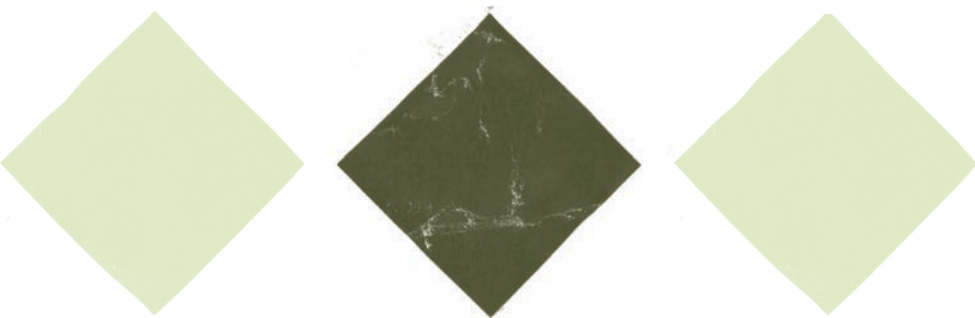
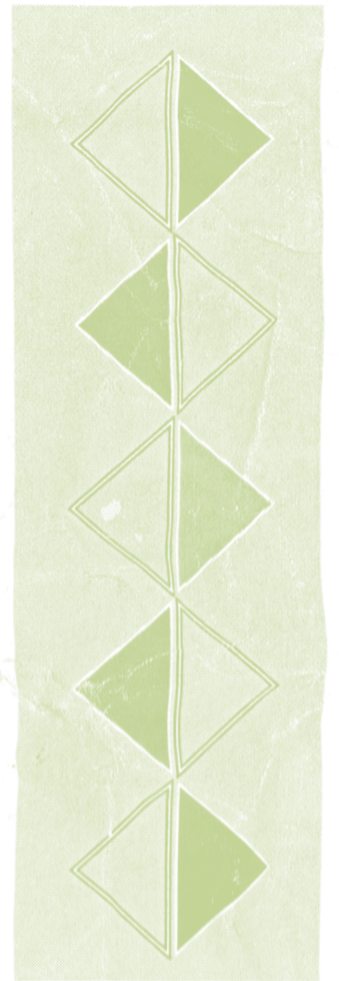
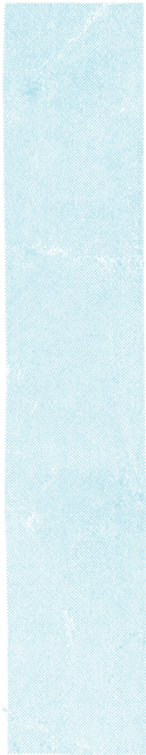


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The School of the Art Institute of Chicago

● NOVEMBER 2012

*A student journal of arts,
culture and politics*



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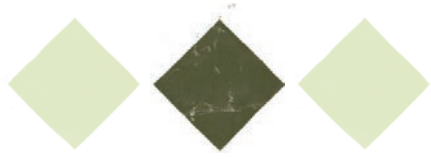
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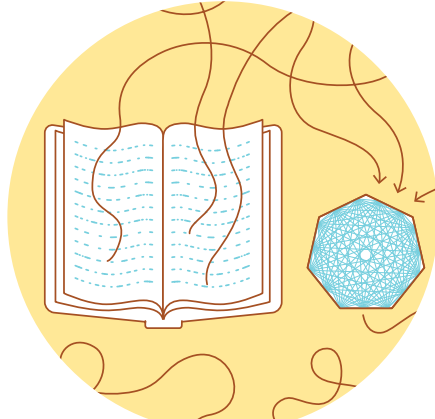
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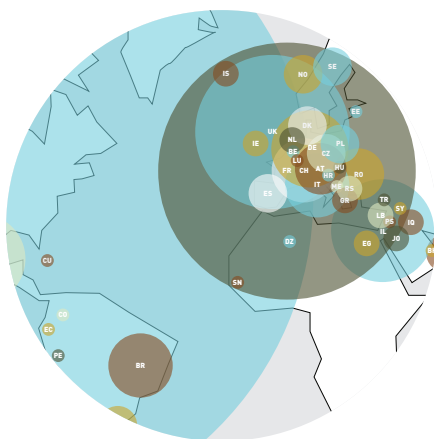
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**WEB
EXCLUSIVES**
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"EXPO Chicago"

Additional coverage of the art event of the year including video interviews with gallerists, SAIC faculty responses to the event and a review of the Kavi Gupta booth.

"F Studio Visits: Tyler Fewell"

New F studio visit with SAIC student Tyler Fewell. See images of Fewell's intricate drawings and paintings while hearing about his inspirations and process.

"Live at the Metro: Ariel Pink's Haunted Graffiti" and "Live at Riviera: Beach House."

Check out coverage of some of the most popular indie acts coming through town by new F Music Editor Christopher Kareska.

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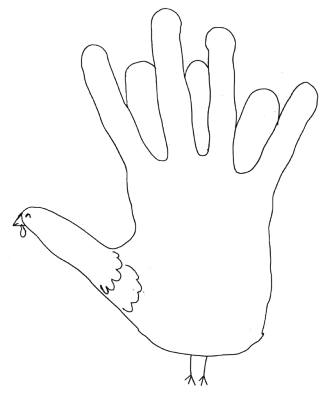
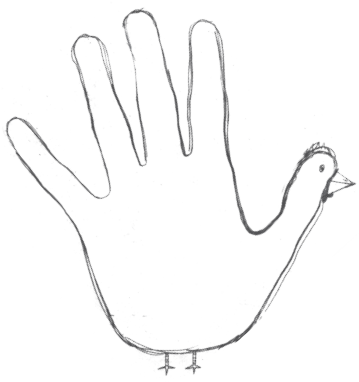
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COVER: "Happy Thanksgiving, Turkey"
by Patrick Jenkins

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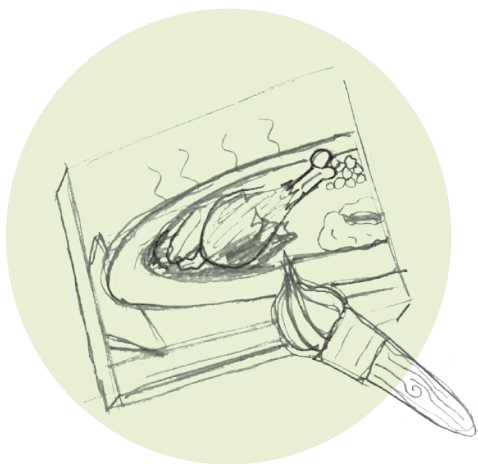


Get Hip to an Alternative Thanksgiving

Untraditional Holiday Events for Students

BY JEN MOSIER

Not every student can – or wants to – make it home for Thanksgiving. In the absence of a traditional family gathering here are a few alternatives that will help you celebrate the season. (And more reasons to wear your personalized-butt-text sweatpants.)



TURKEY IS FLEETING, ART LASTS FOREVER

If you burned the turkey or (let's be honest) never had one to begin with, get out a canvas instead and paint yourself holding a giant turkey leg. Dress in your favorite Flemish costume to get in the meat-eating spirit. Once immersed in your mannered-Vermeerian brush strokes and listening to Top Lute Songs of the 1690s, you'll probably forget about your hunger and end up with a masterpiece ... assuming you don't eat it.



COOK FOR THE DESPERATE

Dust off that festive apron you bought three years ago – the one that makes you look like you're dressed as a busty Pilgrim. It's time to let go of the 2008 Salmonella Supper mishap and give cooking another chance. Even though family will probably never eat your food again, and your friends know better, settle on getting chummy with your weird neighbors. You can all bond by giving thanks that your other neighbors went on vacation with their annoying yap-dog.

SWEAT OUT THE GRAVY

Hmm. Black Friday shopping or a peaceful afternoon of yoga? Avoid getting yourself stuck in a maniac shoppers tug-o-war over discount decorative sofa pillows. Choose to meditate instead. With help from yoga instructor Mary Scherer, you'll breathe out (exhale) the holiday stress and re-center yourself. Class will be tailored to students' individual needs on the Friday after Thanksgiving for \$2, from 4:15-6:15 p.m. in Sharp 214.

