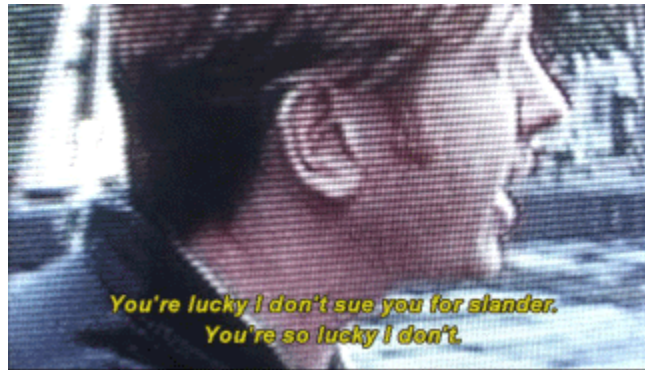
[Binghamton Public Access] Why are you so angry?



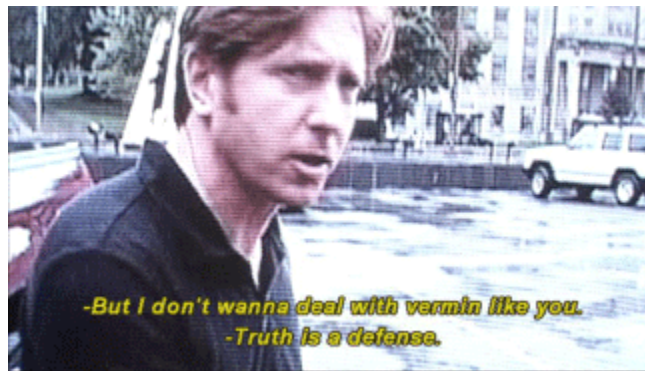
[Anthony Brunelli, Gallery Owner] I don't want to be filmed. I don't want to be filmed.



You don't even know your facts, and that's your problem.



You're lucky I don't sue you for slander. You're so lucky I don't.



But I don't wanna deal with vermin like you.

[Binghamton Public Access] Truth is a defense.

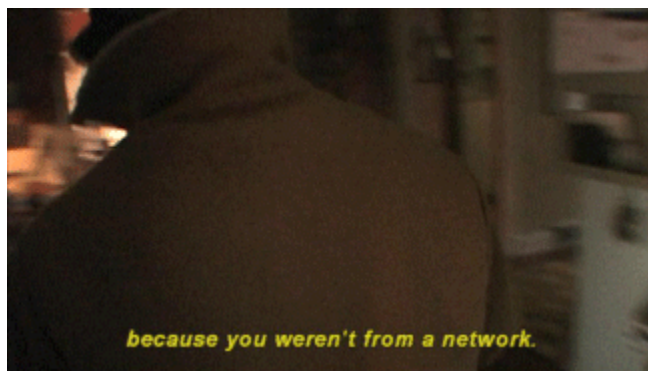


[Anthony Brunelli, Gallery Owner] Turn off the camera!



*From the very beginning,
you were kind of a wild card.*

[Elizabeth Cohen, Columnist -- The Press & Sun Bulletin] From the very beginning, you were kind of a wild card ...



because you weren't from a network.

because you weren't from a network.



You weren't going to be putting them on the evening news.



You were a guy who just wanted to make his own film.



What attracted you to it?

[Amir Bar-Lev] I saw it as a film about modern art. 60 Minutes took me completely by surprise.



I had totally accepted that Marla was doing the paintings.



[Laura Olmstead, Marla's mother] This is where the camera was, up here.



And they had it wired so that, in the laundry room, you could turn it on and off.



And then the painting had to be stationary.



There's one of Mark's paintings.



[Elizabeth Cohen, Columnist -- The Press & Sun Bulletin] They trust you. Obviously they do, or they wouldn't be letting you do it at this point.



[Amir Bar-Lev] They're expecting that this film is going to exonerate them.



[Elizabeth Cohen, Columnist -- The Press & Sun Bulletin] Redemption factor.

[Amir Bar-Lev] Yeah, and 60 Minutes raised some doubts in my mind.



And I haven't been 100% honest about having these doubts.



So now, yeah, they think that this film is going to clear their names.



[Elizabeth Cohen, Columnist -- The Press & Sun Bulletin] They want you to film a painting from start to finish.

[Amir Bar-Lev] Yeah.

[Elizabeth Cohen, Columnist -- The Press & Sun Bulletin] Of course they do. And put it on TV.



[Amir Bar-Lev] And I'm ready to do it. I need that for my film, too.



[Mark Olmstead, Marla's father] I wanna clear the air.



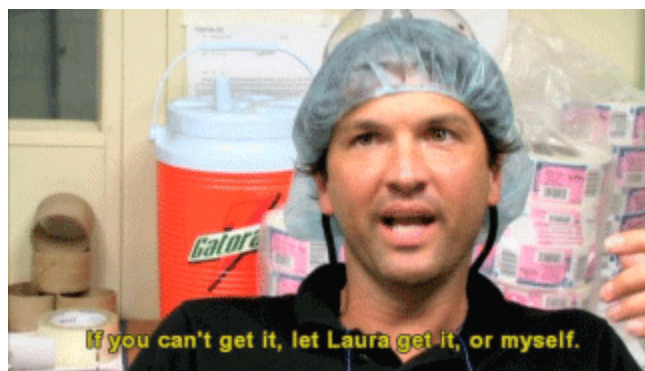
I don't want to hear any more about what a bad person I am, what bad parents we are.



Because it's so inaccurate.



And that's why I'm saying, "Film her." Let's do it the right way.



If you can't get it, let Laura get it, or myself.



Let's do it the right way, if that's what it takes to make people happy.



[Laura Olmstead, Marla's mother] I mean, it sounds ridiculous, but you guys should sleep over some night. And just be ...



We wake up and we have breakfast. That's how it goes. We wake up. We have breakfast. We hang out in our jammies.



She doesn't get dressed because she's going to get messy, and she gets in her underwear, and she paints.





[Marla] I'm not gonna paint.



[Laura Olmstead, Marla's mother] I feel pretty good about working with you.





It will be a gift for Marla, because we've been portrayed in the media so many crazy ways, and I think this will show her a more accurate representation of what was going on, what our thought processes were, and we really did have her best interests in mind, and we just love her so much.



And I hope it comes across. Because I don't remember that much from when I was four or five. You could tell me all kinds of things, and I would believe you.





Even though I do have good feelings about you, I still have moments where I'm like ...



"Wait a minute. Does he have some kind of ulterior motive?"



I opened myself up to you.



You know, I choose to trust you. So ...



[Marla] Zane. Do you want to paint?



[Mark Olmstead, Marla's father] You want me to get Zane a canvas?

[Marla] Yeah.

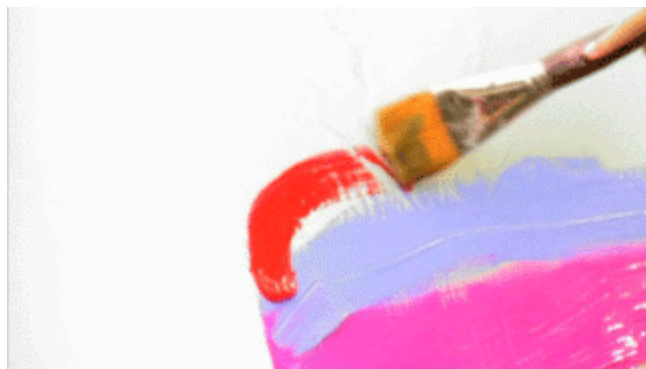
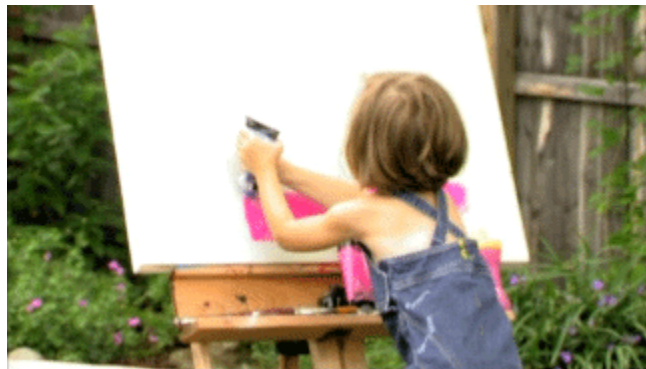


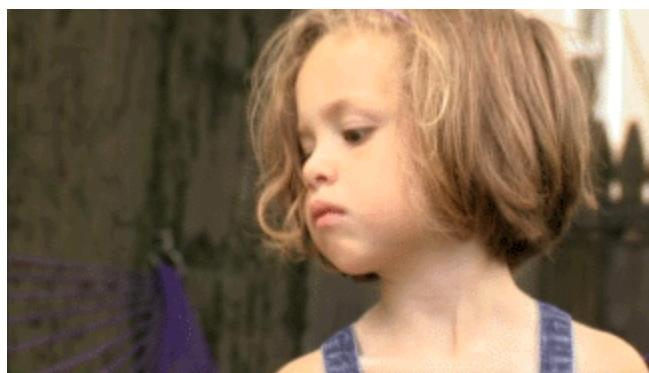
[Mark Olmstead, Marla's father] Okay, then you can both do your own.



