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British Columbians to watch in 2005: Jason McLean: Artist: [Final Edition]

Mackie, John. **The Vancouver Sun** [Vancouver, B.C.] 03 Jan 2005: D6.

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Abstract (summary)

You may not have heard of [Jason McLean] yet, but you will. The 33- year-old Vancouver artist seems to be everywhere in the art world, popping up in international magazines like Flash Art from Italy and Contemporary from England, showing up at art fairs in Switzerland, Chicago and New York, and doing solo exhibitions in Vancouver and Los Angeles. He's even been featured in Maclean's magazine as one of the 10 Canadian artists to watch.

The painting in Flash Art, for example, features all sorts of seemingly disparate subject matter: Bill Cosby, measles, a skateboard ramp, golfers Vijay Singh and Mike Weir, McLean's son Felix, diet queen Jenny Craig, and the jail in Kamloops where a friend spent the night.

Full Text

Profile of Jason McLean.

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"The last couple of years have been really crazy, it's been a mad pace," said McLean. "I had four projects in New York last year."

McLean laughs a lot when discussing his career, as if it all seems a bit unreal. He clearly is having a lot of fun, and it is reflected in his paintings, which are playful, imaginative and somewhat out there, in a folk- or outsider-art kind of way.

He paints in a stream of consciousness, "automatic drawing" style, conjuring up illustrations with little messages and ingeniously threading them all together.

The painting in Flash Art, for example, features all sorts of seemingly disparate subject matter: Bill Cosby, measles, a skateboard ramp, golfers Vijay Singh and Mike Weir, McLean's son Felix, diet queen Jenny Craig, and the jail in Kamloops where a friend spent the night.

Looking over his own painting, McLean chuckles, like he is just figuring out himself where it all came from.

"There's a lot of stuff about my daily life, personal observations," he said. "Historical things, pop culture things ... little tidbits I've picked up here and there. Some things are about my upbringing, sometimes sports comes in ... my family was really into golfing and stuff."

His eclectic paintings come from his eclectic nature. The native of London, Ont., might be the only person in the world who claims both wildlife artist Robert Bateman and the Nihilist Spasm Band (a "noise" band from his hometown) as big influences. He also might be the first artist ever featured in Flash Art who once did placemat designs for Burger King in Sackville, New Brunswick.

His latest deal is taking century-old pictures and making them into paintings. A recent work featured all sorts of wacky stuff gleaned from listening to Art Bell, a late night American radio host who talks a lot about extraterrestrials and the paranormal. You've probably never seen anything like it, which is why Jason McLean is on the cusp of something big.

Illustration

Color Photo: (Jason McLean.)

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Indexing (details)

People	McLean, Jason
Title	British Columbians to watch in 2005: Jason McLean: Artist: [Final Edition]
Author	Mackie, John
Publication title	The Vancouver Sun
Pages	D6
Number of pages	0
Publication year	2005
Publication date	Jan 3, 2005
Year	2005
Section	BusinessBC
Publisher	Infomart, a division of Postmedia Network Inc.

Place of publication	Vancouver, B.C.
Country of publication	Canada
Publication subject	General Interest Periodicals--Canada
ISSN	08321299
Source type	Newspapers
Language of publication	English
Document type	Business
ProQuest document ID	242291358
Document URL	https://www.lib.uwo.ca/cgi-bin/ezpauthn.cgi/docview/242291358?accountid=15115
Copyright	(Copyright Vancouver Sun 2005)
Last updated	2010-06-11
Database	Canadian Newsstand Major Dailies