

## **Pulp Fiction and Art with a viewpoint**

The movie Pulp Fiction evoked a visceral response in me. I first thought it obnoxious, in parts boring, sexist, racist, and disgusting in its obsession with blowing heads and body parts off. A film about and born of male energy with nothing particular to say that I could ascertain. The treatment of women in the film for me was only slightly less pathetic than the overall creation of characters I might end up caring about. At the same time it seemed catchy in an odd sort of way. The way of telling the bits of story was unusual in its structure and did not seem manipulative in its attempt to lead you to conclusions. Most everyone I know thought the movie was great and the critics are raving. This leaves me a bit baffled.

The only thing I can come up with is that most critics and moviegoers do not have expectations for film that involve anything beyond technique and entertainment. What it has done for me is raise the issue of what my expectations for art are. Why do I have this deep need for art, especially movies, to offer up some insight or direction for the mess our culture is in? Why does art for me have to break new ground for understanding what humans are about on this planet. What is art really about? What has it ever been about through history?

This vile dehumanizing movie, born of a culture that appears to be on its death bed still quivering looking for anything that will jack up the senses, has catalyzed me to question my root assumptions about what I know and what's important. Maybe this is just what art is all about- and to assign it any more responsibility than that is just a useless and ineffectual impulse.

In this context I come back to what this book is supposed to be about. It is a search for meaning in an arena that offers at best mostly platitudes about the individual, sport and society. At its worst the model that sport offers up -win at whatever cost and "in your face" if possible- is embedded both in the economic system and in our cultural psyche, producing artists who make films like Pulp Fiction that receive rave reviews and capture our imagination. There are no answers of course. My goal is not to lead anyone towards a formed conclusion, but instead catalyze perspective. This seems somehow remarkably close to what Pulp Fiction was all about. The ironies of life rise up again.