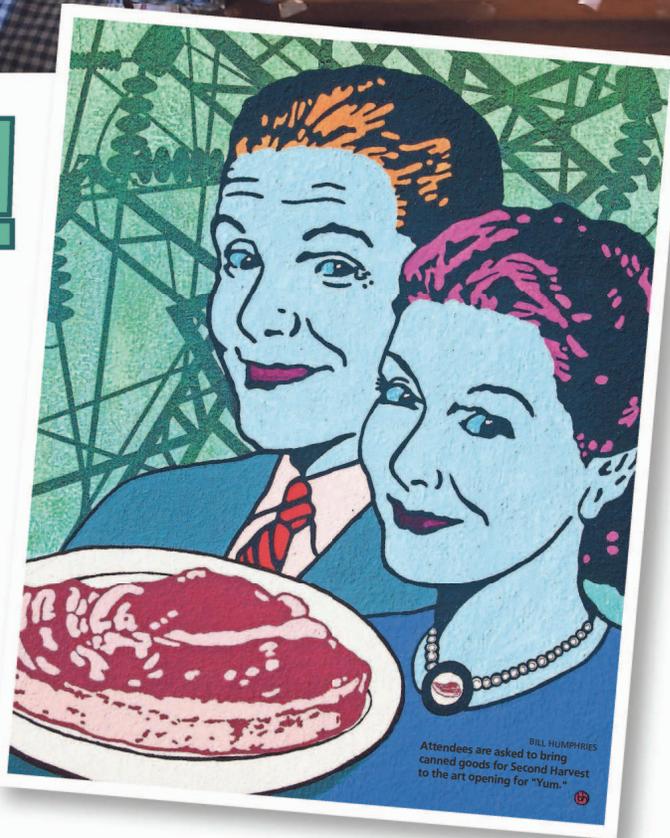




FRANKY VERDECIA.
Bill Humphries
at work on a
painting.

YUM! POP GOES THE ART



Attendees are asked to bring canned goods for Second Harvest to the art opening for "Yum."

BILL HUMPHRIES EXHIBIT OF FOOD-THEMED WORK OPENS THURSDAY WITH A DRIVE TO DONATE FOOD TO SECOND HARVEST

AMANDA SIERADZKI
COUNCIL ON CULTURE & ARTS

Bill Humphries, a pop art inspired painter, works diligently in his studio atop Southern Exposure's gallery space in Railroad Square.

Creating effervescent works of quirk, he's surrounded by canvases ranging in color and subject matter that serve as windows into a dimension constructed by Humphries' creative eye.

Above Humphries' workspace peeps a man in underwear and suspenders reaching off the canvas, his face mummified by gauze. Jutting from his hipbone is a pop-up window with a chocolate Nabisco cookie nestled inside, and from above, gears gnash another man's arm as bubble letters warn, **YOUCH**. Dazzling in safety-cone orange and fire-truck red, this piece is a bright, attractive, and nuanced example of how Humphries folds food and popular culture into his



creations. "There is some kind of narrative, especially in the collaged works," states Humphries. "I'll gravitate towards a strange image and juxtapose that with food, signage, and typography. I borrow from magazines and go on my own in terms of typography—that's the perfect storm of what I do."

Two similar pieces by Humphries, titled "CLOC" and "Bob and Betty Blasengen Loved Their Meat," are showcased in COCA's latest exhibition, "Yum" at the City Hall Art Gallery. In tandem with America's Second Harvest of the Big Bend, opening reception attendees are encouraged to bring non-perishables to donate as they view artwork that celebrates food's role in our everyday lives. Humphries is energized by this theme, as the philosophy and intent behind his own creations continue conversations started by pop-era artists such as Andy Warhol and James Rosenquist who were often inspired by food and its packaging.

