

Missoulian

one bloch over: How to get ahead in life

By **BEN BLOCH** for the Missoulian | Posted: Thursday, February 3, 2005 12:00 am

Pricey forehead advertisement reveals our taste for the absurd

Last week I was amazed to learn that Andrew Fischer, a Web designer from Omaha, sold advertising space (for one month) on his forehead for \$37,000 on eBay.

The winning bidder was Snorestop, a company that makes, you guessed it, snoring aids. Fischer will sport a temporary tattoo of the company's banner and slogan on his forehead for one month.

"You have seen it all over the news. You have seen it all over the world" Fischer writes on his Web site, www.humanadspace.com.

"On January 3, 2005, I decided to move foreword with this idea of mine. I thought it would be a fun way to get a bit of extra spending cash. Little did I know that the next few weeks of my life were going to be far less average than I was used to. In the three short weeks that followed, I have been interviewed by radio stations all over the world, and have also made multiple live TV appearances."

Now, you have to ask yourself: Do did Snorestop get their money's worth?

You bet they did.

Since the end of the auction, Fischer has appeared on ABC, BBC, CBS, CNBC, CNN, FOX, MSNBC and NBC, and as he touts on his auction page: WHEN TALKING TO THE MEDIA, I WILL TELL THEM THAT YOU ARE THE WINNER. On this Fischer has remained true to his word, and indeed Snorestop is one very happy customer.

As detailed on his Web site, Fischer is dedicated to bringing new meaning to the term "personal ad space," and envisions what he is doing as potentially introducing a bold new advertising vehicle to the marketplace. Montanans, perhaps, ought to be the least shocked by this, since up to only a few years ago, the Black Star brewery in Whitefish used to hold annual contests to see who would put (permanently) the largest tattoo of their cowboy/buckin' bronco logo on themselves, awarding the winner a Harley Davidson. In 1998, the winning tattoo measured 50.25 inches.

Nowadays, though, it seems the personal tattoo is increasingly commonplace. Perhaps people have grown so accustomed to marking their skin with earnest symbols and logo-like designs that the pragmatic goal of skin advertisements might seem like a perverse breath of money-making fresh air. More than a few mimicking entrepreneurs took note, because just hours after Fischer's auction ended, there were several new auctions for forehead ad space, including a man selling space on the forehead of his beautiful girlfriend and a house husband who writes earnestly (though with bad spelling and grammar):

"My name is Walter. I am a family man on leave from work. I have plenty of time on my hands and will advertise just for you. I am forty-one and a great walker. I love malls and places of Interest. I will advertise your company name and phone number or web address on my forehead. On top of that I will place the same add on the back window of my car and wear a shirt of your choice with said add. I live in the Midwest and have many cities' surrounding my town that I will go to. I will even go many steps further for you as my customer. All expenses paid by me."

Interestingly enough, these copycat auctions (which range in starting bid price from \$700 to \$20,000) have not yet received bids, and one would assume they are not likely to get the same kind of media attention as Fischer's precedent-setting sale. In this way the first auction resembles a kind of original artwork, and is accordingly valued. But this certainly doesn't mean that at some point in the near future somebody - if not Fischer himself - won't find a way to get the human ad space ball rolling for real.

At the very least, all of this is intriguingly bizarre, and Fischer knows it. "People will always comment on something out of the ordinary," he says in his sales pitch. "People like weird."

It's hard to disagree with this statement, and in some ways it's what makes a venue like eBay a surprisingly charged creative arena,

where some of the strongest (and most outlandish) ideas and objects pop up before large audiences where they naturally compete for their mass appeal and monetary worth in a free market.

To view Fischer's completed auction, follow this link: <http://cgi.ebay.com/ws/eBayISAPI.dll?ViewItem&item=5950507719>

I encourage you to go to this URL and read the auction description, because chances are it will affect you. Fischer seems to know exactly what he is doing, and is succeeding at it. But to his credit, he has refused from the outset to be the carrier for any message or product thought to be tasteless in more traditional advertising formats, and is pleased that a product as respected as Snorestop wound up the highest bidder.

Like the polarizing reaction commonly elicited by strong artworks, there are likely as many people who find Fischer's endeavor to be a frightening sign-of-the-times lunacy as there are those whose jaws drop at the brilliance of this money making scheme.

In the end, however, we all must be a little wowed at the new ways people find to get the world's attention. It's not an easy thing to do, but when it really works as well as this auction did, even \$37,000 can look like a bargain.

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