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Interview: Werner Herzog | Failure and Bravo's "Work of Art" | Elissa Tenny: New SAIC Provost

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the first year experience

With a new title and a more specific focus, the First Year Program becomes its own department

By TOLA BRENNAN

According to Scott Ramon, this isn't the first time the First Year Program (FYP) has changed. "The First Year Program has been in transition ever since I started ten years ago," says SAIC's Director of Undergraduate Admissions. In the last decade, the FYP has gone through some aggressive changes, most of them occurring since 2005. Most recently, the FYP has become the Contemporary Practices Department (CP).

Amy Vogel, Co-chair of the Contemporary Practices Department, explained that when they began reformatting the program, they had to say, "This isn't quite right for 2005," and ask, "How do we adapt to that?" Staying contemporary is an important aspect of the SAIC experience. "What's exciting about SAIC is that it was one of the first [schools] to start changing. Everybody was involved in the curriculum," Vogel adds.

Jim Elniski, former First Year Program co-chair and current faculty member in the new Contemporary Practices Department, wants first-year SAIC students to be able to stretch the limits their creativity. "The whole issue of creativity has really been: What is creativity? It is an ability which has been re-focused as being a human attribute that has more recently been tied to dispositions that we have as individuals and supporting open-ended exploration of ideas and form, and less about methods and materials."

This rethinking of the program resulted in Core Studio, the year-long media-based synthesis

of the old 2D, 3D and 4D classes. "Rather than studying the foundational principles of surface or 2D and then doing the same thing for 3D, you'll study them in relation to each other. It's really coming at art through the making, how you get at ideas through materials," Vogel explains.

This approach is cemented in the alternate terminology of surface, space and time. "I think that this understanding is a necessity for visual scholars, for people who make things. They need to understand that there's a bridge between these qualities. The bridge is their idea," adds Ramon.

The name change was essential to the continuing development of these studies. "Even if we didn't become a department, we were going for the name change. It just happened to coincide nicely," says Vogel. The [First Year] program felt like, "this thing you had to get through. 'First Year' doesn't really say what you're doing in the classes, it's just a mark of time. The name 'Contemporary Practices' felt like a nice move away from the sense that we were just foundations."

Forming the department began "with some research about students and retention and a correlation [with those numbers with] being taught by full-time faculty. I think that's why it came down that we were allowed to become a department," explains Vogel. Being a department enables the hiring of full-time faculty.

However, this came at a price. "All of us had to reapply for our jobs to make room for full-time faculty. We couldn't keep all of the part-time people." The process was handled by an undisclosed committee, and was structured

according to strict school regulations. "I know it was a very, very tough decision. Across the board it was very hard for all of us. Everyone was in the same boat."

In regards to the newly-formed department, Vogel says that "it was really painful, and it's a risk making the name change and everything. But it feels good. There's a sense that it's exciting and we're going to keep discussing stuff. We have faculty lunches and teas where we talk about curriculum and we keep looking at: is what we're doing right?"

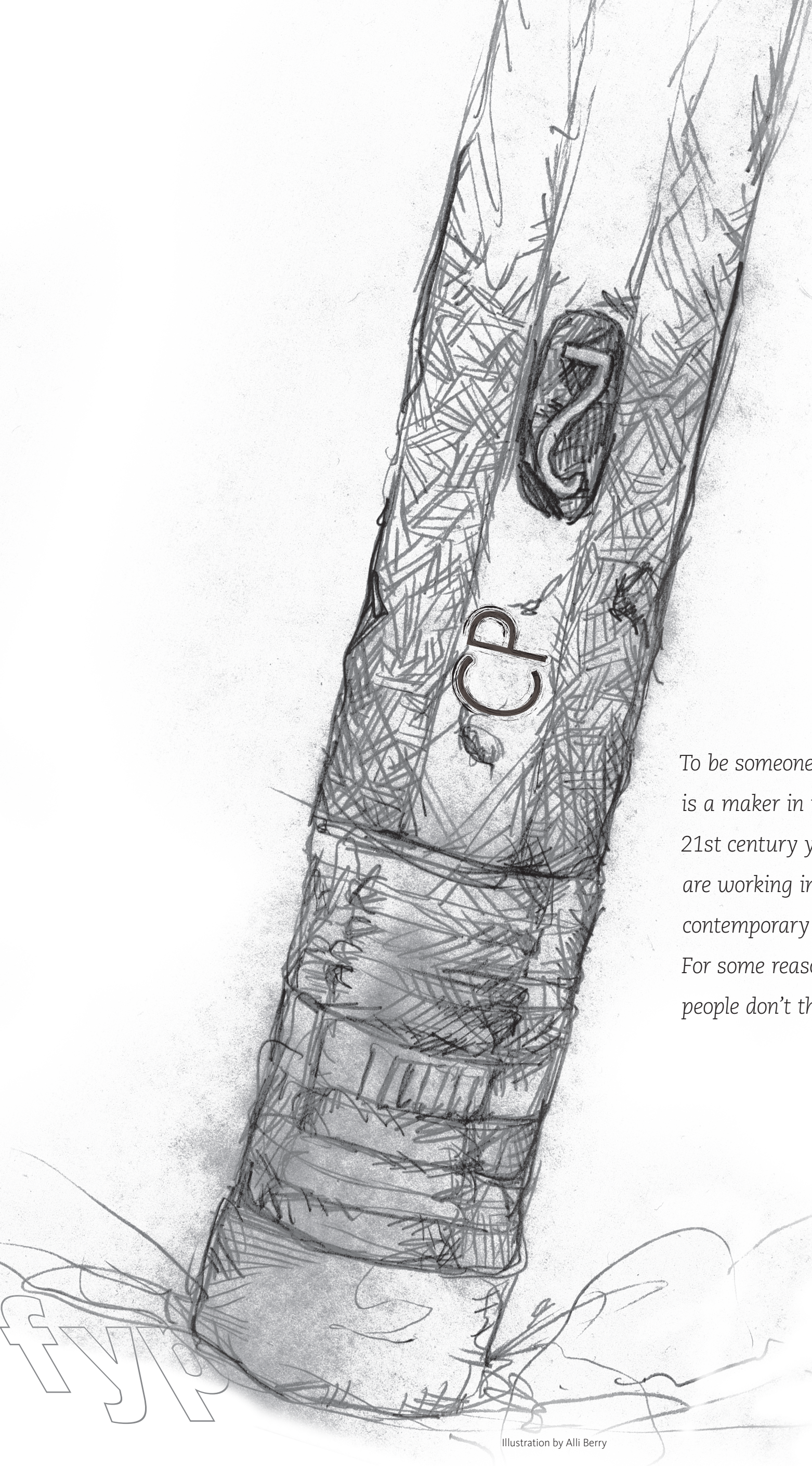
Keeping studies relative to current trends in art is something that they focus on when building the first year curriculum. "We want to keep being able to respond and build on what we already have that's good, [while also] responding to changes. How do you bring in new technology and still really teach drawing and be fair to that?"

Maintaining SAIC's interdisciplinary philosophy was important in the development of the identity of the Contemporary Practices department. "You need to immediately think in an interdisciplinary manner or you're not going to make it," Ramon says. "A lot of people have a very traditional art background. It's very rigorous in the technical exploration of still lifes or classical studies. There's not a lot of talk on theory. There's not a lot of discussion in regard to what's happening now. People ask: 'Who's your favorite artist?' Are you going to say Van Gogh, Gauguin, and anything you can see on a Wheaties box? To be someone who is a maker in the

21st century you are working in a contemporary context. For some reason, people don't think that."

Trial and error is fundamental to the Contemporary Practices department. "A big aspect of CP is this emphasis on learning how to fail and learning how to accept that, and I think most people are not ready to handle it at that age group," says Ramon. "We're looking at media holistically — just because something is surface-based, it might be a drawing, but it might involve time and it might involve other elements. It's more of an open-ended perspective, and it forces you to think about that. It makes sure you're not going to gravitate towards safety or quaintness of how you work in media. It's not the most pleasant place to be but you have to be doing that. If you're not questioning what you do and how you make something, then you're coloring in a coloring book."

The program's name change is more than just a cosmetic enhancement. Rather, it's reflective of the School's commitment to keeping the curriculum relevant — consistent with the program's evolution over the past five years. With a clearer identity, and a new faculty structure, we shall see if the Contemporary Practices Department can deliver where the First Year Program fell short.



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Illustration by Alli Berry

Digital vs Analog



Plush's recording artist, Liam Hayes, on the pros and cons of modern recording technology.

Liam Hayes does things his own way. He's been making and recording music since before many SAIC students were anything more than a twinkle. Performing and recording as Plush, he's in, out, up, and down. He's been in a movie, he's been told he's big in Japan, and recently finished a string of shows at The Hideout here in Chicago. His current album, *Bright Penny*, stands as the third full-length release in his catalog. Hayes' music has been often described as orchestral 60s pop, à la The Bee Gees, The Walker Brothers, or Burt Bacharach.

In the past, Hayes has given his fair share of interviews. Many of them seem to be filled with indie-rag reporters asking vague, trivial questions that are met with proportionately equivocal answers (think mid-sixties Bob Dylan Q & A sessions). Because of this, Liam has often been pegged as enigmatic or idiosyncratic. Regardless, Liam was kind enough to sit down outside with F over coffee to discuss a few topics pertinent to the current state of music and how he makes it.

"I don't drive right now. My car is in that record."