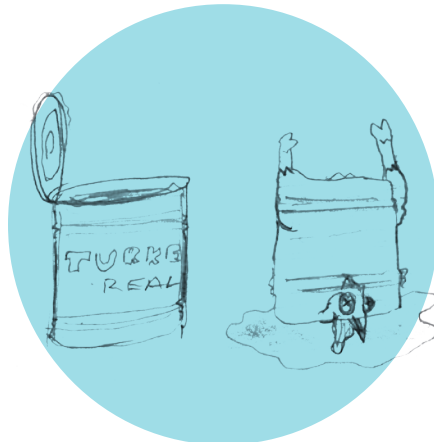


GIVE THANKS FOR EXPERT CRITIQUE

The friendly people at The Joan Flasch Artists' Book Collection and The Writing Center are teaming up the Wednesday before Thanksgiving for a first-come, first-served Publication Clinic. Available for all students, they are offering a free critique of publications you're struggling to finish, including your Zombie Turkey Comic book. Meet on the first floor of The LeRoy Neiman Center from 4:00-5:30 p.m.

MARCH FOR TURKEY PRIDE

What do trombones have in common with an oversized helium balloon of Dora the Explorer? They will both be present on State Street Thanksgiving Day. McDonald's hosts the 77th parade starting at 8:30 a.m., with a route moving from Congress to Randolph. You can either view the marching bands and holiday-themed floats in person, or stay home in your dirty sweats and watch it on WGN Channel 9.



TOFURKEY FOR ALL

Thanksgiving is a meat-lovers holiday, but vegans and vegetarians are festive people too. The Chicago Diner is having their 30th Annual Vegan Thanksgiving Dinner with a menu of renowned classics, minus the meat. Options include: a tofu roast with herb-seasoned stuffing and country gravy, marinated seitan referred to as "Beefy Wellington" or a pumpkin ravioli topped with apples and onions. Entrees start at \$11.99 and are carry-out only. Order at veggiediner.com and pick-up at 3411 S. Halsted.

RUN YOUR STUFFING OFF

Create the illusion of a healthy holiday by starting your day with a run. On Thanksgiving, the 2012 Chicago Turkey Day 5K starts at 9 a.m. in Lincoln Park with a course that moves northbound on Lake Shore Drive for 1.5 miles. You're allowed to wear your dirty sweats for this one. Or why not run in the heirloom Pilgrim outfit just sitting in the closet? Early-turkey registration is \$30 at www.turkeyday-5k.com



IF YOU CAN'T BEAT 'EM, OUT DRINK 'EM

Few things are worse than having your blissful bar-based sorrow-drowning interrupted by a pub crawl of swaggering, pickled bobble-heads. Might as well join in and become part of the spectacle. The Turkey Crawl is on Wednesday, November 21 and again Saturday, November 24 beginning at noon. For an admission fee of only \$1, what else do you have to do? And yes, you can wear your sweats.



SIT ON A STRANGE MAN'S LAP

Here comes Santa Claus. Here Comes Santa Claus. Right down Santa ... wait ... wait ... wait ... Thanksgiving is the next major holiday. But if you're getting into the Winter Wonderland mode on Thanksgiving Eve, Santa's House at Daley Plaza will have an available Santa for picture-taking opportunities from 6-8 p.m. Sweats are not recommended because the resulting image of you on Santa's lap will be weird. And creepy.

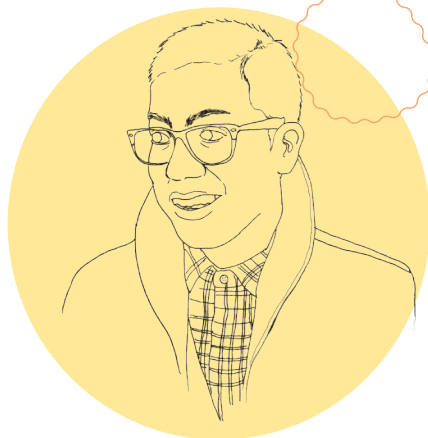
THANKSGIVING

STRIPPERS, SILENCE, & SMALLPOX

BY LINDSEY AUTEN
& SIERRA NICOLE RHODEN

SAIC Students Talk Thanksgiving

Indulging in poultry and watching football — this is how we celebrate the “settlement” of an already-inhabited land and (to 17th-century Europeans) a most fortuitous pandemic. In the spirit of the rather dubious holiday, F News-magazine asked SAIC students to give their take on Thanksgiving and share their favorite — or most bizarre — Turkey Day memories. While many still taste bitter colonialism in their turkey, others find more meaning in camaraderie with friends and family . . . for better or for worse.



WILFRED PADUA
MFA Writing

“The first time I ever watched ‘David Blaine: Street Magic’ was on Thanksgiving. My whole family gathered together and we watched it. My cousin had recorded it on a VHS and played it for us. It was great; it was amazing. It’s still amazing.”



ROSS JORDAN
MAAAP & MAAH

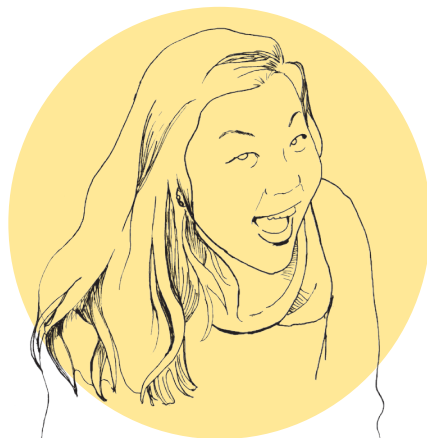
“Last year, my friend threw the inevitable ‘you’re not going home’ Thanksgiving party. We all got together and brought stuff to her house. I’m at the point where I can really remember my childhood and long for things from Thanksgiving, so I was like, ‘I’m going to make eggnog from scratch.’ I did, and it’s really disgusting because it takes like 25 eggs, and you mix it up and separate them. But it was the most delicious thing I’ve ever had. Everybody seemed to do that, bring the thing that made them think of home.

“It’s funny, because there are a lot of things like [Thanksgiving] that are commemorating really horrible events. That’s how everyone in art school kind of pitches it. But it is really a time where families and friends come together for communal things. It’s lost its meaning in celebration so I think you can celebrate it without guilt [laughs]. It just means you’re going to take some time to be thankful for your friends and have this kind of ironic holiday together, and that’s pretty cool.”



MOKI TANTOCO
BFA Art Education

“I’m Filipino American, from the suburbs. All my family lives here basically, so we all have Thanksgiving together on my mom’s side. It’s a mix of Thanksgiving food and Filipino and Chinese food — it’s a weird dinner. Non-stop eating for the entire day, and non-stop talking. We have two turkeys, because there are so many of us. One is made by my father, and the other is made by my aunt. My aunt’s not very good at cooking. There are a lot of Filipino people that go to Chinese buffets and have their Thanksgiving there. It’s like a thing.”



LILY KIM
BFA Visual Communication Design

“I don’t celebrate Thanksgiving. [Thanksgiving] is like Columbus Day, very negative. Every Thanksgiving is basically Columbus thanking God that he killed all the Native Americans — ‘Oh we have this land, but fuck all the Native Americans.’ You know that you’re not supposed to celebrate that shit! [laughs] What am I thankful for? I’m thankful every day. What’s the point in celebrating it? I can’t meet up with my family anyway. They’re in China and Korea.”



BRUNO SUAREZ
BFA Visual Communication Design

“I’ve celebrated [Thanksgiving] once and it was last year. I’m from Ecuador, so it’s like celebrating Independence Day. Back home Independence Day, Columbus Day, and even Day of the Dead are celebrating horrible, horrible massacres. But I guess you have to concentrate on the food and sharing. This year I think I’m going to stay here and we’re going to do a potluck with all the RAs. You’ve got to emphasize what’s right now, not the past. And I don’t like it when people are like, ‘Oh, the turkey’s dry.’ An animal died for you. Food is food. Just eat it.”



