

Classic Posters Interview with Frank Kozik by Michael Erlewine

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Background

Interview done January 30, 2003

Michael Erlewine: And I have some basic questions that I've got to get to build a biography. For example, it would be good know the birth date and year that you were born.

Frank Kozik: January 9th, 1962 in Toledo, Spain. I'm not American.

Michael Erlewine: You're not an American citizen?

Frank Kozik: Oh yeah, I came over here when I was a teen-ager, joined the military, got citizenship all that kind of deal.

Michael Erlewine: What was your given name?

Frank Kozik: Cebrian Sanchez. But my father's name was Kozik. So like when I came over here, he was an American. He met my mom over there; she got pregnant; they got divorced; he split. I was born over there, raised over there, and in my teen years I had a rapprochement with my father and I came over to the states.

And I had dual citizenship, and then I joined the military and got like full U.S. citizenship in 1978 or something.

Michael Erlewine: So you went into our military?

Frank Kozik: Yeah, I went in the Air Force.

Michael Erlewine: I'd like to know how you got started with art.

Frank Kozik: When I was a kid, I always liked to draw, and I was always the guy who could draw goofy shit or whatever.

And then in the 1970s, I grew up with European comics, right?

Michael Erlewine: Which I know very little about.

Frank Kozik: There was a great school of European comic book illustrations. It was very strong in the 1970's, late 1960's and the 1970's. There were some French and Spanish publishing houses that put out, like Heavy Metal Magazine.

Michael Erlewine: Would you name a few artists ?

Frank Kozik: Sure, like Mobius, and Phillippe Druillet and Francisco Ibanez and all these European, sort of like comic-book artists and they would put out these hard-bound comic books. And so I grew up with this really rich culture of illustrative comic art, but more adult themed, you know what I mean?

And I was just really into that and like fantasy art in the 1970s and all that stuff, you know, Roger Dean, and all that kind of shit. I never liked... I was never exposed to the psychedelic-era art. I still don't like it to this day, just sort of a weak Art Nouveau rip-off, if you ask me. So, I kind of grew up as a kid with European comic art. Okay, and I grew up in Spain, and my family was extremely right-winged, so a lot of...sort of like social-realism-propaganda art was very important to me. Then I came over to the states, got turned on to rock and roll music. So I sort of absorbed that. I found out about punk right at the beginning, like 1979, so early punk stuff had a big sort of impact on me. So my stuff is like a mixture of traditional comic book stuff, political art, and sort of the crude factor of the punk rock thing. I had a good exposure to classical art as a

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child, but you know.... that's something that I couldn't do...so...

Michael Erlewine: Did you have any formal art training?

Frank Kozik: None whatsoever. And the way it really started was probably around 1979 or 1980, when I started doing mail art. I don't know if you remember that?

Michael Erlewine: Now what is it?

Frank Kozik: I started doing like 'mail art'. It was something kind of like before there were fanzines. I would just correspond via mail with people in various countries and stuff and we'd just do weird shit and send it to each other, it was kind of like a little, sort of... just a weird thing to do.

Years in Austin

Frank Kozik: And then I was stationed in Austin, and I was doing this mail art stuff and some people that I had been corresponding with up in Portland, they moved -- four of them moved -- down to Austin, and they had a sort of art collective called the Artmaggots, right? So we'd hang out and sort of do this like Dada kind of flyers in little magazines and stuff they'd just put around town.

And then, some of the local bands approached us to do like little flyers for their bands. So I did like my first official band flyer in 1981, but it was sort of an outgrowth of this sort of just weird art shit that we were doing that was collage stuff. That we just put up for no reason, just to be weird, right?

Michael Erlewine: Right.

Frank Kozik: And then I sort of didn't do very much until the mid-80's, like the occasional thing or whatever. I was just like going to shows and getting high and

stuff. And then, I had hooked up with this guy called Brad First, who was the one guy in Austin that consistently tried to have a good venue, right? He had many venues over the years. He had worked at Club Foot. He opened the Cannibal Club.

He opened the Cave Club. All that stuff, so Brad and I were friends and I worked actually at his clubs, like I was a door-man and stuff for a long time.

And he was really into doing posters, so he was a guy that was like "Hey, like let's do a poster with color on it," right? So we would do like a two-color offset. At the same time, his one club was kind of successful. He started getting touring bands coming through.