[Marla] Well, Zane's won't be in the art show.

[Mark Olmstead, Marla's father] That's true, it won't be in the art show.









[Marla] I'm done with the painting, Daddy.

[Mark Olmstead, Marla's father] Okay.



[Marla] You can put those back in the pile.





[Amir Ben-Lev] I just spent the day with the Olmsteads ...



trying to get the footage of Marla painting one of her paintings, beginning to end. This documentary has become something different, and I've been telling everybody how great it is for the film, that this potential scandal has come up. And right now, driving back, I'm not feeling that way. I'm feeling sad and conflicted. If they're lying, they're lying incredibly well. It's such a sad thing, if it exists, and I really, really hope it doesn't. I'd rather be stupid and not know about this kind of stuff. And it was only tonight that I realized ...



I'm going to have to call some people liars, who, on the face of it, are, like, the nicest people.



What's my investment in it? So people will think ...



I'm a great filmmaker, or whatever. You know? Why do I care?



[Anthony Brunelli, Gallery Owner] Sales have, kind of, come to a stop. They have interest, but I haven't sold a painting since two days prior to the airing of 60 Minutes.



[Laura Olmstead, Marla's mother] It slowed down the demand for the artwork, which, personally, I feel is a blessing. I really do.



The whole 60 Minutes episode was terrible.



It was such an awful portrayal of us, as a family.



But I remember the night that it aired ...



I caught myself just laying in bed smiling, with almost relief, that it was over.



Mark feels we were wrongfully, financially injured. Which we probably were, but at the same time, we kind of ... I mean, the money came, not through any hard work, or dreams, or anything of our own. It just sort of happened. So, things that just happen like that can very easily un-happen. And they did, and I'm fine with it.



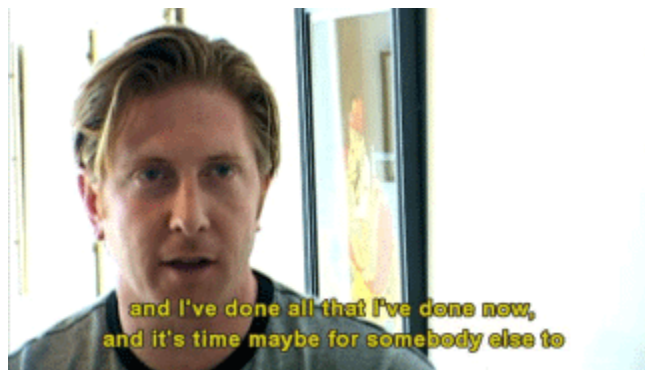
[Anthony Brunelli, Gallery Owner] One of the things it made me do, is refocus myself on my own paintings. I felt like I had too much involvement with Marla.



It was too many responsibilities with Marla's career that I've kind of pulled back.



I mean, I have my gallery. I represent her when her work is here ...



and I've done all that I've done now, and it's time maybe for somebody else to kind of step in and take the leads with that, and I'm definitely happy with that.



One of the great things about Marla is that people are questioning. And, you know, in a roundabout way, that was really my whole intention from the very beginning. I've always felt that modern art ...



is somewhat of a scam.



I've been a realist painter all of my life, and I'm a photorealist painter. And there are times it can take me nine months to do a painting, and then you read about auctions and records set at Christie's and Sotheby's ...



for these abstract paintings with swatches of paint like this and that, and they're selling for millions of dollars.



You know, the most I've ever sold a painting for was \$100,000, which is a lot of money. It's an awful lot of money. But when you look at the amount of time that I've put into that painting compared to what some of these paintings are selling for, that I don't get.



That I just don't get, because my kid could do that.





When I came across Marla's work, it was almost like a gift from God.



It was almost like me saying, you know, "Screw you, modern art world, I've got something for you." Now, finally, I've got an in to this world that I've never understood. Where I've never understood this abstract work and the value that it's gotten, I do understand the value of marketing and how it is that ... Why one person's painting could be \$1 million, and another person's painting could be \$100.



And they could be the same type of painting.



That's when it all started coming together. I said,



"I think I have history in the making here.



And I have something that is going to turn the art world on its ear.



And if I do this right, I'll succeed in that. And I did it right. And I called the right people ...



and I got the right kind of attention.



And it would have continued on, but it stopped because of the 60 Minutes piece. The paintings stopped selling, basically.

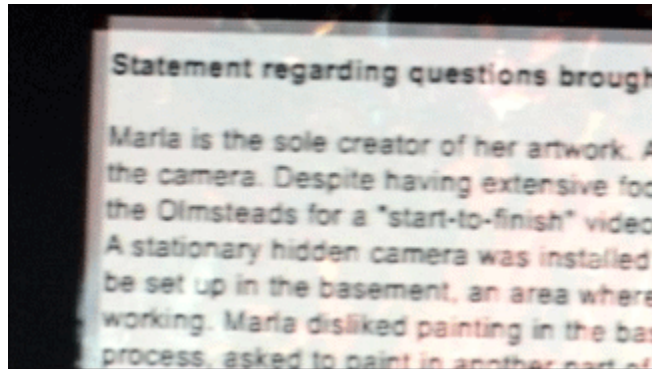
[Elizabeth Cohen, Columnist -- The Press & Sun Bulletin] They could have just rolled over and died, you know? But, I mean, really, they had to respond.



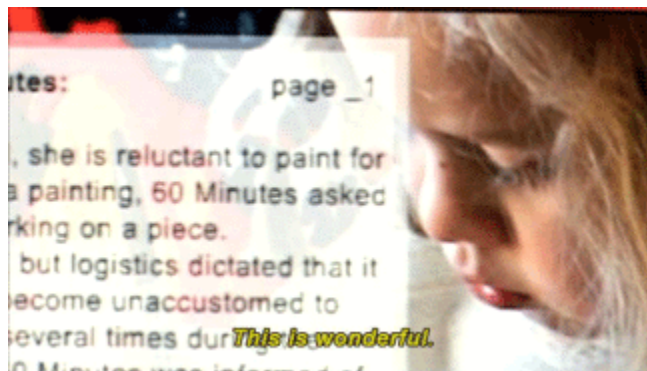
The story got taken away from them by 60 Minutes. So now this is about owning the story back.



They had to make a DVD from start to finish of a painting, because Charlie Rose was saying, "You couldn't."



[Statement Regarding Questions Brought by 60 Minutes: Marla is the sole creator of her artwork. As a shy child, she is reluctant to paint for the camera. Despite having extensive footage of Marla painting, 60 Minutes asked the Olmsteads for a "start-to-finish" video of Marla working on a piece. A stationary hidden camera was installed in the home, but logistics dictated that it be set up in the basement, an area where Marla had become unaccustomed to working. Marla disliked painting in the basement and several times during the process, asked to paint in another part of the house.]



[Anthony Brunelli, Gallery Owner] This is wonderful.



Mark and Laura did five hours of videotape of Marla painting.



The footage now is really great because it's start to finish.



It's all the stuff you didn't see on 60 Minutes.



And I think that they should have some sort of retraction. They almost will have to.



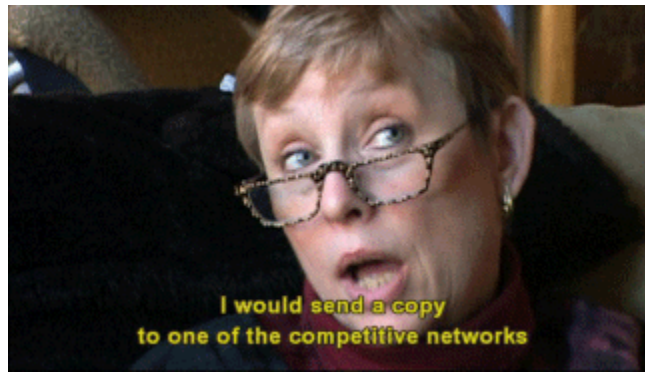
So it's great now because we have control.



