

Pop artist retrospective at HCC gallery

Holyoke Community College's Taber Art Gallery presents a retrospective of comics, paintings and sculpture by pop artist Gary Hallgren through Feb. 21

In 1971, Hallgren joined a band of radical cartoonists in San Francisco called the Air Pirates. The group's self-published comic books, the "Air Pirates Funnies," took aim at the mighty Walt Disney Co. with savage parodies of its beloved characters.

Despite support from free speech advocates such as Village Voice critic Nat Hentoff, a judge ultimately found the Air Pirates in violation of federal copyright law. To this day, despite a five-decade career as a pop artist and illustrator, Hallgren remains on permanent injunction and is banned from using Disney characters in unauthorized ways.

He considers all others to be fair game, however.

The gallery will host a reception for Hallgren on Thursday from 5 to 7



Artist Gary Hallgren, of Granby, poses with "Grim Reaperette, mannequin with costume and props, 2018," one of his latest works. "Sometimes 3D has more force than drawing," Hallgren said.

p.m., with a talk by the artist beginning at 5:30 p.m.

"Pop art can be about more than art or culture," Hallgren said in a statement. "It can be about that most universal of themes: the human condition. Familiar newspaper comics characters can carry much symbolism on their black-and-white backs after being infused with the gravitas of easel painting."

Hallgren's freelance illustrations

and parodies have appeared in such mainstream publications as Time, The New York Times, The Wall Street Journal, Entertainment Week-

ly and Premiere - and also National Lampoon, Mad, Marvel Comics, Screw and many others.

"Gary's bold designs, distorted realities, finished and unfinished surfaces, canonized humor and joy of painting are clearly present in this exhibition's selections from his expansive body of work," said Taber Art Gallery Director Amy Johnquest.

Since 2003, book illustration has been a mainstay for Hallgren. He illustrated "You: An Owners' Manual," by doctors Mehmet Oz and Michael Roizen, which was published in 2005 and has sold more than a million copies in hard cover. He continues to supply finished drawings for the "Hagar The Horrible" comic strip.

Hallgren holds a bachelor's degree in painting and design from Western Washington State College. He lives in Granby.

The Taber Art Gallery at HCC is open Monday through Thursday from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. during regular school sessions. Free and open to the public, it is located through the campus library lobby on the second floor of the Donahue Building, 303 Homestead Ave.

For more information, contact Amy Johnquest at 413-552-2614.

Submitted by Holyoke Community College.

The gallery will host a reception for Hallgren on Thursday from 5 to 7 p.m., with a talk by the artist beginning at 5:30 p.m.