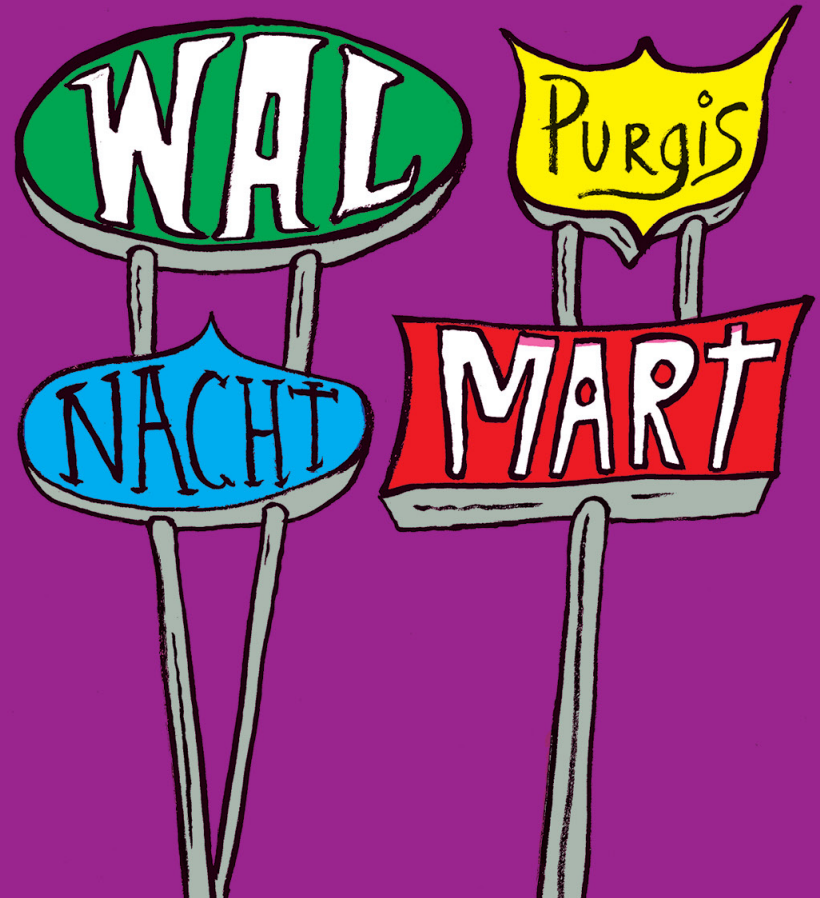


Sleep of History, by David Sandlin, Art Catalog, cover, spine and flap, Freisens Press, September 2018, art direction and design



Sleep of History, by David Sandlin, interior spread, Freisens Press, September 2018, art direction and design



Sleep of History, by David Sandlin, interior spread,
Freisens Press, September 2018, art direction and design

Installation photo: David Sandlin: 76 Manifestations of American Destiny
AEIVA, 2017



76 MANIFESTATIONS
of AMERICAN
DESTINY

Sleep of History, by David Sandlin, interior spread,
Freisens Press, September 2018, art direction and design

Swamp deVille, 2011
Spray paint on 72 Cadillac Coup de Ville



ESSAYS

ESSAYS BY
DENNIS HARPER
AND JOHN FIELDS

Sleep of History, by David Sandlin, interior spread,
Freisens Press, September 2018, art direction and design



Mephistopheles Over Belfast, 2015, Silkscreen and lithograph on paper, 30 × 22 inches

Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man Aging By Dennis Harper

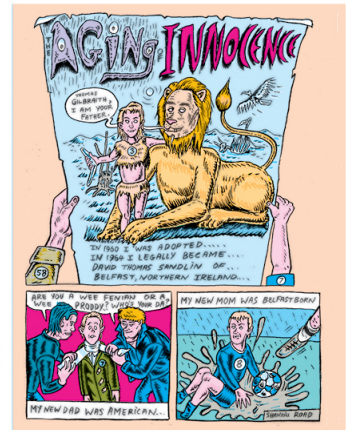
“D’ya mind if I peint yer head?” The words came from behind me, voiced in an accent I couldn’t quite place. The year, I believe, was 1977, and I was in an art studio at the University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB). “Your head—the sculpture up on the cabinet,” he enunciated slowly, drawing out his vowels to near-Southern diphthongs in a conscious effort to aid my comprehension. Approaching me was a slightly scruffy guy sporting a wannabe Bowie-style haircut and thrift store garb that looked pretty awesome in contrast to my latter-day hippie uniform. He said he was searching for a subject for a painting assignment and was attracted by the faceted facial planes on a clay head that I’d sculpted.

That’s how David Sandlin and I met, during our undergraduate studies in art at UAB, forming a friendship that has endured for four decades. David’s biography as a working artist in New York is much better known (at least in circles outside Birmingham) than are the details of the seminal years he spent in that Alabama city, forging a decision as to just what the hell he would do with his life. His later paintings, graphic novels, and serial prints readily display the indelible mark that the experience of the South bore upon him in all its aspects—good, bad, and ugly.

Considering the intimately autobiographic nature of his art, getting to know Sandlin really just requires spending some quality time with his work. Most of the particulars of his life are there for all to see, rendered in audacious lines and lurid colors.

Sandlin’s painting of my head turned out to be prophetic, pointing to the serial or episodic nature that much of his future art would take. On a single canvas, he repeated the modeled head in three rotated overlapping views, sequenced from three-quarter aspect to profile. His attention wasn’t so much directed to the solid, planar facts of the subject; instead, Sandlin evoked a sense of the temporal with his rendering. Its treatment fell somewhere between Futurism and a Sunday comic strip. Composed of arbitrary colors that had nothing to do with dried clay, the painted image felt a bit like a psychedelic Mount Rushmore.

Soon after that first encounter, David and I began to hang out. We both spent a lot of time in John Dillon’s printmaking studio at UAB, where etching presses, litho stones, and serigraph washout sinks shared tight quarters. The air there was thick with the comingled fumes of nitric acid, lithotone, and lacquer thinner. It wasn’t what we would now call a green studio setup. Dillon was a burly, thick-bearded artist and mentor who demanded high craft from his students. His deep, gravelly voice made him sound gruff, but he tendered sensitive insight and encouragement in his critiques and encouraged constant experimentation. Forty years on, printmaking remains at the core of Sandlin’s practice.



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