-Liam Hayes



Liam Hayes Photographs by Ben Pegrām.

By BEN C. PEGRAM

BEN PEGRAM: I’m curious what your thoughts are on the topic of digital versus analog. In a broad sense, what are the advantages and disadvantages of both as they pertain to music?

LH: I’ll give you an example: I have some files from a recording date I did seven years ago. I did some demos in a digital format. “Seven years later, I wanted to take those files, right – because they’re not in the dominant file type, I’d have to take them and render them over from a file type that nobody uses now. That ends up taking two hours, to transfer one song that’s four minutes long.

So, I had somebody else who had a session that I needed to transfer, not from digital to digital, but from analog to digital. I had him transfer three songs. I asked him how long it had taken, once he was done, and he said it took nine minutes. Three songs, nine minutes, done. He didn’t even charge me for it. The other thing cost me a hundred bucks. So there’s the ease of dealing with digital, but because it continues to change, you constantly have to dance to whatever the tune happens to be.

BP: Does one sound better than the other?

LH: Is one better sonically than the other? I don’t know. We tend to be sold this idea of, okay, here’s the new solution for all your problems, and it’s always been that way with technology. But I think it’s important to consider where you are along that continuum. Personally, I think digital is in its infancy. You don’t really know five or ten years from now how it’s going to sound. You might retrospectively be able to hear it the way you hear things that were recorded digitally twenty-five years ago – things that have flaws. I don’t know ... it’s whatever you’re comfortable with. You have to be comfortable with managing files that potentially may not be able to

be opened thirty years from now.

BP: Do you like the security of having a physical copy of your music? Do you feel better if it’s on tape, as opposed to being a file on the computer?

LH: There are a lot of things that you have access to when you’re working in the digital realm. The way you can run a session, for example. The way you can save a session, the way you can edit, or juxtapose things very easily and quickly. You can’t do that on tape. So, most people would consider that to be an advantage. It does change the way that people work. You don’t just say, well, we have all this at our disposal, but let’s not use it. People tend to use things that are there for their ease or convenience.

BP: Digitally, there are so many options for manipulating or recording sound. What factor does that play in getting your music recorded? Do you approach it the same way you would if it was tape?

LH: I think that if you could, that would be a good thing. Like I said however, it really never ends up working that way. You never say, “Let me treat this like a tape machine,” and not do any editing. You end up using those solutions.

BP: To your advantage though?

LH: Well, I guess. It’s just there to save you time. It’s there to help facilitate other ways of completing a thought or musical idea. There are people who are making what may as well have been Pro-Tools records in the analog world, due to all of the editing that they did. It just took a lot longer to do that.

What most people who’ve gone into a recording studio had, or the way a recording started was with everyone playing it once. It was initially more performance-based. As things evolved and multi-tracking became widespread, you didn’t have to focus on the performance as much. I don’t think it was really until Pro-Tools

that you could really construct a piece of music so easily, without that being a part of the equation.

BP: So digital recording doesn’t get in the way?

LH: For me, personally, it comes down to what you value. If you want to do a lot of editing, if you want to create a performance, if you want to create a part out of many different pieces of a part. There are just so many different things you can do to create something out of very little with access to that technology. What I’m saying is if what you value is more around performance, it doesn’t necessarily mean that you have to record it live. A lot of performances on records, even classical performances, are fixed.

BP: They’re multi-tracked.

LH: Right. A lot of pop songs before digital technology were made from parts of different takes. Maybe they did the first half with one take, and the second half with another, then editing. Performance is something to value in music. Keeping as much of that as is possible makes it more interesting, to me.

BP: So, for the most part, do you do live takes for your recordings?

LH: Yes, as much as you can, or as much as it makes sense to. If it’s played well, it’ll sound great.

BP: I know that a lot of your recordings have taken lengthy amounts of time to complete. What’s the reason behind that? It doesn’t appear that you’re churning out a record every year.

LH: It just has to do with practical concerns. To make it – I don’t know if I’d even say a bigger record, but to make a “studio recording” the average budget would be so much. To do that you’d have to have the studio, engineers, musicians, arranger, and on. So whatever resources you might have had access to in the past, if you had a record label footing the bill, it

I know somebody that was just working with a group that was in the studio for two months solid. But they had somebody footing the bill to do that...I’ve never been in that kind of a position. It might be two months in the period of two years, just doing it as I can.

would have allowed for all of that to happen in a more compressed time-space. That’s not to say that some of those bigger records didn’t drag on for months or years.

In my case there’s more gathering of resources in order to do it without the support of a label. So it seems as though it takes longer, or is bigger than it actually is just because it’s happening out of context.

I know somebody that was just working with a group that was in the studio for two months solid. But they had somebody footing the bill to do that, and they were writing in the studio too. I’ve never been in that kind of a position. It might be two months in the period of two years, just doing it as I can.

BP: From writing the songs, to getting the album in the can, how long did it take to record your new album, “Bright Penny?”

LH: I don’t usually start a record unless I have the songs. Once I have the songs, then I’ll start getting things together that need to be brought together to record it. From the time we started, to the time we finished was about three and a half years. But we weren’t in the studio every day!

I can’t imagine what kind of record somebody would make if they were actually in any studio for that long on one project. I just can’t imagine. Maybe there are records where people have just done it and redone it, and bashed it to death. That’s really not the case with this one though. Again, it may seem like it took a long time, but if you break it down into what people do when they make a record it’s not. For this project it required some time, though.

BP: How did you finance the record outside of a major label?

LH: You do it by getting help from people that value what you’re doing, and also you just make some personal sacrifices. I don’t drive right now. My car is in that

record. At this point in time making a record is not a good investment. You’re basically making something, and I won’t say that people don’t value music, but I don’t think that it’s something that’s valued in the same way that it had been.

It’s kind of funny – the price tags on anything tend to be indicators of people’s emotions. So when you buy a record, you’re making an emotional investment. If you remove that, you remove that connection that people have to music. It becomes more, without sounding cliché, “disposable.” Were there ways to listen to music for free in the past? Sure. We’re just at an unusual place currently.

BP: Are you optimistic about the future of music, even in its current state of digital proliferation? Do you see people continuing to buy music?

LH: Well, here’s the thing, it’s easy to talk about computers and to demonize technology. I don’t know if you can really separate the economic aspect of it from the technological aspect of it. What’s the difference if you buy a record and put it on a turntable, or you listen to it on your computer or a portable device? There might be issues of fidelity, but what’s the big difference?

The main thing that we’re dealing with right now is beyond any discussions of how it was recorded, or how it sounds. What place does music hold in people’s lives now?

Select songs and downloads of Bright Penny, as well as the rest of Plush’s previous albums are available on Liam’s website:

www.liamhayesandplush.com

Herzog

By BRANDON KOSTERS

After murdering his mother with an antique sword, Brad McCullom (played by actor Michael Shannon) evades the police in his house, claiming that he's holding two hostages. Detective Havenhurst (Willem Dafoe) and Brad's fiancé Ingrid (Chloe Sevigny) meet outside of the house as the situation escalates. "I don't mean to alarm you, Miss Goodmanson, but it's all a little strange," Havenhurst tells Ingrid. "You see, he's claiming his name is Farook. He shouts about God. He tosses oatmeal at us. It's all a little confusing."

Directed by Werner Herzog and produced by David Lynch, "My Son, My Son, What Have Ye Done" is a chilling story about one man's descent into madness. It has played in select cities throughout the world and will be available on DVD this month.

F Newsmagazine sat down with Herzog to discuss the film.

BRANDON KOSTERS: What inspired the story and how did you begin working with David Lynch?

WERNER HERZOG: Well, I didn't start working with David Lynch, but with Herbert Golder, who is the co-writer of the screenplay. He is a great scholar of ancient Greek tragedies who was always fascinated by stagings. He came across a case in San Diego during the staging of the Oresteia where the leading character, who actually has to murder his own mother, became more erratic and strange, and ended up murdering his own mother. It's all based on a real case, and he was put away into a maximum security detention for the criminally insane. There were incredible details about the court procedures and the investigation into the case.

So Herb Golder was my assistant director for many films. He struggled with the screenplay, and since he got nowhere, I said, "Let's do it together. I think I have quick ways to do it." So we wrote the screenplay together and then it fell dormant. We couldn't get the finances for it.

Twelve or so years later, I was with David Lynch. We meet each other sporadically, and really respect each other's work. We sat together and discussed the situation of cinema in general, about exploding budgets and the difficulties of marketing films and all this ... I mentioned we should go back into a position where we have great stories — great, great movie stories, and the best of, best of actors and small budgets. He totally became very enthusiastic and said, "Do you have a project?"

I said, "Yes!" and he said, "When can you start?" I said, "Tomorrow." He pushed the whole thing, and Eric Basset, who is the producer of the film and who had worked with David Lynch for 10 years, felt this very strong impulse, and that's how the film was all of a sudden pushed into existence. But David did not really collaborate in the way I would collaborate, for example, on the screenplay with Herbert Golder. It was more like giving it an enthusiastic push. He only saw the finished film after that.

BK: It seemed to me that there were traces of Lynch's influence in the film.

WH: There is a very clear homage to David Lynch in casting. Grace Zabriskie. She is one of the quintessential "Lynchian" figures. And of course, Grace is absolutely perfect in the role of the mother of the murderer. She's very much a "Lynchian" creature. I wanted to point out that we love each other for casting. For example, he worked with Nicolas Cage and I worked with Nicolas Cage, not because we are looking over each other's shoulder, but because both of us have recognized that Nicolas Cage is such a phenomenal talent.

