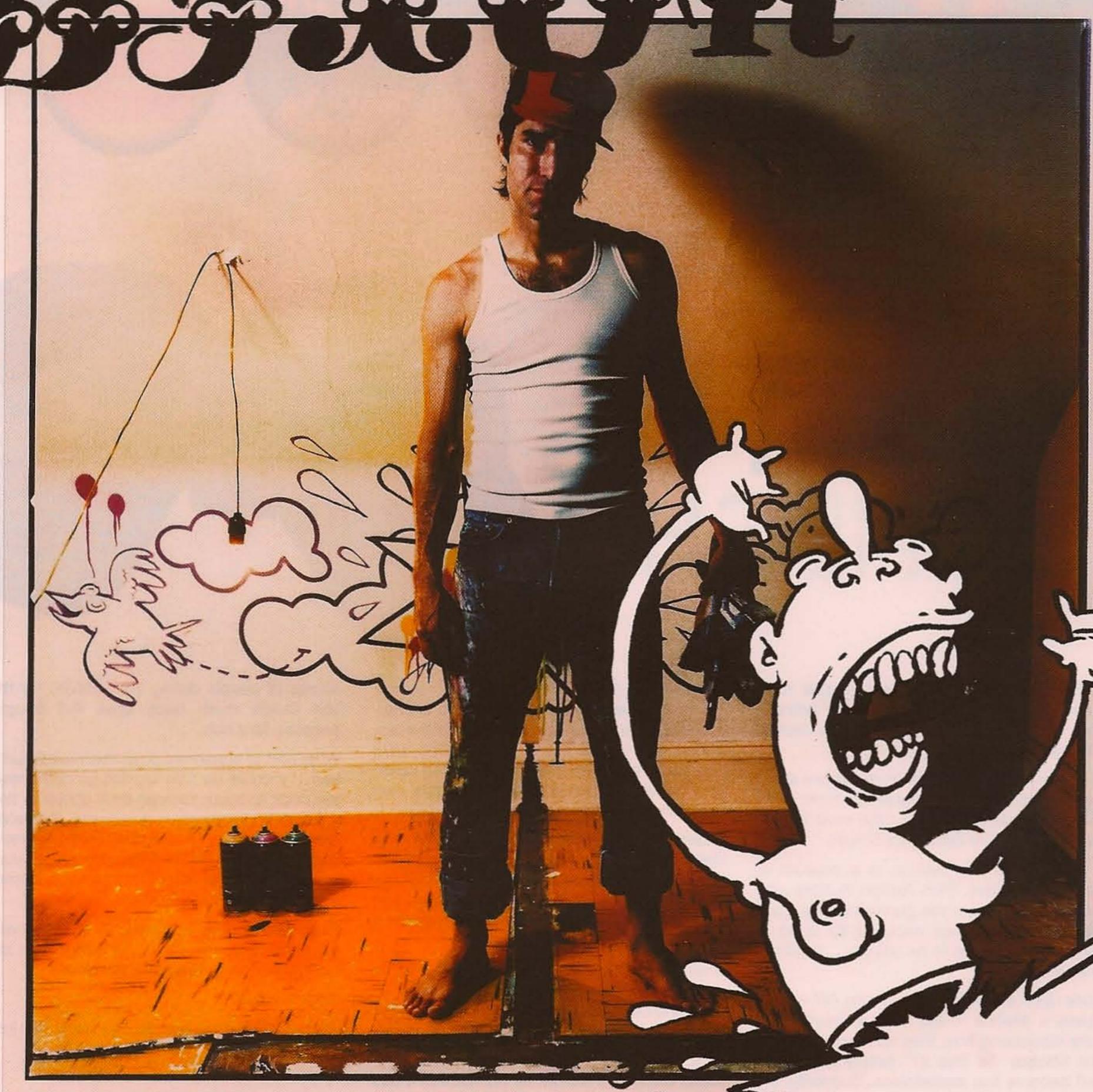
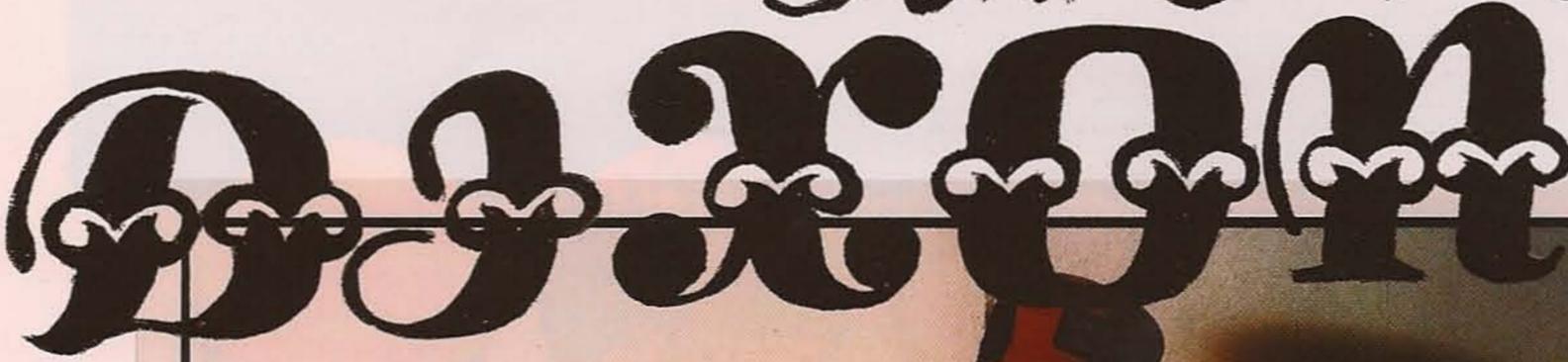


