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Charlotte Street Foundation's Urban Culture Project is pleased to present

## GOOD THING I USED A PSEUDONYM

*Work From a Three-Part Career: Frank Stack as Painter, Connoisseur,  
and Incognito as Graphic Novelist Foolbert Sturgeon*

Curated by Anne Thompson & Nathan Boyer

OPENING RECEPTION: FRIDAY, JANUARY 20, 6-PM

DISCUSSION WITH CURATORS & FRANK STACK: SATURDAY, JANUARY 21, 2:30PM

PROJECT SPACE / 21 EAST 12<sup>TH</sup> STREET, KANSAS CITY MO

Kansas City, MO. Jan. 8, 2012—Artist-curators **Anne Thompson and Nathan Boyer** present works from the archive of artist and collector **Frank Stack**, also known as renowned graphic novelist **Foolbert Sturgeon**. This is the first exhibition in Stack's five-decade career to consider his traditional figurative work, made under his real name, in the context of cartoons produced under his pseudonym. The curators group these two bodies of work with selections from Stack's personal inventory of historical prints, highlighting shared motifs such as religion, the erotic, and the artist's relationship with his audience.

In merging these different strains of Stack's activities, Thompson and Boyer explore the politics of taste and artistic personae. Stack, who retired in 2003 after forty years as a professor at the University of Missouri in Columbia, created his nom de plume as a young man so he could satirize politics and religion without running afoul of Midwestern conservative sensibilities. In 1962, he published "The Adventures of Jesus," widely considered to be the first underground comic book. He collaborated with writer Harvey Pekar on the "American Splendor" comic series and illustrated the award-winning "Our Cancer Year." Yet Stack's fame as a pioneer in the world of underground comics remains largely unknown to those around him in Missouri, where he continues to produce locally popular landscapes, portraits, and nudes.

Works in the exhibition include rarely seen original drawings for comic narratives such as "Searching for Dr. Feelgood" and "Amazons" and episodes such as "Jesus Joins the Academic Community" and "Jesus Goes to a Faculty Party." Also featured are graphic novels about legendary painters: "The Lying Ear" imagines the falling-out between Van Gogh and Gauguin, and "No Hope. No Fear. The Unraveling of Caravaggio's Career" details the Baroque master's infamous brawling and criminal record.



Original drawings by Frank Stack as Foolbert Sturgeon.

Examples of what Stack calls his "straight" work complement the cartoons. His drawings of female nudes, which sometimes include a surrounding environment in which other people are drawing or learning to draw, reflect his years as a professor. Here the two "F.S." personae start to overlap. Though subversively naughty, the graphic novels embody Stack's serious engagement with art history and classical literature. At the same time, his so-called academic work contains a playful eroticism and sly criticality toward the often-romanticized practice of "working from life."



Historical nudes grouped with Stack's in the show contain political or religious content, such as Albert Decaris's series about Samson and Delilah. A William Strang image of Christ provides a counterpart to Stack's "Jesus." Lithographs by Daumier lampoon the plight of the working artist, the desire for success versus the struggle for creative integrity. These works, published in 19th-century Parisian newspapers, connect the contemporary graphic novel to art history and form a thematic anchor for the exhibition overall: Daumier's career as both fine artist and satirical cartoonist parallels Stack's own dual production.



Works from Frank Stack's personal collection of historical prints, clockwise from top left by Honoré Daumier, William Strang, Daumier, and Albert Decaris.

**Curator biographies:**

**Anne Thompson** is an artist and writer on the graduate faculty of the University of Missouri. She has had solo exhibitions in New York City, and her work has been reviewed in *The New York Times*. She has been a fellow at the Virginia Center for the Creative Arts and at the Oberpfälzer Kuenstlerhaus in Bavaria. In 2009, she received a DAAD grant to do research at the Bauhaus Archive in Berlin.

**Nathan Boyer's** performance videos have been featured in national and international festivals and biennials. He recently was awarded a Fulbright Fellowship in Austria and was an artist-in-residence at the quartier21/Museums Quartier program for digital media in Vienna. He has an MFA from the Yale School of Art and is currently an assistant professor in the University of Missouri Art Department.

*Charlotte Street Foundation is dedicated to making Kansas City a place where artists and art thrive. Through its Urban Culture Project initiative, Charlotte Street supports artists of all disciplines and contributes to city's vitality by transforming previously vacant spaces into dynamic venues for multi-disciplinary contemporary arts programming. For more information, visit [www.charlottestreet.org](http://www.charlottestreet.org).*

**Opening reception:** Friday, January 20, 6-9pm  
**Talk with curators & Frank Stack:** Saturday, January 21, 2:30pm  
**Location:** Project Space  
 (a Charlotte Street Foundation Urban Culture Project venue)  
**Address:** 21 East 12<sup>th</sup> Street, Kansas City MO 64105  
**Exhibition runs:** January 20-March 3, 2011

Gallery hours: Wed, Fri, Sat 12-5pm; Thurs 11-6  
More info: [www.charlottestreet.org](http://www.charlottestreet.org); 816.221.5115

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