BK: The actual event took place in San Diego ...

WH: Yes.

BK: And that's why you chose to shoot there?

WH: Yes, but I would say whether it's San Diego or Boise, Idaho ... doesn't make that much difference. It was a place where things

F sits down with the legendary director to discuss "My Son, My Son, What Have Ye Done"



seemed to be serene, where there's the ocean and surface and palm trees, and clean beaches, and some sort of a horror slowly creeps up with you in this kind of environment. That's what I found fascinating ... as if this case had naturally belonged to San Diego.

BK: I'm curious about the directing style. It seemed like multiple genres are both referenced subverted. There are elements of neo-noir and horror ... I'm wondering what informed the directing style for this film?

WH: I think that there's more narrative precision in it than in any of my other films. For example, the way one dialogue blends into the next half-sentence of dialogue, and this next half-sentence, and an unfinished sentence is completed in a flashback. This needs a very high precision of directing ... so you don't even notice that this is a flashback.

BK: What does it mean to you to shoot digitally? What are the advantages? The limitations?

WH: Shooting digitally has only one advantage: it costs less. I'm still a fan of celluloid, and I think celluloid has more depth and higher quality still than digital filming. I'm not nostalgic about celluloid, but I see that it has great advantages.

BK: When is the film going to be released in the states?

WH: It has been shown. If you're calling from Chicago, I think it was shown in Chicago in theaters. It was shown in a couple of cities around the country, and it will be released on DVD on September 14th.

BK: I'm curious about your cave painting film project...

WH: It's almost complete. It will be shown in Toronto at the festival. Hopefully (laughs). What can I say? I've always had a strong affinity to cave paintings. It was actually my very first intellectual fascination independent of my family or independent of school. A fascination that I developed myself

when I was 12 or 13 years, and it has never left me completely.

I was very glad that I was allowed to shoot in this cave which is sealed off categorically. I shot it in 3-D which was a very wise decision. It was really wonderful to see it in 3-D, although I have been a skeptic of 3-D and I'm still a skeptic of 3-D. In very special cases, like in this case, I think it's the best of all decisions. And you have to see it when it's finished.

Listen to audio from this interview with Werner Herzog at Fnewsmagazine.com



[San Diego] was a place where things seemed to be serene, where there's the ocean and surface and palm trees, and clean beaches, and some sort of a horror slowly creeps up with you in this kind of environment. That's what I found fascinating.

PROFILE: Elissa Tenny

New Provost wants to boost awareness of SAIC within Chicago.



Photograph by Sue Huggins

By JENNIFER SWANN

Though Elissa Tenny has been known on college campuses like the New School, Bennington, and now SAIC, as an administrator, an educator, and a critical thinker, she simply refers to herself as the person who knits things together. As SAIC’s incoming provost, Tenny says she is “the keeper of the academic vision,” a vision that has been challenged over the last few years of administration changes. Tenny said new President Walter Massey’s role is making connections within Chicago and fundraising for the school, whereas she describes her own position as having a more internal focus.

“It’s important for the person in this position to have lots of hands in lots of things — not meddling hands, but as a way to keep information flow going and to understand what issues are around the college,” Tenny said. Tenny intends to observe the school and listen to what the students, staff, and faculty are saying about everything from curriculum and student life to enrollment and retention rates.

“How does enrollment connect to student affairs connect to academic issues connect to facilities connect to resource issues?” asks Tenny. “How are we connected, how are we seeing the interrelationships? How are we thinking about our forward momentum so that we’re all kind of pulling in the same direction?”

I met with Tenny during her second official day on the job, and already she had spoken with resident advisors about their upcoming fall schedules, greeted graduate students and faculty about their current exhibitions, and conversed with administrators about ways to reach out to the Chicago community at large.

Having just recently left the

middle of southwest Vermont for urban Chicago, Tenny says she discovered that she loves rural living and she loves city life, but isn’t crazy about what’s in between the two. And though she’s new to Chicago’s downtown area, she’s already thinking about the roles and responsibilities of the institution in the community.

“A couple of things that I’ve heard from a few people is that there are a number of people in Chicago who don’t really even know about the school — there are a number of people in Chicago who don’t know about the Art Institute — which is really kind of amazing. And so, what is the school’s responsibility to connect with the community in different ways? Whether that’s working in the schools or working with community organizations, with all the creative energies and talent in the institution, [...] how do we identify faculty and students who are interested in this and then support them?”

Tenny ponders the commitments of the artist and the art school to local, national, and global issues. “I think that we are in a period as a country in which we can’t be isolated in what we do as professionals,” she said.

Another one of Tenny’s favorite analogies in regards to college curriculum is that of the intellectual meal rather than the intellectual diet. Though she doesn’t remember whether it was she or Carol Geary Schneider, the President of the Association of American Colleges and Universities, who coined the expression, it’s one that she likes to use to emphasize the potential richness and diversity of a college education.

“I think of the word diet as being all about restriction and narrowness and also I think

in higher education, what’s happened at a lot of schools with the curriculum, it’s all about pick from column A and column B and column C and column D, and you have to pick from those, you don’t get to not take those classes.” Tenny encourages students to indulge in the many different courses that make up what she calls a curricular meal, something she feels that students should be passionate and excited by.

Tenny said she is excited about enriching curriculum and making connections on campus. Likely, she will draw from her previous experiences as dean of the New School and provost at Bennington, schools that cemented her belief that curriculum is not a top-down or templated structure but one that manifests itself through collaborations and explorations in an interdisciplinary focus.

Tenny said SAIC is “a gem, and it’s a resource and it’s a very important and distinguished institution in this city.” She says that both she and Walter Massey will make it a priority to get more Chicagoans to know about the school.

“Some people might say, well, if you have an international reputation, then what does it matter? How do you decide whether in fact that is an important priority? I think it should be, but the community has to think it should be.”

As the knitter of the school’s fabric, Tenny has many issues to resolve and numerous answers to provide, but what’s even more significant is that she’s constantly raising questions that challenge herself and her community. She’s eager to connect the threads within our small, private arts school, but she’s always considering the larger material of the global fabric.

“I think that we are in a period as a country in which we can’t be isolated in what we do as professionals.”

Who is Walter Massey?



Photograph by Sue Huggins

By BRANDON KOSTERS

SAIC’s new president Walter Massey takes office this month. He has served as president of Morehouse College, professor and dean at Brown University, provost at the University of California. He has sat on boards for many corporations, including McDonalds, BP, and Bank of America. His credentials are intimidating ... but what is he doing at an art school? What does he want to see changed? Which programs and initiatives of former President Wellington “Duke” Reiter will he abandon, and which will he pursue further? What does his presidency mean for SAIC?

F Newsmagazine will conduct an exclusive interview with Walter Massey, printed in our October issue, with video on the web.



THE RYMER GALLERY IS MOVING?

The saga continues with the struggle for gallery space at SAIC

By JUSTUS HARRIS

*Administrators admitted
that the rejection of the
donor family's wishes
was a "sticky situation,"
but that it did not stop
plans to go ahead with
the move.*

What many SAIC students don't know is that the Betty Rymer Gallery was previously scheduled for relocation by the first day of this semester, before you, the students, even read this article, and without your input. Fortunately, delays have scheduled this move to be made a year from now. Paul Coffey, the Dean of Students, introduced this plan two weeks before, summer break to the Exhibitions and Exhibitions Studies (EE/ES) Committee, which controls programming for the Sullivan and Rymer Galleries. A layout was included for where the Rymer Gallery would exist within the walls of the much larger Sullivan Galleries, but it was made clear that this would not add space to the Sullivan Gallery. Rather, it would sanction off an area equivalent to the current Betty Rymer Gallery in the existing Sullivan space—a move which will deplete student studio space significantly, with a net loss of 2,700 sq feet of total exhibition space at SAIC.

Three weeks prior to the meeting, the EE/ES committee found out that this plan had been proposed after a donor committed to giving a contribution to the school in order to build new "high-end" facilities. The faculty members present at the meeting who taught in the Columbus building were not informed that these plans would be taking effect as quickly as August. Only a handful of administrators, and the department heads in the Columbus Building, knew about the plan. They were not instructed to relay the message to their departmental faculty, let alone students.

After classes ended, an additional meeting was scheduled to discuss the Rymer move and a general concern over the lack of student and faculty input. In attendance were: Lisa Wainwright, Dean of Faculty; Felice Dublon, VP/Dean of Student Affairs; Barbara Degenevieve, and Michael Ryan, SUGS; in addition to several students who were in town and available over the summer. It became clear that there

were conflicting philosophical views between students and some of the administrators. Lisa Wainwright remarked that she felt "the school will really be slipping behind if we do not secure these facilities." There was also the issue of spending money that was still available before the end of SAIC's fiscal spending year.

No one denied the importance of such facilities, but many took issue with the loss of exhibition space in the largest studio building at SAIC. What would be done with the Rymer Gallery's original space remained and still remains unanswered, with no layout of the new space or mention of how it will affect the Columbus Building as a whole. At the meeting, SAIC undergraduate Meg Dancey stressed that when she was looking for schools, the ability to see student work in the Columbus building made a huge impact on her, because she saw an opportunity to exhibit and experiment in addition to having other students see her work. Brook Sinkinson Withrow echoed this sentiment, saying that prospective students responded greatly to the space and hearing that the First Year Program's (FYP) ArtBash took up the entire gallery once a year. In response, Sculpture Professor Mary Jane Jacobs said that it would not be possible to accommodate ArtBash in the Sullivan building because of conflicts with the MFA show and other programming, therefore leaving the FYP show without a home.

