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Off The Wall

He's Gonna Bop You With His Wacky, Wicked Work

Cynthia Rose

Painter James Jaxxa is one of Seattle's best-kept secrets. Although he's lived here 14 years and painted for 12 of them, he has kept an extremely low profile. Jaxxa claims this is because he wanted to hone his style. (To that end, in '98 and '97, he traveled to Manhattan's School of Visual Arts and to the Rhode Island School of Design).

Jaxxa had a small exhibit at Broadway Market over a year ago. But his only real exposure came last summer at the now-demolished Belltown gallery Vital 5. Here, despite an eviction that cut his show's run back to one week, Jaxxa scored a huge hit. The artist also sold six pieces and accrued a set of fans.

Now, The Virginia Inn has picked up on the cultish star - with his fastidiously hilarious paintings. Each, says the artist, evolves from its title. These are phrases like "I'm Gonna Bop You," which he culls from ads, conversations and the media. Jaxxa begins working on an acrylic base, with which he sketches in a work's major components - many of them pictographs. Further texture and detail are added with oil stick, oil pastels, line drawings and found imagery.

His completed works both embody and comment upon their viewers. When it comes to linguistics, social funnies or corporate-speak, Jaxxa has a wickedly inventive perception. "Most of my stuff," he says, "concerns interactions, those fears and desires people have and the ways they communicate." Don't miss his show; it is both a first and a treat.

From today, the work of James Jaxxa can be seen at The Virginia Inn, 1937 First Ave., Seattle, 206-728-1937. Hours: 11 a.m.-midnight Monday through Thursday and Sunday, 11-2 a.m. Friday and Saturday.

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