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Artist's Collages are Fun to Make and to Look At

By Dan Mayfield
Journal Staff Writer

Too often it seems artists want to make serious statements about the world, how bad something is, or to get their own issues out.

Not Wayne Berube. Instead, Berube, who's willing to take a break from framing to grab a cup of coffee with a friend at the drop of a hat or who's ready to crank up the radio and dance around his shop when the mood strikes, makes collages that are as fun and eclectic as he is.

"If they're not funny, I don't want to make them," Berube said. "There's enough gloomy art out there so I went the other way.

"I find kids like it. If they walk up to it and point at it and say 'mommmyyyy' I like that that."

His collages include Digger the Dermatophyte, the gross little animated guy from the Lamisil TV commercials, and K-Fed (Kevin Federline), Britney Spears and other stars of pop culture.

In a dyptich called "As Above, So Below," he's combined David Hasselhoff and Kate "the skinny girl who's anorexic now" Beckinsale in one piece.

"I like the tension," he said. "I'm chomping on popular culture and synthesizing it through my filter and sending it out. My mission is to do art people enjoy."

In the Art Bar, the frame shop Berube owns in the university area, the walls used to be covered in prints he imports from Europe. Now, it's all his art.

"I went into this (framing) business because I started collecting prints from France," he said. "That was 11 or 12 years ago. I used the money I used from doing ladies' makeup at Dillard's and Sears to start up. My side job turned into a job framing."

Now, his side hobby of making art is earning Berube nearly as much as his framing does.

"I have a friend who came in, and collage helped him get past a divorce. I figured, if it's helping him heal, maybe I could do it."

But not at first.

The band at his church needed a bassist, so he bought a bass and tried to re-teach himself to play it. He put it aside and has instead focused on the collage work for the last eight months.

"Most framers are artists on the side anyway and I figured shoot, I'm going to get a killer discount on the framing."

In the back of the Art Bar is Berube's little lounge, where his refrigerator is usually stocked with root beer for a buddy and a sofa. But lately, it's been taken over by his collage table and cutouts are all over the place.

"This is my cowboy junk, this is my sports pile ..." Berube said.

It seems he's having a lot more fun with his collage than with framing the work that's coming in. His collages have spread to the rest of his life, too. Many of his collages also include Berube's head with celebrities, such as his self-portrait in his store that includes his picture, boxer Mike Tyson and "My twin Miguel," Berube said, which is just another picture of Berube.

He's put his mug in military recruitment posters and more.

So where does a guy get so many images to cut out?

"I did one and people just started giving them to me. I'll never have to buy a magazine again," he said.

His collages take images from sports to pop culture, political figures and cartoon characters, and incorporate history, current issues, fun and are all over the place.

If anybody has broad interests, it's Berube. He was raised in Albuquerque and has degrees in special education, political science and philosophy from St. John's College in Santa Fe. He's visited the Holy Land, he's taken classes at Albuquerque Bible College, he lived in Seattle for a year, he taught high school for a while and was the perfume sprayer at department stores in the mall.

"Sadly, that bass I bought is sitting there and the church still doesn't have a bassist," he said.

WHAT: Wayne Berube's "Cheerful"

WHEN: Through May 5

WHERE: O'Niell's Pub, 4310 Central SE

HOW MUCH: Free. Call 265-2789