NINA PALOMBA
BFA Cartooning & Illustration

“We’re a really Italian family. We have really big dinners, but we also eat really late. One Thanksgiving my dad didn’t put the turkey in until an absurd hour, thinking it was going to be done. We’re all hanging out waiting, in the kitchen thinking, ‘I thought we were supposed to be done with this a couple hours ago.’ My dad was so upset because the turkey didn’t get done until two in the morning. We ate everything else, and then we had this turkey that didn’t turn out well. The family was crushed. I think we went to a buffet the next day to make up for it.”



ALEXANDER WILSON
BFA Interior Architecture

“My aunt was a bartender/stripper, and for one Thanksgiving she came in at 9:00 pm when we had already sat down for Thanksgiving dinner. She was in go-go boots, a short skirt and a low-cut top even though it was November. She was drunk off her ass, and she was just screaming about how fun Thanksgiving was for the drunks and how well all the sad men tip on Thanksgiving. Then she proceeded to take a leg off of the turkey and throw it across the room. That was like 1997. I remember it vividly, because I remember sitting there like, ‘Mom, do something!’ Every holiday [my aunt] is kind of a mess. One Christmas she just threw money at the tree. It was like \$200 in ones.”



KALEY CROSS
BFA Performance & Animation

“Nothing ever happens [on Thanksgiving]. It’s a bigger family gathering. It’s uncomfortable. It would be like Grandma’s sisters and then us. There are kids the same age [as I] but we don’t talk because I see them about once a year. We sit at big tables and don’t talk to each other. It’s always the same food. It’s a long day.”



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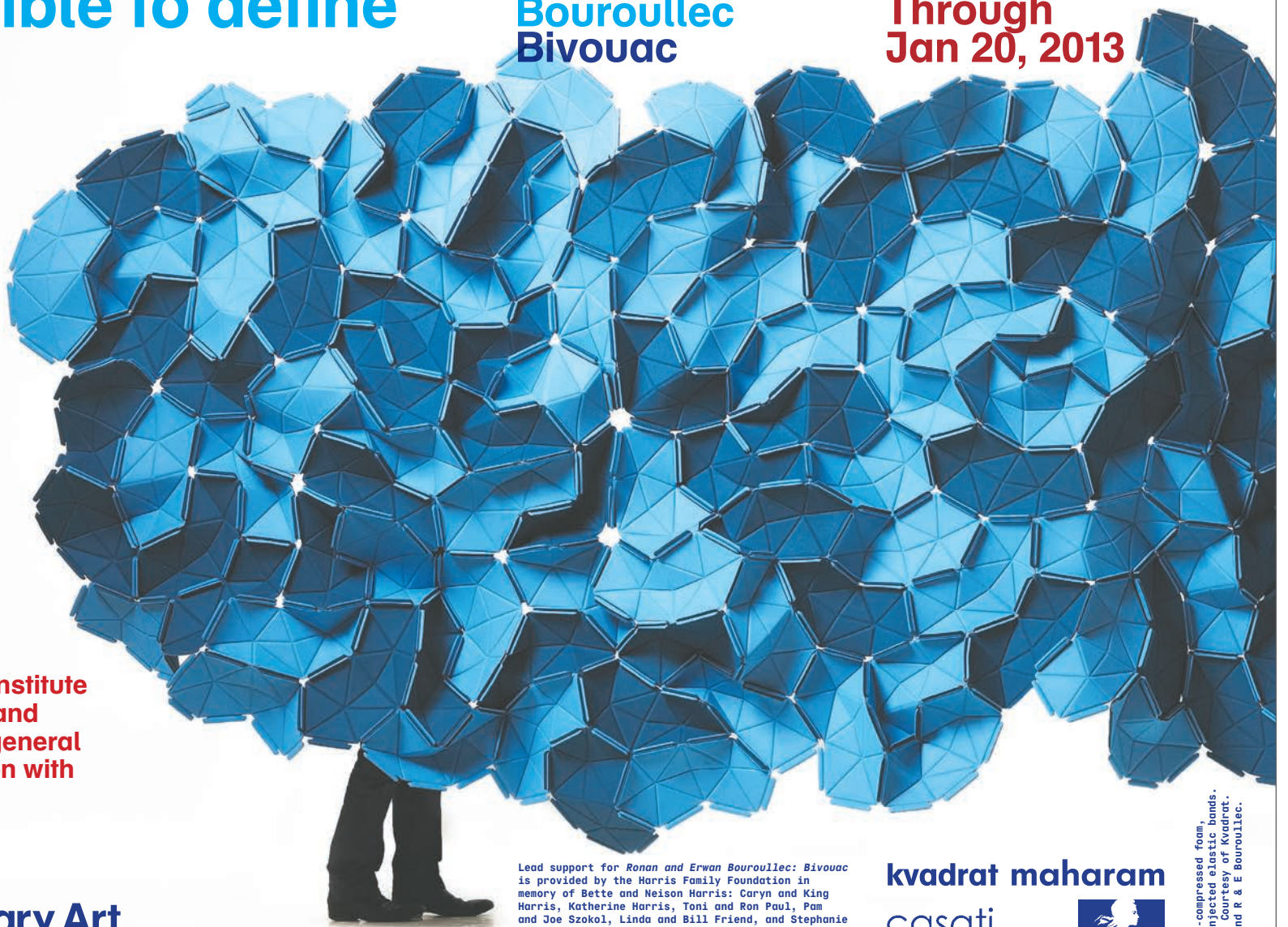
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Clouds, 2008. Thermo-compressed foam, fabric, and double-injected elastic bands. Produced by Kvadrat. Courtesy of Kvadrat. Photo © Paul Tahan and R & E Bouroullec.

Fostering Cultural Spaces or Disrupting Community Growth?

— Gabriella Brown

STUDIO NIGHT



BY KRISTOFER LENZ

Just two years ago the Chicago art market was in disarray. NEXT Art Fair was wheezing out its terminal breath and smaller, independent galleries lacked a singular voice. With the exception of the stalwart SOFA, it appeared that Chicago was entering a future without a prominent art fair. But the art world moves fast, and today the landscape is wildly different. Expo Chicago completed its first run in September and MDW Fair is planning their third event for early November. Suddenly art fairs are alive and well but are they the best way to elevate the Chicago art market?

*Feast and Famine
at Expo Chicago*

Now that the sawdust has settled and the crates have been packed and shipped (some to new homes), we are left to ponder the success and impact of the grand experiment of Expo Chicago, the sprawling art fair that occupied over 150,000 sq. ft. of The Navy Pier's convention floor. The plan was audacious and the stakes were high.

Reports of the staging and presentation of Expo have been nearly unanimously positive. SAIC Professor Terry Myers told F Newsmagazine, "It was impeccably organized. It looked great. It had moments of feeling like the good old days, when Art Chicago was the fair of the world." Organizer Tony Karman and his team drew international dealers and collectors to Chicago and presenting their work to an estimated 27,000 attendees. While the aesthetics were impeccable, there is only one measure of success for an art fair: the number of zeros in total sales.

In his opening remarks, esteemed art critic and Chicago native Jerry Saltz made a preemptive plea, "Chicagoans move slow and our money moves slow," as if to explain away the languid pace of purchasing over the weekend. The cost of a booth at Expo

ART NEWS

A Tale of Two Art Fairs

Commerce, Community and the Chicago Art Fair

started at \$20,000. For all but the biggest galleries an investment of this kind, before accounting for travel costs, meant that no amount of publicity or exposure would justify the expense. Dealers had to sell or Expo would be a disaster.

An art fair like Expo must satisfy two parties that are notoriously difficult to please. The Chicago collector's market must be strong enough to entice out-of-town galleries to bring their wares. Simultaneously, the Chicago galleries must offer strong enough work that out-of-town collectors are willing to leave their local art markets to find new work. It's a complicated chain of desire and wealth; if one link fails, the whole enterprise crumbles.

