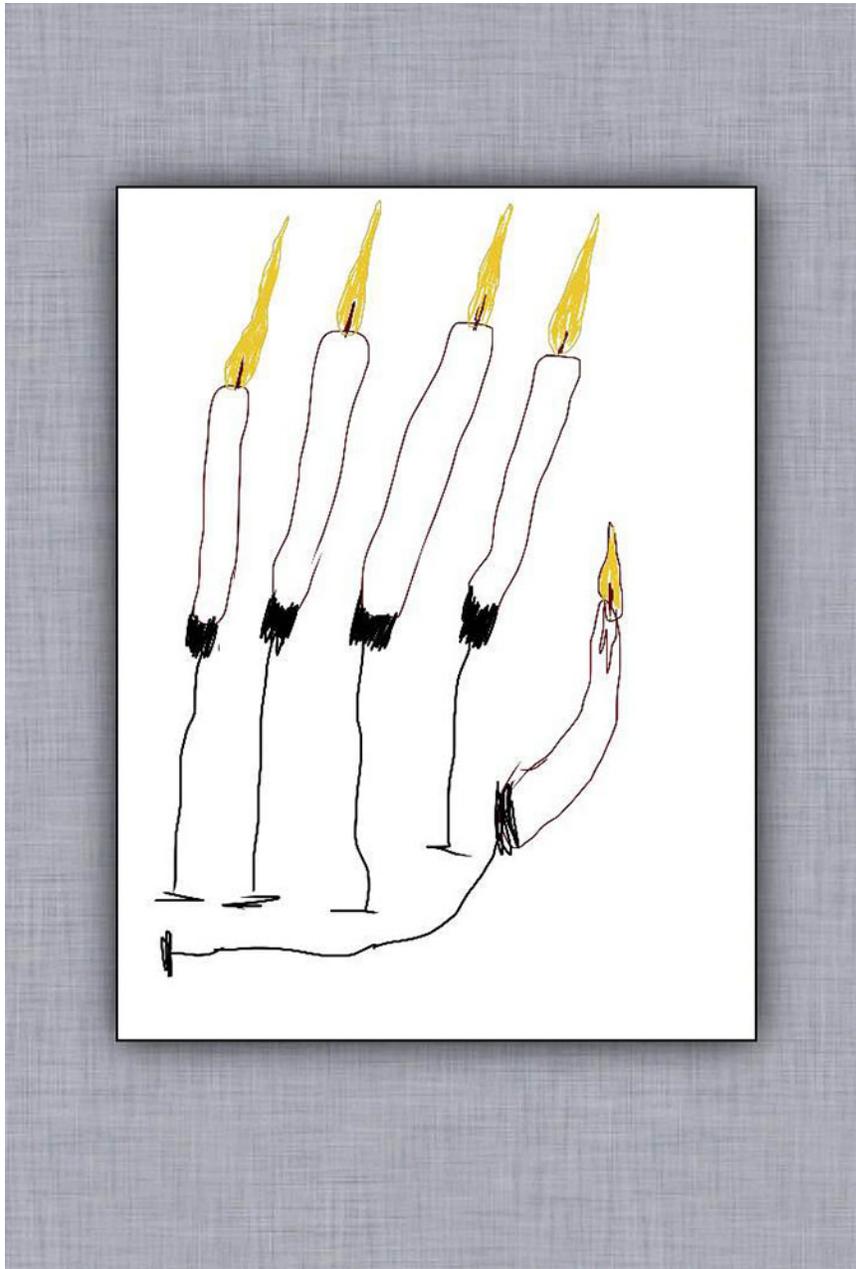


FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE



BILL & TED

Bill Adams and Ted Gahl

May 14th - June 25th, 2016

Opens Saturday, May 14th from 3-6pm

Bill & Ted is the first exhibition to open Freddy's new home within an old church located in Harris, New York. The exhibition is on view by appointment only. For more information (including exact location) and images please contact info@freddygallery.biz

Bill and Ted

Ted: Hey Bill. How are you? You getting tired of this weather yet?

Bill: Greetings from NYC. I'm exhausted by the weather: windstorms, April snow, icy rain, and cloud banks as far as the eye can see. When the sun does appear it's brief. I've made a habit of walking on the sunny side of the street. I recommend it.

Ted: Oh man, I'm totally the same about the sun thing. It's funny, we are both from the tri-state area, so we always have a good idea what winter will be like; but it's almost as if we are still surprised when it's really cold. How did your ballpoint works come about? I remember Josh called them "monsters," while they have also been described as both cats and dogs.

