

# Artist's twisted sense of humour on display

Beal attracted to balance between the serious and the seriously funny

GILBERT A. BOUCHARD  
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Artist Kyle Beal is raiding the world of one-liners and standup comedy for his multimedia exhibit *Standing Up for Nothing*.

Not that visitors to the Latitude 53 Gallery are going to be seeing cartoony or straightforward humorous work that falls neatly into the funny-ha-ha category.

Now based in Montreal, the Calgary artist admits to producing a body of witty and text-heavy work that's funny-weird and more than a tad on the twisted side. Beal is interested in looking at the whole idea of funny and in particular the tactic of saying one thing while really meaning another.

For example, the largest piece in the show is a highly detailed photograph of a handmade miniature diorama of a "burnt-out comedy club." The darkly humorous piece aims to get gallery attendees to think about the serious side of these particular entertainment centres.

"They are places where you can say some real deep and disturbing stuff without turning people off."

He wants people to think about the delicate balance of serious and comic you see in these clubs via a cheeky, one-joke photographic work that visually juxtaposed the serious (a fire with the funny (i.e., the humour built into the club itself), just like the routine of a standup comedian.

Beal, 27, was trained at the Alberta College of Art and Design and is making his Edmonton visual art debut with this show. His work is on display until Sept. 2 on the second floor of the gallery at 10248 106th St.

**Q: How did this particular Edmonton show come about?**

I first applied to the gallery about four years ago. This February, Todd (James, Latitude 53 artistic director) called me up and asked me what I was up to. I sent him some images of this new work I was doing and he liked it enough to program me this August.

**Q: Where did the idea of working with humour come from?**

It just seemed to me like a good way to approach things. I really like making art that looks at the whole idea of self-expression and the act of making art itself and using humour lets me take on these serious subjects without being too serious.

I also like word play and cheap puns. A lot of work in the show is probably only funny to me, but it (humour) does make the whole process nice and accessible. Everybody likes to have a

WE HAVE A FEW QUESTIONS FOR YOU ■



SHAUGHN BUTTS,  
THE JOURNAL  
Artist Kyle Beal  
is reflected  
in his artwork,  
Burnt Out  
Comedy Club,  
at Latitude 53  
Gallery.

bit of a laugh.

**Q: Two of the works on display are photographs that use miniatures or dioramas. What moved you to start working with these tiny props?**

Ironically enough for someone who specialized in drawing at school, I'm more comfortable building things with my hands. It's fun and pleasurable to make things and make them convincing.

Plus, not having a studio means I have to

work out of my apartment.

That and not having a lot of money means that making the dioramas is very practical as well as a way to push me to be inventive and work with what I have at hand. I made the comedy club scene for only \$6.

**Q: What does working with all the text in your work give you as an artist?**

Working with text in my art is a way to address all the text that is out there in the world. If you think about it, there is text and signage all around us, even

on our T-shirts. Not to mention that works themselves are little icons, little images in and of themselves.

The works are also these little free-floating opinions and statements that aren't so much personal statements as comment on the fact that we live in a world where everybody has an opinion.

**Q: Who are your artistic influences?**

I read more than I look at other visual artists so my influences tend to be writers like Martin Amis, Mordecai Richler and John Ralston Saul.