

Pushing Culture Forward

Off the Cuff with artist Daniel Fleming

BY JUDITH ANN MORIARTY

JULY 11, 2017

1:27 PM



The Gallery of Wisconsin Art (GOWA) rises from the remains of a former West Bend tire shop. The 6,000-square-foot space opened June 3 and has tony neighbors, for instance, the Museum of Wisconsin Art (MOWA), directly to the north. Soon, they'll be connected by a strip of land enhanced by Jim Shields of HGA Architects. Their proximity is a win-win.

Milwaukee artist Daniel Fleming's big, bodacious paintings are in GOWA's lower level—gutsy, experimental and the opposite of serene landscapes like the Gibson Byrd painting one floor above. A Milwaukee Institute of Art and Design (MIAD) graduate, and a former Shepherd Express designer and illustrator, Fleming

changed course when he switched his major from painting to design. The change taught him to be analytical.

Graphic designers are usually pretty structured aren't they? That said, you greatly admire the paintings of Anselm Kiefer whose work is darkly political.

I grew up looking at modern and post-modern work, so I've never felt restricted by materials or styles. I start out with a concept, but I paint and repaint and end up far from where I thought I was headed.

Are your paintings political?

Well, I get more out of art, far more, if it has a message beyond just being attractive or interesting. Of course, artists don't need to be political, but why, when you can push culture forward, would you choose not to?

OK, so you've chosen to push culture forward. In what way does your work reflect that choice?

My messaging is more aimed at exploring differences rather than reinforcing them. From that standpoint, I'm not so much purely political as I am socially minded.

When you aren't painting in your home/studio on Milwaukee's East Side, what occupies your time?

I have a job as an artist and designer in Glendale for Black Forest, LLC, a Mercedes-Benz restoration firm. Have you heard of "Disc Gulp?" That's a game I designed. It's produced here. As a kid in Rochester, Minnesota, I drew cartoons with my dad. A doctor, he often drew images, in order to better explain things to a patient. My cartoons were dinosaurs and goofy stuff. At one time, though, I did want to be a cartoonist or graphic novelist.

To learn more about Fleming's work, visit danielflemingart.tumblr.com.

A&E Off The Cuff Daniel Fleming
BY JUDITH ANN MORIARTY

JULY 11, 2017

1:27 PM

FROM <https://shepherdexpress.com/>.