Michael Erlewine: Which club was that?

Frank Kozik: This was the Cave Club. It was a large club. So this is about 1987, 1988. I start doing posters not just for the local acts, but for like Sonic Youth came through and Ministry came through, and the Red Hot Chili Peppers and all those bands were still small then, right?

And so, I started doing these national acts, basically, and that opened opportunities in other cities. And so, there was never a plan. I just started doing it and at the same time, I managed to quit working construction. I got a job at a local T-shirt place. I started doing production art for this T-shirt guy.

And learned about printing and stuff, just by hands-on. And I worked for him for about a year and then like 1989, I just went to all my clients and said if I quit, will you just pay me direct for your art? And they said, "Yes," so I started making a living. I started making a living

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in like 1989 by basically taking all this guy's T-shirts clients away from him.

And the posters I was just doing for fun, right? And then one thing led to another, and I started selling stuff through a gallery in Los Angeles and they were like "Hey man, have you ever thought about doing fine art stuff?" And I'm like "no," but I will, so I did a bunch of big fine art pieces and they were sort of spending this fortune getting my stuff printed as silk screen editions.

Michael Erlewine: What was this "L'imagerie"?

Frank Kozik: Yeah.

Frank Kozik: So I sat down. Look, for what we are paying to print an edition, I can buy a silk screen press and I can print my own shit and we'll make all this money.

Michael Erlewine: Right.

Frank Kozik: So, they did that. They coughed up like the ten G's, I set up the press. I did up some stuff for myself. I printed some Roth stuff, some Williams stuff. It was pretty boring. And then one day, I was like "Fuck it, I'm going to do a poster on this thing." Right? So I did like the first large-format silkscreen poster, which was a pig-faced poster. It was just like two colors, but people fucking loved it.

And then after that, like the first 10 or 15, I did them on the sly. Then I started selling those, and you know, just sort of kept growing, and just basically kept getting better equipment. And making larger more elaborate posters. And I was just doing it because it was just a pleasurable thing to do. Right?

And then in the mid-90's it kind of like, I came out here on a whim, kind of deal. I

had the first book and I was kind of like, "Fuck maybe I could do this like as a full-time business."

The Beginnings

Michael Erlewine: I'm in the process of interviewing a lot of the Texas guys. And for some of them, the more recent ones, you figured very strongly in their whole development.

Frank Kozik: Right.

Michael Erlewine: I don't have images for a lot of your work.

Frank Kozik: Yeah, I'm not prone to keeping anything, so I have basically nothing. I've got zero, I guess. I just... you know, once I'm done, once I do the stuff, I want to get rid of it, so I don't tend to keep piles of my own stuff. I have little or nothing to help the archivist.

Michael Erlewine: Well, then it just makes my job all the more fun, right? [laughs].

Frank Kozik: [laughs] At one point I was probably doing four or five things a week, and you know, just no way to keep track.

Michael Erlewine: Now are you computer-oriented. Looks to me like your doing them on computer.

Frank Kozik: I always have.

Michael Erlewine: Oh, you always have?

Frank Kozik: Sure, I mean, ever since computers were around. I mean, the majority, anything that has an illustration on it... it's actually a hand-inked illustration, which has been scanned, and so forth.

Michael Erlewine: And you put it in Adobe Illustrator?

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Frank Kozik: Yeah, I scan it, put it in Illustrator or Photoshop, whatever works the best. For the silkscreen posters, all of it was cut by hand, of course. These days, like I no longer do music stuff. I'm just like sick of it. I started that label [Man's Ruin] and that was a big five years of craziness, and I put out like 300 records and I just got totally thoroughly disgusted by rock music with that experience.

I shut the label down about two years ago. So now I just maintain my commercial accounts. I'm doing a lot of toy design these days, and I started doing like large-format oil paintings, which are selling quite well. So, basically, I'm never going to do any more music stuff.

Michael Erlewine: Oh, that's too bad for the music poster collectors.

Frank Kozik: Dude, I don't care anymore. I did it for 20 fucking years, man. You get tired. I did like 800 posters, produced 200 full-length record albums, did the art for those, countless other things. I mean, I think....

Michael Erlewine: So there are 800 Kozik posters out there?