We're ready to make our counter-attack, if you will.



[Mark Olmstead, Marla's father] We released this to show people, okay, this is the process. And that people who are on the fence are gonna say, "Okay, this helps the story and this makes more sense."



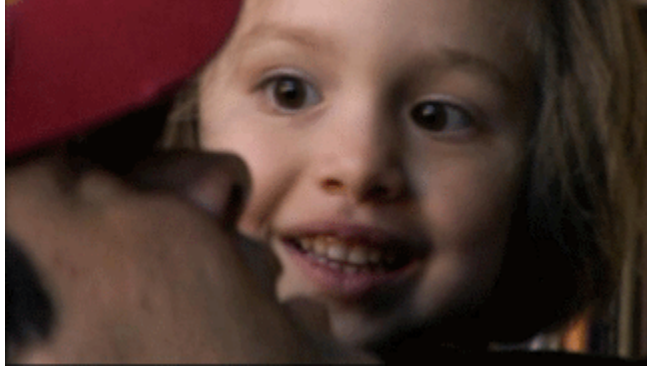
[Woman] I would send a copy to one of the competitive networks and say, "You know, fair is fair. Why don't you do an investigation using some of our film and stuff as a follow-up? And go up there and also interview." I think it would be a fascinating Primetime Live or something like that.



[Woman] My initial inclination was to send it to every competitor to CBS. But I am the largest collector of Marla's pieces.



How is that going to be viewed by people, if I do something? When you calm down, and at the end of the day you say, "Come on, don't stoop to their level."



I really do believe in taking the high road.



[Stuart Simpson, Marla Collector] I agree, we have to take the high road in this thing. We have to be better than them. But the one issue, and Mark brought it up, and Tony brought it up, when this piece aired two days before my gallery opened, a lot of people were saying, "Well, she didn't do the work. Well ...". And I don't know how many hundreds of thousands of dollars I lost in sales because of this inaccurate reporting on Charlie Rose.





All right, here's the beginning.

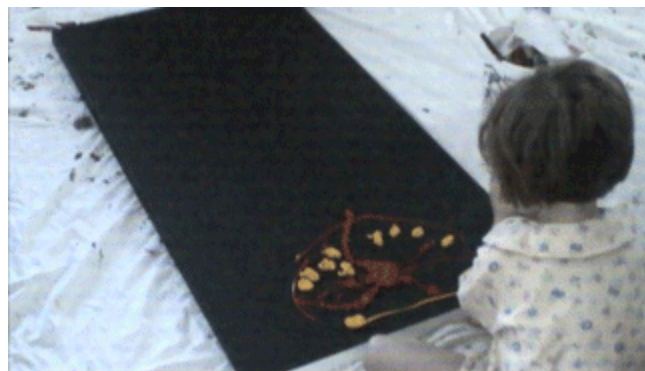
[Mark Olmstead, Marla's father] All right, here's the beginning.

[Laura Olmstead, Marla's mother] Mark's pacing.



Did you show this to Janet yet?

[Anthony Brunelli, Gallery Owner] Did you show this to Janet yet?



[Laura Olmstead, Marla's mother] We gave her a copy. We wanted everyone that mattered to have a copy.



That's cool.

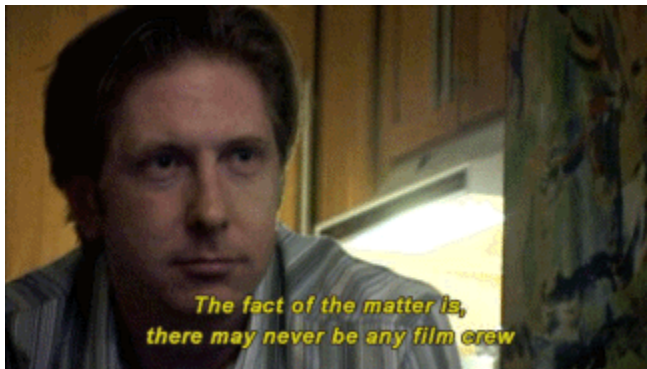
[Stuart Simpson, Marla Collector] That's cool.



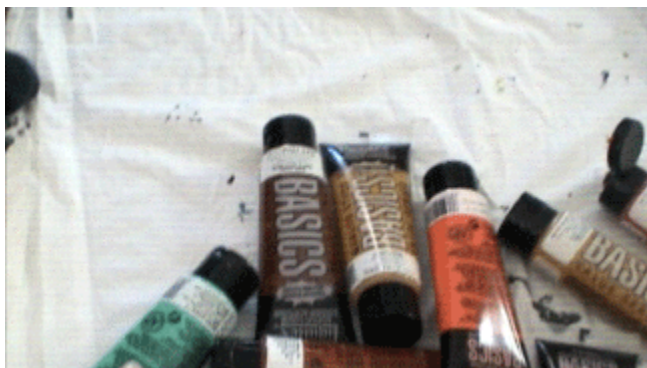
[Marla] That makes pretty colors.



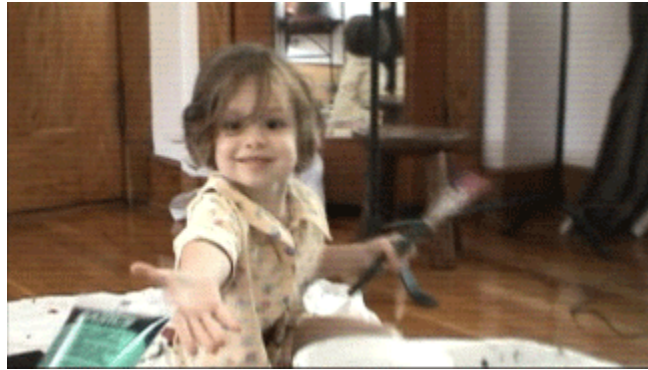
Where's the dark blue?



[Anthony Brunelli, Gallery Owner] The fact of the matter is, there may never be any film crew that will ever be able to get what the parents get.



[Laura Olmstead, Marla's mother] This one?



[Anthony Brunelli, Gallery Owner] Because watching Marla in that video almost feels like a voyeur.

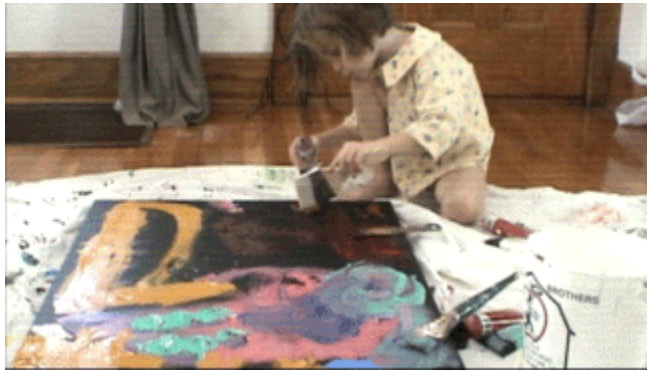


[Laura Olmstead, Marla's mother] What do you say?

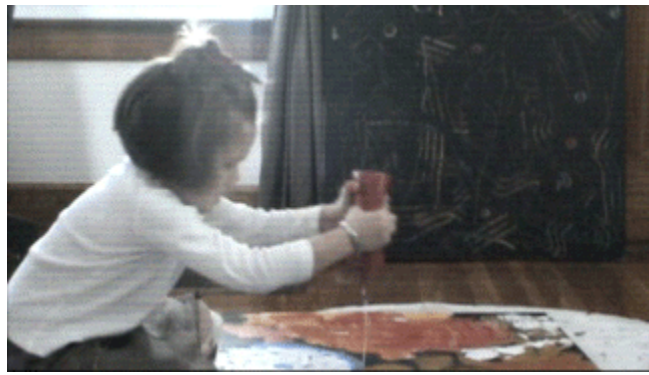
[Marla] Thank you.



