



*Aging Superhero* by Andreas Englund

## SURFACE TREATMENT

### ***My Hero!***

Where: International Museum of Art & Science, 1900 Nolana  
When: Through July 23.  
Hours: 9am-3pm Tuesday-Wednesday, 9am-8pm Thursday, 9am-5pm  
Friday, 10am-5pm Saturday, 1-5pm Sunday  
Contact: 956-682-0123 or [www.imasonline.org](http://www.imasonline.org).  
Cost: General admission is charged.

### **All About Superheroes!**

An art exhibit with stimulating new twists on iconic subjects

My Hero! alone is worth the price of museum admission. On display at IMAS, My Hero! takes the superhero theme and soars way past what we would normally expect from a comic-book themed exhibit. The Clark and Cardenas galleries are filled with a sprawling collection of works by artists from around the world working in a range of media, including painting, prints, sculpture, fiber, photography, mixed media, and video. Superman, Batman, Wonder Woman, Spiderman, et al, are considered from a global perspective and provoke thought about the world-wide popularity of the superhero concept. The artists provide narratives regarding their personal viewpoints, and although our superheroes are the ultimate champions, their other qualities are carefully considered.

What makes this exhibit truly special - and it is - are the artists' elasticity of thought; every artist is going in a different direction with the superhero phenomenon. Previously, we have seen superhero images used as icons in Pop Art with no reference deeper than the comic book. Not so in this exhibit. These artists have stretched the idea of the superhero and consider his/her probable actual existence with notions that even include how a

superhero feels after work; Matt Ritchie's "Bummed-Out" depicts the Marvel and DC comics' superheroes after a bad day. And while Ole Marius Joergensen considers a young Superman exploring the trials and errors of learning to fly, Jason Yarmosky's drawing, "Playing Cards", depicts a group in their senior years.

Lizabeth Eva Rossof's powerful sculpture, "Xi'an-American Batman Warrior" was inspired by the Xi'an terra-cotta figures found in an ancient Chinese tomb, giving a decidedly cultural twist to the genre. But although it's easy to accept a Batman Xi'an warrior, that's not exactly where Rossof wants to take us. Instead, she is commenting on the "Disney-fication" of our global culture.

I find it interesting to reflect upon the need in cultural life across the millenia for the superhero, which has usually been resolved by the concept of God(s). Our biological wiring from ancient cultures that embraced multiple pantheons of Gods may have ignited a genetic familiarity within us that resonates with modern comic book superheroes. Certainly, ancient Greek, Roman, Norse, and meso-American pantheons seem to echo superhero aspects. And superheroes, like many of the earlier Gods, came from humble mortal origins. Connecting the superheroes to the past was significant to Jannis Markopoulos; he looks at the transformation of our cultural definition from Greek cult heroes, bringing realistic bodies to comic heroes. The concepts of immortality and humanness are seen throughout the exhibit, and Laurina Paperina focused on the frailties of her spastic heroes.

We are a practical, questioning, and creative society; is it just a coincidence that as the tenets of Religion have been somewhat eclipsed by the Business model, we have embraced fictional superheroes so profoundly? For many youths, these fictional entities may have become a substitute for the heroes and heroines previously found in religion. Nevertheless, this exhibit explores the human sides of superheroes by looking at their powers, their psychology, and yes, their marketing importance as products of a consumer culture.

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