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Artist Jim Riswold Takes on Villains and Cancer with Humor

SALEM, Ore. — The Hallie Ford Museum of Art is pleased to present “Jim Riswold: Undignified,” opening June 2 and continuing through August 26, 2018, in the Melvin Henderson-Rubio Gallery and the Maribeth Collins Lobby. Jim Riswold is a highly regarded Portland, Oregon photographer—and former creative director at Wieden+Kennedy—known for his staged photographs and mixed media works that poke fun at taboo figures such as Adolf Hitler, Benito Mussolini, Mao Zedong, General George Custer, Vladimir Lenin, and Kim Jong-Un, among others.

Riswold’s twofold career began in 1984 when he joined the advertising firm of Wieden+Kennedy in Portland. During his 20 plus years there, he was responsible for legendary advertising campaigns for Nike that featured Michael Jordan, Charles Barkley, Bo Jackson, and Tiger Woods.

In 2000, Riswold’s world took a drastic turn when he was diagnosed with leukemia. After surviving the disease for five years, he left Wieden+Kennedy to become a full-time artist. For the past dozen years, the primary impetus for his artwork has been to use his scathing humor, satire, and sense of the absurd to skewer, ridicule, and ultimately deflate the potency of notorious characters as well as history’s most impactful bullies.

Riswold works with a wide variety of photographers, printers, costumers, and even framers to create his artwork, and for him, the text or narrative that he writes to accompany his staged photographs are just as important as the photographs themselves.

His work prominently features a host of plastic toys, and dolls, modeled after some of history’s most despicable figures and villains. It started in the early 2000s when he and his son Jake went on the Internet and found a universe of Hitler products, including toys, dolls, books, videos, games and garden tools. He found the same for other Nazi villains and bullies like Hermann Göring, Joseph Goebbels, Heinrich Himmler, and Reinhard Heydrich. Appalled but curious, he decided to explore the subject as art.

Talking about his art, Riswold says “Bullies and evil people, be it Hitler or a deadly disease (cancer), don’t mind being called evil or bad, but they don’t like being laughed at. People tell you you’re not supposed to laugh at the Hitlers or the Maos or the Stalins or the Napoleons of the world, but I would

counter, how are you supposed to talk about them? People tend to talk in hushed tones, which I actually think pays these fools the reverence they crave. A philosopher friend of mine has repeatedly said, 'Jim's art teaches us how to deal with evil, be it Hitler or a deadly disease.' Those are kind words, maybe a bit grandiloquent, but I'll take them."

Born and raised in Seattle, Riswold studied at the University of Washington, where he received BA degrees in communications, philosophy, and history. Over the past decade, Riswold has been featured in numerous solo and group exhibitions throughout the region and his photographs can be found in the collections of the Tacoma Art Museum, Portland Art Museum, and the Hallie Ford Museum of Art, among many others.

The artist will give an illustrated lecture on his work and career on Saturday, June 2 beginning at 5 p.m. in the Paulus Lecture Hall in the Willamette University College of Law. Riswold will also offer Tuesday gallery talks on June 12, July 10, and August 14 at 12:30 p.m. at the museum. Admission to the lecture and gallery talks is complimentary.

This exhibition has been supported by general operating support grants from the City of Salem's Transient Occupancy Tax funds and the Oregon Arts Commission.

Please note, this exhibition contains mature themes and strong language and may not be suitable for all visitors.

Public Website

willamette.edu/go/riswold

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About the Hallie Ford Museum of Art at Willamette University

Oregon's third largest art museum features works by Pacific Northwest and Native American artists, and includes a diverse collection of traditional European, American and Asian art, as well as artifacts that date from antiquity. Frequently changing exhibitions include lectures, special events, tours, artist demonstrations and educational opportunities for children and adults.

The museum is located at [700 State St.](#) in Salem. Hours are Tuesday through Saturday from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Sunday from 1 to 5 p.m. The galleries are closed on Monday. General admission is \$6, \$4 for seniors and \$3 for students 18 and older. Students 17 and under and children are admitted free. Admission is free for everyone on Tuesdays. For more information call 503-370-6855 or visit willamette.edu/go/hfma.

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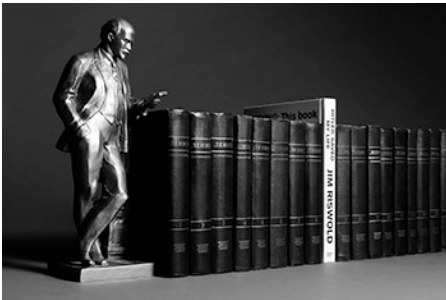
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Jim Riswold (American, b. 1957), "St. Custer (After Rubens)," 2017, color digital print, 29 1/2 x 24 inches, courtesy of the artist and Augen Gallery, Portland, Oregon.



Jim Riswold (American, b. 1957), "Still Life with Lenin and Hitler Saved My Life and Other Books," 2017, black/white digital print, 12 x 17 inches, courtesy of the artist and Augen Gallery, Portland, Oregon.



Jim Riswold (American, b. 1957), "Red Chinese Doll (in Kate Spade)," 2015-16, color digital print, 40 x 30 inches, courtesy of the artist and Treason Gallery, Seattle, Washington.



Jim Riswold (American, b. 1957), "Beer Hall Putsch Hitler (1923)," 2014-15, color digital print, 60 x 40 inches, courtesy of the artist and Augen Gallery, Portland, Oregon.



Jim Riswold (American, b. 1957), "Göring's Lollipop," 2014-15, color digital print, 40 x 60 inches, courtesy of the artist and Augen Gallery, Portland, Oregon.



Jim Riswold (American, b. 1957), "Kim Jong-Un is a Big Fat (Licorice) Sucker!," 2014, color digital print, 28 1/4 x 20 inches, courtesy of the artist and Augen Gallery, Portland, Oregon.



Jim Riswold (American, b. 1957), "Don Quixote Fights Cancer)," 2013, color digital print, 54 x 40 inches, courtesy of the artist and Augen Gallery, Portland, Oregon.



Jim Riswold (American, b. 1957), "French Pastry Joffre," 2012, color digital print, 53 x 40 inches, courtesy of the artist and Augen Gallery, Portland, Oregon.