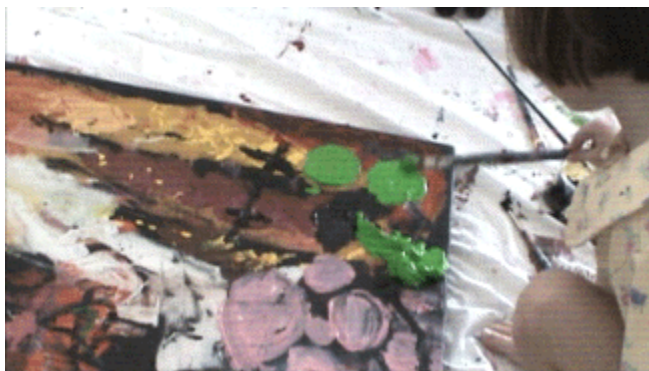
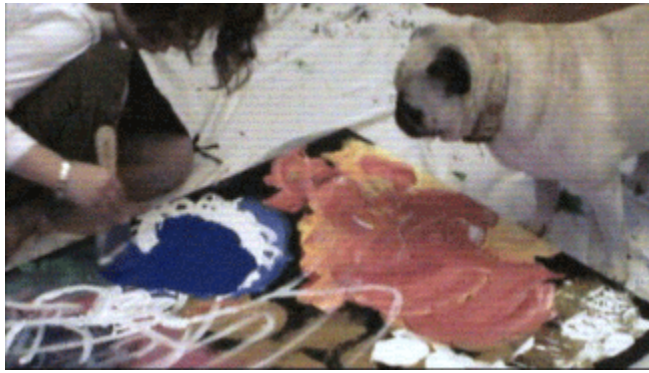


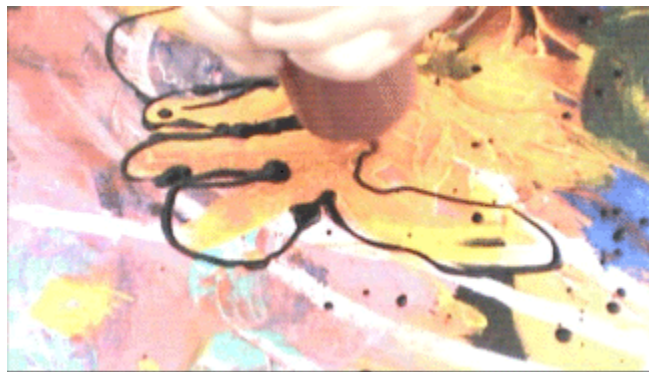


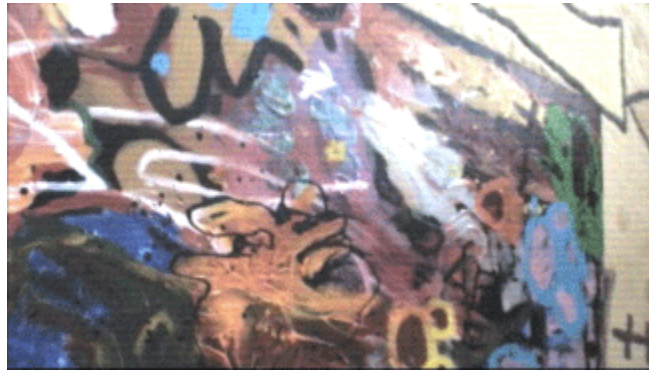












[Man] I like the little Mickey Mouse ears.



[Anthony Brunelli, Gallery Owner] It was exciting for me to actually be in the same room with you when you watched Ocean for the first time. Because I've always felt that you have been neutral. You kept your, kind of, opinion to yourself. But I don't think anybody who can watch this footage could come out of it feeling anything other than the fact that Marla completely does these paintings.





Ocean



Flowers



Ocean



Four



Mosquito
Bite



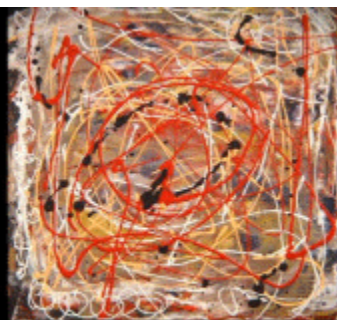
Blue Sun



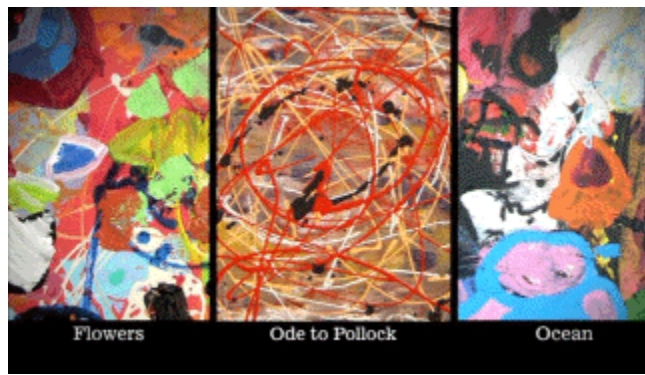
Asian Sun



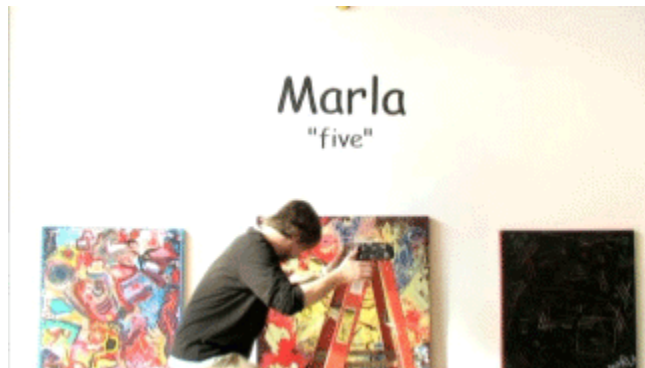
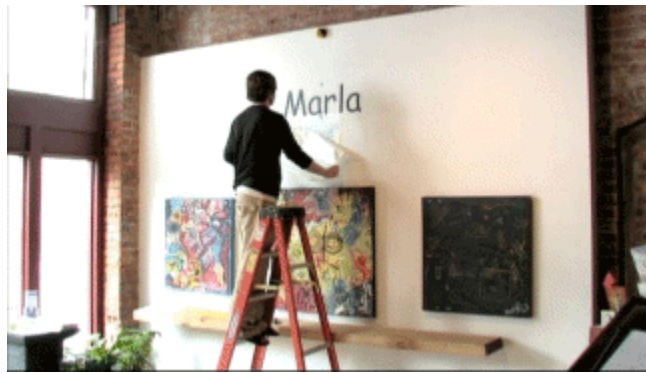
Feather



Ode to Pollock



[Anthony Brunelli, Gallery Owner] And I would admit, that 60 Minutes painting was not as strong as the others. Ocean, on the other hand, I think, is right up there.



I can't tell you the excitement of having this show and being able to debut the DVD.

[Anthony Brunelli, Gallery Owner] I can't tell you the excitement of having this show and being able to debut the DVD. Anybody that walks in here, sees this work and watches that DVD, I don't think there's a person that can walk out of these doors feeling anything but the fact that she is, truly, I mean, I really feel that she's a genius.



I mean, she really is. It boggles my mind each time I get a new painting. And they're all so different. Yet, they're all Marla's. You can definitely see her thumb in every single one of them.



That one is called Gorgeous and that's \$20,000.



That almost looks like a Dali.



And then the triptych is \$20,000 as well, the three-panel piece.



Sick Teeth is \$11,500.



This is At the Lake.

[Woman] "At the Lake."

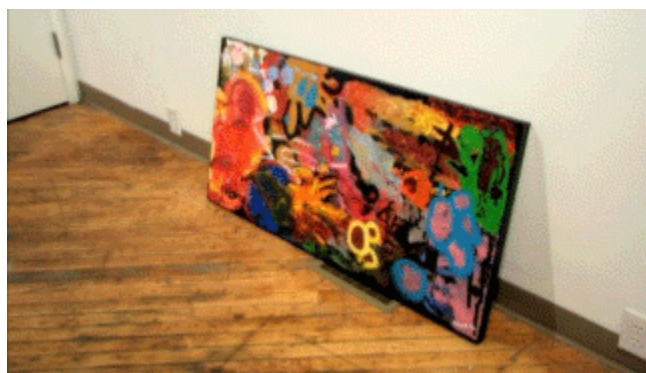
[Anthony Brunelli, Gallery Owner] I think it looks like a Monet.



[Woman] Yeah, this is, like, from the water. I like Monet a lot.



[Anthony Brunelli, Gallery Owner] And then this is the one on the DVD. I like it.



This is where she's starting to get a little bit more figurative.

[Woman] Kathleen says, "Don't get the one with the Mickey Mouse."



[Man] Well, that's why you buy it.

[Woman] That's why you buy it.



[Man] Because she said not to.



[Anthony Brunelli, Gallery Owner] Who said that?



[Woman] My daughter-in-law. She was looking at the pictures, she said, "Oh, I like all of them." Ocean was the one, she said. Because of the Mickey Mouse ears, she said, "It looks like Mickey Mouse."