Three weeks after the art fair the Expo 2012 Wrap Release was distributed. In this glowing bit of PR, Karman and his gang patted themselves on the back with a hearty "job well done." The Wrap includes enthusiastic reports of sales by dealers from London (Haunch of Venison), New York (Leo Konig, Inc.), Paris (Galerie Daniel Templon) and other international locales. Chicago powerhouses like Rhona Hoffman Gallery and Kavi Gupta also reportedly sold well.

While the official PR line was one of rousing success, grumbings closer to the ground pointed to deep-seated dismay. Terry Myers spoke to many out-of-town dealers who expressed frustration. "What I heard too often is what I would characterize as bad behavior on the part of Chicago collectors," he said, "to the point where I feel like they need a remedial course in behaving at these things." When pressed, Myers related stories of a Chicago collector who openly expressed disinterest inside a major dealer's booth and a collector who opened his home to visits by out-of-town gallerists but began his talk by stating that he only supports Chicago galleries. Myers also mentioned that the networking aspect that keeps art fairs relevant was lacking: "Some dealers said they weren't necessarily expecting to sell much, but they would have liked to meet some people and strengthen ties with collectors down the road. That just didn't happen."

Concerns with Chicago collectors point to a deeper issue of whether Chicago has an art market wealthy enough to support a major international fair. During the 1980s and 90s Art Chicago was one the most important art fairs in the world.

But as Art Chicago declined during the last decade the art world moved on. Today there is a full calendar of events like Art Basel/Miami, Frieze Art Fair London, Art Paris, Art Cologne and countless others in exotic or otherwise appealing locales. For Myers the saturation of the art fair market presents the biggest roadblock to future success for Expo. "I just don't think Chicago has what it takes to get people to add it to the private jet circuit. I just don't see the droves coming from Europe, South America or China ... It's not a problem with out-of-town money helps everyone), questions of whether the risk is worth the reward linger. If Expo falters or fails in a spectacular way, the ensuing backlash could sour an entire generation of art dealers on the idea of doing business in Chicago and leave scorched earth where a burgeoning art market once was.

While success for Expo has innumerable benefits (flooding the local art market with out-of-town money helps everyone), questions of whether the risk is worth the reward linger. If Expo falters or fails in a spectacular way, the ensuing backlash could sour an entire generation of art dealers on the idea of doing business in Chicago and leave scorched earth where a burgeoning art market once was.

The Art Fair as Community-builder

Meanwhile, on the other side of town a different kind of art fair is gaining momentum. The third Mdw Fair will occur during the second week of November. Founded in 2011 by Aron Gent (Document), Ed Marszewski (Public Media Institute), Shannon Stratton (threewalls), Eric May (Roots and Culture) and Abigail Satinski (threewalls), Mdw's purpose is, according to Aron Gent, "to give a voice to local galleries and local DIY apartment gallery spaces." While explaining Mdw's mission, Gent described how smaller galleries in Chicago often paid \$4,000 or more to get booths at sprawling events like Art Chicago or Next Art Fair. Investments like these placed too much emphasis on whether art sold or not and left many galleries with a bitter taste in their mouths. Mdw arose as a response to the overpriced art fairs, offering a low-overhead rallying point that connects and strengthens independent galleries and arts organizations.

This year's Mdw Fair will host 75 exhibitors, publishers and performers to Mana Contemporary art center on the South Side. The new layout will pair exhibitors in 25' x 50' rooms and the gallerists decide how to divide the space. The

hope is that this interconnectivity will foster a next level of collaboration and polination. "It moves away from the idea of a fair, with the open booths and the aisle you walk down," Gent told F News magazine, "Instead it's more like a studio visit, a little more intimate than cruising down the aisles of traditional art fairs. It's a social experiment of how the relationships of these galleries will evolve or stay the same."

Booths at Mdw cost a meager \$400, a calculated move by the Mdw organizers. According to Gent, "This way galleries can afford the cost of having an exhibition, make these connections, get exposure, be happy and make money back or put the \$400 as a tolerable loss." This low level of financial investment frees Mdw from purely commercial measures of success. Instead participants can experiment with presentation and test the market.

The problem for a fair like Mdw is that while the financial risk is low, so is the possibility of making a statement. Expo Chicago drew international press and interest, providing a launching pad for lesser-known galleries. For example, San Francisco's Jessica Silverman Gallery garnered art world headlines by selling out their works by artist Hayal Pozanti. In the past Mdw has received barely a fraction of the same coverage, and little work sells. Mdw's purpose is not specifically to sell art but one must question the ultimate value of "making connections."

Is there room for more?

When Chicago gallery owner Andrew Rafacz acquired a booth within the Expo-Sure section at Expo, offered at a reduced rate and geared toward up-and-coming galleries, his goals were realistic: "When presenting emerging contemporary artists, it is hard to be 100% sure how it will go," but ultimately the fair was a success, "We made sales that boosted the profile of (our) artists, but we also got the work in front of a lot of people." For Rafacz, Expo was about more than making sales, "There has always been an amazing level of cooperation and collaboration (in Chicago). All of this has been in place on some level for a long time, (and) it's more about out-of-towners showing up and realizing we have something great here." Aron Gent echoed this sentiment: "I think it's really great what Expo is doing, trying to

pull international people and collectors to Chicago. It's generally good exposure and they should continue to do it. Mdw on the other hand is crucial but on another level. It's about taking that first baby step and meeting people without worrying about money."

While Expo offers the benefits of a trickle-down-style economics, and Mdw supports up-and-coming arts organizations, neither addresses what Gent considers a glaring concern — the lack of a middle-class art collecting community: "(We need to be) educating young people in Chicago about collecting and trying to facilitate a collecting community." This brand of collectors who pays between \$500 and \$5,000 for work provides an integral bridge between the markets of Expo and Mdw.

Perhaps of greater concern are questions of whether the art fair is an outdated model. "Chicago may be better suited institutionally and historically to jet-tisoning the idea of the art fair as a way of bringing contemporary art to a larger context," said Terry Myers, "Perhaps we should get on the biennial wagon. It wouldn't be so blatantly reliant on people showing up to buy things. It has more to do with sponsorship from corporations and institutions."

The international art fair model could galvanize interaction between every aspect of Chicago's art culture. It could require collaboration between museums, universities, gallery owners, arts advocacy organizations and artists. It would also require buy-in from Chicago's governmental infrastructure, whose support would be essential to completing plans and securing exhibition space.

Unfortunately, overabundance also plagues the glut of international biennials. A successful model could be Kassel, Germany's DOCUMENTA, which occurs every five years, an optimal length of time that allows for thoughtful curation while also keeping the art world's interest.

By removing a reliance on sales as the lifeblood of the event, the presentation of art becomes the primary interest. A successful exhibition could bring attention to all facets of the art world, performing the dual functions of Expo and Mdw, but without as much reliance on the vagaries of the international art market.

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January 15, 2013

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Survival of the Richest

Jerry Saltz, Art Fairs, and EXPO Chicago



BY MARGOT BRODY

“I view art fairs as cultural-biomasses: survival mechanisms where galleries act like great schools of fish, banding together in like groups that allow more to thrive,” opined art critic Jerry Saltz in an entry he wrote in conjunction with a New York Magazine’s feature titled “How to Make it in the Art World: The New Rulebook.”

Though the publication’s self-proclaimed “tongue-in-cheek” insider’s guide came off, as a whole clichéd, shortsighted and contrived, Saltz nonetheless managed to communicate somewhat insightful views about the ubiquitous phenomenon that is the contemporary art fair. “At art fairs, art becomes like millions of eggs released into water to have a better chance at being fertilized,” said Saltz. “This means that collectors are semen, but whatever.”

I would be reluctant to call Saltz a brilliant wordsmith, however, it might be worth it to entertain this metaphor for a moment. If the nature of the art fair renders an artwork as undeveloped potential waiting to be fulfilled by a healthy collector...er...swimmer, it could arguably follow that the critics are flagella, propelling collectors toward the prize (though Mr. Saltz might disagree). In the end, collectors just have to pray that they get a good egg with solid DNA that can endure today’s fickle art market.

