

2. Earlier Junction by Ucaoimhu

One artwork, part of a noted collection, shows two objects that came together way back when. In that regard:

(1) In 17 clues, one word has a compass dir. added in *front* or *back* or (for the last such clue) both; remove this before solving. These front and back additions, each in clue order, specify two paths through the grid; an addition to the clue's *n*th word indicates a move of *n* squares in that direction — except for the last, two-direction clue, which indicates the two 1/2-square moves making both paths meet at the dot. Working backwards, find the paths' *starting* squares, and read one word downward from each to identify the artwork.

(2) In the last three squares on each path, Across and Down letters conflict; enter both (Down first) to form two-letter symbols. These can be interpreted as a 3-2-1 "countdown" before contact is made. If a symbol indicates "n" in the countdown, circle the *n*th letter from the end of both conflicting clues; all 12 circled letters, in clue order, will tell you *how* (in a way relevant to the collection) symbols are matched with numbers.

(3) Five clues each have *two* valid answers differing in one letter; as a result, one grid column can name *either* of two items associated timewise with the vast coming-together events seen in the nonstart, nonsymbol parts of the paths. The opposite column names other stuff seen in those path sections, and at the artwork's core.

(4) Alter the answers to 12 clues before entry, by writing just (3)'s items, swapped; altered entries include three proper names, a prefix, a var. form, a hyph. word, and a phrase. The final 12 clues each have an extra 1-2 word sequence (to be removed before solving); in order, these define the altered entries. If an extra word is the *n*th word in its clue, circle the *n*th letter in its matching clue; these 18 circled letters (in clue order) will say what, way back when I was deciding how to use the paths in (3), *also* collided dramatically.

ACROSS

2. State of fogginess originally touching Dotty Crane
7. Ian cites Seth's weird "beauty experts"
11. Outwardly smallish fragment of Asia, before 1000, is a phony
12. Louse, finally clad in aureate material, exhibits remorse
14. Shift each OS within hoop five places to display a prefix for a web address (*abbr.*)
16. Revolutionary Mira, when tossing the Second Edition, is able to hit a target
17. Swore Len'd be cooking
19. Chunk of *Reptilia* that gets into slithering Pa's Dadaist works, ultimately
20. Peruse bisected trails the Chilean ought to join together hastily
22. A woodworker's method for joining nine-ton nuts with guanine
23. Item used to carry heavy hydrogen beam
26. Put weight furlongs to the east of small beam

28. Imbue tine with qi and put it near front parts of chest area quickly (*2 wds., abbr.*)
30. Briefly teaching English at the unfriendliest capital that's unionized? (*4, abbr.*)
32. One evening informally involves a bit of merriment paid for by yours truly (*2 wds.*)
33. Tot initially regarding overrated form of wrestling
34. Gets heated about Prime Minister's highly-placed naval supporters
35. Paper screens Sis put around Henry, Oscar, and Jay
38. Assassin/diarist Anaïs Wiener's "Oui"
40. French city's MDMA fit inside tin
41. Circling gym to hunt and fish (*2 wds.*) [NI3]
43. Word before "Kea," "Massachusetts," and (in Rome) "One"
45. Weapon used in fencing matches with outspoken primate, and in Capri
47. "Nicene Smelling Bag" at Che's parties
48. Teammate of Tinker and Chance veers with abandon
49. E.g., Teela's ailing heirs
50. Rotten, rusty Gaelic tents in central Asia
51. Sweden's second rodent-shoot
52. Gets sworn, lust-shrouded pair of depositions
53. Insert "L" *Vogue* misplaced, being someone good with words (*hyph.*) [NI3]

DOWN

1. Many a fellow like Newton, roaming Asia with phony's prefix codes, after evacuation
3. Sheep's throat tissue near Park Slope
4. Seam adjacent to Earl's place in Iowa
5. Primarily, Ebert invested in sticks used to hit spheres and hexahedra
6. Corporate bigwig has little Egyptian

8. Folk who vandalize Red's cafe badly
9. On the radio in the dining room, had unwelcome little needle case
10. When snagging PIN, shamus chiefly employs three-pronged whatsis (*2 wds.*) [NI2]
12. London gallery docent's intro interrupts cheerful Australian greeting
13. Agents to fight bacteria — one dozen — that help make gourmet (hic!) ill, instantly
15. Three ladies hugging TA wearing under-shirt that's revealing
18. Eating half of corn pone from the south that's put into a shed with eggs [NI2]
21. Sand trap's right next to large American
24. Comic Johnson said sardonic author is "Frostlike"
25. Swan elevated poem that praises secondary battery terminals
27. Sunbaked, unclad actress Bancroft
29. China's first dynasty contributes to each battle site? Si, amigo
31. One who dresses one of Vixen's cohorts
33. Thin TV Lee's horse reassembled
36. Snap at six in Italy before son rises
37. Outside of A & P, rip Mr. Cobb's zany Wonderland gathering (*2 wds.*)
39. Like those who often will bring up Mel the Giant Gutless Panda (*2 wds.*)
40. Charlie spots roguish people
42. What might represent *Texas* actor Chaney to be Mexican (*2 wds.*)
43. Odd tars mess with the matter content of a motionless particle (*2 wds.*)
44. Informal speaker's nose disheartened Uriah repeatedly (*hyph.*)
45. Vowelless name attached to a biblical king's recorded matter (*abbr.*)
46. Swine will support each pixie

