



D. Dominick Lombardi, POD Heads 501-600, 2009, archival pigment print, edition of 15
30 x 20 inches (76.35 x 51 cm)

Tattooed Tokyo: A Combination of Factors

Prince Gallery, Copenhagen,
Denmark

by Erik Bendix

In his *Post-Apocalyptic Tattoo* (1998-2008) and *Graffoo* series (2006-2009) shown at Prince Gallery in Copenhagen D. Dominick Lombardi playfully tackles the theme of the human condition. In these series, a distant future is

imagined where pollutants, transgenic food and tainted water cause genetic mutations at the reproductive level. Despite the brightly colored, graphic renditions of cartoon-like tumorous mutations often set on candy colored backgrounds (photographs taken on a trip to Japan, and reworked in Photoshop), the works tell a much bleaker story of a deeply impacted society seen from the perspective of a future tattoo artist whose final designs record the extreme mutations of a distant future.



D. Dominick Lombardi, Tattooed Man #9, 1985 & 2007, oil and alkyd on previously painted canvas,
20 x 16 inches (51 x 47.75 cm)

What strikes you when confronted with the pieces is Lombardi's choice of visual strategy in conveying his dystopian point of view. Many artists produce work dealing directly with dystopia; uncomfortable, controversial or dark subject matter, and there seems, generally speaking to be two more or less common strategies. The first is the type of work that instantly repels you, only to make you return for more. One needs only consider the obvious examples – the Chapman brothers, Paul McCarthy as well as Jeff Koon's *Made in Heaven* series. Part of the appeal of these artists' work lies in their ability to elicit horror and disgust in an extremely visceral and direct manner while subsequently uncovering subtler themes and points underneath the surface. The second type is work that, at first glance is visually seductive and often appear to be rather innocent. They mostly speak a familiar, approachable and almost cute visual language that automatically lowers your guard, which in turn sets you up for the full impact of the serious nature of the underlying subject matter. Takashi Murakami or Yoshitomo Nara

operate in this territory; Lombardi also falls under this second category, sharing his sensitivity, although his approach is decisively more lowbrow and environmentally informed.

Stylistically, the various mutated heads that make up the majority of the works shown at Prince Gallery eventually, but unavoidably, produce thoughts of deep malaise. Reminiscent of early Robert Crumb, these head-like *Graffoos*, at first, seem innocuous, but on closer inspection reveal a warning to be heeded; a sense of consequence and doom regarding the way we as a society – more often than not – value economic gain over the health and wellbeing of living things. Following the logic of the works, the impact of our current short term solutions is extremely palpable, and should by no means be taken lightly.

Apart from the works on paper, there are also a few paintings on found canvasses, that tip their hat to the Situationist International, and more specifically to Asger Jorn's *Detoured* paintings. Jorn famously re-appropriated cheap paintings found at flea markets, altering the content of the originals by painting over parts of them in order to offer a potent critique of capitalist and bourgeois society. When viewed from a Danish context, Lombardi's overpainted canvasses offer a take on the Jorn's legacy, and a different approach to his, and in a wider sense, the Situationist project. The Scandinavian countries with their focus on the environment, social equality and public health is not your obvious choice for a show dealing with the negative consequences of tampering with nature, food and everything else under the sun. Prince Gallery has taken a chance showing Lombardi out of his element in Copenhagen; a city, that for better or worse, fundamentally still has retained its village-like qualities. That said, the problematics are the same, whether here, there or elsewhere, and taking the chance has paid off. The show is thoughtfully hung, and an excellent introduction to Lombardi's work to a wider Danish and European audience.



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