With what I’ve gathered about this year’s EXPO Chicago (and life in general, I suppose) — When no one gets any action, everyone gets a little agitated and pretty self-conscious.

If art fairs can be seen as complex ecosystems, each with specific needs and characteristics, it means that they can thrive, change, or die depending on how the species and conditions within fit together or compete for survival.

In his article, Saltz was relatively cynical about what existing fairs have come to represent, but

also unusually hopeful that the rise of new and diverse art fairs might point to a moment capable of breaking down what he sees as domineering commercial art world structures.

If these emerging events do, in fact, point to a revitalization of the art world, the question then becomes whether or not it is possible for less established fairs to compete and survive, without becoming what Saltz describes as “entertainment complexes for the one percent.”

Hired as the keynote speaker for the opening day of EXPO Chicago, Saltz brought these issues to bear on the city’s fledgling affair. In between pleasing the crowd with various recycled jokes — including the one about having so many honorary doctoral degrees that he could perform surgery — Saltz, true to form, said the things proud Chicagoans have been too afraid to talk about in terms of the much hyped spectacle at Navy Pier.

“Chicago is a real city with real galleries, real museums...but if collectors do not buy, this art fair cannot survive,” he said, “This is what I want, but I do not know that it can happen.”

As he doled out tips for artists in the crowd, it became clear that he wanted to direct the focus of the art fair away from the collectors and gallerists to reintroduce the importance of the artist and the seemingly lost notion of imagination and experimentation in these fêtes turned high-class carnivals for very “important people.”

Needless to say, he did not compromise his infamous say-it-like-it-is attitude for the occasion. Undoubtedly attended by a significant number of SAIC students who were given free admission to the fair, Saltz’s advice to avoid the unnecessary trap of expensive art schools may have been in vain.

Actually, many of the speakers and panelists included in “EXPO/Dialogues” — ongoing educational programming at the fair including a local and international range of

artists, collectors, curators, gallerists, and academics, among others — were in fact alumni or faculty of fancy, overpriced schools.

Maybe a pricey school can’t make you a good artist, but surely you have a better chance at meeting the “100 people” that New York Magazine listed as art world must-knows in “How to Make it in the Art World: The New Rulebook.” Come to think of it, Jerry Saltz, who happens to be the magazine’s resident art critic, was the only EXPO Chicago speaker who was on that list.

But this is Chicago, and like those stubborn New Yorkers, we have our own midwestern way of doing art. Or do we?

In a lively Expo dialogue between The Renaissance Society’s internationally recognized curator Hamza Walker, Chicago gallerist Andrew Rafacz of Andrew Rafacz Gallery, and Chicago collector and leading HIV specialist Daniel Berger, the conversation centered around the notion that Chicago’s contemporary art scene is beginning to shake the stigma that it is second rate or out of touch. And according to the panelists, it’s an exciting time and ideal place to be involved in art.

“Chicago’s art scene has become more robust in the past twenty years,” said Walker, “I don’t reflect on a certain Chicago-ness as I would have before — It’s a particularly beautiful moment.”

Rafacz and Berger concurred that the city’s upswing is, in part, due to a palpable de-centralization of activity in art, without losing necessary points of intersection and chances for intermingling within both institutional and independent realms.

“The galleries and art establishments have been providing great programming that helps ground the city in the larger world, encouraging dialogue about what’s happening on an international level,” said Rafacz, “If you look at Corbett vs. Dempsey, they started as staunch regionalists and branched out from there.”

Many of the dialogues, in addi-

With what I’ve gathered about this year’s EXPO Chicago (and life in general, I suppose) — When no one gets any action, everyone gets a little agitated and pretty self-conscious.

tion to certain exhibitions within the fair itself, and even the previously cited New York Magazine article to an extent, conveyed the idea that a recent integration of “fresh blood” into the mainstream has energized the art world. There seems to be a pervasive feeling that a younger generation is seamlessly incorporating itself into the fold, sans the hostile “kill the father” shtick that is used to mark the overthrow of the reigning artist elites. As Walker puts it, there has been a somewhat organic “changing of the guard,” encouraging a breakdown of old fashioned concepts of “Chicago-ness” in terms of the work produced by Chicago-based artists.

Though Chicago might be rid of its so-called regionalist past, the speakers all expressed the viewpoint that the city is coming into an overall moment of vitality. Walker explained that, while New York’s art scene seems to be an exhaustive mass of art communities and networks which rarely or never overlap, Chicago is currently building a particular model that allows for both eclecticism and cohesiveness. This open and engaging arena harks back to Chicago’s rich history of DIY and artist-run communities, but now the dialogue has organically expanded to incorporate the entire art ecosystem.

“I’m not immune to mourning Chicago’s unique history of self-contained, committee driven art spaces,” said Walker, “But now, there is an entire constellation of people and communities that provide the city with a wealth of heterogeneous ideas. I take it to be positive.”

At this point, it’s hard to imagine that an art fair with the aspirations as lofty as this year’s EXPO Chicago will be able to stay afloat unless it can carve out an identity that differentiates itself from all of the other art fairs out there, even if Chicago is undergoing a significant artistic awakening.

But in the words of Jerry Saltz, “Can art surprise? Damn right.”

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REVIEWS



Casilda Sanchez, "I wish I was as tall as the Moon" (2012)

I End Where You Begin
'Ground Floor' at Hyde Park Art Center

BY KRISTOFER LENZ

The ambition of Hyde Park Art Center's "Ground Floor" is at once inspiring and troubling. A show spotlighting "promising artists from Chicago's top-level MFA programs" suggests that the schools producing the artists are also on trial and when the weight of the assembled work is measured, the city of Chicago itself may be found lacking . A high standard is immediately achieved as work hanging in the exhibition's entryway alternately shouts and whispers. Tony Lewis's delicate graphite on paper work suggests reflection of the boundaries between language and perception. Conversely, Rachel Niffenegger's hanging sculpture confounds in three dimensions, simultaneously enticing and revolting, hanging with slouched aggression but burdened with the sense that a well-placed match could unravel the entire assembly.

Two selections of photographic work that address intimacy are similarly set at odds. Jeremy Bolen's abstract images are visually striking and the titles point to sensual precision within natural processes. On the opposing wall Andrew Thomas Lopez's photographs are unflinchingly honest and realistic depictions of confused adolescent loneliness and nascent sexuality. When exploring the space you'll notice a softly hummed song just piercing the edge of perception. Its source is Casilda Sanchez's ornate gold box containing video of the moon travelling across the night sky. In one deft move the viewer gains a sense of starry-eyed frailty applicable to the exhibition's assembled artists. The purpose of the exhibition is redefined by this object and its effect. Professional, complicated and executed effortlessly, this work and all it encompasses suggests that the future of art in Chicago is in good hands indeed.

The Quotidian / The Catastrophic
Danh Vo at The Renaissance Society

BY ALEXANDER WOLFF

As evidenced by his latest exhibition, "Uterus," Danish-Vietnamese artist Danh Vo is involved with in the politics of identity, authorship, and culture. In 1979, the four-year-old Vo and his parents fled from war-torn Vietnam in a makeshift boat built by his father, eventually being picked up by a Danish freighter and settling in Denmark. Though his art is underpinned by these conflicts and often references Vietnam, it attempts to be placeless, so it can comment upon multiple cultures and the identities they create. "Uterus" is a multi-faceted culmination of global, cultural and personal narratives. Vo's attention to detail often reveals the artist's intentionality and in other cases, confounds notions of authorship. The golden Evian logo of his piece "For Suzanne" recalls Vo's past gold leaf and cardboard works, which commented on the romanticized nature of commodity objects and their entanglement within the promises of the United States. The title "For Suzanne," and the placement of flowers in the box, evokes personal notions of tribute, gratitude and commemoration. The unadorned box next to it, "Gordon's Gin," is instead titled after the name of the gin company that manufactured it. A flower bulb and many leaves from "For Suzanne" fell into the gin box — asking viewers to wonder if "Gordon's Gin" was planned as a container for the withering flowers. Issues like these touch on the recurring question of authorship in Vo's work. It is reminiscent of Felix Gonzales-Torres' work, where the form and content of a piece is determined by variables such as viewer participation, or time itself. The dichotomy between life and death in contemporary society that Torres' candy and light bulb pieces create are evoked in "For Suzanne" and "Gordon's Gin." Building on the content of his past gold leaf boxes, the dying leaves of the personal memorial placed in the idealized water-bottle box fall into the more unattractive and sober box of gin. Its message seems more final and ethereal than Torres', for once the organic life of the bouquet has ended, the signification of the piece shifts. The bouquet in "For Suzanne" will become even emptier as "Gordon's Gin" and the floor, become a memorial strewn with dead flowers. Small, ostensibly unintentional details



