



Problem Not Solved-Buy the Billets-Rent the Gun-Get the Job Done

SURFACE TREATMENT

What: "Between the Lines...: Stolen Images, Cultural Adaptation/Appropriation and Confiscated Dialogue"
Where : Dorothy and Charles Clark Art Gallery, ARHU Bldg., UTRGV campus, Edinburg
When: Only through May 20.

Culture Crash

Enlightenment, salvation, and perseverance toward a better life are the underlying themes of this lively exhibition.

BY NANCY MOYER

SPECIAL TO THE MONITOR

M.C. Farris's exuberant exhibition certainly lived up to its title, "Between the Lines...: Stolen Images, Cultural Adaptation/Appropriation and Confiscated Dialogue". On display at the UTRGV Clark Gallery during April and May, the works in the show spoke of a cultural romance between the artist and Japan. Along with paintings on wood, canvas, and paper, two small shrines were also displayed. Farris had been working with cut-out wood panels as an alternative to the standard window-image format prior to his trip to Japan last year, and the Asian experience moved comfortably onto that new format.

"I started doing more wood cut-outs," Farris elaborated about his work. "Japanese culture has this idea of so many little images that are based on love and prosperity, like the Daruma. I'm fascinated with it." The painting, "Daruma: A wish, a prayer, and a little Luck never hurt anyone", greeted viewers immediately upon entering the gallery. Daruma dolls are small round objects with blank eyes regarded as talismans for perseverance and luck. One eye is colored in when the owner has a goal to be reached and when that goal is reached, the other eye is colored in. "Just before the show started I colored the eye," Farris confessed. "I want this show to travel outside Texas. Multiple times. If it does, then I'll color the other eye and it'll be complete."

Contemporary linear patterns injected new life into each subject. Farris's process is a combination of collaboration, adaptation, manipulation, and sanctioned theft, where he borrows traditional images and confiscates text and language at will. He infuses the resulting image with the colorful stripes; The placement of the stripes is impressively well handled in these works. They flow in accordance with, or otherwise accentuate the figures and create fresh images. These paintings are statements of playful beauty. It is unfortunate that this exhibition was not advertised to the Valley community. The flawless painting execution makes the appropriation a bit unnerving at first, but his images occupy distinctly different forms from the originals, although he has remained true to the cultural meanings. The image in the painting, "*MANEKI-NEKO: NO LUCK: If it doesn't make Dollars, it doesn't make Sense!!!*", is the ceramic beckoning cat that is often seen at the entrances of shops and businesses; the "Chinese lucky cat" is popular with Chinese merchants. Tengu, or Heavenly dog, are a type of legendary creatures in Eastern religions. Originally thought to take forms of birds of prey, they have been popularized into humans with large noses or flying beings. Appropriating a current anime interpretation, the cut-out, "*I'M NOT THAT KINDA DOG....ELROY!!!!*", flies through today's sky with jet power. Humorous, often impertinent, tongue-in-cheek titles work with Farris's images.

"Between the Lines" underlined our ignorance of other cultures, and our initial tendency to misinterpret their images based on our own mind-set. Explanations of Japanese symbols were posted for viewers unfamiliar with Japanese iconography. A figure with fangs and horns is not a demon, but rather wears points/horns of fire representing the purification of the mind by the burning away of material desires, so although many of the images seemed to embrace violence or a negative side, not so. The themes in this show embraced enlightenment, salvation, and the perseverance toward a better life. Except for the gun, whose image seems to appear in every Farris exhibition.

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