



All Noise-No News

SURFACE TREATMENT

What: "Screen Junkies & Other Anxieties" by Wendy Gilbert
Where: McAllen Creative Incubator: Studio 9, 601 N. Main Street
When: Through March 2019
Hours: 9am-5pm, Monday through Saturday
Contact: Wendy Gilbert at (956) 460-1880 for closer studio viewing,

Inspired by Frustration

A satirical look on our relationship with technology and how we live our life in an "always on" environment.

BY NANCY MOYER

SPECIAL TO THE MONITOR

"Screen Junkies & Other Anxieties" by Wendy Gilbert reacts to contemporary life in an explicit way and humorous way. Her current exhibition at the McAllen Creative Incubator is intimately housed in Studio 9, but contains enough inspiration for a satisfying show. Gilbert has always successfully communicated with her sense of humor and here she employs it a visual-narrative-Pop style that slides into the emotional urgency of the political cartoon genre. While her previous work reflected her inner dialogue of personal struggles and frustrations, this body of work reflects her reaction to those of a social caliber.

The format of this exhibition consists primarily of ideas in sets of four. Gilbert's nemesis is social technology and her expressive medium is the digital print. The prints have a spray-painted

background that unifies the show, although altered in hue and saturation for each work. The first set, "Preventative Measures", is a series of four sequential panels in which a nonstop newscaster talks until he's literally blue in the face. She artistically offers a panacea to this sensory offence. The main culprit, however, appears to be media that layers and overlaps upon the consumer as in "Screen Junkies", a commentary on our "always on, always connected world". "This is kind of a reaction to how we handle technology and the way it takes over who we are," Gilbert posited. "I see the internet and connected devices as the greatest inventions of our lifetime and the worst inventions of our lifetime." In this most interesting set Gilbert has created an Everyman that becomes a victim of personal technology. He is "Plugged in, Tuned Out" and "Consumer Consumed", unable to see past the devices to which he is attached and lacking the will to break free. The "Consumer" even holds a device in his mouth that appears to function as a pacifier. "Mass Media Meme Madness" positions Gilbert's Everyman with outstretched arms. "I'm a teacher and what the character is doing is a T-Pose," she explained, "I have literally watched my students, when we had a death, all stand up and go like that." (The T-pose, otherwise known as a Reference Pose, is an unanimated default state of certain 3D graphics models. It became popular later on when used with 3D-animated characters in memes, one of which showed a group of cartoon characters in the T-Pose at a child's death. Unfortunately, it was picked up by White Supremacists in 2017, and thereupon labeled as a hate symbol). Gilbert said that her students constantly take things out of context and repeat random information because of memes. "You don't even know what that means," she tells them. But they saw/heard it on a meme. Another set, "Trump'd: Living in a Time of High Anxiety", clearly references the political cartoon genre. Although relevant, they lack the crisp zing of her anti-technology pieces. The spirit of this show is ultimately epitomized by the work, "Life in the Age of Willful Ignorance," which doesn't end on a positive note. The sense of overall frustration is succinctly rendered in the repeated "Screaming Meemie" character who was originally the artist's anxiety rabbit. Now it has escalated into a screaming meemie to express the more intense frustrations that we all feel. "It's the way you express frustration in a humorous way," she concluded. Gilbert teaches art at Alonzo De Leon Middle School in McAllen.

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