Regarding this problem, many administrators at the meeting turned to the Student Union Galleries (SUGS) as a means of providing exhibition space for students and creatively accommodating ArtBash without the Rymer. It is important to remember that SUGS began in 1994 because students were frustrated over not having opportunities to show in the Rymer Gallery, and in particular as a reaction to that year's absence of a gallery for the FYP show. Many students threatened to leave the school and claimed that the school was guilty of false advertising. Regarding this, Barry Rymer, the late Betty

Rymer's husband, argued, "I think student work should be shown where it can best be seen. That was originally the intent of the Betty Rymer Gallery. That was what the donation was made for. I think that if students want their art there, that's where it should be. The Board of Trustees and the Governors know my position on this, I believe. If not, they haven't been listening to me."

Barry Rymer's words may have been heard, but as the meeting continued it became apparent that his son's might not have been. Barry Rymer's son, the current heir to the estate, has not consented to moving the Rymer Gallery to the Sullivan Building. Administrators admitted that this was a "sticky situation," but that it did not stop plans to go ahead with the move.

This rejection of the donor family's wishes highlights the strong philosophical differences that exist at SAIC regarding what do with the too few feet of valuable Loop space the school possesses. What are we providing to current students? Do we create more exhibition space, high-end sculpture facilities, graduate studios, or perhaps even eating areas? What are we dazzling prospective students with?

The demands and decisions that occur in any academic institution are great, and those dealing with utilization of space are often some of the most challenging. So what does \$33,000 a year in tuition a year provide an SAIC student? Equipment, Prestige, Location? What to do with the little space available and how to appease all those who want a piece of the pie is a difficult question. The answer to this may lie in having well established core philosophies that come from students and faculty alike in a way that is quantifiable.

As we begin a new school year, and welcome a new president, Walter Massey, and new Provost, Elissa Tenny, there's no telling the changes that will be made at SAIC. In which direction will they take us? Do we have a philosophy that drives our school or are we a well-established art school wandering without a direction?

Failure and Bravo's Work of Art The Next Great Amateur

By BETH CAPPER

"Eddie's composition has simplicity, but did he run out of time on the details? Barbara's sunny painting has a warm atmosphere, but did courage fail her on the buildings? And Michael has observed the scene well, but has he overemphasized the verticals?" Such questions summarize three watercolors painted by contestants on the U.K. television show "Watercolor Challenge." The show, which aired between 1998-2001, pitted watercolor hobbyists against one another to depict a tranquil scene each episode — their efforts judged by a group of professional painters.

Competitions of this kind have existed for decades, on and off television, but the U.S. television station Bravo is the first to apply the amateur competition formula to contemporary art, with its reality show "Work of Art: The Next Great Artist" (which aired between June-August 2010). Co-hosted by art collector China Chow and cartoonish French art dealer Simon de Pury, *Work of Art* brought together fourteen would-be artists vying for a solo show at "the world famous Brooklyn Museum" and ten thousand dollars in cash. The challenge: Make a piece of art every week, related to a loose prompt, some of which — like "make a work of art based on hanging out in an Audi showroom"—were very loose. Contestants were eliminated each episode by a panel of three arts administrators and Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist and SAIC professor, Jerry Saltz.

While the show has similarities to programs like "Watercolor Challenge," "Work of Art" is more of a reality show than a competition show; the difference is that one focuses squarely on the competition at hand, while the other is more concerned with the interpersonal dynamics of the participants. As reality television goes, it's routine fare, not entirely different from "American Idol" or "Project Runway." Unlike these shows, though, the subject matter of "Work of Art" sits a little less comfortably within reality television's formula. Perhaps because while fashion

and pop music are unabashedly market-oriented, art and artists aren't really meant to be. Indeed, market-oriented art is often thought of as akin to selling out.

"Work of Art" is also different in two other fundamental ways. First, there is little-to-no emphasis on technical skill. Technique is valued by the show's judges, but only when it enables the transcendent experience to which only art supposedly has unique access. Secondly, and most centrally, "Work of Art" is about sorting amateurs from professionals, as opposed to being a competition between self-proclaimed amateurs. Indeed, any mention of the term "amateur" is only intended as a put-down; bad work is "amateurish," and to be deemed an amateur is to have failed.

One could say that the appeal of reality television is the catharsis derived from watching others fail. However, "Work of Art" is more interesting than simply watching a slowly unfolding car crash. Part of the fun of watching the show comes from never knowing what the artists will do next, and the most enjoyable contestants to watch are those with less knowledge of what the art world expects from them. Their failure is intrinsic to our enjoyment, just as failure is in many ways intrinsic to the figure of the amateur. Ralph Rogoff describes this in his essay "Other Experts," arguing that the ways in which amateurs fail to perfectly conform to the artistic conventions we hold as natural draws "attention to the arbitrary and artificial character of cultural codes that structure the production, and reception, of aesthetic products." Perhaps the most successful thing the contestants on "Work of Art" could have done would have been to fail, and through their failure expose the mendacity of the art world.

What is most depressing about "Work of Art" is that the contestants were unable to carve out their own parameters for success. Indeed the show demonstrates that for many people, the mainstream art world still exerts a strong gravitational pull. Someone should have told these contestants that there is no "get rich quick" scheme for being an artist, and there is more to the life of an artist than blockbuster



Perhaps the most successful thing the contestants on "Work of Art" could have done would have been to fail, and through their failure expose the mendacity of the art world.

shows and a review in the New York Times. As artist and critic Mira Schor writes in her essay "On Failure and Anonymity," "Follow fashion and be fifteen minutes late. Trends are fleeting. A lifetime of art cannot be built on a weather vane."

Moreover, "Work of Art's" contestants are the tip of the iceberg. They're a microcosm for the desires of art students everywhere. Market success and a big gallery show, or the equivalent for moving-image makers, is seemingly what drives a majority of MFA and BFA graduates, whether they admit it or not. The notion of the professional artist has shifted over the last sixty years or so. Time was such that institutions such as SAIC were places where artists learned technique in much the same way as a blacksmith or woodworker learns a trade. Today, technique has been sidelined for concept, and what makes an artist professional has more to do with being recognized as such by the contemporary art world, and, yes, the market. In both cases, the emphasis on professionalism as the degree zero for an artist's aspirations promoted work conceived within limited parameters.

Schor offers a familiar complaint: "A CalArts graduate presented a paper at a College Arts Association conference some years ago in which she blamed the school for not having prepared her for the realities of the art market ... But the logical outcome of this emphasis on networking

and salesmanship is hucksterism, self-commodification, packaging at the expense of content. The art precipitated by this imperative to "make it" tends to be fast work that can be sold easily and quickly. Even 'angst' must be 'lite.'"

Just like the job prospects this CalArts graduate had expected her overpriced degree would yield, "Work of Art" can never deliver what it promises. The show's winner, Abdi, will become famous, but he'll be famous as a reality TV star, not as an artist. Will money and a show at the much-maligned Brooklyn Museum of Art yield the respect of the art world? Unlikely. Its pathos lies in the fact that its contestants are a hyperbolic version of everyone else who "wants in" to the art world.

What should be taken away from the show is the limited taxonomy of art and artists that it propagates. And only if we stop bolstering the decree of institutions whose aesthetic judgments are at best random, and at worst, completely arbitrary, can we level the playing field.

There's evidence all around us that amateurism is gaining traction, most notably in experimental film circles. Since film has always been shunned by the art world, it seems filmmakers and historians have less to lose from rethinking whose expressions of creativity are valuable. Individuals and institutions like Skip Elsheimer (A.V. Geeks) and Orphan films have demonstrated that there's beauty in work

left to the trash. Writers like Rogoff and Patricia Zimmerman have written eloquently on the aesthetic importance of amateur art and artists.

There is more to amateurism than the Sunday painter or hobbyist. As Rogoff points out, amateurism has been integral to art movements throughout the 19th and 20th century, where "an ethos of amateur production was embraced as both a democratic signifier and an alternative to the increasing professionalization of creativity in a market-driven culture." Throughout history, artists have created, distributed and exhibited the art and art criticism they want to see, when they want to see it. And what's more, they've been content with amateurism, even embraced it.

To reach a true valuation of the work of amateurs, it's important to do everything to resist the professionalization of their work. The only way to create a new taxonomy of art and artists is to push for a horizontal economy, rather than a vertical one, an economy in which everything is valued according to infinitely relative parameters of success and failure.

Amateurism keeps art and culture moving, or as Andy Warhol, who loved amateurs, said, "Every professional performer always does exactly the same thing at exactly the same moment in every show they do. That's why I like amateurs. You can never tell what they'll do next."





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Afghan Women

and that Time magazine cover

By BETH CAPPER

“What Happens if We Leave Afghanistan?” asked the cover of the August 9 issue of Time Magazine. Time answered its own question on the very same page: for next to this query was a disturbing photograph of an 18-year old Afghan woman named Bibi Aisha, whose nose and ears were cut off on the Taliban’s orders for attempting to escape her abusive household.

