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ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

By Charles Desmarais

New Yorker cover artist Mark Ulriksen at Modernism

Ulriksen's works have graced cover of the New Yorker 60 times



"Coiffures Géantes" features Tim Lincecum (left), Buster Posey, Madison Bumgarner and Hunter Pence sporting their distinctive haircuts. Acrylic on panel, 24 x 48 inches

There are many more "art worlds" than the pedants might lead us to believe, and they don't all center on museums and galleries. One of the more robust such worlds is the vital realm of illustration, where one symbol of high distinction is the cover of the New Yorker magazine, with its 1.2 million culturally aware subscribers.

The art gallery Modernism laudably crosses interplanetary boundaries with its show of original works by San Francisco artist Mark Ulriksen. His amusing cover painting a few weeks ago of a dog lounging on a flotation ring, sublimely adrift on rippling blue waters, is the artist's 60th for the New Yorker.

All 60 printed magazine jackets are here, for reference. Dogs — generally with a whiff of anthropomorphic attitude — and music are frequent themes. The highlight of the exhibition, however, is the presentation of 19 original paintings, with an emphasis on Ulriksen’s satirical sports images.

They are playing-field dazzling, full of fresh color and frank insight — the visual equivalent of japing sideline commentary. Three recent paintings are take-offs on folk-art African barbershop signs. One, called “Coiffures Géantes,” depicts Giants stars Tim Lincecum, Buster Posey, Madison Bumgarner and Hunter Pence modeling haircuts with faux French names like “Man-Child” and “Hairy Dog.”



“Downtime,” acrylic on paper, 16 1/2 x 12 inches



In “Soaked,” a player is about to be doused by a beer topped by a Mets fan going for a ball. Gouache on paper
21 1/2 x 14 3/8 inches

I do wish a picture with the political impact of “In Creative Battle,” which depicts a prayerful Martin Luther King Jr. taking a knee alongside protesting NFL players, would have been included. But then again, “Strike Zone,” with its screaming Yankees-Red Sox antagonists joined by an equally loudmouthed umpire, might be the best metaphor of all for this American moment.

Charles Desmarais is The San Francisco Chronicle’s art critic. Email: cdesmarais@sfchronicle.com.