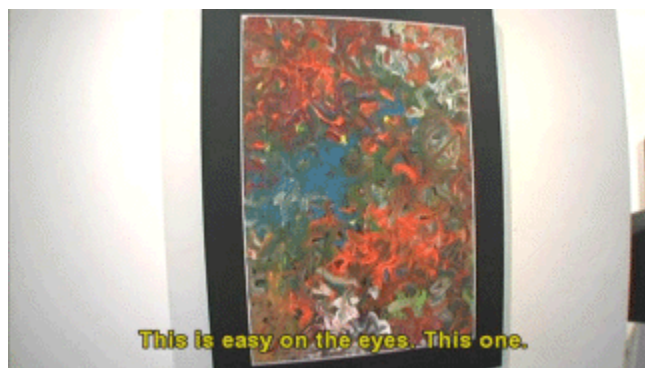
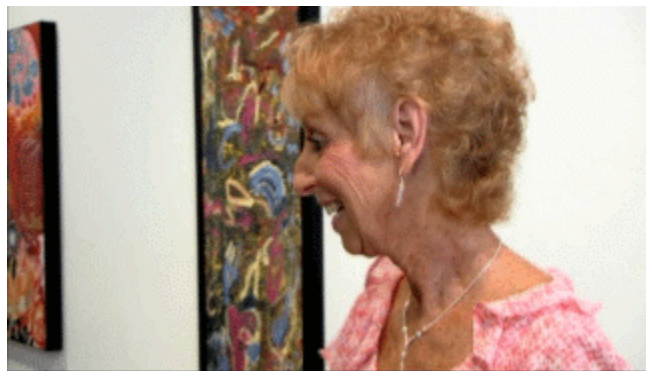


[Anthony Brunelli, Gallery Owner] This is on the DVD, so this painting becomes special.

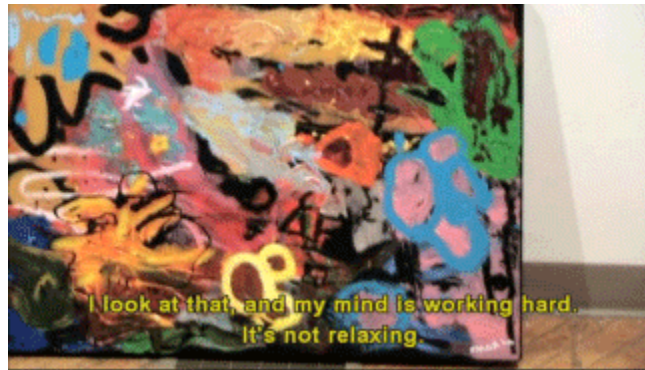
[Woman] Right.



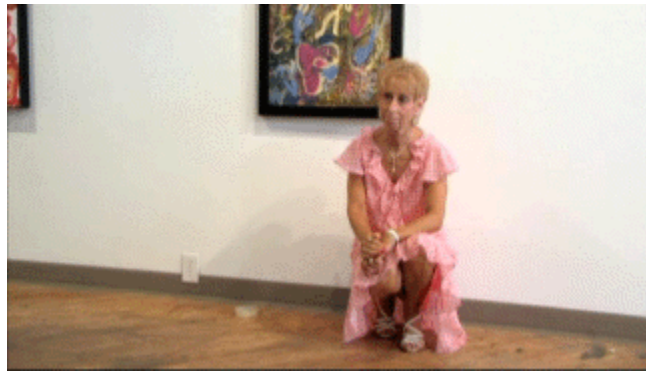
[Anthony Brunelli, Gallery Owner] This becomes almost like a landmark painting.



[Woman] This is easy on the eyes. This one.



I look at that, and my mind is working hard. It's not relaxing.

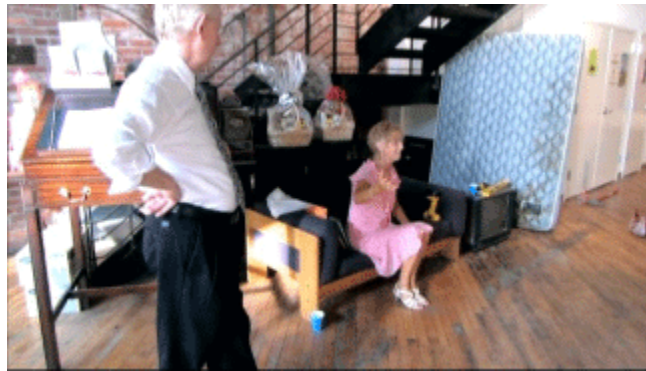


[Anthony Brunelli, Gallery Owner] What's going to happen is I know what's going to happen. If this doesn't sell opening night, people are going to go watch this DVD, and then they're going to come back and say ... Because they're going to see how this little girl created it.



And you will be so amazed when you see how she created it.

[Man] Why don't you buy it?



[Woman] Because it doesn't look like the same person's painted it. It looks like it was painted by ... I mean, I know it wasn't. It's just different than ... It's different from the normal painting that she does.



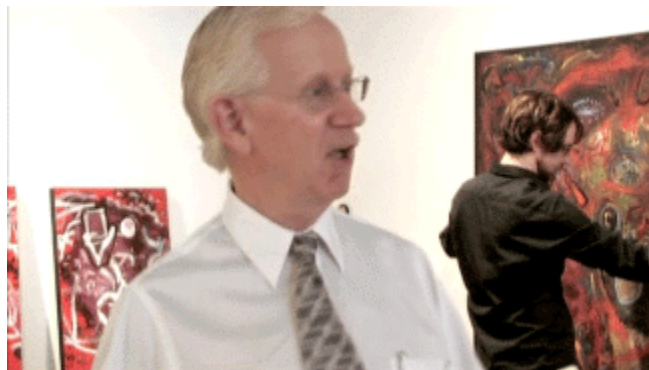
[Anthony Brunelli, Gallery Owner] I don't know if you remember, the expert did say in the very beginning ...



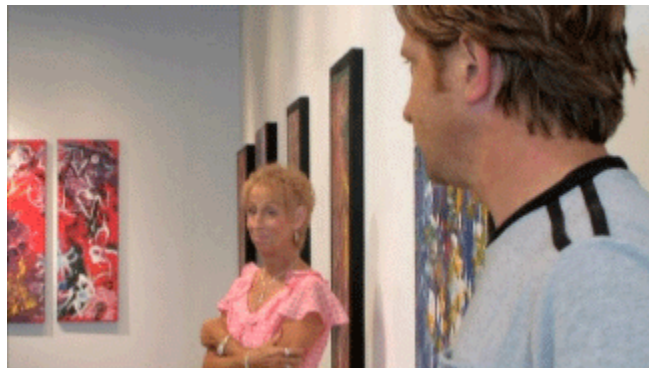
"This kid could be right in the Metropolitan and you could get away with it." Whatever. This stuff is amazing. Clearly this is her.



So now it goes back to, this kid belongs in the Metropolitan.



[Man] That's on the DVD. Works for me.



Buy it.



[Woman] Well, I suppose I'll get the Mickey Mouse one, and my daughter-in-law will just never talk to me again.



[Man] Is that your choice?

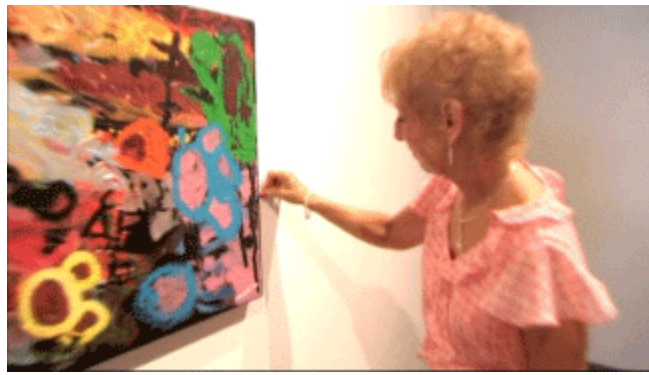
[Woman] I guess.

[Man] Ocean?

[Woman] I guess, yeah.



[Anthony Brunelli, Gallery Owner] Congratulations. In my opinion, you picked the right one.



All right. See you tomorrow.





August 12, 2005





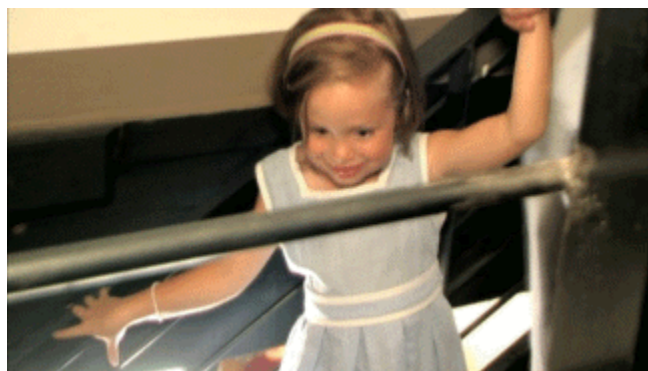




[Laura Olmstead, Marla's mother] It's amazing how quickly the 60 Minutes piece has receded in our minds.