Time Magazine is not the first to use women’s rights as a bargaining chip in wars waged on behalf of the U.S. in the Middle East. In 2004, George Bush proclaimed the success of the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan for women, stating, “Three years ago, women were viciously oppressed and forbidden to work outside the home, and even denied what little medical treatment was available. Today, women are going to school, and their rights are protected in Afghanistan’s constitution.” Similar arguments have been made on behalf of the women of Iraq, and as a condemnation of Ayatollah Khomeini’s Islamic dictatorship in Iran, perhaps to prepare the public for another war waged “on behalf of women’s rights.”

Such claims by the U.S. government, however, amount to little more than grandstanding. If women’s rights really are an issue, the U.S. might begin by discontinuing its generous support of Saudi Arabia, a country with a deplorable record of human rights abuse against women and where the female population is still unable to vote. Indeed, as noted by Huda Juwad, writing for Dissident Voice, “The United States has no qualms about supporting Saudi Arabia with billions of dollars in military sales and various ‘aid’ packages each year — in addition to whiskey and other unmentionables — in order to maintain the status quo that currently operates [in] the Middle East for American interests.”

In fact, contrary to George W.’s claims, many commentators suggest that the U.S. presence in Afghanistan has worsened the lives of Afghan women. The Revolutionary Association of the Women of Afghanistan (R.A.W.A.) has reported that, in many regions, violence against women has increased.

Kavita N. Ramdas, president and C.E.O of the Global Fund

for Women, discussed war and women’s abuses in the Huffington Post, describing an initiative supported by the U.S government in the Democratic Republic of Congo that tripled the number of soldiers in the army to 60,000. “Rapes of women tripled in the areas the soldiers were deployed. There is an obvious connection between violence against women and militarization,” she argued. The consensus among many advocates for women working in Afghanistan is that women’s rights are as minimal now as they were prior to the occupation, and additionally women now have to contend with living in a war zone, as well as the threat of sexual and physical abuse from foreign soldiers.

Moreover, supporting the Karzai government in Afghanistan is seen as tantamount to supporting the continued oppression of women. Juwad argues that in addition to open negotiations and concessions with the Taliban, Karzai is also gaining concessions from Hezb-i-Islami (Islamic Party) led by Gulbuddin Hekmatya [sic] – a faction whose attitude towards women rivals that of the Taliban in cruelty and oppression. There is another myth being promoted by the Afghan and US policy makers that some form of moderate Taliban exists; in reality, it is the same group of terrorists responsible for making life an utter hell for millions of Afghan women, but with more power and money.

Just like feminist activists in the U.S., Afghan women’s groups, and their U.S. feminist supporters, seem divided about U.S. military occupation, although without talking to Afghan feminist groups working on the ground, it’s impossible to know. In the media, arguments for and against continued occupation are being made most visibly between the Feminist Majority and Women For Afghan Women on one side, and the R.A.W.A. on the other. In an article for the Huffington Post from 2009, Eleanor Smeal, spokeswoman for the Feminist Majority, laid out the group’s argument for the continued occupation of Afghanistan. She cited fears that the country would fall under Taliban control, as well as concerns that 40 percent of the country is still inaccessible to humanitarian aid workers. Without the presence of troops in addition to humanitarian aid, the group believes that many women will



suffer dire consequences.

On the other side, R.A.W.A.’s stance is clear: they oppose the continued occupation of Afghanistan, U.S. involvement in forming a new government, and especially U.S. support of the new Karzai regime. In addition, they oppose any negotiation with fundamentalists and feel that the fight for women’s rights in Afghanistan must be fought by Afghan radicals and progressives — a position similarly expressed by Iranian women activists. While being outspoken about the abuses against women perpetrated by Ahmadinejad and supporters of the Islamic Revolution, most Iranian women activists also oppose any U.S. involvement in women’s liberation initiatives.

R.A.W.A. has received widespread support from the U.S anti-war movement and radical feminist movements. However, in an article from 2003 for the American Prospect, writer Noy Thrupkaew argued that R.A.W.A. has also been criticized by some Afghan and Afghan-American women activists for ostracizing Afghan women’s NGOs and encouraging fighting instead of coalition-building. R.A.W.A. responded to Thrupkaew’s

claims, stating that the NGOs in question were themselves aligned with or not critical enough of fundamentalism. Part of this response, published on equityfeminism.com stated: “Certainly, we have great respect towards those NGOs which are working for all people and not for any particular ethnic group, honestly, without any bias or tie with the fundamentalists and away from the widespread corruption, which unfortunately has be-fell many Afghan NGOs [sic].” Such issues are important to pay attention to as a means of understanding the nuances of Afghan feminist positions. However, it is important to take a non-judgmental stance. Women fighting in Afghanistan for their rights have to contend with struggles we can’t even imagine. Understand the intricacies but remain supportive of multifarious positions.

Ultimately, how the U.S. leaves Afghanistan is a complex issue. In moving beyond the reasons for beginning this war to the most appropriate way of ending it, we must remain critical, and keep our eyes and ears open to the demands, positions and differing opinions of Afghan feminist activists.

Just like feminist activists in the U.S. Afghan women’s groups, and their U.S. feminist supporters, seem divided about U.S. military occupation

WHAT THE IRFM?!

They find your keys at the bottom of the elevator shaft. They pump the rice out of your clogged toilet (why on Earth would you empty your rice cooker in there?!). They pull the staples out of bulletin boards. All while they help you learn, study, build, mold, shoot, record, display ... Oh, and they hire naked people.

In a school built for a bunch of kids who are partial to off-the-wall ideas and wacky behavior, one can imagine that the people in charge of keeping things running smoothly are perpetually on their toes. So it goes in the classrooms, shops, offices, bedrooms, and every other corner of SAIC that Instructional Resources and Facilities Management (IRFM) is responsible for.

From the Media Centers to the wood shops to the smart classrooms to the dorm rooms to the offices of this humble newsmagazine, IRFM is probably much more involved in your life than you even know. That's not much of a problem to them, however, as they're less interested in praise and recognition than they are in helping you get the most out of your time here. Says head honcho Thomas Buechele, "We're trying to facilitate the artist in the best way possible." This credo has informed IRFM from the early days, when that nutty acronym didn't even exist — the department's massive reach has grown exponentially since they were serving students simply as the Media Center.

You can learn all about the different things IRFM does around the School on the SAIC Portal, so we've decided to spice things up a bit. We dug deep with the directors of the vastly diverse department and asked for some of their most fun and interesting tales.

Text and illustration by ERIC BASKAUSKAS



Tom Buechele, Associate VP for Facilities, Operations & Planning, enjoys trips to Facilities Management trade shows, where he gets to talk with representatives of other colleges across the country. Most of the time, there are numerous commonalities — electrical issues, housekeeping, construction projects — but the department at SAIC holds one card to trump them all: they hire all the nude models for life drawing and sculpting classes. Buechele's used to the double-takes by now.

Since IRFM is so pervasive, it makes sense that they employ the most students on campus. Chances are you or someone you know has served, is serving, or will serve time in a workplace related to IRFM before you're out of here. Craig Downs, Director of Media Services, says, "We've sent scores of people out into the world more prepared for their professional lives. Including many people who have power and authority at this school." As a matter of fact, five of the seven IRFM directors we met with had worked for IRFM as students at SAIC!

You might not even need to leave the building to buy your next batch of supplies — SAIC Resale sells tons of stuff.
— This fall's sheet goods order (plywood, masonite, acrylics, hardwoods, etc.) weighed 23,000 pounds.
— 397 2x4s sold in Sharp and Sullivan Resale this past fiscal year (July 2009 though June 2010).
— 2.6 miles of muslin sold in that same fiscal year.
— About 500 miniDV tapes are sold each semester via the Resale vending machines.

IRFM

Like many aspects of IRFM, the WebCheckout feature of the shops and Media Centers is easy to take for granted. In this day and age, we're all used to going online to take care of business. But what you should note is that this particular system was devised here at SAIC and is now in use at hundreds of colleges worldwide, including our bitter rival Columbia College of Chicago. (Our football teams have hated each other since the dawn of time! Wait... never mind, we like them.)

Basements and storage go together like Midwest winters and leaky basements. Naturally, nobody was too shocked one year when the basement of the Sharp Building succumbed to a bit of water damage. The exciting part? The Sharp basement was being used as the storage facility for all housekeeping materials, not the least of which were the... ahem ... "feminine hygiene products." Let's just say they did their job, and IRFM cleanup crews were treated to a lighter workload than they expected. Ladies, if we can find the brand of product in question, we'll be sure to pass it on.

If time heals all wounds, it also makes weird stuff funny. The weirdest thing ever found during locker cleanout? A complete skeleton of a dog. Don't get any ideas.

Contrary to popular belief, SAIC does have athletic facilities. There's a swimming pool in the basement of the MacLean Center, which was once used by Olympic swimmer and original "Tarzan" actor Johnny Weissmuller. It should be mentioned, however, that it's now full of a surplus of office furniture and other equipment ... the School is always looking for creative storage solutions; this might be the most storied of all.

Alex McHenry is the Director of Resource Technologies & Training, where students go for equipment workshops and authorization training with IRFM's various rentable goods. One employee, Olga Arango, started producing tutorial videos for the most popular items. McHenry was so impressed with Olga's work that she submitted her 2009 video, Means to a Lens: An Intro Guide to Video Cameras, to the Telly Awards, where it won first place in its class. In 2010, Olga's Framing Bytes: A Guide to Digital Still Cameras won second prize. We wish Olga more success this year with her upcoming production!