Danh Vo, "Uterus," Installation View, The Renaissance Society

like this are the driving force behind Vo's work, as they simultaneously reveal his hand and obscure it. On a similar note, his acquisitioned piece "Untitled (The Collection of Leonard Lyons' Letters from Henry Kissinger)" (2008), nonchalantly invokes the secret carpet bombings of the Cambodia Campaign, a military campaign that killed thousands of civilians and led to the creation of an entire diasporic population. These events hold numerous similarities with post-war Vietnam, reminding one of Vo's own forcibly displaced family. Like this tension between the quotidian and the catastrophic, Danh Vo's work exists between luxury and devastation. "Uterus" approaches allegory by assembling disjointed elements that create a more powerful statement than a unified whole ever could. The beauty of his work is that it is not limited to purely subjective, political or global definitions. Instead, it has the ability to critically comment on each at once.



"Two Histories of the World," Hyde Park Art Center

Remix, the Remix
'Two Histories of the World'

BY KATIE WADDELL

Appropriate to its postindustrial framework, the edition of "Two Histories of the World" on view at the Hyde Park Art Center (HPAC) isn't about reviving defunct art installations so much as exploring possibilities posed by the remix — the twenty-first century's pervading creative gesture. For its first iteration, curator Karsten Lund invited artists to make work from objects found at William H. Cooper, a dilapidated factory-turned-resale warehouse on Chicago's West Side. The artwork stayed where it was, unlabeled, mixed with the factory's miscellany, making the exhibition a sort of reverse-Duchampian game of distinguishing between intentionality and happenstance, leaving viewers to decide whether the chairs stacked in the rusty sink were arranged by one of the artists or by providence. As Lund rightfully suggests in his exhibition essay, the HPAC gallery space plays that game for the audience. For the exhibition's second version, artists were asked to make new work responding to the experience of creating art at the warehouse, without relying on the postindustrial setting to activate the work. The show's most successful work stays true to the original exhibition's generative position by responding to stuff's inherent stuff-ness. Laura Davis's sculptures, for example, comprised of stacked steel-frame cubes and various errata, have a Surrealist flavor, which is appropriate given that this movement was among the first to appropriate vernacular objects as artistic material. And while they don't form an explicit narrative, the objects she uses — mannequin hands taped together at the wrist, mounted by a red hair clip, suspended over a black-and-white image of a giant razor in one sculpture — produce meanings associatively, exquisite corpse-style. Sara Black and Gillian Soto's tables adorned with monochromatic objects forming a rainbow of knick-knack tableaux, suggest an impulse to impose order on to the chaos of overproduction via color-coding. The colors into which the manufactured objects are organized (cream, metallic gold, orange), are diverse. Nature might wear the colors of the spirit, but with over 2,058 Pantone swatches, technology dons the garish hues of invention. All exhibitions that wrest location-specific art from its context, recapitulating it for different audiences at a different time and place, often with a distinct visual-spatial and contextual frame, gamble with the work's legibility. Divorced from its original site, artwork often falls apart, existing for new audiences as a mere document of its former self. Part two of the Lund's bipartite exhibition Two Histories of the World addresses this problem by reinventing its site-specific art objects entirely, rather than merely translating them. "Two Histories of the World" becomes a show that both stands on its own and works as a part in a series, suggesting that new and risky curatorial tools, like the remix, are often the sharpest.



Trans-forming

Dr. Susan Stryker Lectures on the History and Evolution of Transgender studies

BY MICHELLE WEIDMAN

"Technology is changing our embodiment in really interesting ways," Emmy Award-winning filmmaker and groundbreaking academic Dr. Susan Stryker explained at the end of her packed lecture at the Sullivan Galleries on October 3. She went on to describe the growing interest transgender studies has in the ways that technology complicates the division between the human and nonhuman.

Transgender studies, a field that Dr. Stryker helped establish, is interested in opposing the idea that trans bodies are in some way less "natural" than other bodies, a criticism that has come not only from conservative channels but previously from certain gay and lesbian circles as well. In many ways, Dr. Stryker reminded the audience, the human body has already been a combination of biological and technological forms, and that a division between the two may not be a correct or useful distinction.

The lecture focused on the history of transgender studies and how it has earned legitimacy, to a point where a self-identified trans person like Dr. Stryker can contribute to the discourse as a figure of authority, rather than as merely the subject of the conversation.

Stryker started the lecture by defining the "Transgender Phenomenon" as that which "disrupts or denaturalizes the normative phenomenon," as distinguished

from a transgender "thing" — that is, a stable and singular identity or set of traits. She explained that this distinction is important in order to focus attention on relationships between an observer and an observed, instead of seeing gender as an inherent quality. By shifting the focus in this way the discussion can be "not just about looking at a minority, but [about] looking at changes in the way we [as a culture] look at things."

Stryker located the emergence of transgender studies, what she calls "Transgender Studies 1.0," around various social and political phenomena in the '80s and '90s. A few of the events she listed were the AIDS crisis and the emergence of queer politics, the end of the Cold War and the dissolution of many binary ways of thinking that were associated with it, and the techno-futurist fantasy in the late 90's when, "people thought they were about to live in the future." This last event was also marked by a growing fascination and acceptance of the cyborg-body, with which transgender studies has a conceptual connection because of the shared interest in collapsing distinctions between the human and nonhuman.

This first round of trans studies had its limitations and problems, however, as most emergent fields of study do. Some of the problems identified by Stryker were having "whiteness" as a default position [something which lesbian and gay studies has struggled against in the

U.S. as well], and the fact that "gender" is an anglophone concept that doesn't have an equivalent in other languages. Many of these issues are now an integral part of current trans studies which emphasize the necessity of a close reading of how "trans" things happen and are conceptualized in other places, by non-anglophone people.

In the final part of the lecture Stryker listed emerging themes of the field including biopolitics, radical political-economic critique, and post-humanist boundary criticism. Stryker's personal academic interests are moving away from sexuality and toward intersection of trans studies and technology.

The lecture was scheduled to coincide with "The Great Refusal: New Queer Aesthetics" at SAIC's Sullivan Galleries. Although Stryker did not directly discuss visual arts or art making in her lecture, she included an encouraging comment to queer artists stating that queer aesthetics are "part of cutting edge art practices now [that go beyond] autobiography [to form] fascinating conversations about gender complexity."

*The lecture was sponsored by the Goldabelle McComb Finn Endowment with additional support from the Department of Exhibitions & Exhibition Studies, the Office of Multicultural Affairs, the Department of Liberal Arts, the Department of Art History, Theory, and Criticism, and the Department of Performance.

REVIEW

‘Opening the Black Box: The Charge is Torture’ at Sullivan Galleries



BY WILLIAM RUGGIERO

Six claustrophobic feet separate the two white hallway walls that line the opening of “Opening the Black Box: The Charge is Torture,” an exhibition organized by Chicago Torture Justice Memorial Project, an activist group that seeks justice for the victims of torture by the officers who worked under former Chicago Police Department Cmdr. Jon Burge.

Painted black lines connect a timeline that starts in 1972 and lists the specific historical events of Jon Burge’s torture squad, as well as the subsequent court cases and activist groups’ motions and demonstrations. “TORTURE BEING DID” — one of the copies of handwritten official police statements by the victims — offers a stick figure illustration of a handcuffed victim with a shotgun forced into his mouth.

