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Miggs Burroughs Lenticulars On Display At New Westport Gallery



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"Modigliani Newd Two" is part of Miggs Burroughs' exhibit at Worrell Smith Gallery in Saugatuck. (Miggs Burroughs / June 30, 2014)

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Lenticulars are fun, seen in "winky" sunglasses bought at fairs, on album covers and in gimmick advertisements: Stand in one position, a picture can be seen, but rock a little to the side, and another picture appears, back and forth, back and forth. Miggs Burroughs calls it "the lenticular shuffle."

When Burroughs was 10, he got a lenticular birthday card from his aunt. He forgot about it for years, but found it again when going through his late father's things. "I was fascinated by the little thing," he said. "You see something 100 times, but the 101st time you see it, something clicks."

Today, Burroughs is one of only a few artists in the country who use lenticulars to make art. Seven of Burroughs' lenticulars are among the works in the inaugural show of the new Worrell Smith Gallery in the Saugatuck area of Westport, which features three other artists. Sixteen more Burroughs works can be seen in a public art installation in the Main Street shopping neighborhood of Westport, where Burroughs has lived his whole life.

Burroughs, who graduated from Carnegie Institute of Technology in Pittsburgh (now Carnegie Mellon University) in 1967, became an artist almost accidentally. In his last year of college, he couldn't afford to go home during a school vacation, so he whiled away the days making a portrait of his friend. The portrait was influenced by the Pop art style of Andy Warhol, who had graduated from Carnegie almost two decades before.

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"I sent it home and without my knowledge my father entered it into the Silvermine art competition. It got in," Burroughs said of the long-running **New Canaan** exhibit. "So [his father's] friends asked me if I could make a portrait of them. Then I did more."

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Someone from Time magazine saw one of his portraits, and asked him to submit an illustration to Time. "It was kind of serendipitous. I didn't feel like an artist looking for work. I was working at Pepperidge Farm in Norwalk as a bread slicer," he said. "That job smelled so good."

Over time, Burroughs offered dozens of illustrations to Time. "That was during Watergate. They needed a quick turnaround on the portraits but they never knew who'd be in the news which week," he said. "I had this quick style that fit the news, which changed so quickly."

Four of his works were used: **Spiro Agnew**, "Nixon's Jury: The People," **Charles De Gaulle** and the president of **Royal Dutch Shell**. Burroughs eventually became a graphic artist and illustrator, first at Westport Town Crier, then independently. He also designed a "Prevent Drug Abuse" postage stamp and an Easter egg used at the annual Easter egg roll at the Reagan-era White House. He creates his artworks on the side.

Burroughs has been doing lenticulars for about 10 years.

Lenticulars use grooved optical plastic to create the illusions, with 30 stripes and 30 grooves per inch. One image is sliced into thin strips to go in every other groove. The second is sliced to fill in grooves left empty by the first image.

"I think I'm a frustrated storyteller," he said. "My lenticulars are movies, with just two frames, a beginning and an end."

Two of Burroughs' lenticulars tell the story of different art trends. "Piet Pollack" has a Mondrian-ish neoplastic grid, alternating with a **Jackson Pollock**-esque abstract expressionist drip design. "Mona Monroe" shifts back and forth between a Warhol Marilyn Monroe and the Mona Lisa.

Two others tell stories of Westport. "West Bank Westport" shows a scene on Route 1, the first a photo from the early 1900s, the second a recent photo. Another shows the Saugatuck River Bridge — which can be seen from the gallery's back door — in a day scene and in a Christmastime night scene, hung with colored lights.

"Brothers" shows similarities between a Masai safari tour guide and a man walking down the street in **Times Square**. "Adam and Eve" is two "exquisite corpse" drawings of both Biblical figures. The most amusing artwork, "Modigliani Newd," depicts a woman looking at a Modigliani nude, alternating with a nude woman looking at a clothed Modigliani.

"I got that idea by one of those pens that shows a woman with clothes on, and then you turn it upside down and her clothes fly off and she's in a bikini," he said. "I wanted to bring back that voyeuristic thing in a more sophisticated way. She's dreaming. She's switching places with the model."

Burroughs' outdoor installation — in a tunnel between Main Street shops and Parker Harding Plaza — is a touching series of lenticulars of the hands of couples: old, young, interracial, same-sex, mother and daughter, paint-smearred artists, blinged-out hands, bare hands, hands clutching a bagel.

The most moving is a shifting image of a child's hands covering an old woman's forearm, then letting go, revealing a number tattoo. "She was 8 years old when she was sent to Auschwitz. She was the only survivor in her family," Burroughs said. "The girl is the granddaughter of a friend. She's 8."

HOME, an exhibit of work by Miggs Burroughs, Nina Bentley, Judith Steinberg and Jocelyn Braxton Armstrong, is at Worrell Smith Gallery, 611 Riverside Ave. in Westport, until July 26. Gallery hours are Monday to Saturday 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. A "Local Everything" night, at which all or most of the artists will appear, will be on July 5 and July 18 from 6 to 7:30 p.m. www.worrellsmithgallery.com.

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