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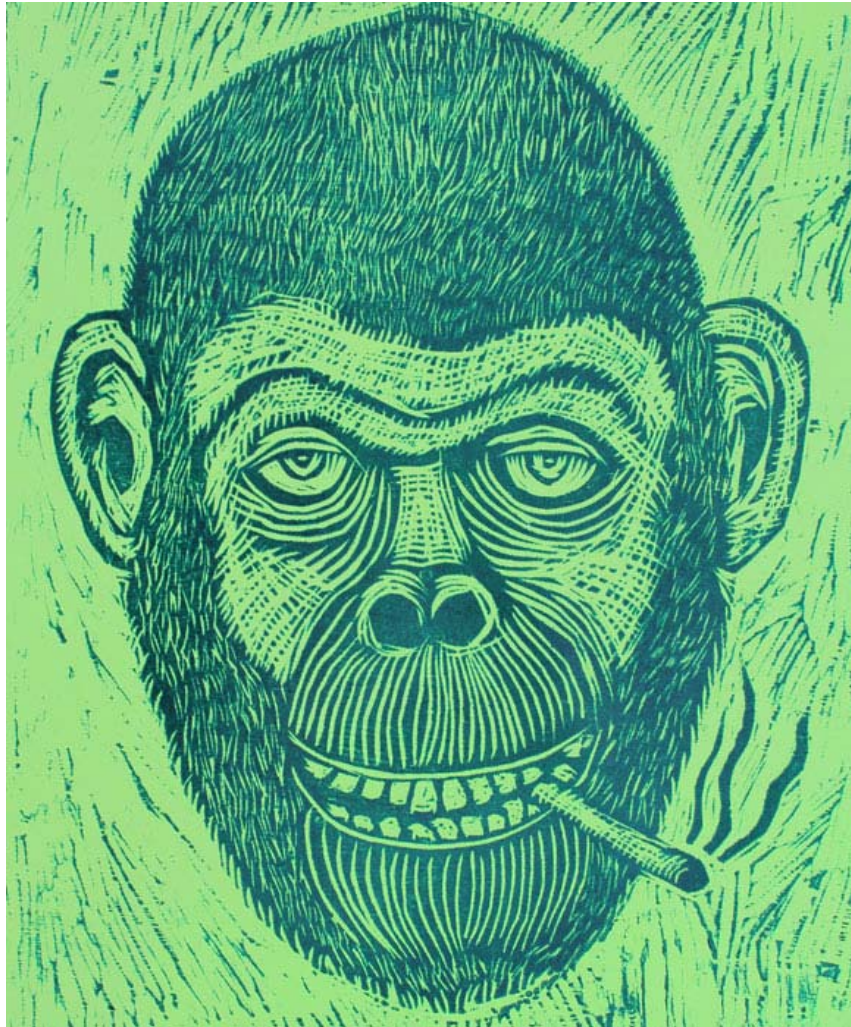


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Sean Starwars, *Chimface*.







Sean Starwars, *Tipsy Turtle*.

## Sean Starwars, when the Realism of the Portrayal Exceeds the Subjects

Wonder Fair: Art Gallery,  
Shoppe & Studio  
803-1/2 Massachusetts St.

(Above The Casbah  
785-856-3247  
Lawrence  
Sean Starwars  
*A Fuck Ton of Prints*  
June 29-July 22, 2012

By BLAIR SCHULMAN

Images of pop culture, advertising and Southern tableaus led astray, printmaker Sean Starwars' bluntly constructed imagery are presented in their most primal form. Raw and quickly rendered, *A Fuck Ton of Prints* at Wonder Fair Gallery in Lawrence, Kansas, features an absolute notion of representation that, if not altogether exciting or original, is certainly straightforward and direct. The strongest position of these 80-plus woodcut prints on display is that they are intentionally free of deeper musings. What you see is what you get and there's nothing wrong with that sort of honesty.

Starwars drinks a LOT of Mountain Dew which helps him get through his projects of one woodcut a week. In an email exchange, he says, "... I decided that...the project would be big, because it would generate a lot of work... the individual pieces could be much more immediate, much freer, (be)cause I was gonna make a new one each week. So this way even if the new print for the week sucked, it wouldn't matter cause every Monday I was gonna start a new one anyway!!!! It was very liberating!!!!" Although he must be caffeinated beyond reasonable heart rates, the emphasis in his work looks to be on the finished pieces' lo-fi qualities. His images are without hidden symbolisms. For the record, I abstain from using the term "lo-fi" from here on in. It reminds me of someone wearing thick-rimmed Urkel glasses, extolling the virtues of Radioheads' Thom Yorke.

The press release I received says the prints resemble Hannah-Barbera cartoons, but I disagree. The images have an air of depravity that is exhaustive, weary, and very, very far away from Saturday morning television. A family portrait of Siamese twins, for example, holding beer bottles with their bejeweled dates is more carny sideshow than cartoon.

Printed on paper of dirty yellows, flashy pinks and suicidal blues, Starwars portrays faces as skeletal, with hooded, simian eyes. And there are plenty of chimps to be seen; depicted as office workers, sailors or just randomly inserted. Other frequently used



Sean Starwars



images are rabbits and crocodiles, seen throughout the show as both frightening and kindly. One creepy piece depicts a little girl holding the severed head of a rabbit (maybe forget the lack of hidden symbolism), while

the crocs are often shown as goofy creatures.

Living and working in Laurel, Mississippi, Starwars is a member of the loosely organized group known as the Outlaw Printmakers, which includes, among others, Sue Coe, Bill Fick, Tom Huck, and Dennis McNett. "Organized by Huck, the traveling exhibition titled *Outlaw Printmaking* started touring the nation in 2003 ... to reflect attitudes of the printmakers involved and their non-academic approach to prints."

Starwars' look at older advertising and Norman Rockwell / Hallmark ideas of symmetry is re-designated. Not as an artistic vision of the culture that surrounds us, but how unbeautiful reality can actually appear in a format derivative of *Cracked* magazine. Slovenian philosopher and cultural critic, Slavoj Zizek, discusses the cinematic insight of 2003's *Children of Men* on a YouTube clip, but might have been thinking about this work too. Taking a cue from 19th Century German philosopher, Georg Hegel, Zizek says, "A good portrayal looks more like the person who is portrayed than the person himself." A weary couple in their kitchen is white trash in its most inelegant form. This image, along with others, speaks to the individual in their deepest, most private, elements; heavy-lidded, unapologetic, debaucherous show offs with Uriah Heep smiles, farting their way through life.

These works are not my personal favorites. I would have liked to have gotten past the snarky t-shirt or 'zine element so glaringly present. But to contradict myself, his work flows to a point where he does not deny his audience, or himself, any genuine feelings. Nor is it exalted. The work exists solely for itself. There is no reason not to drink a fuck ton of sugary, caffeinated soda and visit Wonder Fair to see for yourself the twisted combination of rough prints and hyper-inflated glucose levels.



Sean Starwars







Sean Starwars, Siamese Twins.



Sean Starwars, installation view, Wonder Fair.

Sean Starwars, Toad.

