

products -- soup and beer cans, steel wool boxes, and flags -- into pop culture icons. Indeed, many state and provincial license plate designs are themselves pop art exemplars.



Vanitizing also makes it easier for motorists to find their vehicles in crowded parking lots.

Many businesses have vanitized their vehicles, because vanitizing is an inexpensive way to advertise; for taxi or livery services, vanitizing makes it easier for customers to find their vehicles, quickly.

Vanitizers often use the same kind of 21st century spelling/shorthand used in electronic messages -- emails, instant messages and text messages:

**LTRZ R** omitted, **WRDZ R** spelled phonetically, **NUMBR5 R** substituted **4 WRDZ** and acronyms **R USD**. **LCNS2ROM** is a paradigm of this new form of vanitized spelling, which I call **SHRTSPL™** [Shortspell].



Less space = fewer characters + more creativity.

*New York Times* "Language Maven" William Safire has described vanity plates as a "new language," and some vanity plates incorporate neologisms or neo-acronyms that DMV officials, who screen all vanity plate applications to prohibit "offensive" messages, don't understand.



For example, North Carolina DMV-ers recently learned how hard it is to keep up with the new text-message-lingo: the Tarheel State issued a new series of standard license plates with a **WTF** prefix; those plates were recalled once news reports revealed that **WTF** is a text message acronym for "What the F\*ck"! Prisoners who manufacture license plates sometimes catch approved vanity plates with cryptic references to gangs, drugs or violence, which DMV screeners then refuse to issue.