

## Gallery Gourmet: New views at local galleries

12:55 PM CDT on Tuesday, May 6, 2008

### Ed Blackburn, Brian Belott at And/Or

Strange bedfellows.

That phrase has always made me a little squeamish, but it might apply to the pairing of Ed Blackburn and Brian Belott currently at And/Or Gallery.

Mr. Blackburn has lived in North Texas and exhibited here for 30 years. Mr. Belott is a young New York artist who exhibits on the Lower East Side of Manhattan. You wouldn't expect them to wind up showing across the room from one another nor to have very much in common. Which they don't, but they prove to be surprisingly compatible.

In his *Bible Paintings*, which he first showed in the 1980s, Mr. Blackburn chooses stories popular from Sunday school and presents them in storybook fashion. A heavy black line defines both settings and characters, and his palette comes from that jumbo pack of Crayola crayons most of us had as kids. He "fills in the lines" as though he was working in a coloring book, using the wrong colors in a way that emphasizes his refined visual sense.

In *Joseph and the Pharaoh's Dream* (1997), one of the paintings at And/Or, faces can be either blue or the peachy tone Crayola used to call "flesh." A mauve sun floats in a pale yellow sky, and for one figure he has painted flesh and clothing all the same purple, just as though he didn't know any better.

Joseph told the Pharaoh to expect seven years of plenty followed by seven years of lean, and Mr. Blackburn's new black acrylic drawings depict the lean years. They keep the painting's title but add subtitles that describe their newspaper-like images. One is *Pakistan Police and Demonstrators*. The other shows two double portraits, *Cheney/Rice* and *Putin/ Ahmadinejad*.

Politics does not seem to be on Mr. Belott's mind when he creates his small collages from the torn and cut pages of books and magazines. Most of the works have a clearly defined horizon line that provides a setting for his fantastic scenes that take place under skies often splotched with drops of watercolor.

In these landscapes, hunters open fire at fantastic birds or a farmer stands in his field. But the farmer's hand is an enormous claw that holds a tiny yellow bird. The age of his source material mutes Mr. Belott's color so even his most dazzling effects seem to take place at twilight.

Mr. Belott also uses collage to remake low-end children's board books into sculpted objects where the narrative has been transformed into playful and sophisticated exercises in free association. The same mentality finds a grimmer expression in the artist's repurposed photo albums filled with thematically linked found photographs.

Both Mr. Blackburn and Mr. Belott are storytellers that expect viewers to fill in some gaps and work with them to create a narrative. But perhaps what this exhibition really demonstrates is simply the fact that two sure-footed and nimble-minded artists will tend to look good together in the same room.

Charles Dee Mitchell

**Through May 31** at And/Or Gallery, 4221 Bryan St., Suite B. Hours: 5 to 8 p.m. Wednesdays, noon to 6 Saturdays and by appointment. Free. 214-824-2442, [www.andorgallery.com](http://www.andorgallery.com).

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And/Or Gallery

Untitled collage books (above), 2008, by Brian Belott and *Joseph and the Pharaoh's Dream* (below), 2007, by Ed Blackburn are both at And/Or Gallery.

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