

# *MARK FLOOD'S HATEFUL YEARS*

## LUXEMBOURG & DAYAN, NEW YORK, 2012.

### *WHAT'S MY LINE?*

by John Dogg

Mark Flood is a Canadian professional ice-hockey defenseman who is currently with the Winnipeg Jets of the National Hockey League. He previously played for the New York Islanders. He was born on September 29, 1984, in Charlottetown, North Carolina. His height is 6'1", weight 190 lbs; he shoots right-handed, and his salary is 525,000 US dollars per year.

Mark Flood is an artist who lives and works in Houston, Texas. He was also born there, in 1957. Constructing a biography of Flood is a challenge. Any of the following statements may or may not be true. He went to Rice University. He studied cooking and was keen to try to make white rice into a sustainable vitamin-rich gourmet meal. (He once froze balls of rice and would remove them from his freezer in the middle of summer and try to convince friends that the concoction was a new kind of healthy yogurt.) He made all-over paintings with rice and drove a 1968 Jeep Wrangler with a fender made out of rice that doubled as a battering ram. He tried unsuccessfully to manufacture dungarees made out of Arborio rice.

His favorite song is the jingle from the advertisement for Rice-A-Roni. He started showing his art in Houston at DiverseWorks in the '80s, and by 1991 in New York City. By the 2000s, most of his exhibitions were in commercial galleries centered in and around Eastern Europe. His last exhibition (in what is now or used to be Romania) was made up of a single grain of rice, cast in an aluminum alloy and painted black. The single grain was rumored to be a mouse dropping. His proposal to fill the American pavilion with quicksand in the next Venice Biennale was turned down. (He told me in a short telephone interview that he's planning to re-submit his proposal for the Biennale, but "this time around I would edit and strip down my last proposal and exhibit a single grain of sand on a velvet pedestal." He went on to say the "lighting" of this "sand" will be "the last place on Earth that God didn't finish.") Mark is currently working on "doilies" based on his grandmother's personal collection.

Mark Flood is a financial economist, living and working in the Washington DC area. His fields of interest include risk management, financial institutions, capital markets, and financial data and software. Current affiliations are as follows: senior policy advisor, Department of the Treasury, Office of Financial Research (OFR); and senior partner with ProBanker Simulations, LLC.

Mark Flood is a doctor who practices psychiatry in Rochelle Park, New Jersey. Flood graduated with an MD twenty-five years ago from Nasson College, Springvale, Maine. He is board certified in the state of New Jersey. He went to graduate school at Texas Tech University and did his internship at Health Sciences Center School of Medicine in Lubbock, Texas. He graduated in 1987. His hobbies include skeet shooting, and he is part of a summer-stock theater production based in Westchester, New York. This past summer he played the part of Tommy in Deaf Dumb and Blind, based on the rock opera masterpiece by the Who. He is also a ham radio operator and can recite the entire screenplay from the movie On The Beach. (He is quick to ask the question, "Who or what" is sending out the S.O.S. in the

the abundant symbolism contained within J. M. Barrie's cavorting tale. We all know Peter, born a contrarian rebel, cut off Captain Hook's hand and fed it to a crocodile. Delve further into the flagitious history of this universal favorite, and the violent preface spirals into theories of Jungian archetypes, sexual sadism, black voodoo magic, and satanic fable. Hints of this are immanent in Flood's picture, with Pan, sword in hand, fashioned with six eyes and spirited phallus. (Quite accurately, a Houston art legend reveals that when these Flood paintings were exhibited, they were seized as evidence in an alleged satanic cult investigation.)

Flood invites us to consider the refuse that follows this plague of ritualistic monotony. Recombinative appropriation thrives in the realm of the domestic, rife with material culture to expend, to sort, to reuse, to worship, to love, to discard. In the seminal texts of *The Invisible Dragon*, Dave Hickey writes that we gather around our fashion, sports, art, and entertainment icons as we would about a hearth, that we "organize ourselves in nonexclusive communities of desire." Flood examines how our disease begins with these simple notions of pleasure—how an innocent teenybopper's pinup-plastered wall begets an innocuous crowd of star-gawkers, but in Flood's world at any moment the crowd could quickly morph into Nathanael West's ominous angry mob, their disappointment over false idolatry unleashing a jihad that takes shape after humanity becomes nonsubjective globs. Idolatry is the scion of obsession, feeding our mass cultural infection.

Flood's idols and monsters serve as bellwethers for his later *Hateful Years* output, segueing into and around the celebrity canvases and collages. Similarly to the "Idols" and "Monsters," the meaning of these crudely altered portraits is not determined by the subject's identity, but instead by the very mutation of their flesh. Quasi-human figures dispense broken commands, their presence unearthing the totemic power found in even the most minor of celebrity. SEE THE NIGHTMARE. Flood's is a world in which the flashes in the pan, the one-hit wonders reanimate zombified, and loiter—where the warped but still God-like voices of Justine Bateman or Tony Danza can command the viewer to perform the weightiest of tasks: BE GOOD, COMMIT SUICIDE, ENJOY LIFE, EAT HUMAN FLESH.

With all its unabashed contradictions, the common strain in Flood's *Hateful Years* productivity is the deformity of this very notion of fame; and with each disfigurement there is offered a correction, whereby Flood achieves the most honest answers about this cultural epidemic. It is as if Flood disrupts the gathering about the hearth, to say "See how monotonously sick we all are?" The tenacious human recycling impulse spews out a Corey Haim, a Don Johnson, a Hannah Montana, a Justin Bieber, like a vending machine. A season of *American Idol*, a Satanic ritual, what does it *really* matter? Inasmuch as Flood considers repulsion, he always offers a giant medicinal spoonful of seduction. And we remain about the ceremonial hearth, and we beg for more.