
ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

Political Cartoons Thrive in Heated US Presidential Campaign

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Political cartoons have been around for hundreds of years. Matt Wuerker, a cartoonist for the multimedia news organization Politico, said they can be very effective, helping to point out hypocrisies and stupidities.

"If you can combine a funny image with maybe an insightful commentary about the political process, it's something people seem to enjoy," he said.

Art Soiree, an art exhibition organization, held its sixth annual political cartoon exhibit in Washington on February 19-20. Art Soiree's founder, Sandro Kereselidze, said Washington is a city of politics.

"Combine politics and art, that's what you get," Kereselidze said of the cartoons.

More than 100 cartoons were on display at the exhibit, which drew a large crowd. Republican businessman Donald Trump was the subject of more illustrations than any other presidential candidate.

"Trump is actually possibly going to be the Republican nominee," said *Washington Post* cartoonist Tom Toles. "That makes him the primary focus of attention."

Toles, who won a Pulitzer Prize for his work, said that in political cartoons, irony and criticism go hand-in-hand.

"So if there is a political figure that you don't like, that's a very good subject for a political cartoon," he said.

Keep it simple

Toles said a good political cartoon should be simple — "simplicity of image, simplicity of message. ... It's the idea in a cartoon to take a lot of complicated ideas and boil them down, make it fast, make it clear, make it funny, if possible."

Visitor Matthew Clifford said he found the exhibit entertaining and useful.

"Having the opportunity to come together, get all sorts of people in the same room, and to be able to look at things that make us laugh together, things that will allow us to understand the humor inherent to the process, it's always going to be healthy," he said. "Hopefully, that can help us come to greater consensus on a number of issues."

In some countries, targeting political leaders in cartoons can land an artist in jail. Politico's Wuerker said the best thing about democracy and freedom of speech is being able to freely make fun of politicians who understand that it's part of the process.

"It's healthy when you can laugh at the leaders and leaders hopefully can laugh along, too," he said. "I can draw anything I want about the president of the United States, and he can't throw me in jail. I can draw anything I want about Donald Trump, and all he can do is send some mean twitters about it."

Wuerker said people should care about politics.

"People should also be a little lighthearted about it," he said. "It's not Sunnis versus Shiites. We can all have a political argument, and at the end of the day we go forward as a country."