El Regal

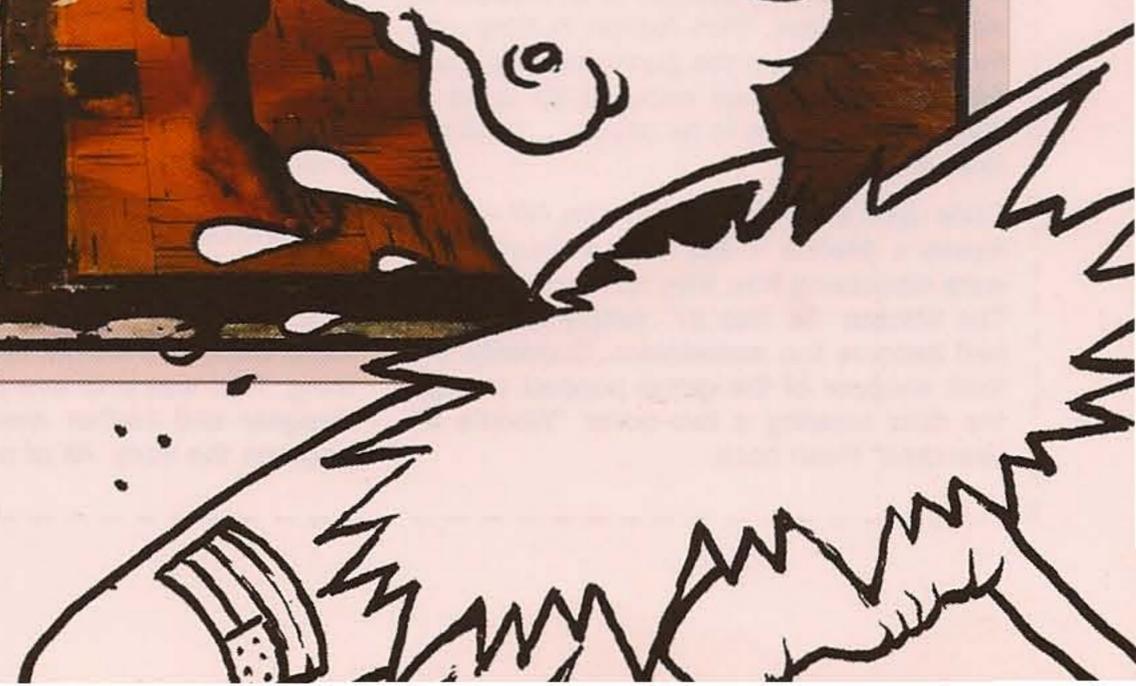
Aka

JUAN CARLOS NORIA

aka



WORDS: NATALIA
PHOTOGRAPHY: AARON MACKENZIE
LINKS: WWW.JUANCARLOS NORIA.CA
WWW.GRINNINGCOWBOY.COM
WWW.THEM-ART.COM



We've coated these pages with a waterproof finish, because we know you're going to be drooling over the art. Now wipe your mouth and read on ...

Mirror: Let's start off with brief a introduction. Where are you from? Where do you live and what are you about?

Juan: My birth name is Juan Carlos Noria. My blood lines are Spanish and Italian but I was born in Caracas, Venezuela (1968). I've traveled all over the world but make Canada's Capital my home. Living in Ottawa is like living in the beast's brain, and that's why I like living here. I practice message-based graffiti in these streets in hopes of reaching and liberating the nine-to-five robots working towards their sweet retirement plans.

When did you first get involved in the arts community?

I started being active, in terms of sales, in 1986. That's when I sold my first few pastel-still lives. It was a great moment! I think that my first art show - in a group setting - was in arts school, but my first one-man show was done in a public space named Cafe Wim (Ottawa).

How has your art evolved since you first started out?