We've survived. Everything's okay and just, sort of, it's a relief. It's over.



[Elizabeth Cohen, Columnist -- The Press & Sun Bulletin] So, it seems like controversy is a positive thing. When I found out she was having another show, I felt like ...



"Wow, you know, catch your breath and think about this."



I mean, in one year, a girl has been globally famous and then debunked. And now she's getting famous again.



And it just seems like, doesn't every child deserve a childhood?



Isn't that one of those inalienable rights?



To just be a child?



She doesn't need to be on TV anymore. She doesn't need to be in a movie.

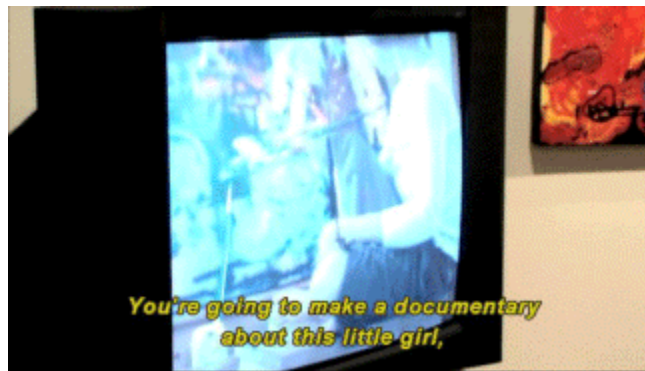


[Amir Bar-Lev] So, if you were in my position ...

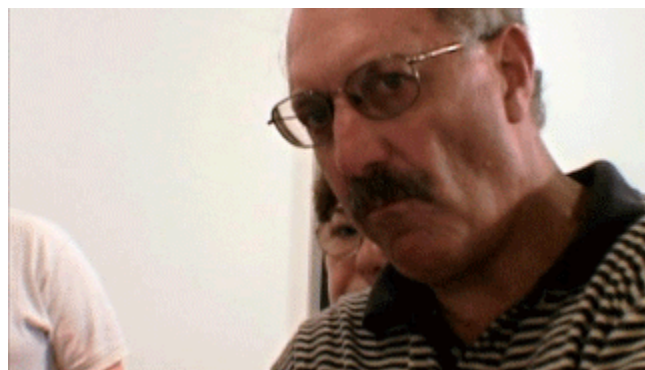


[Elizabeth Cohen, Columnist -- The Press & Sun Bulletin] Well, I did just kind of jump on you, there.

[Amir Bar-Lev] No, that's okay.



[Elizabeth Cohen, Columnist -- The Press & Sun Bulletin] And I'm sorry about that, but it has occurred to me that this is a continuation of what's happened to her. You're going to make a documentary about this little girl ...



and it's just like, one more throwing Marla out there.



It's kind of, at a certain point, like being thrown to the wolves.



And by the way, mea culpa. Because I'm just another person who's writing about Marla. I think I've written my last column about it.



I followed the arc of the story, but I feel like the story's reached its logical conclusion for this reporter at this time.

[Anthony Brunelli, Gallery Owner] They've opened their lives. I've opened my life. We're an open slate to you. What, specifically, are you looking for now? That's kind of where I'm at a loss because ...



Is it ... Where are you going with it now? What is it?



If you were to walk out of here today, and the Olmsteads called you up and said ...



"Whatever you want. What is it that you want? Let's do it." What is that?



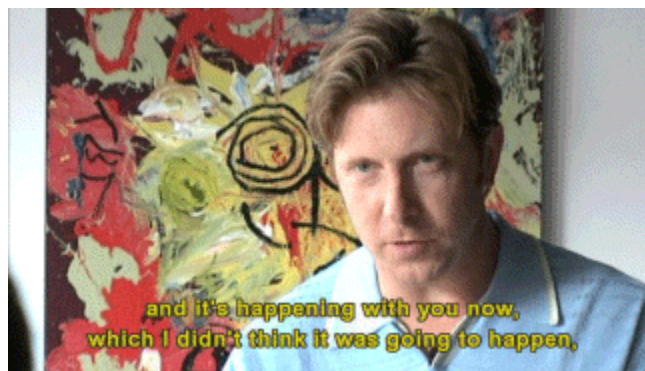
[Amir Bar-Lev] I want footage of Marla painting.



That will put my doubts to rest.



[Anthony Brunelli, Gallery Owner] Yeah, yeah. It's, you know ... The problem that we have here ...



and it's happening with you now, which I didn't think it was going to happen, is that I think that ...
Everybody's trying to shape the story into something that they want it to be. And not letting the story be
what it is.



[Mark Olmstead, Marla's father] That's like your wand, isn't it?



[Marla] Your turn to do it.

[Mark Olmstead, Marla's father] No.



[Marla] You, paint a face.



I'll tell you what to do.

[Mark Olmstead, Marla's father] You'll tell me? You'll coach me? I'll have to get my own to do that.

[Marla] Then go get one.



All right, just help me dude.



Or tell me to be done or help. What one? Pick.

[Mark Olmstead, Marla's father] Marla.

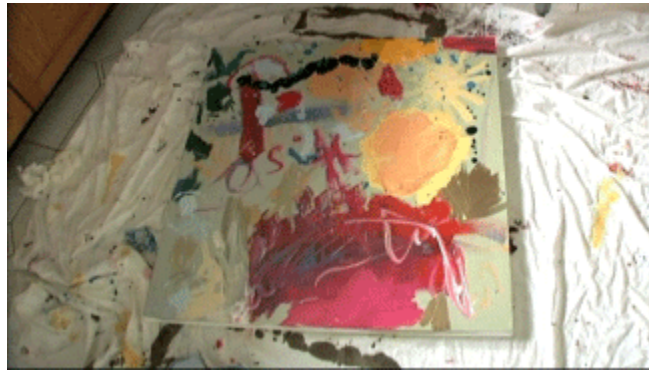


[Marla] I'm only going to do one of those things.

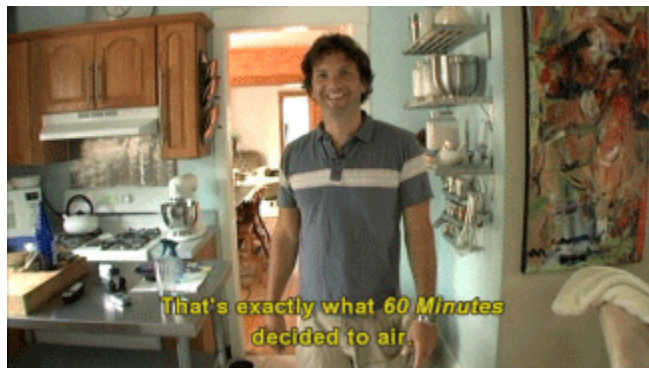
[Mark Olmstead, Marla's father] You do what you want, sweetheart.



[Marla] You have to tell me what to do right now.



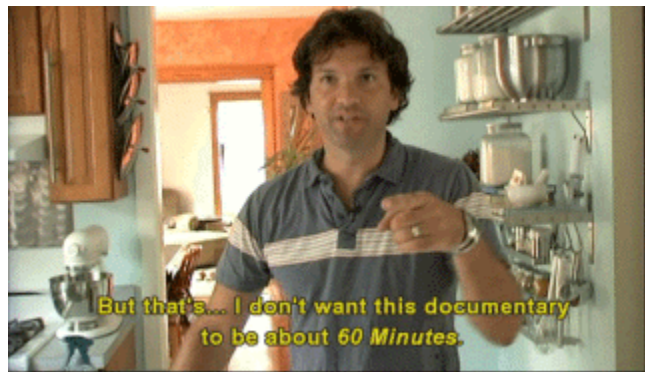
[Mark Olmstead, Marla's father] You see, here's a good comment for this is, you see when she knows what's going on. You can get a sense of what's happening, like compared to what Laura shot. And when she starts talking and says, "You do it. You make a face."



That's exactly what 60 Minutes decided to air. So ... And that's never the way she paints. Well, excuse me, that is the way she paints when she's playing and having her way with me. So it's kind of funny. She says funny things all the time, but when you're on camera, forget about it.



