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Chloe Mandryk, 'Philjames - WARPARTY', *Art Almanac*, April 2017, pp.49-51.

Philjames paints in oil on vintage offset lithographs and makes ceramic sculptures. As if in a cry of 'off with their heads!' the artist gives historical figures a facelift applying cartoon masks which change and challenge the agency of the image. His discombobulated compositions adapt iconography from pop-culture that are already a little 'warped'. The trope of the grotesque is turned on its ugly head with cute-as-a-button animations that grow jowls, mutate and like a carnival 'freak' amuse and threaten our sense of ease. Philjames' fine art interventions are similar to what happens in street art, the disobedience encourages us to look twice, often with renewed focus.

Why is there power in devotional images and history paintings, and how do you riff off that in your work?

It's like writing a love letter. With history paintings I think events and general life in times past can take on a kind of majesty, which time and distance bestows on many things. So in that case it's an artist's impression.

The smell of raw sewage and cholera has long vanished. It reminds me of the disclaimer on the old Sea Monkeys comic advertisement which read: "Illustration is fanciful."

What's your process like from the start to finish of a piece?

It really varies, I have heaps of books with ideas and notes that may work for painting or sculpture or something else. In the case of my typical painting I collect the pieces, sometimes I can see straight away how I could reinterpret it, in which case I'll sketch out the idea then transfer it over and start the painting process. Which generally requires several layers and adjustments as it develops. I source the images from far and wide.

How do you select the cartoon characters you transform? Is it tied to their formal qualities or the role they play on screen?

This is a weird one, and to go fully into it would take pages. But mostly, character-wise, I'm interested in the yellow characters, Pikachu, The Simpsons, Spongebob and Charlie Brown. It's actually more about their place in our world. I mean I actually don't really watch Spongebob that much.

The idea of 'Speculative history' is something that fuels my process and thinking. In the hypothetical case that humanity was wiped out and then, thousands of years later was dug up and rediscovered, what would they make of our civilisation? Who were our gods? I mean think of all the merchandise out there, that type of 'Devotion' is usually reserved for a higher power.

Trump, Jesus, endemic social ills – what are your hot topics at the moment?

Plastic surgery, memes, meth, being able to drink water out of the tap, robotics, life on other planets and social media slang. And good old equality, gender and race - it's insane and a great dirty smear on humanity that it even needs to be discussed. And is Paris Hilton ok? I'm concerned.

You have a series titled 'White Privilege (and how to get it)'. Is 'white guilt' present in your practice?

I'm empathetic and consider myself a thoughtful person. I suppose my white guilt could be the expression in the eyes. I'm ashamed to admit that the term 'White Privilege' had only recently come to my attention (make of that what you will) and so I thought about it and how we came to be in this position of privilege, and I kind of boiled it down to two things. 1: Fear, 2: Mockery, which are the two elements in the works. Fear, as the burning cross, and mockery as blackface. And this is actually too recent to be even classed as history, I mean I saw minstrels on TV as a kid; they were even on The Goodies! Racial violence and atrocities are happening somewhere right now. It's so incredibly sad and fucked up.

Sometimes, instead of a gallery, you've hung pieces on Sydney city walls. Why is street art of value?

I think the valuable thing about street art is the street itself. It's the forum where basically anybody can reach an audience and it's the act of putting it up that's powerful. Doing something you're not allowed to do, I think that's important now more than ever.

In a culture where we're spoilt for choice, even inundated, with images where does your image making sit, why is it special?

Wow ok, well I think through my art I confront and present my desires, fears, fantasies, hopes, and monsters. I believe my work is honest, it's mine. It's true to my character and I really feel that I'm developing a language.