Frank Kozik: Oh yeah, easy. Sure. I mean the problem is that, like I say, I never kept track. I mean the stuff that I printed myself in my shop, with the exception of one or two pieces, those are all numbered, those all have a KZ number on them, all the silk-screens.

Michael Erlewine: Do you still have a site where a lot of these are available?

Frank Kozik: No, there's a commercial site called fkozik.com, which this guy bought a bunch of inventory over the years. He's peddling the stuff. There's no cohesive...I mean I don't even...I see

stuff all the time, like, "Oh yeah, forget I did that one."

Michael Erlewine: Do I have your permission just to try to get thumbnails of some of this, just so I document your work?

Frank Kozik: You do whatever you want man. I mean I have three books out on Amazon.com, and the stuff I really enjoy is in those books.

Volume four is coming out in about a little over a year, so there will be four volumes of the stuff I kind of like, but there's also a lot of stuff not in those books. So my problem is...you know, ever since like 1982, I just banged stuff out. There was one stretch where I was doing like four or five posters a week.

And, the deal is, like I say, none of the offset posters were ever kept track of. In 1991, I kind of...well the stuff in 1991, I didn't put numbers on it. I think probably 1992 was the first year I started putting like "92-whatever." So for about 10 years the silk screens, the majority of the silk screens, there are numbers. Now, how many I did in a given year I have no idea. I mean in some years I would do like 65 or something.

Michael Erlewine: And how did you do the silk screens? Would you cut all of them by hand?

Frank Kozik: Yeah, I had a print shop all those years, so I was going to do the art, print out a positive, do hand separations, you know, throw it on the press.

Michael Erlewine: But you weren't cutting them like in Rubilith?

Frank Kozik: Oh yeah, sure. Of course. Only way to do it. Yeah, see my whole thing was I... is... What you have to

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understand about my posters is that like what's going on now is just like artist-people doing these artsy posters and doing like these really small runs and trying to somehow become an artist or something.

Like what Jermaine Rgers is doing. I mean, dude, I was doing real rock posters for real promoters and real tours, so it was a commercial enterprise.

Michael Erlewine: Right.

Frank Kozik: Which, was based on volume [laughs]. So, like I say, I produced an awful lot of stuff over the years ... countless editions of posters that were paid for by clients that I have no copies of. There's so much crap out there, it's like retarded. And like I said, I just never really had a personal interest in like keeping an archive of the stuff.

Michael Erlewine: But it's just important, for the future, to try to archive it, so that there's some history.

Frank Kozik: Yeah, like I say it's like, you know, have fun [laughs]. But like I say, I literally can't even sit down and tell you how much stuff I've done because I never kept track.

There's an excess of 800 posters, there's an excess of 300 CD, album and single covers, hundreds of commercials illustrations, maybe 85 different commercial-ad campaigns over the years. I mean...right now there's like 52 toys. I mean I just tend to do a lot of stuff.

Michael Erlewine: Well Jermaine speaks of you like you are the Godfather, right? These guys really look up to, you know that already?

Frank Kozik: Well, that's cool.

Michael Erlewine: And where are you now?

Frank Kozik: San Francisco. Yeah, been out here since 1993. And in the mid-90's the poster thing really peaked and I had a lot of money. So I did the label. I started this record label and the label kind of became important and it made a lot of money, and then it crashed and I lost all the money.

And in the interim I started doing commercial design work, right? And that sort of developed into its career. I've done ad campaigns for everybody, dude, Nike, Gator-Aide, Camel Cigarettes.

I did Slim Jim for three years. So I have this whole other thing where I do, like, you know, large scale. I might do a big job for A. T. & T. You know, all of it, print media, TV commercials, radio stuff. You know, all that kind of like hard-core-like commercial design work.

Michael Erlewine: Right.

Frank Kozik: You know, which is basically like anonymous, but it pays lots of money.

Michael Erlewine: I bet it does.

Frank Kozik: And that kind of actually funded the posters and the label the whole time. Do you know what I'm saying?

Michael Erlewine: I do.

Frank Kozik: And in like 1996, I hooked up with a design collective in Japan and so that's been real nice, and I've got a whole deal over there. You know, I have a house, and a studio in Tokyo.

Michael Erlewine: Your kidding.

Frank Kozik: No, I spend a lot of time over there.