Bill: We evacuated our loft after 9/11 for a couple of weeks so I began to think small. Only later did it become something I began to use in earnest when I started the wounded animal/monster drawings. Then I was in a show called *Ballpoint Inklings* curated by Geoff Young and Kerry Schuss and suddenly I realized this was a thing. When I was growing up I taught myself guitar and learned an old folk song called *the cat came back* about a cat that survived nuclear annihilation and I began drawing that hypothetical cat. As for the ballpoint thing, I knew I'd never stop. It became basic instinct, especially after 9/11, because I needed to draw all the time. At first it was all cats. But now it's monsters, humanoids, bushes, and lately flowers and dogs. I even bought space pens so I could draw on the wall or upside down if necessary. I always think of this quote by Johnny Rotten, "I don't know what I want but I know how to get it." It seems to go to the heart of process and it's so insistent. I look at your work and I think there's conviction in the everyday, an insistence in the everyday, and I like that a lot. But within that there are themes that emerge, images too. Like the candle. So, what about the candle?

Ted: The candles are a way to slow down, an approach that relies heavily on placement and constructing a painting. The candles started with cartoony drawings of inanimate objects out on a date. I made this painting a few years ago of a fat candle on a date with a very skinny candle. I liked it, but then I started making trompe l'oeil paintings of VHS movie covers and I figured why not try to make some candles in a more classical mode. We've seen so many examples of painters all throughout history taking on candles, so I made mine floating candles burning on both ends. When I was growing up my mother would often tell me that I was "burning the candle at both ends." I have a soft spot for visual pun paintings like the ones they sell in casinos or frame stores. I loved your last show at Kerry Schuss in the city - it really stuck with me. I remember telling you that when we met up. Were those larger works, those paintings, kind of made in that "come what may" approach? Were they made from drawings? I thought they were a great balance - using faces and features as these devices to create abstract paintings.

Bill: The drawings and paintings are separate, although I sometimes insert literal bits of drawing into a painting. Like an eye or a shape. And where the drawings are dense amalgams of scribbles and lines, the paintings are something else. Something material. An accumulation of everyday stuff, from newspaper to scraps of discarded color shapes, any kind of junk. Sometimes I hate a painting so I leave it outside in the heat and rain, to age and weather, until one day I see what it is and race to the finish. Or I hide paintings and forget about them until I seize an idea for a move. It's a weird kind of cat and mouse game. Incidentally, the human features, which often appear in the paintings, unite the disparity between the painting act and the image. Pretty simple I suppose except my response feels complicated, full of associations and personal history. I think the human features function in a similar way as the candles do for you. Many of your paintings seem conversational. For instance, a color daub here and then suddenly geometry! In the way one might move from topic to topic in a fast paced conversation. It's almost athletic. How would you characterize this? It strikes me as a kind of beautiful conversational mimicry.

Ted: I did a little group show in Texas years ago and I specifically made works thinking about sentence format with different small paintings acting as stand-ins for verbs, nouns, commas, and quotations. As my paintings got larger, I took that idea and applied it to a single surface. The last couple groups of paintings I've made were austere single color paintings, but with these blasts of manic color and paint handling, or basically interruptions. I love the idea that a painting can be loud or shy, or frenetic, etc. I also understand that feeling of hating a painting. I always find it interesting - the relationship that artists have with their own work. You meet some who are enamored and confident with every little thing they touch. Then you meet some who are the opposite. I think I am somewhere in the middle. Do you have any works around from when you were younger? What does the work look like that you were making when you were in school in Indiana?

Bill: I do have work from when I was a kid. I have an oil painting I did when I was nine: A self-portrait in a navy blue shirt. And I have three colored pencil drawings based on images from the yellow submarine. And some other drawings of imaginary rooms with strange distorted humans in bell bottoms and strap shoes. All from kid days. There is one surviving painting from high school, where I was trying to master a kind of photorealism. Also, I have a couple of copies of school newspapers I did cartoons for. I love cartoons. As for Indiana days, the works I kept are one-shot landscapes of a creek behind my house that I painted every morning at the crack of dawn for like three months. The experience altered my views on painting in a thousand ways. When I came back to New York after grad school I started on the track I'm on now. And there are paintings and drawings scattered around from all these years. It's helpful to check it out if only to see how the pendulum swings. And, of course, I have always had a thing for children's art and so-called outsider art so it's doubly interesting to look back.

I have seen a smattering of cartoons and drawings that you've made. One particular image of a painter at an easel really stays with me. This image reoccurs in your paintings too. And on Instagram I have seen animations along the same lines. I see this image as intricately related to your larger more abstracted work. What do you think? And also I keep thinking about time travel... it's the Bill and Ted thing! Do you think about time travel in any way? Maybe this question is too out there.

Ted: Haha, that question isn't too out there at all. I think everybody thinks about time travel in one way or another. I mean doesn't everybody wonder what it would be like to go back or forward? I think as painters we dwell on it especially, just because what we are doing is so wrapped up in history. It's like every move we make brings up a thousand ghosts that come and look over your shoulder. I didn't grow up wanting to be like a Picasso or whatever, I wanted to be a Gary Larson, or be making stuff that looked like Doonesbury. I grew up following my dad to work at an ad agency and I was really into the big drawing tables and stacks of markers where these guys would do sketches of elaborate and embellished characters. I start everything I do in this mode of imagery. Even the candle paintings, as I mentioned, they all start as these crude, messy napkin drawings. A large scale, somber oil painting might begin its life as a poorly drawn square on a small piece of paper with a line that represents the floor and a goofy guy looking at it for scale. I think 'serious' painting and sculpture is great, but I don't think there is anything more direct than a quick, funny, well done cartoon drawing. Speaking of sculpture, I have seen images floating around of some sculpture stuff you've been doing. What are they made of? What are they about?

