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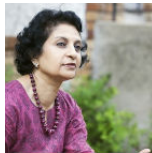
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Artist Matt Semke goes Warhol for Glitter Ball 4

By [Loren Green](#), Wed., Apr. 6 2011 at 3:15 PM

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The Grain Belt Bottling Building is a symbol of community. Its ties to history, the varied architectural styles, and its current use as shared art space all make it a perfect setting for Glitter Ball 4, an annual fundraising party for [Rock the Cause](#).

This incarnation will benefit the Youth Performance Company, a community-focused theater group for teens, by celebrating all things 1960s and '70s with an Andy Warhol twist. The party brings live music from Pictures of Then, Alicia Wiley, the Arms Akimbo, and Joey Ryan & the Inks. There will also be a cadre of creative visual artists including Linnea Doyle, Danika Leithesier, Matt Semke, and Jessica Slagle.



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City Pages took a moment to chat with participating artist Matt Semke in his basement studio.

Before we sit down to discuss the upcoming show, **Matt Semke's** cat manages to brush against a wet canvas that combines an image of Michael Jackson with a 3M logo. His pieces for the event--including paintings of Elvis, Michael Jackson, and General Mao--lean against the studio walls drying, and Semke frequently gets up to illustrate ideas or concepts about the works. The paintings draw from pop-culture influence and locally-based companies, giving a distinctly modern, Minnesota stamp to Warhol's familiar style.

Semke started painting about 10 years ago; Glitter Ball 4 marks his 49th public exhibit (and first Glitter Ball). In addition to his art, he works a full-time job, recently earned his an MFA in ecological architecture, and plays guitar for **Bird Sounds**.



As far as creating for Glitter Ball, is it an individual process or will it be collaborative?

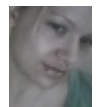
They want us to create some works that have a focus on the vibe of that time period. That makes it a collaboration, and a couple days before the show we'll all be getting together and planning out the layout.

Some of it will be interactive. Is that going to be collaborative between the

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artists as well as the audience?

It sounds like we're going to have a room set up where people can walk in and if they feel like making something we'll have stuff to help. I'll probably bring this projector in and we'll have some stencils and stuff that they can use to make art on the spot.

With the audience it's more about the process than the end result, isn't it?

Exactly. During the Warhol Factory parties, Warhol was kind of just telling people what to do, or there was all this stuff lying around where people could make giant screen prints or that kind of thing.

Have you tried to do Warhol-inspired works before?

A few years ago there was a "Billy and the Old Man" show [a collaborative show with Minnetonka artist [Billy Hessian](#)]. It was kind of these internet memes, or whatever they're called, and then stencils so I could make them really fast and reproduce them. It's kind of all about being able to reproduce something so many times that it loses or changes meaning.

Another connection with pop art are my [vector illustrations](#). It's all digital work that's in the pop-art realm.

How did you pick the pop-culture figures for this show, like 3M and Einstein?

I tried to go with people that Warhol had done. I was on a big Elvis kick already, so I thought he would be a good starting point. I painted him and, since he had a gun in his hand, the Target logo just came to mind.

I guess that's how it usually works for me. I don't know what the end result is going to be. I just know the first step. That's why I consider myself a "process artist": standing back and looking at stuff as you're making it and thinking about how far to push something.

With the Glitter Ball theme are you consciously using a different process?

I wanted to be able to reproduce images easily, so I got a projector, which is new to me. And the projector is '50s and '60s technology, so I thought it was appropriate.

Will you be bringing it with to the event?

I'll probably bring the projector. This is kind of goofy, but what's interesting to me is that the projector itself is like a projection of somebody's CAD drawing. And then there's all of these logos and the people associated with them, as they're both being projected it's no longer about Dairy Queen or Mao. It's kind of about the combination of the two.

And you tie in your own style with the fuzzy, duplicate look.**Min**[buy, sell,](#)[rentals \(7](#)[personal](#)**Slid****Too****Search****Cate**

Yeah. I'm doing a lot of double-vision stuff. Three Michael Jacksons and 3M--it's kind of funny. And then I'm taking slogans, like "Elvis more, pay less" which is like "Expect more, pay less."

That's ridiculous.

Warhol always claimed he was being as American as he could be, but I think all the stuff was kind of tongue-in-cheek, poking fun at Hollywood, giant corporations, and advertising, and then bringing himself up into that whole realm. That's why I used local companies. I thought they were more likely to hit home for people.

Are there other artists from that period that you're trying to pull from stylistically, or is there a strictly-Warhol approach for yourself?

I don't know what other people are doing. I heard Jean-Michel Basquiat is another artist people are interested in kind of mimicking. But I was pretty focused on Warhol.



This is your 49th exhibit and your 31st group show. That's a lot of shows.

If I agree to an exhibition, it kind of sets me up to make a lot of work. You've committed yourself to making stuff. It's like with my website. I've created something new every day for over four years now. That's kind of my process. I dedicate myself to a show, and then I have a reason to make a bunch of art. Not that I need a reason, but I feel like I've publicly



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committed to doing that, so then I do it.

As a form of motivation?

Yeah. With the daily website updates, it's become almost second nature. All day long, I'm looking for that hour or half-hour I put aside to make a drawing or thinking about what I'm going to be drawing, or looking for a photo to take.

If you go:

Glitter Ball 4

Friday, April 8 7:30 p.m. to 1 a.m.

\$5/\$25 at the door; \$50 VIP

Grain Belt Bottling House

For tickets, visit www.irockthecause.org or call 612.207.6272

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