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Michael Erlewine: So you're doing well then. Lucky for you, because so many of the guys are doing terrible, right?

Frank Kozik: Dude, I've had years where I made like 300 grand, you know. But, I mean, because, dude, I'm not political. I don't have any like... You know, people say I have no ethics. It's just like if someone wants to give me 25 grand to do a TV commercial, I'm going to fucking do it.

You know, because it's like the same job skills apply. But overall dude it's like, how can I put this. I don't think my work is very good, okay? All right?

My work is okay, All right? But, I like to do a lot of work so it became ubiquitous, okay? And I was in the right place at the right time, and because like I don't have any fucking hang-ups, I've gotten a lot of work and a lot of money. So I try to tell people, because kids will always ask me, like how do I do it? And I'm like, look dude, it's like it's a business, right? Your job is to solve a problem. Like my deal with my art is not about art. Or ego.

Michael Erlewine: Right.

I just want to get paid, right? And I want to work everyday

Frank Kozik: I've never had an agent. I've never done promotion. I don't give a fuck. I just want to get paid, right? And I want to work everyday.

So you have to understand that, like my whole thing is completely natural and organic in nature. It was like a hobby that turned into a business, which I enjoy. It doesn't mean anything. There is no message. It's not about me as the artist. You know, I really like doing stuff that works. I love doing commercial products, like I do toy design in Japan. And it's nice because it's like

aesthetically pleasing. It's interesting work and children play with the toys, so that's my deal. So, there is a big schism between me and the rest of the crowd.

Michael Erlewine: I'm not aware of that. Tell me about that.

Frank Kozik: Well, well it's a friendly schism. They have a hard time understanding that if you want to be successful as an artist, you better leave the 'artist trip' out of it, because everybody wants to be an artist. No, no. Your job is to be like an effective craftsman or whatever.

Michael Erlewine: Well of course, it's commercial art, right?

Frank Kozik: Yeah.

Michael Erlewine: That's what it's called.

Frank Kozik: If you want to do art with a capital 'A', you need to go paint or whatever, which you can do too. Which I do. I paint and people buy the paintings and so it's very nice.

So there's a lot of people that are doing good stuff, but they are destined to failure, for whatever odd reason, and the more liberal they are, the more they box themselves in. They are like "I can only work in this narrow confined area."

Michael Erlewine: Right.

Frank Kozik: And if it's not all handed to me, then I'm going to complain endlessly. Where I'm always trying to get these guys to, you know.

Favorite Poster Artists

Michael Erlewine: Well I hope so, right. That's very far out. Who are some young posters artists that you think have real talent?

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Frank Kozik: The Factor 27 team; they are exceptionally gifted designers. There's this guy who calls himself, Scrojo, who's a really gifted illustrator.

There's a group called Nocturnal Showprint that does amazing work. There is some really high caliber work, but the problem is they ghettoize themselves, because we only want to do stuff for these really obscure little bands. Blah, blah, blah...so

Michael Erlewine: But, with many liberal ethics, sometimes it's hard to break through commercially.

Frank Kozik: Well, well, well, we're living in fantasy world. They don't understand that, like, the liberals won.

Michael Erlewine: [laughs].

Frank Kozik: You know, it's all the same anyways. Punk rock won, you can do what ever you want to. Your average television commercial is a lot more creative and liberal than any piece of art in a museum.

Michael Erlewine: Oh, yeah, totally.

Frank Kozik: They just can't understand, cannot grasp the concept that there is no "us vs. them," it's all "us" now.

Michael Erlewine: Right.

Frank Kozik: And I'm trying to get that across.

Michael Erlewine: See I had no idea you had this dimension, right?

Frank Kozik: See, I'm a real person.

Michael Erlewine: Right, I get it.

Frank Kozik: Art is not my life dude. Like I have a real life.

Michael Erlewine: Are you married? do you have kids, or anything?

Frank Kozik: No, no, no, god forbid.

Michael Erlewine: So you work a lot?

Frank Kozik: No, no, no, a normal amount, I guess, I fuck off a lot. I think I have struck a decent balance.

The Bands and Venues

Michael Erlewine: That's cool. Let me ask you a couple other things. Are there any favorite venues over the years that you love to work with?