If you go

What: YUM!
When: Opening Reception, 6-7:30 p.m. Thursday, June 1; Gallery Open 8 a.m.-5 p.m., Monday-Friday, through July 17
Where: City Hall Art Gallery, 300 South Adams Street
Cost: Free; opening reception attendees are encouraged to bring non-perishables to donate to Second Harvest of the Big Bend
Contact: For more information, visit <http://co-ca.tallahasseearts.org/art-in-public-places/city-hall-gallery> or call 850-224-2500.

"It's the debris and detritus of the 20th century filtering through my eyes, brain, and hands," describes Humphries. "In a way, I'm exploring the 21st century, and fine-tuning or discovering for myself what 20th-century artists discovered in their art. I'm influenced by German artists and movements, and how it comes out is chance and intuition."
A graphic designer by trade, typography and clean lines are both prominent elements in Humphries' artwork. He arrived in Tallahassee in 1974 and attended Florida State University for a

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Humphries

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degree in creative writing, but found that the imagery of text itself to be his main interest. Over the years, he's cultivated skills in photography, painting, and mixed media art alongside his day job, and has shown work as part of the FSU Museum of Fine Arts Artists' League, as well as in exhibits in Valdosta and Thomasville, Georgia.

Humphries' artwork typically features bold, unnatural color palettes. Themes and moods dictate how he chooses color from his paints, and he also tends to work in series. Lately, he's focused on film stills from old black and white movies, capturing iconic figures with shades of black and gray. In terms of process, he takes reference photos and cleans up lines and shapes in Adobe Photoshop or Illustrator, then chooses tracing paper or a projector to transfer them to the canvas. From there, Humphries finds the greatest satisfaction in the fluidity of the initial image to his final vision, as well as the physicality of the paint.

"For me, art is my private therapy," says Humphries. "I love that tactile feel of the rough canvas grain, charcoal pencil, or a brush. When you're laying down paint, you can see the shadows and striations, and you have total control."

One of his original series, which features Colonel Sanders from Kentucky Fried Chicken fame, captures the essence of Humphries' questions about present-day cultural icons and images, though he wants his work to always maintain a sense of humor. Cheeky titles like, "Which came first: Col. Sanders or the Chicken," ask the viewer think deeply about the fun, pop images and design as he places well-known icons are put against backdrops like the Egyptian Sphinx and Pyramids.

"The Egyptians built these monuments thousands of years ago, and we're stuck with Colonel Sanders," laughs Humphries. "That says something about ancient culture and how we're programmed by consumer cul-



"Yum" exhibits some of artist Bill Humphries' food-related themes.

BILL HUMPHRIES

ture. It's all about how we consume things, why we consume things, or how are we pushed to consume things."

With the COCA exhibition at the City Hall Art Gallery, Humphries is excited to see all the different interpretations of "Yum" from other local artists. The exhibit will kick off with an opening reception on June 1 from 6-7:30 p.m., and stay on display through July 17.

Both of Humphries' works in the "Yum" exhibit are riddled with hidden undertones, waiting to be uncovered. "CLOG," which features the Frisch's Big Boy Restaurant character in a med-

ley of red, white, blue, and yellow, stays true as a visual representation of the iconic burger-brand with the tongue and cheek "Clog" typography beside it.

"Bob and Betty Blauaugen Loved Their Meat," features two blue-faced models from the 1950s with a backdrop of shadowy power lines, which Humphries photographed then transferred to canvas, with a giant, raw steak cutlet in the foreground. Though Humphries sees his own connections in these artworks, he likes the viewer to try and piece together their own stories and conclusions.

"I'm always winking at you," smiles Humphries. "A good piece of art will speak to the community or the individual and give a nod to our human experience, and a framed piece of art is a window to some emotion. It may disgust you or it may make you feel satisfied. It may even make you say, 'yum.'"

Amanda Sieradzki is the feature writer for the Council on Culture & Arts. COCA is the capital area's umbrella agency for arts and culture (www.tallahasseearts.org).