Bill: Yeah the sculpture. It started out innocently enough with baseballs, which I showed last year and there are sign paintings that I showed a few summers ago and then again in NY. I suppose I wanted to make in three dimensions what I didn't want to draw or paint and I also needed a bump, something to take me out of my comfort zone. Plus, I was actually kind of sick of painting and drawing, which happens. And maybe most importantly, I found a huge clay deposit on the beach down below my place in Long Island. When I discovered the clay, I was off to the races. The sculptures give me access to something that's been around forever, another bridge to the past - another bit of time travel. Not just the clay, the ethos. Anyway, you mentioned trailing your father to the office and how much you dug all the art tools and tables and the advertising angle, and probably the energy of the place, and it reminded me of how I used to occasionally go with my father to recording studios where he would do voiceovers for radio and TV, and it gave me a sense of artifice at a pretty young age and I wondered if you felt that when you visited your father's office. I mean it's sort of like in *The Wizard of Oz* where Toto yanks open the curtain...ignore that man behind the curtain. Is there residue from that experience other than the quick napkin sketch thing, in maybe the way you approach an art audience? Maybe this question butts up questions of a public. I'm thinking Instagram.

Ted: The idea of artifice you mentioned is incredibly valid. I went to undergrad at Pratt for Communications Design, which was this umbrella program that encompassed art direction, graphic design, and illustration. It was great because I really got a handle on a broad range of skills, like Photoshop, digital painting, screenprinting, etc. I took as many oil painting classes as I could squeeze in next to my mandatory classes. All that stuff back then helps me today. Now I go to exhibitions at well-known galleries and they are showing sculptures by a person who went to school for architecture or wall tapestries that were made by somebody who studied fashion. I like that it's been opened up. And yes, all of those social media outlets have made it easier to promote and to find. It has also made the idea of the art venue very different than it used to be, speaking of time travel/time warps. Take a program like Freddy for example. It came about on the heels of Josh's extensive art blog and directly in the midst of articles touching specifically on the migration of spaces to more obscure locations and, of course, all of them to the web, to the phone in your palm. How do you feel about showing in the new church space? More so, how do you feel about this heavily digitized, roving context we find ourselves in today?

Bill: I didn't go to art undergrad either. But there were advantages. I was at the Claremont colleges, which is outside LA. One advantage was I could take classes at all five schools. And studio space was abundant. Most days one could find me painting in the studios at Scripps. As far as a digital world view, back then no one I knew even had a computer or dreamed of social media. In terms of getting the word out, we thought a great announcement and a cool mimeograph poster were crucial. Now here comes Josh's Freddy, an old church in a tiny town in upstate New York. Decidedly analog. Aside from me and you and some friends, a few bats and some skittering mice, that's it. After the opening, it's all online, and I can't not love that. I would not call the Internet or social media the great leveler but it helps and I think that's good. That's good for the kid trying to make it. Good for so and so who missed seeing a particular show. And quite honestly I have made great new friends via Instagram, people whose work I really admire, and all sorts of art world people. So, I feel positive about the "roving context." It matches up well with the roving context inside my mind. You know we talked about my new sculpture and the different currents in my work and I think your roving context idea is integral to both our practices. I keep looking at your paintings, studying them, and now this Johns quote is popping into my head. I think it goes something like, "I do one thing then another, then another [...]" In reference to the way he works a painting. I always loved it. It sounds simultaneously idiotic and profound. Anyway, there is this visual shifting, time slipping thing that sometimes feels like the engine inside your paintings. What I want to ask you about is the vulnerability of an idea that might be discarded in favor of a better or different one. Is that anything like, "I do one thing then another?" Tell me about your roving context.

Ted: Man, you nailed it. I'm not much of a cook, but I always compare cooking to painting. Sometimes I get a nice plate ready and then I overdo it on the salt, or leave it in the oven too long and it gets burned. Or sometimes it doesn't cook enough, and the middle is cold. I also love this idea, which I've talked about with other painters, about the cursed stretcher. No matter what you do, no matter how much fancy paint you add, the thing will not cooperate and ultimately has to be discarded. The idea is hilarious because what we are doing is so insanely subjective. When does a painting look "right"? For me, what you're talking about is the fun in all of this. We are building these 'Frankensteins' and we are kind of playing a childhood game where we find animals and people in the shapes of the clouds. To be able to control that, twist and turn it, is an incredible freedom.

This interview took place between April 7th and April 24th, 2016 on the occasion of *Bill & Ted* at Freddy, Harris, NY.