Frank Kozik: Yeah, Emo's. I mean Emo's was like the perfect rock venue in Austin. It was a large sprawling, comfortable place. They always booked excellent bands. For me Emo's was a perfect place. Emo's, Austin. For ten years it was just a great space, a great ownership, a great booking policy, perfect location. You know, it was for the 90's like a great place for a young person to get turned on to sub-culture.

Michael Erlewine: And what bands did you grow to love...that you loved to do art for?

Frank Kozik: Oh, the ones that I loved. I was very fond of the Butthole Surfers in their heyday. I'd say probably that was my favorite. That was a band that I dearly loved to go see, and when I did their posters, it was very rewarding on a personal level. I'd say of all of the stuff I did, that stuff was really what personally excited me the most because I loved that band.

Michael Erlewine: What about media and size, formats of stuff, what is your favorite. You've said you worked on a bunch of silk screens and...

Frank Kozik: Bigger the better, baby.

Michael Erlewine: Really?

Frank Kozik: Size matters.

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Michael Erlewine: Okay, today, your mostly working in Illustrator and?

Frank Kozik: Dude, well I do work in all media currently, hand-done illustrations, computer graphics, traditional, 16th century oil-painting technique.

Michael Erlewine: Really. I'd like to see some of that.

Frank Kozik: Woodwork, metal work, sculpture. I do textile design, clothing design, you know...anything. ...I do 3-D plastic design for toys. You know, like I do all the shit so they can make the machine tools, you know. Just whatever.

Michael Erlewine: What about posters shows of your work, have there been many?

Frank Kozik: I've had over 70 exhibits, worldwide.

Michael Erlewine: How would we ever document that?

Frank Kozik: I have no idea, dude. I've never kept a list. I've done shows. I've done many, many, many, shows in the United States; I've done many shows in Canada; I've done eight show in Japan; I've done over a dozen shows in Germany, Sweden, United Kingdom, Portugal, Spain, Italy, Serbia. I've done shows... I've had shows where I wasn't even involved, and they've sent me press later, so.

Michael Erlewine: Do you have any people in the poster world that you consider peers, I mean...kind of like...like yourself out there floating?

Frank Kozik: All of them, everybody, anybody who does a rock poster is my peer.

API: American Poster Institute

Frank Kozik: I set up this whole API thing (American Poster Institute). We set up these huge exhibits. It's going to be like really historically important. This thing down in Austin, Flatstock, Hatch Show Print, just signed on board.

I try to give these guys a logistical basis, like look, you don't have to sit here and suffer in obscurity. There is no shame in getting paid or whatever.

Frank Kozik: There's this website, this Gigposter site.

Michael Erlewine: Yeah, I know gigposter. Great site.

Frank Kozik: Which is really great.

Michael Erlewine: Yeah.

Frank Kozik: And I've been on there awhile, because it's fun, and everyone's bitching about, "like nobody cares about us." Well, fuck! You got to organize yourself. So I organized a poster convention here about six months ago, which went off very well.

Michael Erlewine: Okay, that was the Flatstock.

Frank Kozik: Right, Number one. And then I went off...

Michael Erlewine: See I thought...I thought Nels Jacobson maybe did that or something....

Frank Kozik: No, no, no, I did that. And then I got hooked up with Nels, because Nels is like this big lawyer...

Michael Erlewine: I know him. Great guy. Uses the name "Jagmo (Nels Jacobson)" on his posters.

Frank Kozik: We set up a non-profit corporation, trademarked "Flatstock," set up a board, right? And now we own it. It's all registered and crap, and we

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worked a deal with South-by-Southwest for Flatstock II, which is going to be big. Everyone is coming. It's going to be really big.

And we're going to, in the next six months, we're going to set up a big FAQ site for membership, you know just to give some logistical support for the endeavor.

Michael Erlewine: Cool.

Frank Kozik: They are trying to turn these kids on to some money and shit.

Michael Erlewine: Well I think, that's exactly my view, is that these guys need some help, just business wise.

Frank Kozik: Unfortunately, it's like these modern American children, who don't know how to do anything in the real world. Yeah, you know the deal, it's like, they think that if I'm cool, it will all come to me and it don't work that way.

Michael Erlewine: No.

