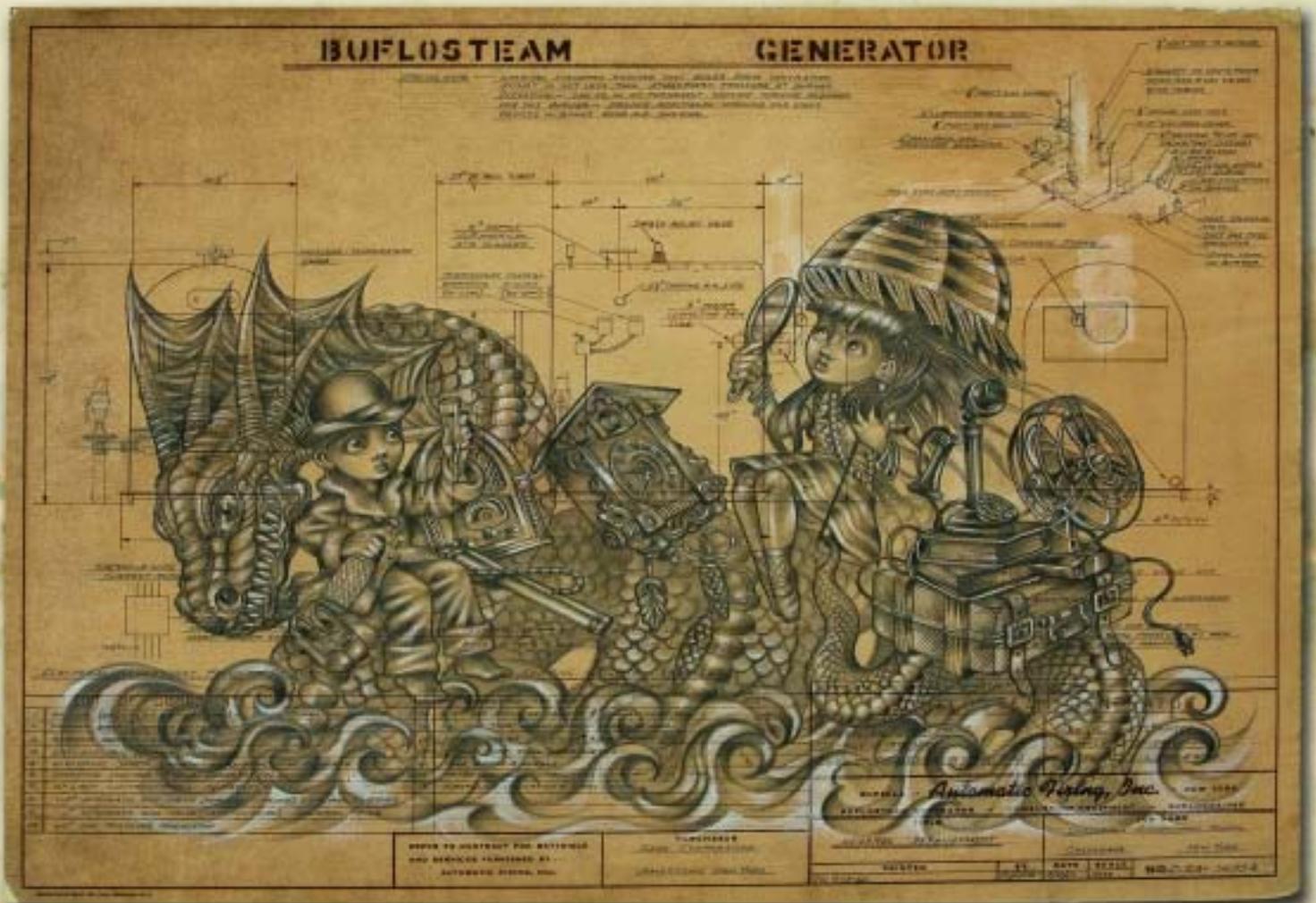


Jason D'Aquino: Old Possum and the Fantastics

June 5-September 18, 2011

Opening reception with artist talk, Sunday, June 5, 2:00 - 4:00 p.m.





Picnic, 2010, graphite on vintage blueprint paper, 17 x 22 inches.

Utilizing meticulously sharpened pencils and magnifying devices, Jason D'Aquino spends a lot of time huddled over his desk creating graphite renderings on vintage paper found in out-of-the-way bookstores and tousel antique shops. The content of his work reflects the wickedly humorous, gleefully gross and the magically macabre rather than the joyful and bliss of adolescence.

