

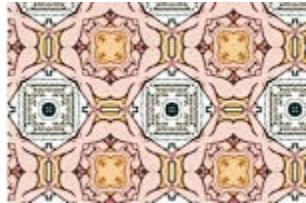
# **Who Knows What Evil Lurks in the Hearts of Men (and Women)? I Do! I Do!**

Date/Time: Daily from Fri., February 6 until Fri., March 13

## **Corruption and Creation**

**The doctor was wrong, right?**

**BY PAUL FRISWOLD**



In 1954, Dr. Frederic Wertham published his study, *Seduction of the Innocent*, which posited that the avalanche of violence and sexual imagery (both overt and covert) in comic books led to juvenile delinquency. Comic-book fans denounced him as a scaremonger, Congress subpoenaed a bunch of comic creators for hearings, and the next thing you know the Comics Code Authority was established to insure that comics were sanitized and child-friendly. No more beheadings, no scenes of drug or alcohol use, no sexiness and no glorification of criminal behavior were allowed anymore, and all criminals had to be punished by the end of every story. And in January of 2009, issue 53 of Jim Balent's gothic-sex comic *Tarot* was a tale of foxy undead nurses in search of their pilfered body parts, and featured the brain-blasting line of dialogue, "You have to get out of here — your vagina is haunted!" We've come a long way, baby. Wertham may have lost in the long run, but he did influence several generations of comic readers and creators. Artist William Harroff pokes fun at Wertham's theory by appropriating the images the good doctor held up as dangerous and destructive, such as disembodied heads and sexy gams, and manipulating them into gorgeous, decorative patterns. Some of them are so artfully hidden that only close examination reveals the "offending" image. Harroff's kaleidoscopic creations are on display in the show **Who Knows What Evil Lurks in the Hearts of Men (and Women)? I Do! I Do!**, which opens with a free public reception from 7 to 9 p.m. Friday, February 6, at Star Clipper (6392 Delmar Boulevard, University City; 314-725-9110 or [www.starclipper.com](http://www.starclipper.com)). Admission is free, and the show remains up through Friday, March 13.