Frank Kozik: So my new mission is: I'm not doing the posters anymore, but I'm going to try to setup like, hopefully set up some kind of association where these guys can get turned on to facts and figures and connections and hook-ups, and they can start to make some ...It's already starting...

Michael Erlewine: That's kind of you do that, that's really great.

Frank Kozik: I enjoy the stuff, you know, plus I have a point to prove, which is you can make a decent living as a creative person.

Flackstock

Michael Erlewine: The most interesting thing you've told me so far is this thing you're doing with Flatstock.

Frank Kozik: Well, we're setting up a site, I mean, what I want to do is... The common complaint is that people just basically are clueless as to how things really work, so there is the questions that are repeat questions, from all the kids are things like legal stuff, contracts, how to get paid, how to actually deal with a commercial job, printing questions, you know. API. We call it the American Poster Institute. What it's for is, basically, I see it as the beginnings of like a graphic-arts guild, which is specifically focused on people that want to be poster designers.

Michael Erlewine: Right.

Frank Kozik: Okay, doesn't matter what else they do, but, to be like an actual, quote, a voting member, you have to consistently produce actual music posters. Okay, that's part of what it is that you do. There was also going to be a category for people who are enthusiasts and they can join, so their \$20 will just help support. So, there's like a yearly fee, a small yearly fee, in order to join.

Michael Erlewine: Is there a web site yet?

Frank Kozik: It's in progress.

Michael Erlewine: Cool.

Frank Kozik: The Flatstock site will turn into the API site. And there's going to be two things that we're going to do. One is we are going to have a web-site that's going to be an information site, and it won't be forums, and the first rule of the board is: no politics or sort of like, nothing, no critical stuff. What were going to do is, I'm going to start amassing information from people, printing techniques, experiences with printers, supplies, equipment -- all that

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kind of stuff. And there are going to be sections, which are going to be like how to coat a screen, how to build a silkscreen press, how to print, where to get printing supplies, how to cut separations. Blah, blah, blah... Just technical stuff. Then we're going to go through and have contacts for all the poster artists, where they can have their contact information up. Then we're going to have contacts for suppliers, dealers, printers, with ratings. Okay?

People are going to vote and then I'm going to do an average and go okay, this printer received a four-star rating, and shit like that, okay? Then Nels Jacobson and I are going to sit down and Nels is actually going to write a set of standardized contracts.

Michael Erlewine: Good idea.

Frank Kozik: Like a bill of sale, work for hire, basic contracts that will be our trademark. And that are free under license to any official artist members. So, they can go to the website, type in their code number, and download a contract which they can use.

Michael Erlewine: That's great.

Frank Kozik: So they don't have to go to a lawyer and so that their actually getting a real contract that will stand up legally, right?

Michael Erlewine: Right.

Frank Kozik: So, like the website is going to be like for that sort of logistical support. In a year you'll be able to go there and get your technical questions answered. Oh fuck, I need a bill of sale contract, and you can go download one that is going to work for you. Then number two is we want to do two of these poster conventions a year, okay?

Michael Erlewine: I think that's great.

Frank Kozik: So, having a corporation, while there is a way to channel the money and pay the bills; it's all tax-free. It gives it like the scent of proprietary for the real world. There is actually an entity that can deal with a venue or a supplier, right?

Michael Erlewine: Right.

Frank Kozik: The events basically are going to pay for themselves. You know the money will go through there, right? All that kind of stuff. The hope is that in a couple of years, okay, we've done a bunch of events.

Michael Erlewine: Yep.

Frank Kozik: It will have gotten press; we have a membership; we have a web site; it's an art situation; we can apply for some funding.

Michael Erlewine: That would be great.

Frank Kozik: From like whomever, the state or the feds or whatever, right?

Michael Erlewine: Right.

Frank Kozik: And if some funding comes in, then that can be used to do things like improve the services or perhaps put out a bi-annual publication, like a workbook/magazine that features our members, which is nice to have, but also going to be sent out to design form as a workbook for this niche in the graphic design field.

Michael Erlewine: I think that's cool.

Frank Kozik: Does that make sense?

Michael Erlewine: It makes perfect sense.

Frank Kozik: That's kind of like the idea behind API, what it does for me, is I don't want to do rock posters anymore.

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I'm 40 and I'm tired of rock music, but I still like the form. I still want to be involved in the community.

