
Seracs

HAMISH M BROWN

Over-investment in machinery brought about the financial crisis in Danny Peplinska's scrap-yard on Firth Street East. Danny loved handling the cool, metallic atoms and could never resist a machine which could cut, flatten or melt the metals he recycled from our waste society. When an out-of-breath jogger stopped at his gate Danny noticed his apparent interest and invited him in to see round the yard.

Ivor Bentley-Crowcombe, a popular artist in his own right, ran an internationally renowned gallery of modern art in Bristol but was frequently gallivanting about Britain, Europe and America. Ivor had studied at Grenoble in his early twenties and had climbed in the Dauphiné regularly but the only reminders of those days were the many mountain paintings and sculptures he'd acquired.

One day his wife had commented that he was 'becoming as broad in the beam as he was in the brain' so, piqued, every day since he had dutifully put in a run, no matter where he was, no matter how tight his schedule.

Ivor had been visiting the friendly Kirkcaldy Art Gallery, officially to discuss a coming exhibition, unofficially to drool over the extensive collection of Peploes, so it was late afternoon before he set off along the sands under the Esplanade. The tide forced him off the shore and he then found himself toiling up an unexpectedly steep brae. He turned off – and so came on Danny's yard.

He stood, breathless, fascinated by the weird tangle of shapes, the unintentional geometrics, the frightful grace of powerful machinery. 'Must be money in scrap' ran through his mind, art and finance being the right and left ventricles of his existence. He gladly followed Danny round the yard.

One machine was effortlessly slicing thick power cable ('the Knowles cutter goes through it like butter' Danny chirped), a man in goggles was cutting inch-thick iron plate with a blue flame, a furnace suddenly opened and lava flowed. Ivor walked in awe. He could quite understand Danny's fascination with the job. Suddenly he stopped.

Before him was a stack of cubes of what looked like tangled and crushed silver snakes. They were beautiful. They were desirable. Danny smirked: 'Aluminium core: stripped by the Vortex, cut by the Baby Knowles, cubed by the Sondheimer Press'. In Ivor's eyes however they appeared as objects born of the high Alps: bold hunks of glacial ice, sculpted by time and sun and motion. Beautiful indeed.

'How much?' Ivor blurted out and was soon deep in an aspect of the business which he never underestimated. The next day his overloaded Transit

headed south while Danny was left chuckling over a £300 windfall which he badly needed. Ivor made three groupings out of his haul, welding the aluminium in places (not easy) and finally calling them *Seracs I, II and III*.

Seracs I he set up on his own patio in the Cotswolds and Seracs II went to the gallery in Bristol, of course.

Seracs III was dispatched to London, with a stylish coloured brochure showing alpine glaciers, an appropriate modern poem and pictures of the various stages of his work on the sculpture. The work was snatched up at once by an American collector for a bargain £30,000.

On the same day as Seracs III was sold Danny Peplinska was officially declared bankrupt.