Many of D'Aquino's works are executed on matchbooks. The matchbook holds nostalgia—but it carries with it something more. It is a disposable memento—a cheap souvenir from a good time, now past. Today, when most art is first encountered via a computer screen, the matchbook carries with it a built-in scale reference. No matter how, or in what format, you are viewing the piece you know in an instant that it is approximately one by one and a half inches in dimension.

Akin to artists like Edward Gorey, who illustrated works such as *Dracula* by Bram Stoker, *The War of the Worlds* by H. G. Wells and *Old Possum's Book of Practical Cats* by T.S. Eliot, as well as dark humor writer Lemony Snicket, the pen name of American novelist Daniel Handler, author of children's books including his most well known work *A Series of Unfortunate Events*; D'Aquino's work is strongly influenced by the shadowy-side of adolescence. He has been featured in well known publications such as *Juxtapoz*, *Hi-Fructose*, *Virus*, *Inked*, *Rue Morgue*, *Tatuaz* and *International Tattoo Art* magazine. His extraordinary drawings have appeared in numerous

galleries and in influential collections across the United States, Europe and Asia.

The exhibit title *Old Possum and the Fantasticals* is a curatorial nod to both D'Aquino's artistic influences as well as a reflection on the wonderment of his subversive visual judgments. *Old Possum's Book of Practical Cats* is a collection of whimsical poems by T. S. Eliot about feline psychology and sociology and was the basis for the musical *Cats*. The poems, written during the 1930s under his assumed name "Old Possum," were first published in 1939 with subsequent editions that included illustrations by artists that inspire D'Aquino's own work including Nicolas Bentley and Edward Gorey.

With regards to the wonderment of D'Aquino's visual revelry—the subversive group known as the "Fantasticals" born of outlandish elements of Mardi-Gras' primal spark—each of his works in the exhibition holds its own embedded emotions and spirited revelry. In 1830 a group of rowdy celebrants, led by Michael Krafft, started a dawn parade on January 1, 1831 making noise with cowbells, rakes, and other farm implements. The group became known as the "parading mystic society." They held annual parades each New Year's Eve until 1838 when the people of New Orleans adopted the European custom of celebrating the last day of the Carnival by a procession of masked figures through the streets. In the 1850s this group, in concert with other individuals became

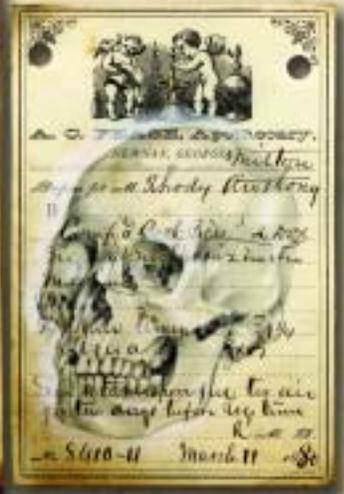
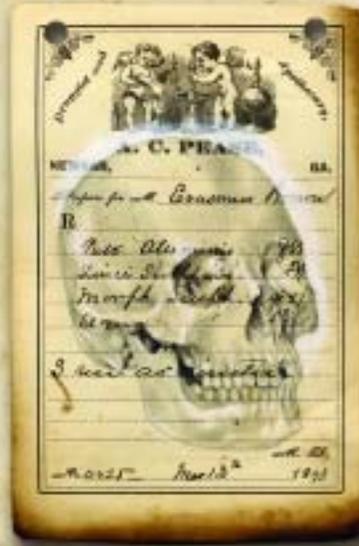
“Jason D’Aquino creates tiny graphite confections- whose master ful line-work and shading enchant the eye, just before the delightfully sordid aspects of the subject matter suddenly r eveal themselves, like a grinning spider in a petite four . These little macabre art gems unveil a world of occult weir dness, circus sideshow chicanery, and bad-ass B grade pop cultur e, and are all created lovingly on vintage found paper with a keen eye, deft hand, and most impor tantly, one of the wickedest senses of humor in under ground art.”
 - Kirsten Anderson owner of Roq La Rue Gallery in Seattle, WA and editor-at-large at *Hi Fructose Art Magazine*.



Plague, 2010, graphite on vintage paper , 8 x 18 inches.



Don Post Masks, 2010, graphite, chalk on antique scrapbook paper , 18 x 24 inches.



Cause and Cure, 2010, graphite on antique prescription sheets, 7x10 inches.
 Collection of Tara Warwick, Buffalo, NY.

known as the “Fantastical crews” at Mardi-Gras festivals. The Fantasticals were *responsible* for float preparations and causing a general ruckus to bring the annual event to order.