But I don't want to churn out rock posters, so it's my way of coming in and being involved in the community, having some fun, right? Keeping my finger in the pie. And sort of paying back the favor, because I've had a very nice life based on this genre.

Michael Erlewine: That's right.

Frank Kozik: So I feel like I should try to help the new people, because once upon a time people helped me. Does that make sense?

Michael Erlewine: Of course.

Frank Kozik: That's kind of like the deal.

Michael; That's very cool. Who thought of the name Flatstock?

Frank Kozik: Some guy that is a member on gigposters.com. I think it was some guy in Canada.

Yeah, it's going to take a while. I mean the site is going to be up and running, but it's going to take a while. I said it's going to take a year. I have to question everybody, a lot of people have to submit stuff. It's going to be a long process. You know how it works, I mean, it takes forever, so...

Michael Erlewine: Well, that's very neat. I didn't expect to hear about this, but I'm sure happy that I did. I think that's just what's needed.

Frank Kozik: Yeah, I mean if you could attend the event in Austin, you should come down, because we're going to have over 60 of the current working, you know, really good poster people in a room. And I think, historically, it's important; I don't think it's ever been

done before. Flatstock I was a precedent, and this will be even bigger, I mean, Hatch Show Print is going to come. Some real heavy hitters are going to be there.

So I think, for people that are interested in this genre of graphic arts, well, everybody whose currently working, with one or two exceptions, because they are such assholes, are going to be there. But your going to have this broad spectrum of artists in a room showing their wares in a non-commercial environment.

Frank Kozik: You know gigposters is a really great, like that's the living side of it, right? We all get on there and all yammer and a lot of stuff comes up from chaos. Our site is just going to be non-interactive on that level, it's going to be like, a website set up as a sister site to gigposters, where the information is there in permanent FAQs.

Michael Erlewine: And hopefully, classicposters.com will be like your archive site, where you can go, if you want to see a picture of every poster that ever was.

Frank Kozik: Right.

Michael Erlewine: You know, except for all of yours.

Frank Kozik: [laughs].

Frank Kozik: My experience is that I've seen a lot of cats try and fail in the last 15 years, and a lot of them were really good, and the problem is that there is no lack of creative genius.

There are a lot of people who have done really exciting work. But then they end up running up against the wall of reality, right?

Classic Posters Interview with Frank Kozik by Michael Erlewine

Like how it works in the real world, what it actually takes to make something financially viable, and my hope is to be able to steer them in the right direction to where they can actually make enough income to support their ideas.

Michael Erlewine: Well, I think one of the most beautiful ideas you presented was this idea that if they are going to put blinders on, what we'll call liberal arts blinders and whatever... and refuse to consider this and refuse to take part in that...

Frank Kozik: Right.

Michael Erlewine: Then, there is no one to blame but themselves.

Frank Kozik: A lot of people are really into building these imaginary fences and I try to tell them there is no fence unless you create it.

Michael Erlewine: Also, if you're doing commercial art, your going have to... I think you also said something really nice, which was like you get off on solving a problem or something like that, you said, that you enjoy the challenge of trying to create art for a given something or other, right? I don't know what your words were but...

Frank Kozik: I like art to actually be useful.

Michael Erlewine: Yeah, amen.

Frank Kozik: So whether it sells a product or enhances an event, or you know, decorates somebody's wall, it's all the same to me.

Michael Erlewine: But if you could teach them that, then they'd have a much better chance of making money.

Frank Kozik: But the problem is if you've worked with creative types, you'd have

to understand. I mean I was lucky. I had a real life, you know... your miserable blue-collar existence before I was rewarded for my creativity. Our society is so wealthy, that, lot of kids now, like maybe your kids, well they've grown up in this sort of paradise of wealth.

They've never had to go dig a fucking hole to earn their bread. So they kind of have this skewed view of like what the world owes them for their endeavors.

Michael Erlewine: Yes, that's true.

Frank Kozik: And I try to tell people, that like look: it's like you can't just like draw pretty pictures and expect everybody to kiss your ass. There's got to be a reason why people want to interact with you. You have to put your work in a context. You know what I'm saying... that's how society works...

You know, I'm a very liberal person, but also you have to pay your bills; you have to find a way to do both, and this is what I try to enhance. And I think it actually makes the work better, because it gives the work a focus.

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