

# Tony Reans blends cartoon whimsy with pulp print reality

Excerpts from the blog by NewOrleans.com contributor, Ryan Tramonte, following the Triennial Northwest LA Competition at the Meadows Museum of Art, and my solo exhibit, Maximum Mindshare, at artspace, both in Shreveport, LA, in the spring of 2010.

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In Section: [Entertainment Blogs](#)

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NEW ORLEANS | In order to help me get past the disgust of having to deal with some people, I like to pretend that they are cartoons; silly, little, rambunctious cartoon characters, doing, and saying the stupidest things that I can imagine. Then almost as if I have just performed magic, I can almost tolerate having them alive in my world. This little talent of mine has helped me to get past road rage, grocery store rage, rage in the morning, rage at church, and the rage that would cause me to hang some idiot's yellowed Wednesday jockstrap on the wrought iron fence on Burgundy Street last week. Without this little talent, God knows what trouble I would be trying to get myself out of these days. Who knows what I would be doing to get my voice heard in these lovely United States of America.

Artists including Tony Reans are using cartoons alongside everyday concepts to create works that are not only fun to look at, but leave a lasting impression visually. Sure, they are fun, but the added bits of collage take his messages more clearly to his viewers, and make his efforts more identifiable to the masses. By adding the collage from newspapers and magazines, Reans is adding a little bit of the real world to his make believe creations. For viewers who need more than the color and the boldness of his characters and painted images, his collage backgrounds take you deep into his work with topical subject matter and items we are exposed to on a daily basis. Very few art forms connect with society the way cartooning does. Add in the fact that Reans centers around food, love, sex, death, America, and space aliens, and you have a mix for a connection with the masses that few artists get to experience during their careers.

In the work "Purple Atomic Ray Gun", Reans combines acrylic paint, and comic book clippings from what appears to be versions of Buck Rogers, Flash Gordon, and Nick Fury comic strips. While the shape of the ray gun itself is enjoyable enough to stand-alone, the collage clippings make the entire creation harmonious. The clippings support more than just the idea of the ray gun, they support and define the shape, the color, and the position in which the ray gun is painted. The clippings and the ray gun together make a piece that is interesting and takes the viewer on a little road trip back. But most of all, it's a feel good piece, a piece that when looked at and observed, gives the viewer a deeper sense of what the artist was thinking when he created it.

In "Internet Porn", Reans uses acrylic paint to create a computer over clippings of rather risqué photos of women from the 30's and 40's. Now pay close attention to the fact that the photos are not pornographic. This is important because across the screen of the computer, we see the XXX, signifying that we have turned our computers into vehicles for our insatiable thirst for porn. Well perhaps I am thinking of Twister again. Anyway, the computer represents the time machine in which our desire to see and be exposed to sex has moved from years ago to now. In

this artwork, the collage section of the creation representing the past supports the message in the foreground of the computer with the graphic XXX across its screen representing today. This piece is a little less jovial but is still fun in its social message to its viewers. It is a message for people about the world they live in, delivered with the sudden, delicate nature of a cartoon.

Perhaps my favorite piece is “Peanut Butter and Jelly Sandwich”. It is my favorite because it allows my mind to wander freely about the message it is sending. I have said it before and I will say it again - when I am able to find multiple meanings in any art, I consider it to be a good creation. Why? Because when a creation has multiple meanings, this is the closest it can come to resembling a person. Multiple points of views, multiple meaning, all encased in one set of skin and blasting its thoughts so loudly, people sometimes do not even hear what it is saying. In addition, the collage candy and peanut butter related wrappers offer a sense of fun to a dynamically painted P B and J. Again, the background tells the background story, while the foreground gives us a sense of comfort and fun that keeps us standing in front of it and most importantly keeps us listening to the artist’s message. Therein lays the beauty of cartoon work. It gives us a sound we don’t mind listening to, even if what’s being said removes our civil rights and takes our fun and beautiful city and turns into a palace of Evil Clowns.

*Reans work most recently was shown at The Meadows Museum of Art. The Museum is located on the campus of Centenary College of Louisiana at 2911 Centenary Boulevard in Shreveport, Louisiana. The Museum is open to the general public from noon to 4 p.m. Tuesday, Wednesday, and Friday; noon to 5 p.m. on Thursday; and from 1 until 4 p.m. Saturday and Sunday. The Museum is closed on Monday.*

*For more information, call the Museum Business Office at 318.869.5040.*