



Clockwise from top left: *My God Rides a Skateboard*; WC; Pachl's tattoo; Spejbl & Hurvinek Tattoo; Winter Jesus.



OFF THE WALL

To Ludek Pesek Pachl nothing is sacred, except art.

Irreverent yet heartfelt, Ludek Pesek Pachl's intricate dioramas use found objects lovingly placed in, for example, a hollowed-out television set. Czech fixtures Spejbl and Hurvinek (think Bart and Homer) cavort about in fetish gear in one, then protest the Soviet invasion of Prague in the next. His paintings, humorous and grotesque alike, subvert icons from Santa and Jesus to The Ramones.

With unadulterated self-expression, his art keeps the elements of a pure punk attitude but is created with a keen hand and mature aesthetic. This spills over into his business venture, which is a work of art itself.

"My shop is a gallery, studio, oasis, and art pub," Pachl says of his store in Berlin's hip Prenzlauer Berg. Art and persona merge here: His shop, named Tuzex after the communist state-owned stores that sold luxury goods to foreigners—in order to prove that life behind the Iron Curtain wasn't as harsh as reported and to use communism for capitalism—is a

wink to the past, with an eye on the future of art. He's morphed his experiences as a punk rocker in communist Czechoslovakia into an authority-flouting private enterprise; works that once might have landed him in prison are now on display in countless galleries in Europe.

Tattoo, hardcore, and skate culture also appears in his work: Spejbl and Hurvinek get tattooed in one of his dioramas, and *My God Rides a Skateboard* features Jesus with a board instead of a cross. The title is taken from West German hardcore band the Sperrbirds.

Pachl's tattoos—including a back piece featuring the work of Czech satirist Josef Lada—reflect both his cultural heritage and commitment to his beliefs, which in turn reflect his undying creativity and his tenacity and business savvy in the free market that was first introduced to him in his adult life. "I provoke my roots and live from it, and that satisfies me," he says. —Andrew Loughnane