Special thanks to the IRFM folks for meeting with us!
Tom Buechele, Associate Vice President for Facilities, Operations & Planning
Alex McHenry, Director of Resource Technologies & Training
Craig Downs, Director of Media Services
Rosalynn Gingerich, Director of Instructional Fabrication & Safety Program Administration
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Prague Studio Residency Photo: Caroline West

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Hillary Swank in "Million Dollar Baby"

Aggression is part of everybody's life and you need it to hold boundaries, to make changes, to be proactive. It's more than just being assertive — let's call a spade a spade. It's aggression.

It might get physical

Maud Lavin says,
Assertion is too weak a word:
Women need to be aggressive

By EMMA JAMES

What comes to mind when confronted with the idea of female aggression? I asked this question to Dr. Maud Lavin in sitting down to discuss her new book "When Push Comes to Shove: New Images of Aggressive Women." Due out in September with MIT Press, Lavin's book interprets depictions of aggressive women in media ranging from sports films to gallery installations to YouTube videos of amateur Chicago women's boxing.

In "Push," Lavin defines aggression as a force that is required for any exertion, not just to harm another person. "That can be a little slice of it. [The idea is more that] aggression is part of everybody's life and you need it to hold boundaries, to make changes, to be proactive. It's more than just being assertive — let's call a spade a spade. It's aggression." The problem, Lavin argues, arises in a society where some people are not allowed to appear aggressive due to conflicting expectations. When aggression is not used, masked, or curbed, it can turn inward and against oneself. But Lavin explains that the "lighter side" of the issue is what drew her in.

Positive images of women in sports have been appearing regularly in popular culture since the 1990s. Dr. Lavin pointed out that this genre strives to create a visceral response in the viewer, who identifies through their own experiences training and interacting with teammates. "You [the viewer] think about the different ways that women can hold their bodies or take up space." And

interact. "Push" draws from psychoanalytical theories of sibling play and peer-to-peer relationships, which take the foreground over hierarchical ones in Dr. Lavin's exploration. Her book emphasizes the meeting place of physical and emotional negotiations about identity.

Not one to undervalue the importance of images from popular media, Lavin seems to regard girl-in-sports films within the hopeful scope of progress. Writing in a style between academia and journalism, she questions, "Why now? What does this have to do with real life, and why is it so pervasive?"

Lavin acknowledges that a number of sociological factors come into play, such as a growing number of women in the workplace — especially during a recession.

"Of course, I didn't plan for this book to come out [during a recession]," she said. "But I am glad that it is. For a lot of different kinds of people, recession is very scary. You think to yourself, 'I don't want to lose my job, so I had better be X, Y, and Z' ... It is a very good time to think about aggression, standing up for oneself, and setting boundaries."

In highlighting a force that contributes to how individuals negotiate their identities in shared spaces such as work and school, "Push Comes to Shove" attempts to raise the reader's awareness about self-conduct. "Aggression," Dr. Lavin reminds us "is part of survival."

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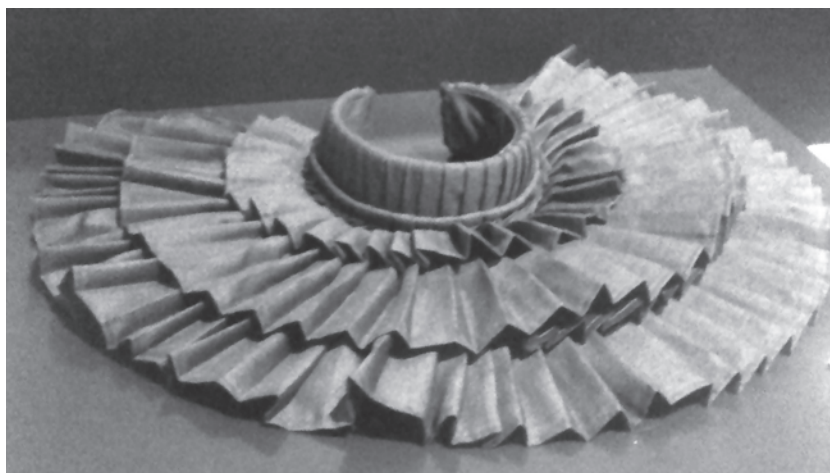
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AIADO & Fashion Graduate Thesis Exhibition

GRAVITY



Photographs by Hiba Ali

As an exhibition, the themes of “Gravity” layer fundamental realities of the universe with the tenuous relationships between individuals and the world contained inside.

Giving form to an invisible force

By HIBA ALI

Coming together for their final graduate thesis, the Architecture, Interior Architecture and Designed Objects Department (AIADO) united with the Fashion department to produce “Gravity,” an exhibition of responses to the earthly force, “exemplifying fiction and advocacy through innovation and design.” The alliance of the two departments stood out as a unique element of this powerful exhibition, shown in the Sullivan Galleries, which challenged students to focus on the idea of gravity and its function as a hegemonic spatial force integral to both industries.

Both the Fashion and AIADO departments are naturally influenced by global aesthetics. As a result, concerns regarding the relationship between the public and consumption, as well as an emphasis on the optimal utilization of worldly resources, were predominant aspects of the exhibition. This phenomenon was particularly present in Gabriela Muracchioli’s Activating Infrastructure/ Gary Union HSR Depot — a wooden model which presented an architectural proposal for the redistribution of transportation traffic in Gary, Indiana, indicating a means of reducing congestion by directing traffic away from the Gary airport. Illustrating a high-speed rail connection between Chicago and Indiana, Muracchioli’s work proposes an installation point outside of the Gary airport, thereby invigorating and reactivating the surrounding communities and businesses of Gary.

More local relevancy was found in David Krell’s project, “Hidden in Plain Sight: This is Chicago Design.” Reassessing the design of the northern lake front area, Krell’s work depicts the aggregation of local culture into vital public areas in Chicago. Differentiated by three separate planning categories — temporary, short term and long term — Krell’s malleable design accommodates the myriad spatial demands of Chicago’s public areas by transforming present public infrastructure into various entities, such as theatrical stages, stalls, sitting areas and vendor booths.

Another impressive gravitational theme was showcased in Kennetha Woods’ “Untitled,” built from pieces of fabric and meant to demonstrate the demands of the human condition — specifically through the dichotomous relationship between fashion and the clothing restraints of an Alzheimer’s patient. Due to decreased mobility, many Alzheimer’s patients are forced to buy clothing in

exaggerated, unflattering sizes. As a response, Woods’ striking riveted neck wraps and hand warmers provide aesthetic appeal, while functionally contributing to the patient’s mental tranquility. Intricately folded and thoughtfully devised, Woods’ garments engage the concept of gravity in a well crafted, humanistic display of fashion design.

An important issue in social policy was addressed in Qingchang Wang’s “(Ju: Get Together) (Xiang: Share),” which featured six impressive hexagonal wooden dinner plates overlaid with a Chinese dragon acrylic imprint — a comment on the “One Child Policy” in China, a government sanction which officially restricts the number of children each married couple can have to one (with some exceptions). Wang’s domestically-driven piece highlights the importance of a close-knit familial relationship through its poignant connection to the preparation of a family meal.

Exploring the gravitational force of school children and their relationship to their environment was the focus of Emily Powell’s “Wigglerug.” Her set of foam structures, shaped like a snake and colored in bright blue and green hues, evoked the youthfulness of a kindergartner, mimicking its symbiotic, wide-eyed relationship to its environment. On a similarly playful, albeit, thematically different note, Lynn Lim’s bathroom pieces engaged “gross” public images. Specifically with the construction of her bathroom mat, “Tripe,” made of silicone loveseats — two toilets attached by a conjoined lid. Humorously ethereal, Lim’s piece juxtaposed the private space of a bathroom with the communal situation that is an art exhibition, forcing viewers to share it with one another. Unable to thwart the space, the viewer is ultimately forced into hesitant enjoyment, eventually succumbing to it.

As an exhibition, the themes of “Gravity” layer fundamental realities of the universe with the tenuous relationships between individuals and the world contained inside. “Gravity” is powerful in its exploration of the agents that establish the use of these projects. The edifices supported and displayed by the works of the AIADO and Fashion graduate students are enriched approaches to art, and present apt commentary which resonate strongly of community development. Like gravity’s force supports human life, so does the artwork of “Gravity” support the vivacity of life.

Audiophiles

By **BRANDON KOSTERS**

Honoring the brave men and women of SAIC who work in both sonic and visual art. This month, we look at **BECKY GRAJEDA**, a second year grad student in SAIC's Sound Department.



Illustration by Brandon Kusters

BRANDON KOSTERS: What propelled you towards making sound art?

BECKY GRAJEDA: I used to carry around a tape recorder to record musical ideas, and it became a personal diary, too. I would be in these classes in undergrad [at Kenyon] where people would be making these sounds, and I thought it would be great to make a sonic representation of the class.

Then I was taking a lot of classes about ... early 20th century classical music and the [composers] were doing a lot of different tonal clusters, and the dissonance wasn't so bad to the ears. And then I heard these sound collages. and it was like "Ah! This is what I've been wanting to do. People are doing this!" And for whatever reason, I hadn't done it myself. Because other people had done it before and were experimenting with recordings of trains and putting oscillators to them and what not, it allowed me to do it.

BK: You have a background in more traditional music as well, correct?

BG: I studied vocal performance, singing, and was into jazz for a while, and musical theater. I did a bit of composition as well, too.

I also took musical analysis and structural analysis courses. But I should say that I always got stuck. I can make up a snappy melody line, but when it came to harmonic structure, it was the chord progressions and overall structure I always had trouble with.

