# Artist dares to butt heads with Pez maker

The Spokesman-Review

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Artists usually have to drop dead before their work becomes more valuable.

Robin Dare isn't waiting around for that gloomy prospect.

Hoping to cash in on a bizarre controversy with the Pez Candy company, the Spokane artist recently hiked the prices for all his art.

Anyone buying a Dare print these days also gets the following bonus:

A copy of the ridiculous demand he received from the makers of the popular character-headed candy dispensers.

"It's like getting a death threat from Walt Disney," says Dare, 42, enjoying the notoriety of being pushed around by such an American icon.

"Here I am, a poor struggling artist, and Pez is coming after me like Goliath after David. Well, let them. What are they going to get?"

As proof the term "corporate lawyer" is synonymous with "rabid weasel," Pez mouthpiece Lou Falango ordered Dare in a letter to "cease and desist" selling copies of "Shirley Temple Goes to Pez Land."

The Connecticut-based candy company learned about Dare's artwork last spring when the artist tried to market prints of his surrealistic pencil drawing through a national Pez collectors' newsletter.

The award-winning 24-by-17-inch work is one of Dare's finest efforts.

It features the heads of famous people such as Teddy Roosevelt, Pope John Paul II and Shirley Temple . . . as well as a few of Dare's own pals and their pet dogs. The heads are stuck atop Pez dispensers standing in a cornfield with giant packs of Necco wafers.

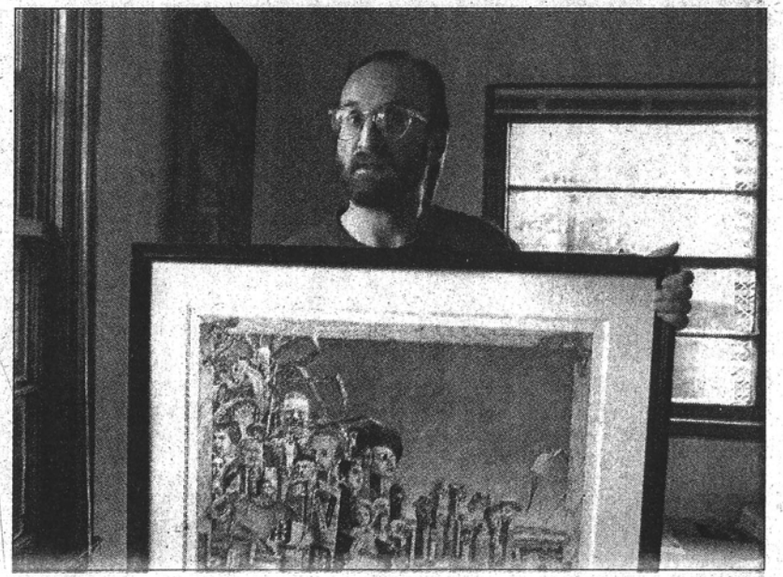
Falango accuses Dare of misrepresenting Pez and violating copyright and trademark laws.

"The celebrities depicted in your prints have never been associated with Pez Candy and dispensers," he harrumphs. ". . . You may also be in similar violations of the estates of celebrities whose likenesses you depict on the top of the misrepresented Pez dispensers."

Yeah, I bet Teddy Roosevelt's great-grandkids are going to be steamed when they hear about this.

Not only does Falango want Dare to stop sales of "Shirley Temple Goes to Pez Land," but he also ordered the artist to turn over all remaining prints and give an accounting of every nickel he's ever made on the artwork.

Continued: **Clark/B5**



Dan Pellé/The Spokesman-Review

**Spokane artist Robin Dare is being threatened by the Pez Candy company over a pencil drawing he created 13 years ago.**

## Clark: Price upped to $300

Continued from B1

"In my own mind it just smacks of profiteering," says Falango during a telephone interview. "I'm not interested in making him any money."

No wonder the public considers a busload of lawyers at the bottom of a lake "a good start."

Falango should know he doesn't have a case. Dare's artistic expression is clearly protected by the First Amendment.

His Pez parody doesn't misrepresent the Pez company any more than Andy Warhol misrepresented Campbell's Soup by graphically painting one of its cans. Pop art is all about using cultural images to express a different point of view.

This demand letter is an example of Pez Prez Scott McWhinnie using his legal department like a neighborhood bully. "The boss gets very uptight with people who do this kind of thing," adds Falango.

Dare drew "Shirley Temple Goes to Pez Land" in 1983, after 11 painstaking months of work. The artist says he was living in a dump and practically starving at the time.

Finishing the piece and having 1,000 prints made established Dare as an artist and taught him how to survive.

"I look at the piece now and don't even know how I did it," says Dare. "I spent 16 straight hours (drawing) on my friend (and fellow Spokane artist) Tom Askman's head."

Before the Pez warning, Dare was selling "Shirley Temple Goes to Pez Land" prints for $185. Because of the ruckus he bumped the price to $300.

Standing up to Pez is the best way to handle this nonsense.

"Maybe they'll send me another nasty letter," says the defiant artist. "Then I can raise the price another 50 bucks."