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## War for sale

*Exhibit juxtaposes military weaponry with consumerism*

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Tom Burtonwood and Holly Holmes sit in front of their piece, "Friendly Fire."

Photos by Josh Hawkins



"1040" is a tank wrapped in income tax forms.

With model rockets and tanks wrapped in newspaper ads and 1040 EZ tax forms, a new exhibit at the Around the Coyote art gallery in Wicker Park explores the connection between war and consumer culture.

In one installation titled "The Law of Diminishing Returns," a military bunker is covered in tax forms on sheets of paper decorated with a camouflage print. Inside the bunker hole, television sets flash scenes of children marred by bomb blasts, the military industrial complex and crumbling urban settings destroyed by battle. In another piece, a silkscreen print of a military bomber covers a poster of pop idol Britney Spears.

The exhibit runs through May 5 at 1935 ½ W. North and also features the photorealistic paintings of self-taught artist Robert Burnier.

Chicago-based artists Tom Burtonwood and Holly Holmes said their work aims to link the manufacturing of war weapons with that of everyday household products.

"I always think the biggest welfare state in this country is the defense industry," Burtonwood said. "That's the thing we're getting at—these bombs, they drop them and we get new ones and who pays for them?"

And not only does the American public pay for the weapons, it is expected to continue shopping and consuming more than ever, Burtonwood said.

"[World War II] was all about saving the little we had and putting resources into the armed forces and cutting back," he said. "The idea of this current war is to spend more. By eating more and buying more, we will help win the war."

A sculpture of a life-sized missile wrapped with newspaper ads sits atop a wooden pallet in the gallery, a statement, Holmes said, that illustrates the means of production for warfare.

"That piece is about the movement of the bombs and the selling and what it means and thinking about where it goes and how it gets there," Holmes said, adding that the pallets are the same as those used to transport products in a grocery store. "That is the everyday life of

Oil paintings by self-taught artist Robert Burnier rearranges war time imagery of missiles launching, oil fields burning and nuclear explosions. Smaller panels are arranged together to represent a larger piece. One piece that displays the exhaust from missiles and mid-air explosions stands 123" x 123".

Burnier said the controlled style of the paintings creates order from the chaos of war.

"I wouldn't say they have a polemical aspect to them," Burnier said. "They have a more contemplative mood."

Creating order in a world of chaos is a skill Burnier honed prior to launching a career in art. Earning a degree in computer science from Shippensburg University of Pennsylvania in 1991, Burnier spent more than a decade building programs for corporate clients.

But about four years ago, Burnier, 37, tired of the algorithms and equations of the digital world, deciding to focus his efforts toward the fine arts.

He said his work in the exhibit titled "Subtle Combat" deals more with the more general theme of control.

"The manipulation of nature, the manipulation of each other-those are some of the things that come to mind," he said.

For more information about the exhibit and upcoming shows at Around the Coyote, visit: <http://www.aroundthecoyote.org>.

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