For some reason, when it became sound and recorded sound, it made so much more sense layering things. You could create these really dense, or seemingly not so dense [compositions] ... creating something where [sounds] move within the structure. So I'm just figuring out the structure as it happens.

BK: In terms of making a distinction between sound art and more traditional music ... what does this mean to you, in terms of your practice?

BG: Very basically, I think of it as timbre and rhythm. I heard something on the street today that was phenomenal, because of the contrast of this grumbling car and, I wanna say baby carriage, but that's not right. For whatever reason, one would come in first and then the other would hit. It's a placement, in time, of each sound and when things come in.

To me, it's a lot like orchestration and picking sounds that

already exist, like an orchestrator would — deciding that a trumpet sounds good with a trombone at a certain point in the piece, and then rhythmically matching it up or placing two rhythms against each other. I like making rhythmic jokes, ya know? It's never too serious.

BK: What are you working on right now?

BG: I'm kind of in between things right now. I was just working in Prague as part of SAIC's study trip there, a six-week trip. I was working in the studios there, taking my regular practice of recording sounds that I hear. I was in the elevator of the national gallery, and found that it had a particularly good rumbling sound. I took a bunch of those, and recordings from other spaces, and made a sound collage. I want to do more of those, and just exhaust that until I can't listen to those recordings anymore. Really, just doing as many studies as I can to push the timbral possibilities of the piece.

BK: What are you working with, in terms of equipment?

BG: For recording I use a Marantz 671. I use a cardioid microphone, and the software Logic, for the editing.

BK: How is music like visual art? How do they inform each other? How can they inform each other?

BG: This is really simple, but ... with any music you like, you always hear more the second time you listen to it, right? With visual art, the more you look at it, the more you get out of it. With sound art...my aim is to make something about it catch so you want to listen to it again. I think there's a possibility within sound to have people dwell on it the way you dwell on a painting.

Another thing I got into in Prague ... is this idea of portraiture. How do you create a portrait of someone in sound? I think I was doing that with the elevator. I won't record people's voices if I don't know them or have some kind of connection to them ... but the problem with that for me is that it's usually men that I'm attracted to [laughs] ... or people that I love and care about, and they're usually men. It's great, but it becomes a very personal experience. I think I have enough ability with sound so that it's still interesting if you don't know the person. But of course when I hear it, it's like a memory for me.

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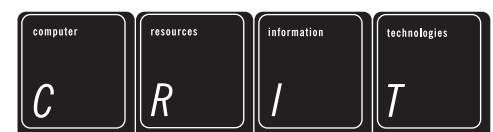
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Scott Pilgrim vs. Depth of Character

Live-action adaptation doesn't add much to comic series

By **THANIA RIOS**

The existence of Edgar Wright's "Scott Pilgrim vs. The World" hardly seems remarkable in an industry that's falling ever more in love with comic book movies. With C-List characters like Marvel's Ant-Man getting their own features, it was only a matter of time before indie houses like Oni Press (Pilgrim's original publisher) started receiving their due. However, in adapting Brian Lee O'Malley's graphic novel series for the big screen, Wright stayed true to Oni's ethos of producing work distinct from the standard superheroic output of Marvel and DC. His "Scott Pilgrim" has a look unlike anything seen in the rest of the summer's comic book movies. In fact, one could argue that it attempts to define "Scott Pilgrim" in opposition to them, using visual effects like real-life level-ups, O'Malley's original artwork, and onomatopoeias drifting across the screen — indicating a winking self-awareness lacking in comic book films like "Kick-Ass" or "Iron Man 2."

More so than previous comic book films, "Scott Pilgrim" consistently reminds us that its story originated on paper. While the mere fact of its production seems to be in keeping with current Hollywood trends, Wright very much wants us to find the content of his film unique.

This becomes a problem when the viewer is confronted with the film's wafer-thin characters. The protagonists—the titular character (Michael Cera), and his love interest, Ramona, (Mary Elizabeth Winstead)—exist purely as pretenses for the meat of the plot: the defeat of Ramona's seven evil exes by Scott, providing the fodder for a slew of overly-aware references to comics, video games, and other staples of Geek Culture. The supporting characters serve to spout off witty asides, putting even more emphasis upon the eye candy frolicking across the screen.

A defender of the film could argue that this is as it should be: the development of Scott and Ramona as characters is not the point, and any pleasure to be derived from watching the movie stems from the mingling of motifs usually confined to separate art forms and genres. According to this



Illustration by Alli Berry

interpretation, the characters and narrative are lifeless, but the film can't be criticized for being anything other than what it meant to be.

However, the climax and conclusion hinge just as much upon Scott's last-minute epiphany and subsequent growth as they do upon the defeat of the last evil ex. By being forced to battle with Ramona's past, Scott is supposed to learn to accept it while simultaneously coming to terms with his own failures as a boyfriend. The visuals and references are meant to serve as an elaborate metaphor for coming-of-age. Simply put, Wright wants us to care about Scott. Unfortunately, nothing in the film compels us to do so. Cera delivers the same performance he's been delivering since his days on "Arrested

Development," which doesn't lend itself to the raging jealousy his character is supposed to overcome. Winstead does what she can, but Ramona only has two moods: mysteriously beautiful, or mysteriously bitchy. The visuals still remain charming, but that's all they are.

While reminding his viewers about Scott's illustrated origins does something to establish Wright's "indie-cred," it falls short of the narrative purpose he had for it. The film's use of illustrated artwork still remains interesting—not to mention entertaining—but the half-hearted attempt to infuse it with significance makes the conclusion boring for viewers who only want to be entertained, and embarrassing for those who expect the use of artwork to point to some higher meaning.

More so than previous comic book films, "Scott Pilgrim" consistently reminds us that the telling of its story originated on paper.

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Net Neutrality Peril?

...or what happens when people don't understand the internet

Net neutrality
has always been
integral to the
Internet, but not
exactly the topic
of our dinner
conversations —
so why now?

By NICK BRIZ

In the past few weeks, Facebook status updates and leftist news outlets have been clogged with alarmist posts about the alleged “Google/Verizon deal.” Ominous headlines have declared: “The Google/Verizon Deal: The End of the Internet as We Know It” (Josh Silver, Huffington Post) and “Why Google became a Carrier-Humping, Net Neutrality Surrender Monkey” (Ryan Singel, Wired Magazine). Those following this barrage of opinion could be certainly forgiven for thinking any/all of the following:

Google and Verizon have some ideas for regulating the Internet, but they're two huge corporations, and we all know corporations can't be trusted! We need the FCC to reinstate their authority over the Interwebz and clean up this mess! But wait, the FCC? We don't want the indecency police screwing things up on the free web — what if they gain too much power!? But we can't just deregulate and leave it to the corporations; just look at what happened with the banks and BP!!! But the FCC is government, and government is owned by big business and Hollywood anyways! Net Neutrality is in danger! What do we do!?

Given this fervor, it's important to understand a number of issues. First, what exactly is Net Neutrality? Well, it's kind of an “online creed” — a “law of the [digital] land.” It's what keeps the Internet functioning as the free and democratic space that cyber-optimists claim it to be. Net Neutrality is what made possible the innovative start-ups (such as Wikipedia, Ebay, Facebook, and, yes, Google) that now dominate the Internet today. In more technical terms, network neutrality means that data, of the same type, is treated the same regardless of source or destination. This means that your Yahoo mail travels at the same speed as my Gmail, and my Vimeo video travels at the same speed as your YouTube video. Net Neutrality has always been integral to the Internet, but not exactly the topic of our dinner conversations — so why now?

It started back in April when a federal appeals court ruled in favor of Comcast over the FCC. Comcast had been covertly sabotaging their customers' use of file sharing applications (i.e. BitTorrent) by causing connections to drop — tactics not dissimilar to China's Internet censorship regime. Despite the FCC's efforts to demand that ISPs (Internet Service Providers) give users equal access to all content, it was ruled out of their jurisdiction. This ruling was the impetus for a series of meetings held by the FCC and attended by Internet and telecom moguls (including AT&T, Skype, Google and Verizon) in an effort to draft net neutrality legislation to present to Congress. If Congress decides to legislate, it could mean a bigger role for the FCC and could drastically change the Internet in the United States.

There are two major aspects of the FCC's proposed plan. The first aspect, which is somewhat over-shadowed, is its push to improve the quality of national broadband. It's no secret that the United States has some of worst Internet access in the world, usually ranking somewhere between 18 and 22 on the list, trumped on speed and affordability by South Korea, Japan,

and the Netherlands, among others. Shameful, considering we practically invented the Internet. This is thanks to a lack of competition between ISPs who've successfully lobbied many state and local governments to ban municipal wi-fi and other efforts, thereby forcing scarcity, limiting options, and charging whatever they like.

The second aspect concerns passing legislation that enforces net neutrality. Here's where Google and Verizon's proposal comes in: a modest two pages which is equal parts promising, problematic, and ambiguous. The New York Times was the first to condemn this proposal, saying that the companies were closing a deal that would destroy net neutrality. Media, press, and commentators, such as Huffington Post, Wired, Public Knowledge, et al., were quick to follow with equally critical backlash. However, this plan is no “deal.” Rather, it's simply a recommendation for the FCC to consider. Furthermore, this proposal is an effort to maintain net neutrality that seeks a compromise — the kind you might get from two corporations with very dissimilar views on the subject. It calls for legislation in favor of net neutrality, banning the deliberate slowing down or speeding up of traffic while limiting the FCC's role in regulating it. The EFF (Electronic Frontier Foundation) — one of the strongest advocates for net neutrality — explains on their blog, “It would limit the FCC to case-by-case enforcement of consumer protection and nondiscrimination requirements and prohibit broad rulemaking” (the feared, previously prophesied, FCC trojan horse).