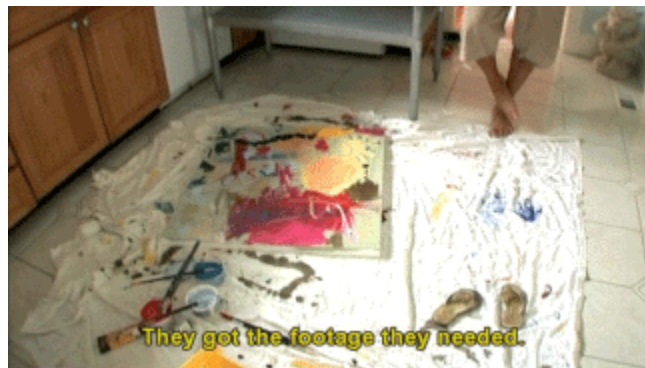
For all we know, it's true, but it's not. So it's kind of funny.



But that's ... I don't want this documentary to be about 60 Minutes. Although it seems like everybody wants to talk about 60 Minutes. But I'm not.



Because I don't talk about it ever until you guys are around.



[To Laura on the phone] They got the footage they needed.



She's telling me to do a face on it, and telling me to paint on the painting and stuff like that. All the stuff you love. She was just saying, "You do it."



But I wasn't asking her to do anything. She was just being silly.



[Amir Bar-Lev] I have something I want to say, first of all, which is this. Putting you guys in this situation is painful for me. But, okay, basically what it comes down to, just to be 100% candid, is that, to me, if Mark helped a little bit here and there, in some way, I could see that explaining what really went on, if you had to explain the complexity of just like ... Yeah, occasionally, like, I'll say, "Hey, how about a little bit over here?" Or whatever. I'm not putting words in your mouth, but it would be really hard to explain on the stage of The Jane Pauley Show. "Do you help her at all?" Whatever, it's easier to just say no. And I mean, I don't know. Am I completely off base?

[Laura Olmstead, Marla's mother] I think so. I mean, I think it's wrong.

[Mark Olmstead, Marla's father] I mean, all I can think about is when she started. You know? And this was a lot of the interviews in the beginning, "Did you have any real help or influence?" I said, "I'm pretty much her assistant." I used to tell her not to push the brush, but to pull it. So I mean, was that the type of stuff that had happened.



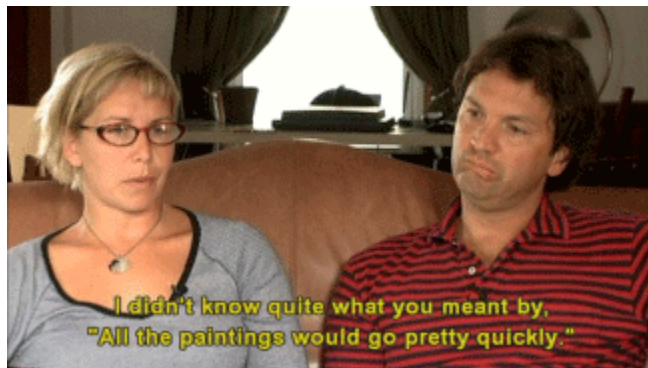
There's that small element, but from a direction standpoint, how do you direct a child to make a crazy abstract painting? You can't really do it. You know? Had I had some kind of influence, all the paintings would go pretty quickly, but there are some that just sit there.



[Laura Olmstead, Marla's mother] What do you mean?



[Mark Olmstead, Marla's father] Like the painting that she has in there. If she wants to do it, she'll do it.



[Laura Olmstead, Marla's mother] I didn't know quite what you meant by, "All the paintings would go pretty quickly."

[Mark Olmstead, Marla's father] If I said, "Marla, why don't you do this?" Or, "Marla, this is a great idea," then, first of all, she probably wouldn't ...



[Laura Olmstead, Marla's mother] I would never, ever, I mean especially ... At the beginning it wasn't even in our thoughts or in our minds. But I would never, ever, ever ...



allow him to influence her. You know what I mean? What?

[Mark Olmstead, Marla's father] That's very true. You can only get a glimpse of that, but there's no ...
Laura has been adamant about that.



She's been adamant about that prior, well prior, to any of this becoming the deal that it is.

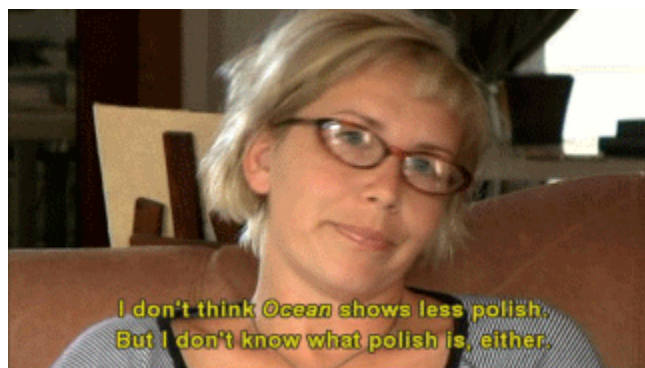


[Amir Bar-Lev] I guess I feel as though some of the paintings seem to have big ideas. You know, big, kind of, adult-type ideas. And then, the footage that we've gotten, it just doesn't make it seem like that's how she paints.



[Laura Olmstead, Marla's mother] We did that one. *Ocean* is start to finish.

[Amir Bar-Lev] I think the feeling I had is that *Ocean*, and the other one that was done on 60 Minutes, that some of them look like they have more polish than others.



[Laura Olmstead, Marla's mother] I don't think Ocean shows less polish. But I don't know what polish is, either.



[Mark Olmstead, Marla's father] I thought Ocean, some of the things she did in Ocean, were really, really great.



Some of the ways she did. And I'm naive or I'm just ... I don't know. I'm not an art expert, by any means.



[Laura Olmstead, Marla's mother] It's not about art to me, though. It's about my family's reputation.



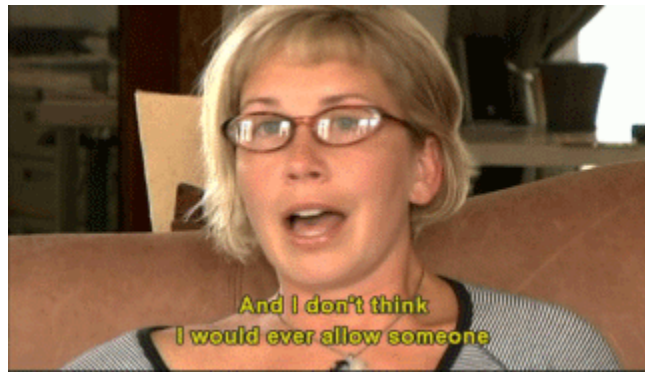
I need you to believe me.



I mean, that's what I'm after. I want to take a polygraph.



I do. I want to get this done. I never want to revisit it again in my life.



And I don't think I would ever allow someone ...



to come in and dissect us again. I really don't. It's just not fair to ... You know what? It was ...



Mark and I are adults and we can handle it.



It's so unfair of us to put our family, as a whole, up to this.



What have I done to my children?



Putting them through this?



What kills me is we put ourselves here. You know?



[Mark Olmstead, Marla's father] We did it again.

[Laura Olmstead, Marla's mother] It's so stupid.



[Mark Olmstead, Marla's father] Right.



I don't think we're stupid. A bit naive.





[Laura Olmstead, Marla's mother] [Crying] I never cry.



[Mark Olmstead, Marla's father] I know.





[Amir Bar-Lev] I'm sorry that I brought this into your house.



[Laura Olmstead, Marla's mother] It's documentary gold.



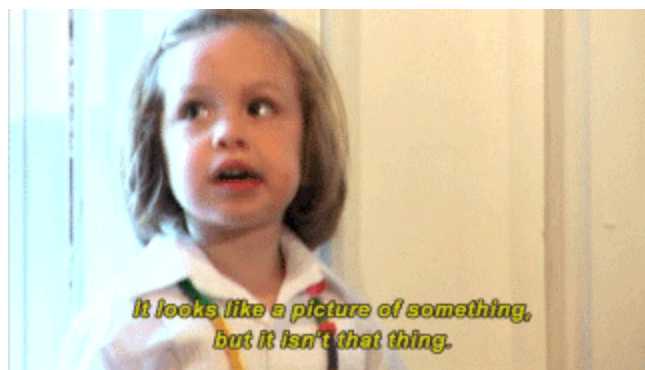




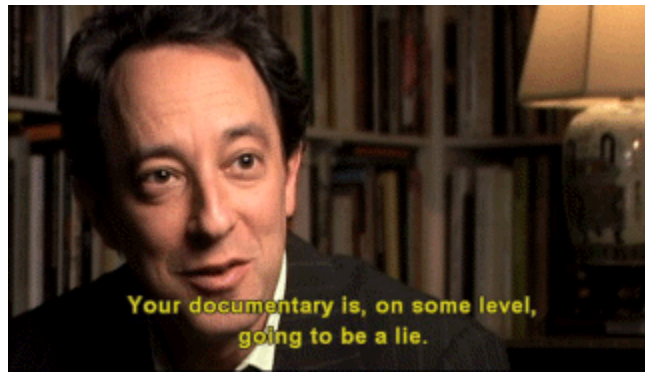
[Michael Kimmelman, Chief Art Critic, The New York Times] Cartier-Bresson, the photographer, used to say that photographing people was appalling. That it was some sort of violation of them. It was even barbaric, he said. Because you were, essentially, stealing something from them. You were imposing something on them.



