

## 'Glory Days'

### Six Gen X men revisit their adolescence

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SOUTH BEND -- How are the boys of Generation X doing now that their adolescence is over?



Based on the works in the exhibition "Arrested Development," adolescence isn't necessarily a distant memory for some of them.

Nor is it a cause for nostalgia.

The exhibition, which continues through Friday in the Little Theatre and Sister Rosaire Galleries in the Moreau Center for the Arts on the Saint Mary's College campus, contains works by six male artists whose teenage years encompassed the 1980s and '90s.

In one way or another, all six artists appropriate pop culture images in their work, some at an ironic detachment, others more warmly and intellectually.

Rudy Shepherd's series of drawings of iconic black musicians includes this one of Marvin Gaye in the "Arrested Development" exhibition at Saint Mary's College.

In addition, curator Krista Hoefle, the director of the Moreau Art Galleries, asked each of the artists to assemble a five-song playlist to complement their works. She assembled one, too, and has all of them available in the gallery for listening on Discman players.

Scott Stulen may well provide the exhibition with its slogan with "Bored and Old," an installation made of black pipe cleaners affixed to a wall so that they spell, "Still waiting for my teenage angst to pay off," a neat riposte to the emotion de rigueur of early-'90s grunge.

Stulen, whose works in the exhibition include two- and three-dimensional works, says in his artist statement that his current work "is based on memories of failure, loss and obsession." That certainly applies to the semi-realist acrylic on canvas painting of a boy uncomfortably outfitted in a cowboy costume standing by a piano in "Hippy Hat Halloween or how I Became a Rhinestone Cowboy."

Stulen's works include this painting, "Hippy Hat Halloween or how I Became a Rhinestone Cowboy."

"My First Through Fourth Grade Teachers," another acrylic on canvas painting, presents an interesting juxtaposition of Larry Wilcox and Erik Estrada in their "CHiPs" uniforms with H.R. Pufnstuf as the two law-and-order cops flank the free-spirited children's show character whose name many people think is a reference to marijuana.

Jason Lahr also makes use of pop culture icons -- precisely rendered drawings of the Unabomber and Led Zeppelin; an AT-AT from "The Empire Strikes Back," nearly obscured by a cloud of white paint daubed over it, like the drifting snow on the planet Hoth; a Play Station; death metal bands' logos -- in his five paintings.

The curator of education and exhibitions at the South Bend Regional Museum of Art, Lahr sets his objects against neutral colors that obscure his emotional regard for the objects. His original texts for each painting, however, depict men as incompetent and/or dismissed and mystified by women: "She stood over him with her hands on her hips and said, 'This is all your fault. You just couldn't leave well enough alone, could you?' Turning away, her tone shifted from panic to anger, 'Jesus, you're so stupid.' He sat in the corner with his crushed legs splayed in front of him and muttered through clenched teeth, 'I'm comfortable with that.' "

The original cover for the "UFO Flying Saucers" comic book, above, and one of Steve Seeley's 26 variations on it, below.

Eric Prykowski's animated video, "Photocopy Movie 2:42," has an Escher-like perspective that makes it entertaining on first viewing as a geometric drawing undergoes multiple Rorschach-like transformations until the original image returns. Prykowski's live-action video, "Deric and Darb in 3D (excerpt from 'Gubbi Gubbi')," a collaboration with Brad Wind, however, hews too closely to early-'90s slacker film conventions to be a parody, while it also hews too closely to early-'90s slacker film conventions to be interesting as it follows two dudes on a night of driving and doing doughnuts in a church parking lot.

Rudy Shepherd pays tribute to five iconic black musicians -- Chuck D., Marvin Gaye, Snoop Dogg, John Coltrane and Miles Davis -- with a series of ink on paper drawings, while two large-print photographs offer contrasting images of stark isolation and human contemplation.

Steve Seeley presents the most obsessive series of works: "The Creature," 26 clever, captivating variations on the cover for the same 1950s-era comic book, "UFO Flying Saucers."

Each cover features a different creature in place of the original creature to confront the boy and his dog from the original cover, except one, where a flower replaces the boy and the dog and three disembodied skeletal skulls take the creature's place. Seeley's replacement creatures range from the humorous image of a robot dressed as a cowboy to the creepy image of a person in a bunny suit, from the sci-fi staples of a three-headed man -- all blue -- rendered in a style that's reminiscent of Charles Addams' style and a pink-headed creature with an oversized cranium like the aliens on the "Star Trek" episode "The Menagerie" to the out-of-place image of a bear disgorging a rainbow. Only the green creature in a metal scuba-like spacesuit of the sort used in '50s B-movies looks plausible as a comic book cover.

Gavin Bunner provides "Arrested Development" with its simplest and most humorous images: seven watercolor and pencil drawings that depict absurd situations. In "Bystander Ruined Picture," a boy does a handstand behind two parents posed with a baby carriage; in "Boxin Polar Bears," a man in a karate suit challenges a polar bear to a fight; and in the best of the lot, "Stalled Car," a dinosaur terrorizes five people as they try to get into -- or push -- a green VW bug. Two of the people even resemble Velma and Freddie from "Scooby-Doo."

Oh, Shaggy.