

Email Interview with Scott Hug- by Lilly Cao

The two works you showed at *Just Kick It Till It Breaks* seem to share a common theme, addressing how media can dilute, distort, or distract. Of course, media has changed a lot since 2007 – the physical newspaper, for example, has largely been replaced by apps and social media. How, if at all, have your critiques of the news media evolved since then?

My work has organically evolved in many different directions since. It has always remain critical of the media in its various forms from my critique of gallup.com statistical polls in my 2009 show: *Million Dollar Spit in the Ocean*, to *HELL TO PAY* (2012) a manifesto of broadsides that recycled found media to engage viewers of the inequalities and political apathy that was going on during the Occupy Wall Street movement [and still to this day].

Since 2016 I've been working on a documentary about Bern Porter—*BURN BABY BERN*. An experimental film about a nuclear physicist who walked out on his day job, The Manhattan Project, the day after they dropped the Bomb on Hiroshima. Bern devoted the rest of his life to publishing avant-garde writers and making his own unique brand of experimental found poetry—a critique of postwar advertising, consumption, waste, and the Atomic Age.

Most recently I've gotten back into photography through my documentary work. Creating my own images again feels really good. I'm still very interested in humanity and the profound effects our society has had not only on us, but our planet. My social photography is an attempt to document this, but not to critique it. I'm exhausted by the new media and consume less of it.

Just Kick It Till It Breaks was one of my favorite shows I've ever been in. Back then the *New York Post* cost only 25 cents! Today it's \$2! I stopped buying it when it went to 50 cents. I felt guilty supporting Murdoch. I find them in the trash now. My background is in graphic design—I love how it can be so powerful and direct. I see my Page 6 Heads as these kinds of status updates—2007 was pre Facebook, pre Twitter... I chose headlines that were general enough that when decontextualized from the celebrity gossip column, they could speak to the absurdities of the George W. Bush administration. We get distracted and love to gaze into the eyes of stars. They were meant to be humorous, but also a deeper darker reading intended to go beyond the surface of celebrity culture and into the culture at large. It was a critique of our consumption of mass infotainment, our mass distraction.

For my first solo show of these heads in Miami at Locust Projects in 2006, I invited Tobell Von Cartier to perform her Punkatronic Electroclash hit, *A Current Affair* which I named the show after... "Controversy on the scene, every cameraman's fantasy, newsstands and magazines, you're the quintessential everything..."

I have 5 of these paintings up in my apartment right now, and I have to say, they've aged really well. *Rage the Roof* (Mike Tyson) seems so perfect with the new uprising of BLM. *Tight Scrutiny* (Jake Gyllenhaal) still works really well under this current mess of an administration. Or my personal favorite, *Get Well Soon* (Lindsay Lohan)—the hangover of Capitalism—the disease that will kill us all, and the planet too: *Let Us Pray* (Mark Wahlberg).

Do you think the issues addressed in these two works remain relevant today?

HELL YES! There is some dark stuff behind our drive for celebrity and material/monetary success—just ask Martha. I wonder what she learned in prison, if anything? Talk about white privilege! Trump has HELL TO PAY!

The Black Lives Matter protests and activism, for example, rely heavily on information disseminated via social media. Are new possibilities offered by this evolution of media?

Yes, for sure, and I see so many young people doing this. It will continue to evolve.

Are there new concerns?

Yes, does information overload make us even more numb/dumb, and fuel our political apathy?

How might looking at older artworks responding to a different political moment help us reevaluate current issues?

As I've gotten older, I'm more aware of the cyclical, and yes cynical nature of things, and people. Darby Crash once said, "Everything works in circles. Like sometimes you're doing something, and a year later you're back at the same point. You understand that? So circle one, is what we're doing now, and someday we'll probably do circle two." We are doing circle 2020 right now and it's the beginning of a long hard crash. It's important especially for a younger generation to know where we were and where we are headed. 2020 will be the topic of doctorates at Harvard and Yale in the years to come. We are at the beginning of a really powerful revolution. We can't ignore the past and so many people, especially right wing white Americans have no knowledge of history or the atrocities that someone like Christopher Columbus and his like did to the indigenous people on the islands of the Caribbean which paved the way to colonialism and brought all the slaves from Africa to do the White man's dirty work— rapping the planet for sugar and profit. It's sick! It's important to look back before moving forward. Be aware, do the research, get inspired. Rewrite the history books!