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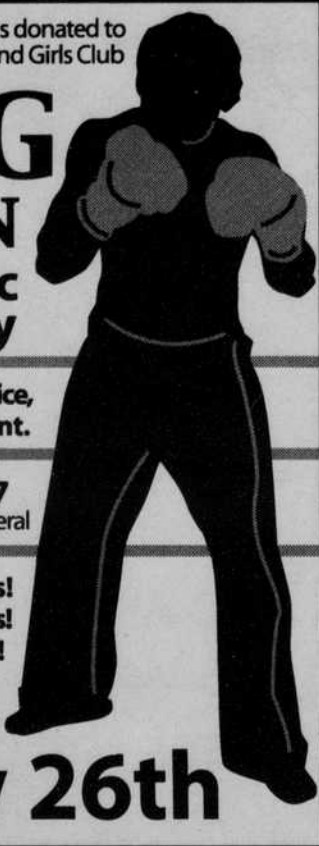
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MacArthur Court

Wed, May 26th




Carl Sundberg
Reasoning with madness

Touting mercy before justice

In these days of destruction, in this era of aggression and revenge, it has become plain to me that we need a new way of thinking. We need what Ken Kesey called a "revolution of consciousness."

"We've got to be mature enough to incorporate everyone into this revolution," Kesey wrote. "Its basis is mercy and justice, and mercy before justice."

This should be its mantra: Mercy before justice.

We've come a long way as humans, but once again, like so many times in the past, we are in jeopardy. We are bordering on killing the whole damn planet — wiping everything out: people and environment. We're working on another world war, kids, and like the saying goes, the third time's the charm.

If this happens, there won't be a World War Four.

We hold the keys to this careening car of destiny, each and every single one of us. And while we are led to believe our leaders are in charge and everything is up to them, it's not. We all choose war or peace. We all choose joy or misery. We all choose revenge or forgiveness. Our leaders sign the checks, but we write 'em.

There is plenty of hatred and anger going around these days, and not just in the Middle East. Here in the United States there is plenty of in-fighting. Just take a look at our political process.

We've got two parties, Democrats and Republicans. (Sorry, Independents, this is the sad truth.) Both sides believe in the rules of the game. They each have a creed, a side, and neither one of them will budge if it means sacrificing their self-induced dogmatic ideal. They'd rather escalate the fury than calm down and take a moment to just simply listen to what the other guy has to say. No one backs down, even if

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Modern art moves from street to MTV

One of the most common criticisms of the fine art world has been that it is inaccessible to the majority of people. Galleries and art museums have been stereotyped as places meant only for the super-rich and cosmopolitan, with the rest of us supposedly too simple to appreciate a fine painting.

One reason for this might be the failure of American education to give us the context to understand and relish art. A glance at the diminishing budgets of arts education and other programs is all it takes to know their place on the list of society's priorities.

Thankfully, there are those who have refused to see art as a luxury. There are those who have overcome the hurdles of art-world elitism by creating pieces for an environment that is quite removed from a stuffy gallery: the street.

Street art is usually equated with graffiti. However, there is much more to it than tagging and the other traditional spray-painted designs. Artists such as Jean-Michel Basquiat and Keith Haring — and the artists they have inspired such as Barry McGee, Margaret Kilgallen and Shepard Fairey — have changed art by merging fine and street art. They have taken the formal art education and used it to decorate informal canvasses.

The universal nature of their work has helped street art come full circle, and this group is now accepted as fine artists. New York galleries such as the Deitch Projects and Alleged Gallery have built reputations for themselves by offering a platform for innovative art to transition from the street to wall space.

But the evolution of art from gallery to street and back to gallery is not over. Many of these artists are transforming their work even further. They're bringing it to the commercial sphere. Some of today's most exciting visual artwork is being made by those who have bridged the gap between fine, commercial and street art.

Fairey, whose simple stencil and paint "Obey Giant" campaign became a widespread phenomenon, is now involved in designs for Sprite



Helen Schumacher
Notes from the underground

and Barnes & Noble. Other examples of this transition include Futura designing Calvin Klein perfume bottles, and Thomas Campbell and Ed Templeton designing skate decks and shoes.

Of course, this mixing of venues comes with plenty of questions and concerns. Companies are co-opting a culture to maintain their relevancy to the young consumer.

At a September conference titled "Creativity Now" in New York, Fairey, during a lecture on the commodification of street art, made the following comment: "When something reaches a critical mass — whether it's the look of street art, stencils, drips, graffiti, or musicians, wardrobe, whatever — it will be used to market products." In other words, the use of the street art style by advertisers was inevitable.

Fairey continues his commentary, saying that designing work for an advertising firm is a way for artists to find a new audience. Instead of futilely dwelling on the issue of capitalism, we can adopt the perspective that this advertising is another way to bring art into our lives.

During the same lecture, Jeffrey Deitch of the Deitch Projects made the point that "this next generation of the artists is much more sophisticated about how to communicate. (Artists can take their) radical perspective and find people who can give them the means to make an MTV video, do a Nike commercial and use the system in a subversive way." Street artists who first subverted the gallery world are now doing the same to advertising.

Contact the Pulse columnist at helenschumacher@dailyemerald.com. Her opinions do not necessarily represent those of the Emerald.

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