As I look back over the years, I've gotten better technically and I'm trying out new ways to lay out illustrations or paintings, but essentially not much has changed. I've always really liked working with color, and storytelling is really important to me. Lately, I've been working with neon colors. Trying to make them look appealing is difficult, and that's where my challenge lies at the moment. My greatest challenge has always been trying to get my message across to the viewer, on the street or in the gallery.

Your work definitely has a storytelling feel to it - like that series you did on carnivore squirrels! Tell me about that story...

The concept of the show was based on an imaginary world I created. The show was about the two most visible animals in our city, squirrels and pigeons. The concept was, all trees in the urban environment are cut and so the squirrel's food and housing supplies are eliminated. Out of desperation and in a very short time, the friendly squirrel evolves. They grow fangs and structure their society to become hunters. They are forced to become carnivores and with an abundant supply of the only other animal in the city, pigeons, the squirrel thrives. My show illustrated "the hunt". It was a fun show for me and all viewers. This is an example of a show where I found my speech in the language of art.

Explain the difference between your varying personas - Royal, Dixon and Juan Carlos?

The three styles that I practice are not only three tickets to win the art lottery but also three ways to combat slumps that artists come across... "writers block" if you will. The Royal stuff is a fun loose way for me to practice illustration, layout and find new ways to become fluent in my language. The Dixon stuff is, as I see it, commercial. It often helps me catch up with any debts or payment that I might have to make. It's a style that is painterly and "wall paper magazine" like. Dixon challenges me to use my brushes and to use the pretentious part of my brain.

The Juan Carlos Noria style is an amalgamation of the Royal and the Dixon. I often use this style at live art events (a five to six hour event with a party atmosphere in which I paint individually or in tandem with another artist to create finished, large format paintings) which lately, in this city, have been popular. All the styles are figurative and highly political and can be seen on the streets.

Why did you feel the need to separate your artwork like that?

Separating these styles was a natural, long evolution. I remember in art school being asked to focus on one thing. I knew that I had so many avenues to explore, I could feel it. It became very apparent to me when I was being forced to retire to my teacher's structure and ideas of what I should be. Separating the styles allows for me to stay fresh and keep my learning curve constant ... when I run out on one, I take the other. It's like having three different record collections! Why just have one? You'd get tired of one.

The price varies a lot from the Royal stuff to the Dixon work. Does each alias cater to a different crowd?

Each alias definitely caters to different crowds and having said that, they all speak a common language, so they could speak to all... Dixon might speak to a crowd that has traveled, a group of people that "drink martinis". And the Royal stuff might spark an interest in a group that is graffiti, illustration based. But all the styles I practice, are charged with a message that comes from one brain. The pricing of the styles is scaled very differently but the message originates from Juan C. and it's free.

You've recently decided to expand your work into Product Design - notably with your clothing label, Royal Clothing. Tell me about that.

Luigi Meliambro, Alison Parson and I are trying out our hand at the retail world. We'll

make an effort this season to get on line with a friend that runs a site out of London, England named www.grinningcowboy.com. Our spring line is only sold in Ottawa stores, but we hope that there's enough interest to make sales in other cities. Alison will be selling the clothes for us. She'll be pounding the pavement for Royal. Luigi runs the business and my illustrations appear on the clothes. We all play a role in the decision making process. For our summer line we're coming out with a fashion bag line. The birth of something like this is a very stressful but exciting experience. The possibilities seem endless!

Why did you choose to do a Royal line of clothing and not a Dixon or Juan Carlos line?

We chose the Royal style for the clothes because it's the most graphic and bold style I practice. The illustrative quality of Royal is easy to digest and it definitely has a playful feel. It left no doubt in our minds, that it was the look we were looking for. In a practical sense, Royal is easy to print (silkscreen) and that makes our job more fun.

When did you decide to quit all other jobs, and only concentrate on being an artist? Has this helped you focus more on your art?

Making art for a living, I'm sure, is every artists dream. My last nine-to-five job was the turning point in my life and career. About two years ago, I was working for a large company (quick messenger) delivering packages on my bike. I saw that the owner, Jack, was wearing a fresh haircut, he drove a nice car and gold all around. He had this swagger that made my belly burn. I realized that I was working like a dog for him so that he could keep his high standard of living. That's when I decided that I'd rather starve than work for anyone that would take advantage of me. It's made me a very "hungry" artist. I work hard 'cause I know that on the other side of laziness is the possibility of working for some one like Jack. Now I work on my shows, about four a year and I do many live art show performances. I've become an art machine! Hehe!

Do you still do a lot of street work or are you concentrating on gallery work now?

As I've gotten older I've slowed my production of public art or graff'. I still get out there, but always trying innovative ways to do so. For example, instead of [bombing], I'll make a poster style cut out in my work space and