The dangerous component of the Google/Verizon proposition is the exemptions made for wireless services, where wireless Internet (as used by the iPhone, Smart Phone etc.) would not be subject to the same kind of regulation or transparency requirements that wired Internet would. This means that ISPs could offer “managed services” that wouldn't exactly play by the rules of net neutrality. So say you want to watch a movie: Comcast could say your only option is their online video service Xfinity, and deny you another service like Netflix. As EFF argue, “Neutrality should be the rule for all services, and a distinction between wired and wireless (...) defies reason.” This is even more alarming because wireless services now go beyond Smart phones — my home Internet is wireless (I have a 4G connection instead of DSL or cable).

As more technology heads in this direction a plan like Google/Verizon could leave us with two separate Internets: one open and neutral and the other closed, costly, and proprietary (think Cable TV). The fear is that *if* these exemptions to regulations are made for wireless connections, as technology moves away from wires and in the direction of wireless services, we could see our current, vast, open Internet exchanged for a limited-options corporately-owned Internet.

In the end, the Google/Verizon proposal is simply that: a proposal, and one that the FCC, amidst all the noise, have been very clear about dismissing. However, the FCC seems to be on the path to declaring themselves the guardians of the web and they will propose something to Congress. We must keep an eye out for what that is and make sure it protects net neutrality and the open Internet. As the web continues to converge with every aspect of our daily lives, there's more at stake than just cute cat videos.



Illustrations by Easle Seo



Digital Locks

What changed this summer, and why you should care

By NICK BRIZ

These days, when it comes to legislation on the wild web, it's nothing but bad news for Internet users all over the world. Tighter locks like Canada's newly passed copyright reform bill, Bill C-32, and the U.K.'s Digital Economy Act, which controversially regulates digital media, represent extremist legislation meant to enforce tighter boundaries for what gets produced, and reproduced, on the web.

But on July 27, thanks largely to public interest groups such as the Electronic Frontier Foundation (EFF), the Library of Congress passed a handful of exemptions to the Digital Millennium Copyright Act (DMCA), a law that prevents consumers/users from breaking digital locks on their products/devices and criminalizes the circumvention of the locks put in place even when there is no violation of copyright.

These exemptions are a progressive step forward in the mess that is digital law today — but before we pop open the champagne, it's important to understand the role of “digital locks” and their place within the world of Digital Rights Management (DRM). While such terms might sound like the preoccupations of tech nerds, they have an effect on everyone who reads, listens to, and watches content on the web, and an even greater effect on artists and their ability to create and produce in our increasingly powerful digital landscape.

DRM is what happens when innovative technology companies (like Apple — a company once dedicated to the idea of open modifiable hardware/software) get into bed with the

entertainment industry and the telecoms (wireless/phone companies).

Imagine for a moment that you've purchased a bookshelf from Target and the only books you're allowed to put on that bookshelf are books you purchase from Target's abysmal book selection. Now that you've filled that shelf with hundreds of dollars worth of sub-par Target books, you want to buy a newer, trendier bookshelf from Ikea, but you can't legally (and without great difficulty) move your books from your Target shelf to your Ikea shelf.

Furthermore, imagine that every time you try to photocopy a page from your books for your class project, the copy-machine spits out a paper which reads “You do not have permission to copy the contents on this page.” You can't even lend any of your books to a friend. What's worse, at the end of the day you're not even allowed to trade or sell these worthless books at your local used bookstore.

Thanks to DRM, this is exactly how devices like the iPad work. It's sad to think that a company that once packaged their computers with schematics encouraging users to edit/modify/hack their products now requires you to have the batteries changed by professionals (as is the case with the iPad). There are no screws on this bookshelf; only super glue.

Cory Doctorow, digital rights activist and children's novelist, writes on his blog, craphound.com: “As a copyright holder and creator, I don't want a single, Wal-Mart-like channel that controls access to my audience and dictates what is and is not acceptable material for me to create.” These “single, Wal-Mart-like channels” exercise their power via the DRM they implant into the digital content which passes through their stores. As makers, the inability to modify our tools isn't the only setback.

I can't imagine a world where Barnes and Noble would dare tell Anne Rice to change the ending of her book before they put it on the shelves — but that's exactly how it works with iPhone/iPad apps which can only be legally purchased on the “single” Apple-controlled store. With the digitization of media comes a dependence on digital

technologies for distribution, and while this technology creates amazing possibilities, the industry, more comfortable with their old models, finds ways to force limitations on them.

This bureaucracy reached SAIC this summer when Shawn Decker's class for creating applications for mobile devices like the iPhone got cancelled, and it wasn't due to low enrollment.

Decker might have better luck next summer as the market for apps opens up, thanks to these new exemptions to the DMCA. It's now legal to “jailbreak” your iPhone, which means with a simple click of a link you can open your iPhone up to a whole world of apps that for various reasons have been “disapproved” by Apple.

The exemptions go beyond jailbreaking iPhones. Say you want to “screen cap” an image from a movie for your class presentation, or rip content off a DVD and satirically remix it. Or say you're blind and want to take a digital book you've purchased and open it with your read-aloud software.

Previously, these things were impossible to accomplish without illegally breaking digital locks with illegal software. Now, thanks to EFF, these formerly illegal actions will be within the full rights of all media users.

Jennifer Stisa Granick, EFF's civil liberties director, says on the group's blog that the rules are based on a very simple idea: “If you bought it, you own it.” Common sense, maybe, but not common practice.

So, although the champagne's been popped, it's important to note that these exemptions leave many questions unanswered. If you break codes on your iPhone, will it still void your warranty? Does this mean it's legal to sell software that breaks digital locks (DRM-ripping, iPhone jail breaking, etc.)? Breaking the lock on a DVD to remix the content is no longer illegal, but, how far does “fair use” go?

Only time will tell. All in all, it's a happy moment for digital rights.

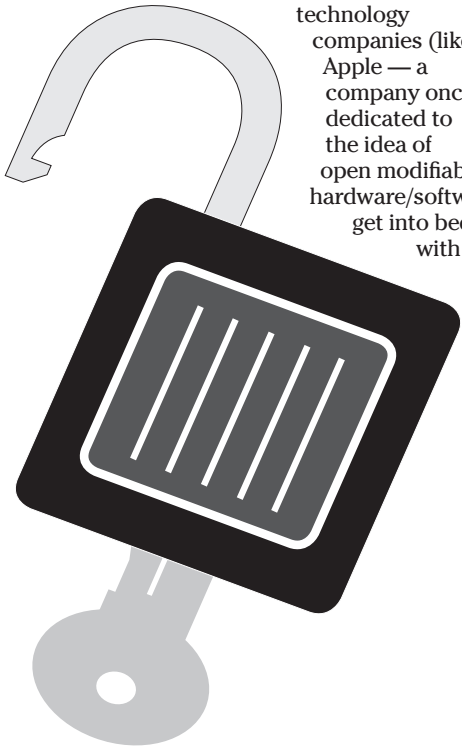


Illustration by Easle Seo

It's now legal to “jailbreak” your iPhone, which means with a simple click of a link you can open your iPhone up to a whole world of apps that for various reasons have been “disapproved” by Apple.

Art Schooled

F News imagines what the course catalog would look like if our favorite artists taught

By JENNIFER SWANN

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1	56	FVNM	2000	002	Filmmaking on a Budget: Cats, Cunts, and Cold-Cuts	3.00	Whenever the emotion strikes you		Columbus Base Space	Carolee Schneemann	25
1	58	FVNM	2000	003	Torturing Clowns and Other Video Installation Techniques	3.00	Repeat		AIC Modern Wing	Bruce Nauman	25
Liberal Arts											
1	1075	SCIENCE	3110	001	Horticulture and the Science of Dog-Shaped Topiaries	3.00	Autumn mornings after the rain		Art Institute Garden	Jeff Koons	22
1	1141	SCIENCE	3114	001	The Chemistry of Formaldehyde and the History of Extinction	3.00	Before the decline of civilization		Field Museum	Damien Hirst	22
1	1135	SCIENCE	3151	001	The Physics of Light, Color, and Vapor in Motion	3.00	Sunrise and Sunset		Millenium Park	Olafur Eliasson	22
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IS ACCEPTING SUBMISSIONS AND PROPOSALS TO BUILD OUR COMIC SECTION FOR THE COMING YEAR.

Send jpegs or pdfs to Brandon Kosters, editor, or Annalise Fowler, art director, at FNEWSMAGAZINE.com by **FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 11**, to be considered for the October issue. Include a little information about yourself and any background you think might be helpful for understanding your work.

inside the dollhouse

Sculpture by OLIVIA LIENDO

Alumna Olivia Liendo first published photos of her hand-constructed doll scenes in March 2010 while a New Arts Journalism graduate student at SAIC. Her commentaries included the burden of health care, tax deductions for artists and last minute fashion. We will continue to publish her photographs here each month.





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Aaron Curry. *Danny Skullface Sky Boat (Reclining)* (detail), 2009. Painted anodized aluminum. 108¼ × 101½ × 41 in. (275 × 257.8 × 104.1 cm). Hall Collection. Photo by Fredrik Nilsen