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Clint Griffin

BUS Gallery, Toronto
October 8–October 31, 1998

Clint Griffin, a recent graduate of OCAD's drawing and painting program, collects cast off photos, currently possessing thousands of images to work from. Cutting, scratching and painting over identifying aspects of his images to protect the privacy of their unknown figures, his subject becomes the photograph itself. It is not the individual depicted, but the memories, ideas and visions the photographs engender in him. This detachment from the original image contributes to the freedom he allows himself.

Describing his method as "rough," Clint uses inexpensive papers, acrylic paint, and coloured pencils, simply framing or tacking his pieces to the wall. In his recent exhibits, most notably at the Meg Gallery, his work included wall drawing. Working quickly, his drawings are more energetic than beautiful, more suggestive than realistic. In some works, Clint stacks photos, nails through the pile at the corners and works on the top image.



In others, photos are stapled onto backboards which serve as a surface for further drawing and painting. Occasionally, there is some text, always ambiguous in meaning.

An early work was produced on a primary school desk top: a figure of a man floating over the surface like an early Hockney *Beautiful Boy* who had somehow morphed with Mary Poppins. Marks seemed to be added for balance: an ingenious cross between narrative, formalism and expressionism that allowed for easy readability without illustrating a pre-conceived message. The various elements had been chosen intuitively because they pleased the eye of the artist, increasing the evocative nature of the piece. All of the work since, though photo based, has maintained this aesthetic approach.

Clint's most recent theme was "superheroes and superpowers." These were everyday figures with capes drawn on them, like kids preparing for Halloween. There were also drawings of various fantastic vehicles and rockets resembling the sort that boys are prone to use to embellish the margins of school notebooks.

Clint Griffin has been participating in group exhibits at Meg Gallery, the Atrium Gallery and Gallery 44. His solo show was BUS Gallery's inaugural exhibit (1237 Queen St. West, Toronto). At the Toronto Outdoor Art Exhibition, Clint won awards for Best Student Work and Best in Show. Despite this acclaim, Clint is invariably friendly, and unassuming. Though he claims there is no message in his work, there is more than an exploration of non-conventional techniques in his work; it is an intuitive examination of the ironies of the human condition.

An archaeologist of sorts, Clint Griffin has harvested over 40,000 old, discarded photos. He manipulates his materials in highly recognizable yet endlessly variable ways — his work is personally cathartic without being self-revealing. And it appeals to the viewer's aesthetic pleasure, combining material that is of its time, appropriately loaded with its own symbolism. *Dianne M. Acey*



100 Years of Revolution

Philippine students of OCAD
Gallery 76, Toronto
June 22–July 3, 1999

"History teaches that, whatever may be the material aspects of this domination, it can be maintained only by the permanent, organized repression of the cultural life of the people concerned."

—Amilcar Cabral, "Return to the Source" *Monthly Review Press*, 1973

Popular culture is a powerful tool. It can be used to control and pacify the minds of the masses. It can also be used as a strategy for Imperialist gains.

The Philippines seem to be a popular topic to trash in Hollywood these days. Recently on a live tv broadcast of the Emmy Awards, Joan Rivers said, "Now you'll have time to wash your dog, or feed your dog, and if you're Filipino, eat your dog."

This is not an isolated incident of American media publicly dehumanizing the Filipino people. On the popular television show *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, a character states: "[it's] easy to get the blood from a Filipina because you can order one as a mail order bride and get one in 15 minutes." On the sitcom *Frasier*, a character states that "you could get a Filipina for free." Actor Liam Neeson

LEFT One of Clint Griffin's "superheroes."

ABOVE Mass action demonstration in Manila, Philippines.