



LYN BONHAM

# Skull Candy

Local artist Peter Roberts creates an endlessly entertaining series of miniature portraits.  
*Reilly Mesco gets inside his head.*

**“W**HAT WERE THEY THINKING?” It’s a question we often ask about celebrities, politicians—even our own Savannah neighbors.

Iconographer Peter Roberts thinks he has a pretty good idea of what’s going on in other people’s heads—at least in the 2-D crania of Zeus, Superman, Mary Telfair, and more of his tiny paper creations.

The story-loving Connecticut transplant, long a fun fixture on Savannah’s social scene, came to town to pursue a degree in video during the early days of the Savannah College of Art and Design.

“It was a great art school because you didn’t have the distractions of a bigger city, so you were sort of forced to create your own enter-

*“When you abstract the human face, people connect with it on a different level, kind of like the ‘smiley face.’ With a little more detail, it draws the eye in more.”*

tainment, your own viewpoint,” he recalls. And create he did. Roberts worked in television for several years and then launched the

graphic design firm Blackbird Press, creating many of the city’s most recognizable logos.

## ON HIS MIND

About a year ago, Roberts began sketching a different sort of logo: “Headcases,” a technicolor series of iconic faces the size of a half dollar—and inspired by the comic books of his youth.

“My first love is cartooning,” he asserts. “I was going through a purging phase, reviewing all of these childhood items, examining what I held onto and why. The very first set of Headcases I did was of the Greek gods. (Continued on page 196)

**FACE TIME:** See Peter’s Headcases at our **Best of Savannah party**, 9/17, and his Oglethorpe Gallery exhibit, 10/2. [headcases.net](http://headcases.net)



## SKULL CANDY

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They're so visual."

Indeed they are. Just look at Titan goddess Metis, the mother of Athena, who was tricked into turning into a fly and was promptly swallowed by Zeus. Peter's rendition of her has huge buggy eyes and wispy fly-wing hair.

"The head shapes are meant to show what they were thinking," Roberts explains. "For Edison, it's a light bulb, and on Ben Franklin there are lightning bolts. It's a way of implying what they're famous for and what their visual narrative would be."

When he showed the first collection of Headcases—from Marvel superheroes to voodoo gods—at the Oglethorpe Gallery last fall, he was still "playing around" with the concept.

"It's fun for me," he admits. "It's fun to draw tiny little heads with tiny little differences and sort of make them universally relevant. I was really surprised at the positive response—and there's still a part of me that doesn't know why people like them."

He's currently finishing up a Savannah

Icons series, which features faces like pro golfer Hollis Stacy, writer Flannery O'Connor and Gen. James Oglethorpe, plus local landmarks like the Gingerbread House and the Cathedral of St. John the Baptist.

### CRAZY FACE

Each collection is arranged in a specimen frame, resembling a miniature exhibition unto itself.

"With Headcases, the generic becomes personal," Roberts muses. "I like the puzzle of figuring out where they fit and how they need to be lined up, who should go next to whom. Is it a timeline? Should I group them by activity? How does it work? Hopefully, the viewer has as much fun figuring it out as I have making them."

For the viewer, the images open themselves to interpretation, and Roberts often is surprised by their impact.

"A lot of people actually look at them as sort of emoticons," he chuckles. "To me, they

all have on little wigs. When you abstract the human face, people connect with it on a different level, kind of like the 'smiley face.' When you abstract with a little more detail, it draws the eye in more." ■



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LYN BONHAM

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