Above the timeline large, printed letters read “I AM A MEMORY.” Treated to look as burned material, the piece, by Flavio Rodrigues, gives the wall a fragile feeling. The combination creates a sense of urgency, or distress; a type of undoing that defies description.

Down the hall architecture proposals cover a wall, all of which visually and textually imagine public memorials in honor of the Chicago torture victims. Digital prints illustrate virtual spaces with a variety of site-specific sculpture: fists breaking chains, reflective stone surfaces, conceptual boulders in the middle of green space, and even a simulated black room with a single chair. Coupled with the timeline, the show stands in between a political pedagogy of public awareness for future action, and the private act of mourning and healing a past.

But how can this commemoration be accomplished? Will a memorial merely diffuse a feeling into public

space in a desire to create a framework of social memory? The success of a dialogue between a public and the object is difficult to imagine from the proposals, and the effects of each piece would rely on the sculpture’s characteristics and relational existence in their respective public sphere. The proposals offer an opportunity for political action and public exposure of the private torture act — an inversion that offers a possibility for hope and for healing. Perhaps this was also the “proposed” space of “The Black Box,” a form of social practice, where art and life meet usefulness. In the midst of chaos and trauma, the exhibition space distills time, making room for a conversation, and the responsibility to engage with it is placed upon both the political and the public sectors.

In the smaller attached gallery spaces the conversation between public and private is continued. Rebecca Keller’s “Soft Prod,” a large, yellow cow prod (once used to electrocute victims) has a green felt tip and is stuffed with packing peanuts. It hangs vertically with uncharged impotence. Maria Cantoni’s “Arbanelle” preserves photographic slides in small jars of olive oil, all of them showing sites where torture happened in the city. Peering into them, the refraction from the light and the oil interrupt a clear image. On the wall, photos of cow prods, typewriter covers and other objects once used to torture the victims, confront the viewer. Their own, cold objecthood channels the physical remnants of pain; the viewer feels for a referent but is unable to find one.

In a more participatory way, Carol Frances Lung’s “A Stitch in Time” offers visitors the chance to help sew quilts that depict men and women holding a sign that reads: “New Trials for Burge Torture

When exiting
the exhibition, one
of Lucky Pierre’s
metal plaques
leaves a final,
lasting image:
“Action #1:
Bear Witness.”

Victims.” Lung’s participatory piece aims to mediate a conversation between objects and memory. The same regenerative processes proposed in these installations are also apparent in Jim Duignan’s “Salve,” a small wooden box containing Aloe plants. During my visit a young girl enacted the safe space when she broke off a piece from the plant, lightly rubbing the aloe onto a cut on her forearm.

A constant search for empathy guides visitors through the galleries, a possible way of putting all the pieces together of a pain-filled puzzle. Tarik Elsayhi’s large photograph “Gisant 3” captures a concrete male body that faces a wall in a fetal position, delivering a cold, deafening silence. Across the way, however, the photograph gains a voice from a video installation by Ivan Martínez, Mary Heinen and

Tirtza Even titled “Sentence Worn, a segment,” a personal narrative from a young boy in a segregated cell. The video does not reveal his face, but his voice recounts the conditions of the cell, so cold that ice formed around the window, he says. Looking back and forth between the photograph and the video piece, one is again suspended in between states of knowing and unknowing.

The piece by the group Lucky Pierre, “100 Actions for Chicago Torture Justice,” includes metal plaques located throughout the space, with a comprehensive booklet hung on the wall. By flipping through the pages one finds various actions that invoke the psychological trauma of torture: “Action #3: Go to the pet store. Buy a puppy. Bring it home. Burn it with cigarettes.” This strikes a nerve in its attempt to approach and embody the feeling of torture, or the desire to inflict it on a living thing. As opposed to compassionate objects presented elsewhere, these “actions” present an unresolved emotional register.

Once a full loop has been made, the last wall to “Black Box” prominently features written columns of the names of the men who were tortured; some appear as “Unknown Victim.” Printed letters in pencil finally give way to some sense of identity, an encounter that brings one closer to a person but further away from understanding the pain he once felt.

On opening night the crowd surrounded the wall text, as two of the original victims signed their names. Their exposure seemed to match both the political voice of the show, as well as its desire to heal. When exiting the exhibition, one of Lucky Pierre’s metal plaques leaves a final, lasting image: “Action #1: Bear Witness.”

D E N Y, D E P R I V E, DESTROY

Activist Group Working to Close Tamms CMAX Prison Moves to Sullivan Galleries

BY DIANA BUENDÍA

Rose Sifuentes does not think her son Jimmy will be released from prison anytime soon. Seventeen years ago, after a violent gang-related altercation, Jimmy was sentenced to 60 years in prison. But after serving his first 10 at Statesville Correctional Center, a maximum security penitentiary, he was transferred to Tamms Closed Maximum Security Unit (CMAX), in the southernmost tip of Illinois.

"I know my Jimmy has a long way to go," Sifuentes said on the evening of the opening of the Sullivan Galleries exhibition "Tamms Year Ten Campaign Office." "But Tamms has taken so much away from him. He has lost 35 pounds, he is extremely thin and he's slowly starting to lose hope."

At Tamms CMAX inmates like Sifuentes' son are housed in perpetual solitary confinement for 23 hours a day, seven days a week, for years at a time. Prisoners only leave their cells to shower or for solitary exercise. They are not allowed to make telephone calls and visits are non-contact. Reports of self-mutilation, suicide, depression and psychotic episodes are common.

Sifuentes found hope for her son when she joined Tamms Year Ten. The grassroots coalition helmed by Laurie Jo Reynolds, an SAIC alumna, artist and activist, was created in 2008, 10 years after Tamms was opened to advocate

for its closure. With the recent U.N. Special Rapporteur on Torture call for all countries "to ban solitary confinement except in very exceptional circumstances, as a last resort, and for as short a time as possible," the support of the American Civil Liberties Union, Human Rights Watch and Illinois Governor Pat Quinn, Reynolds has been involved in an uphill battle, reasoning with labor unions and legislators, pushing for the closure of Tamms.

Through December 21 Tamms Year Ten will be operating from a space at SAIC's Sullivan Galleries. Functioning as the organization's campaign office, it is open and accessible through the main hallway in the galleries. A mural comprised of photographs of every inmate at Tamms confronts visitors as they enter the small, rectangular room. The office is stocked with two desks, numerous file boxes, binders, bookshelves and unanswered letters. Protest signs with phrases like "Tamms Shocks the Conscience" peer out from a shelf. It's neither a relic nor a recreation of the organization's dealings — it's an active office space that Reynolds is grateful for and glad to put to use.

"We've been carrying around a suitcase full of files for nearly five years," Reynolds explained over an extended conversation at the office. "Our campaign has been meeting at places like the Progressive Community Center, The People's Church on the South

Side, different places on the West Side and on the North Side. But it's been important for us to do that — if we move, around more families can come to our meetings."

Reynolds, as the organizer, works alongside Stephen Eisenman, an art history professor at Northwestern University, activist and scholar in the fight to end torture in Illinois prisons. Together with volunteers and family members of inmates, they lead an awareness campaign that clarifies the murky language used to speak about Tamms. Through fact sheets, press relations and demonstrations Tamms Year Ten works to argue against defenders who claim the prison helps decrease overcrowding and inmate violence. They work closely with mental health advocates who speak of the long-term effects of solitary confinement that will undoubtedly affect not just the prisoners who continue to be housed at Tamms, but those who are released and expected to readjust successfully. Tamms Year Ten adamantly emphasizes that dehumanizing forms of punishment "are never necessary for security."

According to the Illinois Department of Corrections (IDOC), Tamms was meant to house the "most disruptive, violent and problematic offenders." Inmates transferred to Tamms "have demonstrated an inability or unwillingness to conform to the

requirements of a general population facility," their website states. But that premise is false, says Reynolds. In 2009, the Bellevue News Democrat published an exposé that found that less than half of the inmate population at Tamms has actually been convicted of a crime after they were imprisoned — Sifuentes claims her son Jimmy has not. The majority of those who have committed assaults, the exposé found, did not necessarily attack prison workers violently but engaged in assaults such as throwing body wastes at guards primarily because of mental illness.

