

# ART & LIT

**By Scott Dickensheets**

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## **LOCAL BOY MAKES GOOD ART**

Dwarfed by the sheer girth of the Asian art exhibit at the Las Vegas Art Museum is a small side-gallery show of recent pieces by painter/sculptor Mark Brandvik. *C-Sides: Where the Glory Meets the Gut* is easy to overlook, but don't. Brandvik, a native Las Vegas raised in the Lutheran faith, has taken familiar marketing figures—Elsie the Cow, the Red Devil, the Morton's salt girl—and recontextualized them with sly religious readings. (Elsie as a demon—inspired!) It's an idea that took root five years ago, when Brandvik realized that "the Hamburger Helper hand looked like an image of the stigmata."

"It seemed like a revelation when I saw these processed-food icons as latter-day

versions of religious iconography," he says. "A trip to Italy two years ago further confirmed my suspicion that Las Vegas is, essentially, a contemporary Venice/Florence/Rome, and that my work could be, among other things, a contemporary version of the art I saw there."

In their precise, accomplished technique (as well as in their materials)(as well as charged decorative elements like hotrod flames), the paintings reflect Brandvik's seven years and counting as a sign painter and designer. "I want the look of the paintings to mimic their sources but to transcend them in meaning and presence."

Mission accomplished.

As enjoyable as LVAM's *Asian Art Now 2000* is, I wish a little more space—and a more conspicuous space, at that—could have been dedicated to Brandvik's show. See it while you can; it comes down Sunday. **LVW**