

Artist makes political statements with unexpected mash-ups

By PETE IORIZZO Staff writer
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Dan Mills creates multi-layered watercolors depicting cartoon characters overlaid on public figures. This 2006 piece is called "Condoleezza Fatale." (Courtesy Dan Mills)



Colin Powell may not know it, but he has a cartoon double -- Poindexter, from "Felix the Cat."

Explains artist Dan Mills, "Felix had a magic bag of tricks. An evil professor was trying to steal it for his own devices. The professor had a genius nephew, Poindexter. Poindexter always was using science to prove that what his uncle was doing was actually good."

Mills' "Poindexter Powell" piece is one of several watercolors on display at his "Meditations on Empire" exhibit at [Union College's Mandeville Gallery](#). The exhibit closes Thursday with a gallery talk.

Mills, a 54-year-old graduate of Niskayuna High who was raised in Schenectady, offers political commentary through his composite portraits

depicting cartoon characters overlaid on illustrations of public figures.

Other examples include Yosemite Rumsfeld and Condoleezza Fatale.

"My goal was to make works that are visually interesting and visually compelling, then draw a viewer to think about some of the other layers of meaning," said Mills, who is director of the [Bates College Museum of Art](#) in Lewiston, Maine.

Mills often has touched on the theme of American imperialism during his more than 25 years of exhibiting around the world, from New York to Beijing.

His parents, [Virginia Ward Mills](#) and the late E. Andrew Mills, also exhibited both near their hometown and in the Cape Cod area. Mills cited his upbringing as a reason for his interest in the arts, though he isn't entirely sure of his muse for the cartoon series.

"To be honest, I'm not really sure where that came from," he said. Then he added, with a laugh, "Maybe it was a very selfish need to amuse myself."

Gallery talk

"Meditations on Empire"