

# The Media Is My Canvas

by Joey Skaggs

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"...I'm here because you're here," said Joey Skaggs when he came to the FCLD office for a *Their World* interview. Joey is dyslexic. "My childhood was very sad," continued Joey. "Anything the Foundation can do to prevent other children from suffering as I did and to bring information about learning disabilities to ignorant parents is wonderful. For that reason I am glad to share my life story in *Their World*..."

Joey had a bad time trying to cope in elementary school. His talent for painting got him through. When other students worked on math problems, he built a display for a math project. He painted posters for English and social studies classes. At home he had an even worse time. His father punished him severely when he could not recite his school lessons properly.

Joey graduated from the High School of Arts Design in New York City. He loved that

school so much that he missed only one day of class in four years. Surrounded by artist teachers, he received encouragement and recognition. Joey joined the Art Students League and eventually graduated from the School of Visual Arts with a Bachelor in Fine Arts degree.

Classes in art design were a problem because of reading and writing. "I had to develop creative ways to cheat," said Joey. "I knew something was wrong with me but I could not bear to get back those penciled pages full of corrections."

Joey explained that it took many years to work his life out with the help of therapy. It was a psychologist who confirmed that Joey had dyslexia – and – for the first time he understood why he had such difficulty learning. "I was very angry," Joey explained. "Humor is a vehicle for addressing hostility. Maybe that is why I turned to satire. I use my creativity to dream up bizarre social situations and to stage non-existing scenarios using the media as my medium – they always fall for it..."

Joey's socio-political satires have been front page stories throughout the world for more than twenty years. His news stories are so brilliantly executed that viewers do not realize where truth ends and spoof begins. Articles have appeared in *The New*

*York Times*, *Wall Street Journal*, *Boston Globe*, *Los Angeles Times*, *London Sunday Times*, in *Life*, *People* and *Penthouse* magazines. Joey has been featured on Channel 13, NBC's *Today Show*, *Merv Griffin*, *Phil Donahue*, *Entertainment Tonight*, *PM Magazine*, *Ripley's Believe It Or Not*, *Cable News Network*, ABC and CBS National News, just to mention a few media spots.

Joey is responsible for the world's first and only Windsurf Voyage from Hawaii to Los Angeles (a hoax), as well as a promotion of a wonder cure extracted from Cockroach Hormones, and a campaign to Rename The Gypsy Moth. Sometimes he uses imagination to promote serious causes, for example, the fight against World Hunger, Nuclear Disarmament and the Vietnam War. Once Joey bought an abandoned Opera House, saving it from destruction. The Opera House is now a landmark and cultural arts center funded by the National Endowment on the Arts and New York State Council on the Arts.

Probably the most interesting creations of Joey Skaggs and the most lucrative are his "Fish Condos," hand crafted tropical fish tanks sporting human habitats. Joey cannot fill the orders fast enough and plans to begin a business to mass produce these popular works of art.

Joey's message to learning disabled youngsters is, "Become aware of power and abilities and use them...even in the face of adversity." He observes that everyone is a magician; all they have to do is realize it. He lectures about his art at colleges and universities around the country. Joey creates, writes, produces and directs all his own materials and acts in his own productions. His genius for creating plausible realities has earned him the title, "The World's Greatest Hoaxer."

*P.S. You fooled us at FCLD, too, Joey!*

**Editor's Note:** Joey Skaggs' "Fish Condos" will be exhibited at the Queens Museum in New York City beginning March 29, 1986. The "Fish Condos" now sell for a minimum of \$2,500 but Joey has plans for mass reproduction at greatly reduced cost. Contact Joey Skaggs at 107 Waverly Place, New York, NY 10011.

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