



MARK FLOOD: DOING IT HIS OWN WAY

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One of the byproducts of the Occupy movement has been the large-scale reemergence of the art style of the altered image, in which cultural icons like Ronald McDonald, that guy from the board game Monopoly and V from V for Vendetta have been fit with a frown and a witty slogan. While most of this latest round of photo manipulation art has been the preserve of the tech savvy 'photoshoppers', established artists have used the same technique for decades. Andy Warhol and his pop artist contemporaries of the 1960's, for instance, trod this path before.

In the last decade, British graffiti artist Banksy enjoyed an unprecedented rise in prominence with his own brand of street art, which juxtaposed modern corporate images with counter-culture metaphors. However, the mission turned ironic, even bordering on hypocrisy, when Banksy started showcasing his work at over-the-top exhibitions (a live, fully-grown painted elephant, anyone?), attended by Hollywood glitterati Brad Pitt and Angelina Jolie.

Someone who has done similar work while staying a little more under the radar is Mark Flood. For more than 30 years, the Texan painter and punk propagandist has been producing mixed media paintings and collages that unapologetically comment on the nuances of consumer desire - without beating the viewer over the head with allegory and liberal in-jokes.

Indeed, Flood is tough to pin down: a virtual unknown for most of his career, but even so, never truly a 'struggling artist'. While building up a prolific body of work, Mr. Flood also juggled regular nine to five's. For a long time, he wasn't selling enough of his artwork to pack up the office supplies and quit his day job. (His longest stint was as an office worker for Texaco--where he would "smoke pot everyday and ransack their files.") Then, sometime in the early 2000's, he was offered \$5,000 for one of the paintings he created using lace. So began the development of a following, and with it, a legitimate career that gave him the freedom to quit the tedious day jobs.

His latest exhibition "The Hateful Years," opening at high-end Upper East Side gallery Luxembourg & Dayan on July 18th, displays his work from the 80's, most of them recreated images of pop stars, members of the royal family and comedians, distorted and re-interpreted through clever collaging.

Perhaps the most interesting aspect of this work is that no matter how politically charged the subject matter seems, the message retains neutrality. "Everything in the built culture is art or can be treated like art," Flood said recently in a New York Times interview. "All the big ideas are supposed to hit [museums] first, but in our society that's no longer true because so many of the great artists now work in advertising and design."

In this, perhaps Mr. Flood has offered a way out to the photo manipulation artists and sloganeers of the Occupy movement, who struggle to pay back their college loans: sell out and take a job in advertising.