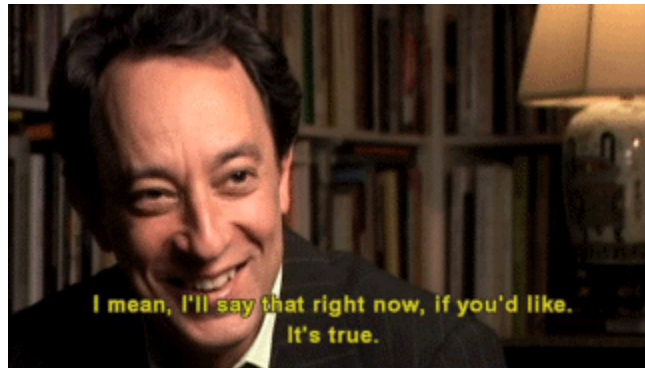
He sensed the inherent unfairness of this transaction. All writers, all storytellers are imposing their own narrative on something. I mean, all art, in some ways, is a lie.



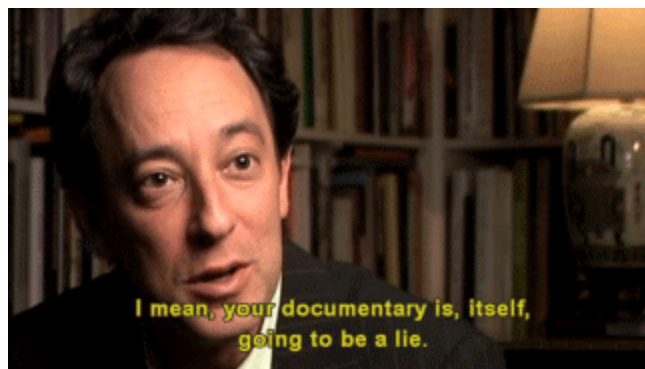
It looks like a picture of something, but it isn't that thing. It's a representation of that thing.



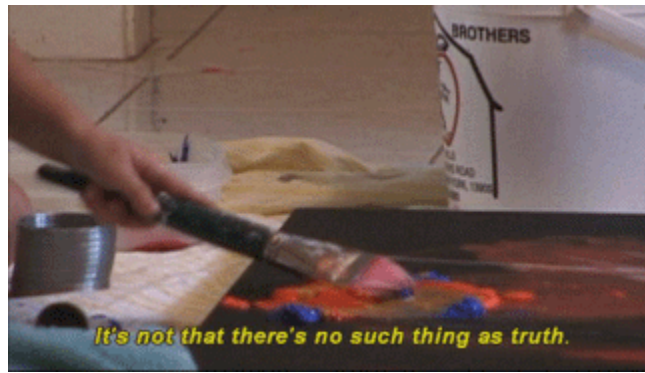
Your documentary is, on some level, going to be a lie. It's your construction of things.



I mean, I'll say that right now, if you'd like. It's true.



I mean, your documentary is, itself, going to be a lie. It's a construction of things. It's how you wish to represent the truth, and how you've decided to tell a particular story. By that, I don't mean that certain things don't happen. Of course they do.



It's not that there's no such thing as truth. But we come to like and trust a certain story ...



not necessarily because it's the most, absolutely truthful ...



but because it's a thing that we tell ourselves which makes sense of the world at least at this moment.





[Elizabeth Cohen, Columnist -- The Press & Sun Bulletin] To me, in my mind, it's a story about what happens with stories. This 4-year-old girl, who is now five, has had world fame, plus she's had an expose.



The whole story, really, is about grownups. It's really not about this kid.



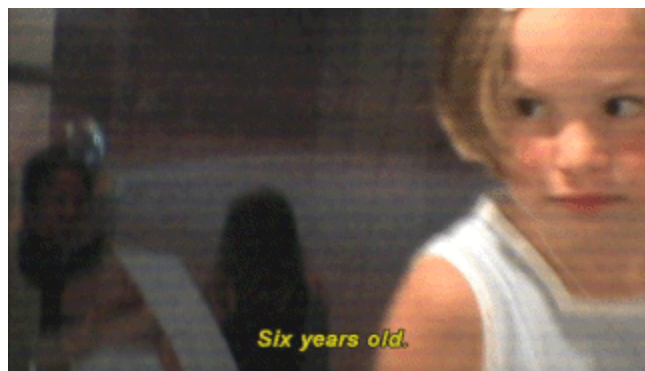
She's just a little girl, painting in her house.

PRODUCED AND DIRECTED BY
Amir Bar-Lev

Produced and directed by Amir Bar-Lev



[Newsman] And finally today is Marla Olmstead. Now Olmstead is a 6-year-old painter.



Six years old.





Last week, she had her solo show, and it was a big week.



She also graduated from kindergarten.



The asking price for her paintings? \$25,000. Just wait till she gets to be 12.



EXECUTIVE PRODUCER
John Battsek

Executive Producer: John Battsek

CO-EXECUTIVE PRODUCER
Andrew Ruhemann
EXECUTIVE PRODUCER FOR THE BBC
Richard Klein
CO-PRODUCER
Stephen Dunn
ASSOCIATE PRODUCER
Sara Nolan

Co-Executive Producer: Andrew Ruhemann

Executive Producer for the BBC: Richard Klein

Co-Producer: Stephen Dunn

Associate Producer: Sara Nolan

EDITORS
Michael Levine
John Walter
DIRECTORS OF PHOTOGRAPHY
Matt Boyd
Nelson Hume
Bill Turnley

Editors: Michael Levin, John Walter

Directors of Photography: Matt Boyd, Nelson Hume, Bill Turnley



Additional Editing: Anne Alvergue, Penelope Falk, Liam Lawyer, Aaron Lubarsky, Trevor Ristow, Gabriel Rhodes

Online Editor/Color Correction: Will Cox, Final Frame

Assistant Onlien Editor: Sandy Patch

Animation: Anthony Kraus, Noisy Neighbor Productions, Stefan Nadelman, Tourist Pictures



Post Production Supervisor: Chris Kenneally

Additional Camera: Amir Bar-Lev, Bryan Donnell, Guy Florita, Jason Leichuk, Rachel Libert, Jenna Rosher, Latch Soomekh, John Walter, Dan Zappin

Sound Recordist: Ryan Carroll

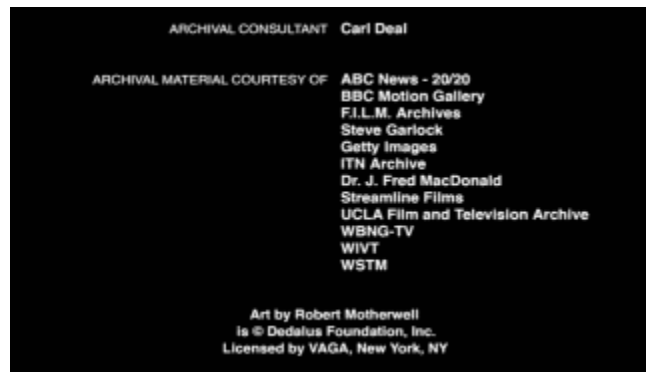
Post Production Sound: 701 Sound, Marlena Grzaslewicz, Marlusz Glabinski, Ira Spiegel

Mix Facility: Tandem Sound NYC

Re-Recording Mixer: Eric Offlin

Dobly Sound Consultant: Paul Sacco

Research and Clearances: Jessica Berman-Bogdan, Holly Cara Price



Archival Consultant: Carl Deal

Archival Material Courtesy of: ABC News - 20/20, BBC Motion Gallery, F.I.L.M. Archives, Steve Garlock, Getty Images, ITN Archive, Dr. J. Fred MacDonald, Streamline Films, UCLA Film and Television Archive, WBNG-TV, WIVT, WSTM

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