The work of Jason D’Aquino lies somewhere between the tongue-and-cheek humor of Richard Prince and the spooky complexity of Hieronymus Bosch. His explorations into the juxtaposition of antiquated printed materials and the pictorial effects of his, at times micro, illustrations are an open aperture into his personal desires and growing collection of oddities. His works of art are a fresh return to honesty in contemporary art...no matter how far down the shadowed path they may lead us.

Michael J. Beam, Curator of Collections and Exhibitions

Artists Statement

I am a miniaturist who works primarily in graphite on found, antique surfaces. Whether it’s a vintage, strike-on-front matchbook, an old page from a ledger or any other ephemera—the surface is never artificially aged. Any foxing or discoloration on the paper has been accomplished naturally by exposure to the elements over time. I achieve these miniature drawings with the aid of architectural drafting tools and high-magnification goggles.

A pervasive theme in my work is the temporary nature of all things. I play around this theme by using old, often discarded surfaces as my canvas. When the finished work of art is displayed, and shown in the stark light of its re-purposing, there is a sense of sadness, loss or nostalgia that often accompanies the anachronism. Much of the content of my work is left to the viewer to discover or overlook. I am aware that an artist is expected to be responsible for his/her content and the successful communication thereof, but I find this idea to be as ridiculous as it is impossible. The concept itself lacks a very basic understanding of the subjective nature of Human experience. I am, after all, an artist—not a magician.

Jason D'Aquino

www.jasondaquino.com

Jason D'Aquino grew up in Long Island, NY and attended Purchase College in Westchester, NY where he received a degree in Visual Arts. After living in Kingston, NY, he has taken up residence in Buffalo, NY where he has been for the past six years. He currently works on his art and co-owns the Leviathan Tattoo Shop on Hertel Avenue in North Buffalo.

SELECTED SOLO EXHIBITIONS

- 2011**
Pulse Art Fair, Miami, FL
Hong Kong International Art Fair,
Hong Kong, China
- Billy Shire Fine Arts, Los Angeles, CA
- 2010**
Lead Poisoning, Last Rites Gallery,
New York, NY
Galerie Nordine Zidoun, Luxembourg
- 2009**
Gallery 1988, Los Angeles, CA
Found Surfaces, Karpeles
Manuscript Museum, Buffalo, NY
- 2008**
FUSE Gallery, New York, NY
- 2007**
Fine Line, RoqLaRue Gallery,
Seattle, WA
- 2006**
Devil in the Details, LaLuzDeJesus
Gallery, Los Angeles, CA
- 2005**
New Works, Pendulum Gallery,
Saugerties, NY
- 2004**
New Souls, Copro Nason Gallery,
Culver City, CA
Triatomic, Lineage Gallery,
Burlington, VT
- 2003**
Size isn't Everything, RoqLaRue
Gallery, Seattle, WA

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

- 2011**
Construction Coordinator,
Buffalo Arts Studio, Buffalo, NY
- 2011**
Is this Thing On, Gallery 1988,
Los Angeles, CA
Hi-Fructose Anniversary Editions,
Roq La Rue, Seattle, WA
Blood, Sacred Machine, Tucson, AZ
INLE, Gallery 1988, Los Angeles, CA
- 2010**
Thresholds of Invisibility, Studio
Hart, Buffalo, NY
Music Is Art, Albright-Knox Art
Gallery, Buffalo, NY
- 2009**
Monster Show, CoproGallery,
Santa Monica, CA
Crazy for Cult, Gallery 1988,
Los Angeles, CA
- 2008**
13th Hour, Last Rites Gallery,
New York, NY
Art of the Automobile,
Classic Car Club, New York, NY
- 2007**
Scoundrels, Venice Contemporary,
Los Angeles, CA
The Rising, Windup Gallery,
Mesa, AZ
Winter Faction, Lineage Gallery,
Philadelphia, PA
- 2006**
Draw, Paper, Scissors, Domestic
Settings, Los Angeles, CA
- Six String Masterpieces*, Dean
Guitars Traveling Exhibition
(various venues)
- 2005**
Quid Pro Quo, L'Autre Gallery,
Montreal, Quebec, Canada
Groovy Group Show, Rogue Buddha
Gallery, Minneapolis, MN
Big Spooky, Roq La Rue, Seattle, WA
Rides of Passage, Milk Studios,
New York, NY
- 2003**
Big Men in Little Cars, Tin Man Alley,
Philadelphia, PA
Tiny Electric Wonderland,
Forbidden Gallery, Dallas, TX
Non-Commercial Art 2003,
La Luz De Jesus, Los Angeles, CA
Day of the Dead, Shop Chuey
Gallery, Los Angeles, CA
- 2002**
Hudson Valley Artists, Samuel
Dorsky Museum, New Paltz, NY
The Circus Show, CPOP Gallery,
Detroit, MI
Jaimez vu—The Never Seen,
CBGB's 313 Gallery, New York, NY
- 2001**
Spunky, Exit Art, New York, NY
Reflections of the New Aeon, Gallery
Eleven Seven, Long Beach, CA
- 2000**
Emerging Artists Exhibition,
Rico Gallery, Santa Monica, CA

