

RANDY GRSKOVIC
THE AGE OF INFO(RMATION)
NOVEMBER 4 TO 30, 2010
TUESDAY TO SUNDAY, 12PM TO 6PM
2233 GRANVILLE STREET, VANCOUVER

It seems fitting that *The Age of Info(rmation)*, an exhibition of new work by Vancouver artist Randy Grskovic, opens in Gordon Campbell's neighborhood the day after he announces his resignation as premier of British Columbia.

Gordon Campbell was born in the Shaughnessy / South Granville neighborhood on January 12, 1948. The charitable arts sector in BC has been hit hard by funding cuts from the Provincial government over the past year.

Campbell's personal approval rating recently reached an all time low of 9%. This exhibition coincides with our pursuit for a new leader who recognizes the educational contributions of contemporary art and critical thought. This exhibition also comes at a time when Frieze magazine investigates religion and spirituality, and the role that art plays in the establishment of community and faith.

The Age of Info(rmation) is presented by Balcone, a new charity that presents contemporary art projects in a variety of spaces around Vancouver. Without a permanent location, Balcone operates with mobile offices and flexible programs that are reactive to social, political and economic challenges within the arts community. Balcone's mission is to create a unique context for the practice, curation and exhibition of contemporary art in Vancouver and beyond. It's primary purpose is to advance

education by presenting artistic projects for the benefit of the community.

The Age of Info(rmation) is a series of collage and diorama works that combine appropriated clippings from retro magazines with hand crafted objects. Each collage tells a story that seems familiar, yet somehow different. They form postmodern allegories illustrated by a variety of fables from biblical stories, historical events and ancient myths. The composition of each work resembles that of Byzantine iconography but they are presented and framed in a modern folk fashion. The juxtaposition of images, styles and symbols from various genres and periods creates an unsettling and provocative narrative that is anachronistic with its references, yet somehow relates to the future.

Anachronisms have been used as artistic devices in art for millennia. The word originates from the Greek words *ana* (against) and *chronos* (time). Many Renaissance artists frequently painted historical or mythological characters wearing garments or eating foods that would have been foreign to those characters. In some cases, placing historical events into a contemporary context makes it easier for audiences to understand or relate to a story.

Grskovic effectively combines old craft techniques with modern media designs meanwhile referencing history, religion, science and technology. The collages prompt viewers to consider how morality in our culture differs from the morals that we have acquired through historical and mythical stories. The exhibition's title piece depicts an Eve-like 1960s era woman with voluminous mascara eating an apple while surrounded by exotic snakes from around the world. This body of work moralizes

contemporary global issues against those of the past.

Icarus is a modern illustration of the Greek myth of Icarus, son of Daedalus, who fell to his death after attempting to escape from Crete by means of wings that he made from wax. He ignored instructions from his father not to fly too close to the sun. *Keepsake* pictures a centaur-like figure, but with a horse's head and a human's body. In Roman mythology, centaurs are usually pictured as having a human's head and a horse's body.

Civilian attempts to add new fictional elements around the public beheading of a murderer and rapist who was caught in the Middle East. Grskovic removed only the figures from the images in the original news story and pasted these figures next to thought bubbles, similar to the format of comic strips. Before the victim is beheaded, he says, "Why are you doing this to me?" After the criminal has been executed, the officer says, "Why are you making this about yourself?"

Many of the works appropriate clippings from Jehovah's Witness magazines. Grskovic was raised as a Jehovah's Witness in Kelowna, Canada. His grandfather, a successful business man, donated much of his fortunes to a televangelist in California who turned out to be a scam-artist. *Torrent* features pictures of choir boys pasted into images of retro television sets surrounded by cameras, speakers, microphones and robotic arms. In the background of *Father*, there is a negative figural space of a woman kneeling down to console a young boy. In the foreground, a man is pictured lighting a cigarette while out on some kind of trip with his dog. The piece suggests that the man is the

absent father missing from the negative scene in the background.

Issue 135 of *Frieze* magazine (November and December of 2010) tackles religion and spirituality. "Dan Fox's *State of the Art* editorial asks if the art world's wariness of religion is a contradiction: 'Religious conviction is taken to be a sign of intellectual weakness, and yet meaning in art is often a question of belief.' Philosopher Simon Critchley, in a feature interview, suggests that art, faith and politics have long been intertwined. 'Artistically and politically, the avant-garde has always been concerned with ideas of the group based around a kind of faith.' He argues that religion allows us to think about forms of community. 'What I want is religion without God, where religion is understood as a form of association' (<http://www.e-flux.com/shows/view/8802>)."

Grskovic's work questions the messages that we receive from religion, science and the media; however, his work also attempts to resolve these doubts by searching for a system of faith and community through art. I believe this search relates to a larger public debate in our province regarding government support for the arts.

Randy Grskovic has a BFA from the University of British Columbia. His work has been exhibited at Centre A in Vancouver, the Alternator in Kelowna, L'OEil de Poisson in Quebec City and Eastern Edge in St. John's. He was also invited to curate a program for Vtape in Toronto. Currently, Grskovic lives in Vancouver and works out of the Cartelera Talent House.

Justin Muir
Executive Director, Balcone
www.balcone.org