

**Yorodeo** is the name of Halifax-based screenprinting art team Paul Hammond and Seth Smith. The two partnered in 2003 primarily to design and create screenprinted show posters for local events. Over the last six years they have focused their collaborative energy on fine art prints and posters, among other projects. They draw inspiration from comic books, science fiction, fantasy and unintentional mistakes. Their work fuses collage, doodles, carefully rendered illustration, pattern and texture.

**Laura Kenins** is a writer and artist based in Halifax. She studied printmaking and art history at the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design and writes for Halifax's weekly newspaper, *The Coast*. She recently curated the exhibition *White Night Comics: Comics from the Baltic States and Finland* at Vancouver's Lowercase Reading Room and Halifax's Eyelevel Gallery.

Yorodeo would like to acknowledge the generous support of:



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This exhibition is presented in conjunction with Printopolis—Open Studio's 40th Anniversary Symposium celebrating contemporary printmaking, taking place October 21-24, 2010 in Toronto.

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# Yorodeo *Three Dee Realms Plus*



*Melted Mountain Way*, anaglyphic screenprint, 20" x 20", 2010



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## Three Dee Realms Plus

by Laura Kenins



Halifax design team Yorodeo—Paul Hammond and Seth Smith—initially made their name screenprinting gig posters for local shows. Their posters have been a distinctive presence on Halifax streets since they began working together in 2003. Working in a form intended for the streets has informed their non-poster work, giving it a certain sense of irreverence. Influenced by other poster artists like Little Friends of Printmaking and Heads of State, and by street art and pop culture of all sorts, the pair has been known for their use of bright colours, patterns, hand-drawn and stencilled text and animals. Recently delving further into a collaborative fine art practice, their gallery works maintain the irreverent,

pop-culture-influenced feel. This is in part due to their backgrounds: Hammond studied printmaking at the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design and Bealart (London, ON), but Smith has no formal art training.

Poster art shows little distinction between art and pop culture: many poster artists are formally trained, but many are not, and gig posters serve the utilitarian purpose of promoting pop music to a predominantly young and media-savvy audience. This sensibility has fed into Yorodeo's art work. The *Three Dee Realms Plus* series was started in 2008 and initially exhibited for Halifax's inaugural Nocturne after-hours art festival. As often happens, they proved themselves ahead of the game in 2008, as the following years have seen a major resurgence of interest in 3D in popular culture, with 3D releases of movies like *Avatar* and Tim Burton's *Alice in Wonderland* proving hugely popular, art magazines printing 3D photographs and even *Playboy* running a 3D centrefold this past summer.

The *Three Dee Realms Plus* series began with a series of larger screenprints of fictional landscapes that owe a large debt to both artists' interest in science fiction. By printing in red and blue and providing the viewer with anaglyphic 3D glasses, Yorodeo makes the viewing experience cinematic. The original series incorporates architecture, winding roads, animals, crystals, mountains and clouds. It suggests everything from sci-fi movies to Bruno Taut's *Alpine Architecture* to medieval engravings to children's art. On the other hand, the series also simply represents the artists' offbeat sensibilities, combining images and influences as usual, without the constraints of design work.

Hammond and Smith initially started thinking about creating 3D prints after looking at 3D comic books, particularly 1980s comics by Basil Wolverton from Smith's childhood. They noticed that the comics were poorly printed and the colours weren't properly lined up, leading to a discussion about the feasibility of screenprinting in 3D. Hammond picked up a book on stereoscopic drawing, but found the instructions very mathematical and realized many steps could be done more easily with design software. Both artists recall experimenting with drawing in 3D as children, using coloured pencils and markers. Their initial

forays into 3D screenprinting had this same experimental sensibility—after spending months working on the images, they weren't certain the prints would work as 3D images until both colours were printed. "It was fun to see how hard it would be to [print] something really complex," says Hammond, "but we didn't really know then how complex we could make them."<sup>1</sup>

More recent additions to the *Three Dee Realms Plus* series, done in 2010, suggest old-fashioned illustration even more strongly, referencing medieval, Victorian and Soviet imagery. The prints are a series of portraits of mysterious characters—a sword-wielding dark figure like something from a sinister deck of playing cards, a hooded reptilian member of a secret society, a group of animals in space suits. Yorodeo cites children's author/illustrators like Dr. Seuss and Richard Scarry as influences for this series, as well as a reference librarian at the local public library who brought them books of illustrations from the library archives from the nineteenth century and earlier.

Yorodeo's interest in pushing the boundaries of printmaking also comes through in this exhibition. Though traditionally trained, Hammond admits to a relative lack of interest in the intricacies of traditional printmaking. Screenprinting lacks some of the labour-intensiveness of lithography and etching, and having printed thousands of gig posters, the concept of editioning prints becomes somewhat absurd: unnumbered, weathered, staple-holed posters end up as artefacts on apartment walls regardless. Consequently, the pair has felt relatively free to experiment with methods of presentation and the idea of using a two-dimensional art form to create something three-dimensional. This exhibition includes a print installed on the floor and intended to be viewed with 3D glasses, as well as cube patterns screenprinted on heavy paper, intended to be cut out and assembled into three dimensional objects.

Though the *Three Dee Realms Plus* series is exhibited in the gallery context and editioned according to traditional printmaking standards, one gets the sense that it is never too far removed from the world of posters, illustrations, stickers and other ephemera or pop culture detritus. The strange animals, cartoon-like drawings, and 3D glasses suggest a playfulness that can't be tampered with by strict art world standards. The two artists are interested in playing further with 3D; the connections between the 'realms' of *Three Dee Realms Plus* are still tenuous, both for the viewer and artists. "I like the idea of building into this world," says Smith. "There are ambiguous connections right now—I think things will start to develop," Hammond says. "The world is still in its infancy—I feel like we'll be working on it for a long time."



<sup>1</sup> All quotes throughout from a conversation with the author, June 28, 2010