EXHIBITION CHECKLIST

- Come for a Ride with me*, 2009,
graphite on vintage Dick and Jane
sentence cards, 11 x 12 inches.
- Question*, 2009, graphite on vintage
paper, 16 x 20 inches.
- Dissection*, 2009, graphite on antique
paper, 11 x 16 inches.
- Waste of Buffalo*, 2009, graphite
on found paper, 14 x 17 inches.
- Hermaphrodite*, 2009, graphite
on antique paper, 9 x 12 inches.
- Van Gogh*, 2009, graphite on vintage
exhibition poster, 24 x 31 inches.
- Protection*, 2009, graphite on antique
paper, 26 x 12 x 16 inches.
- Muses*, 2009 graphite on vintage file
folder, 9 x 12 inches.
- Lecture #3*, 2010, graphite on
vintage lecture sheet, 8 x 14 inches.
- Cause and Cure*, 2010, graphite on
antique prescription sheets, 7 x 10
inches. Collection of Tara Warwick,
Buffalo, NY.
- Soul Eater*, 2010, graphite on found
surface, 9 x 12 inches.
- Plague*, 2010, graphite on vintage
paper, 8 x 18 inches.
- Thrilling Mystery*, 2010, graphite
on scrapbook page, 8 x 13 inches
- Take it and Like it*, 2010, graphite
on scrapbook page, 8 x 13 inches.
- Catch and Release*, 2010, graphite,
chalk on antique scrapbook paper,
18 x 24 inches.
- Don Post Masks*, 2010, graphite,
chalk on antique scrapbook paper,
18 x 24 inches.
- Antique Flash*, 2010, graphite
on antique paper, 17 x 22 inches.
- Patek Phillipe*, 2010, graphite
on antique paper, 15 x 18 inches.
- Memento Mori*, 2010, graphite
on vintage paper, 8 x 12 inches.
- Nightmare*, 2010, graphite on antique
child's homework page, 9 x 12 inches.
- Dogfight*, 2010, graphite on vintage
blueprint paper, 16 x 21 inches.
- Picnic*, 2010, graphite on vintage
blueprint paper, 17 x 22 inches.
- Santa Muerte*, 2010, graphite on
antique paper, 13 x 19 inches.
- Spaceships*, 2009, graphite, chalk on
vintage blueprint paper, 11 x 17 inches.
- Lecture #2*, 2010, graphite on vintage
lecture sheet, 8 x 14 inches.

Olde Tyme religion, 2011, graphite on
found folk sign, 9 x 21 inches.

Bottles, 2011, graphite miniature on
vintage dick and jane sentence card,
4 x 10 inches.

Matchbooks

Disney, 2010, graphite miniature
on vintage matchbook, 1½ x 4 inches.

Jaw, 2009, graphite miniature on
vintage matchbook, 1½ x 4 inches.

Lion Tamer, 2008, graphite miniature
on vintage matchbook, 1½ x 4 inches.

Vintage Auto, 2009, graphite
miniature on vintage matchbook,
11½ x 4 inches.

Surf and Turf, 2009, graphite
miniature on vintage matchbook,
1½ x 4 inches.

Skull (exploded), 2010, graphite
miniature on vintage matchbook,
1½ x 4 inches.

Pulp, 2010, graphite miniature on
vintage matchbook, 1½ x 4 inches.
Collection of Gerald Mead,
Buffalo, NY.

Bizarre, 2011, graphite miniature
on vintage matchbook, 1½ x 4 inches.

Colt, 2011, graphite miniature on
vintage matchbook 1½ x 4 inches.

TopSpin

Artists of the Buffalo/Niagara Region

The museum's Tops Gallery—dedicated to the exhibition of work by local and regional artists—presents the **TopSpin** series. **TopSpin** features a broad range of visual expressions, varied in media as well as message, and focuses mainly on new and emerging artists.

TopSpin is made possible through the generous Support of Tops Friendly Markets, LLC.

TOPS



This exhibition is made possible with public funds from the New York State Council on the Arts, Celebrating 50 years of building strong, creative communities in New York State's 62 counties.

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