Tamms is two-thirds empty — with a capacity for 500 inmates, there are currently 139 men at the CMAX (25 of whom need extra security procedures) and 99 men at the adjoining minimum-security camp; all are under the care of approximately 300 employees. Because it costs the state an estimated \$26 million a year to keep the prison open, in February Governor Quinn scheduled August 31 as the date to close Tamms, as well as Dwight Correctional Center, two youth detention centers and six halfway houses, citing savings for the ailing state budget of an estimated \$66 million. Soon after, however, the American Federation of State County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) Council 31, the primary statewide council of local AFSCME unions in Illinois, filed a lawsuit arguing that closing the facilities would create dangerous conditions for employees and

NEWS



inmates. The closure of the prisons is still pending.

AFSCME members and state legislators repeatedly emphasize the need for prisons like Tamms because they serve as “safety valves” that prevent attacks against guards. “I think ideologues who have focused their attention on Tamms are not being quite honest about the fact that segregation is a necessary disciplinary constraint,” said Anders Lindall, Director of Public Affairs at AFSCME, over the phone. “An inmate who has committed a violent assault, an attack on an employee or who has masterminded gang violence inside a prison can be placed in segregation in a single cell for 23 hours a day. They can be curtailed in order to impose security to keep staff safe.”

Lindall cites the case of John Spires, a convicted serial rapist who took a Dixon prison psychologist hostage in May 2006 and repeatedly raped her. He was transferred to Tamms and has advocated on its behalf because he knows he is safer there and less likely to hurt anyone, Lindall explained. But in early August, in preparation for Governor Quinn’s closure deadlines, Spires and other inmates were transferred to Pontiac and Menard, both correctional centers with former death row cellblocks.

Jobs are central to the conversation about the Illinois prison system. When Governor Quinn announced his intentions to close Tamms and other correctional facilities, Senator

Gary Forby of Southern Illinois, said in a public statement: “[Governor Quinn] is not taking into consideration where these prisons are located. Closing Tamms will devastate Alexander County, which already has one of the highest unemployment rates in the state.”

On October 11, in the latest development of the legal battle between Quinn and the union, Associate Circuit Judge Charles Cavaness ordered Governor Quinn to negotiate with AFSCME on the labor conditions of workers who will be affected by the closure of Tamms. But Lindall stated that their focus is on keeping the prisons open, not on negotiating their closure. “The state legislature has understood the need to keep the prisons open and has acknowledged that transferring the inmates from those facilities would worsen the overcrowding, in a system that already houses over 49,000 inmates and only has a capacity for 33,000,” said Lindall. “It poses a risk to the prison workers, poses a risk to the inmates and to the safety of the general public.”

“AFSCME cares about keeping the jobs in the Union and preserving prisons,” Reynolds countered. “They filed their lawsuit in Alexander County because they knew that the judge would be sympathetic — they have the same ideology about jobs and prisons.”

As the legal battle ensues, Tamms Year Ten will continue to operate at the Sullivan Galleries, surrounded by two other exhibi-

tions: the massive “Opening the Black Box: The Charge is Torture” and “Natural Life,” a video installation by SAIC faculty member Tirtza Even. Each exhibition explores issues of torture, abuse and mistreatment in the contemporary justice system.

The synchronicity is not coincidental. As the Executive Director of Exhibitions and Exhibitions Studies at SAIC, Mary Jane Jacob focuses on social practices in Chicago and the relevance of art in the social arena. Jacob met Reynolds in 2011 in New York City where Reynolds was part of Creative Time’s “Living as Form” event highlighting socially engaged practices over the last 20 years. Over the summer, the Sullivan Galleries hosted a week-long workshop by Artway of Thinking, an organization based in Italy interested in discussing with social practitioners who attended how to continue to develop their work. Reynolds, who was invited to attend the workshop, engages in what she has called “legislative art,” a practice that seeks for a change in legislative policies.

“Laurie Jo had a corner in this makeshift space in New York when I met her,” Jacob explained. “This was a situation in which we we could say to the artist, There is a chance for you to do something that is better than what you did last year, and we’re here to help. The office was her notion of how she could demonstrate the world that she is functioning in and the lives of the people that she’s trying to affect.”

Tamms Year Ten hosts weekly work meetings at the Sullivan Galleries, and there are plans to develop other events. Currently, the organization has collected photo requests from inmates at Tamms who have provided a description of anything, real or imagined, that they wish to see. Any interested volunteer can pick up a photo request from the campaign office, take a picture and submit it so that a copy can be sent to the inmate. Requests range from pictures of family members, landscapes to images of pop culture personalities and ephemera like the statue of Michael Jordan outside Chicago’s United Center.

“Often times contemporary art has been charged with questions of whether it’s useful or not.” explained Jacobs. “This is one of the prime examples of seeing contemporary art as very useful and having a direct effect on public discourse and public policy. It’s really exciting to see its manifestation.”

“Tamms Year Ten”
Sullivan Galleries
The School of the Art Institute
of Chicago
Until December 21, 2012
www.saic.edu/sullivangalleries

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CRITIQUE

Cathode Tubes Full of Women

Andi Zeisler Reminds us why Criticism of Pop Culture is Indispensable

BY DIANA BUENDÍA

NBC recently premiered a string of tepid sitcoms, desperate for a ratings success. Among their fall lineup is “The New Normal,” a standard antiseptic studio sitcom about a gay male couple (read: white, upper middle class) in Los Angeles who, on their quest to start a family, find a young surrogate mother fresh out of Ohio to have their baby. Created by Ryan Murphy (of Glee fame), “The New Normal” attempts to provide an entertaining look at gay parenting, bigotry and in vitro fertilization.

Meanwhile, in academia, queer and gender theorist J. Jack Halberstam recently published a new book titled “Gaga Feminism: Sex, Gender and the End of Normal.” Halberstam intends to dismiss the ol’ anatomy politics and proposes new ways of talking about bodies, pleasure and labor because, in fact, there is no such thing as normal.

How do you reconcile these two conceptions of “normal” — one spawned in academia and the other from the brains of TV studio executives? Andi Zeisler, co-founder and creative director of Bitch Magazine, had a few pointers when she spoke last month at SAIC’s Columbus Auditorium, as part of the Visiting Artists Program (VAP) roster this semester. Her suggestions included engaging in a race and class analysis of TV shows to draw out larger conclusions because, she pointed out, it’s probable mainstream outlets won’t. Also, avoid echo chambers and strive to serve a larger purpose with your arguments, she suggested.

Even as the founder of an influential and outspoken publication founded to provide “a feminist response to popular culture,” throughout the lecture and a subsequent roundtable organized by VAP, Zeisler did not offer absolute answers to students’ questions about the complexities of gender politics, advocating instead for more heedful, passionate writing. It was a refreshing counter approach to the facile and naïve solutions currently dominating the public conversation; only in the last six months a barrage of mass-market writers have intended to provide overarching definitions for the past, present and future of gender issues.

Most recently, in “The End of Men and the Rise of Women,” journalist Hanna



Rosin argues cheerfully that economic power has shifted from men to women because of the recent decline of the manufacturing industry. In Rosin’s misandrist and simplistic universe, women have achieved greater emotional freedom thanks to the “hookup culture” they engage in nowadays and, she writes, women have also stepped up their game in the domestic violence arena, with reports of physical aggression by women on the rise. On the same day as Rosin, the polarizing Naomi Wolf published “Vagina: A New Biography,” in which she endorses orgasms as the solution to every woman’s problems and advocates reclaiming the vagina “as central to everything.”

Even as mass culture offers these neatly packaged answers to gender inequality by way of naïve books, Zeisler did assert that by speaking the common language of popular culture it is possible to get into more theoretical conversations about feminism and gender politics. As a tonic to the vapid non-fiction books, recent movies, TV shows and novels have offered more nuanced, but by no means all-encompassing, portrayals of women that cultural critics have flocked to analyze.

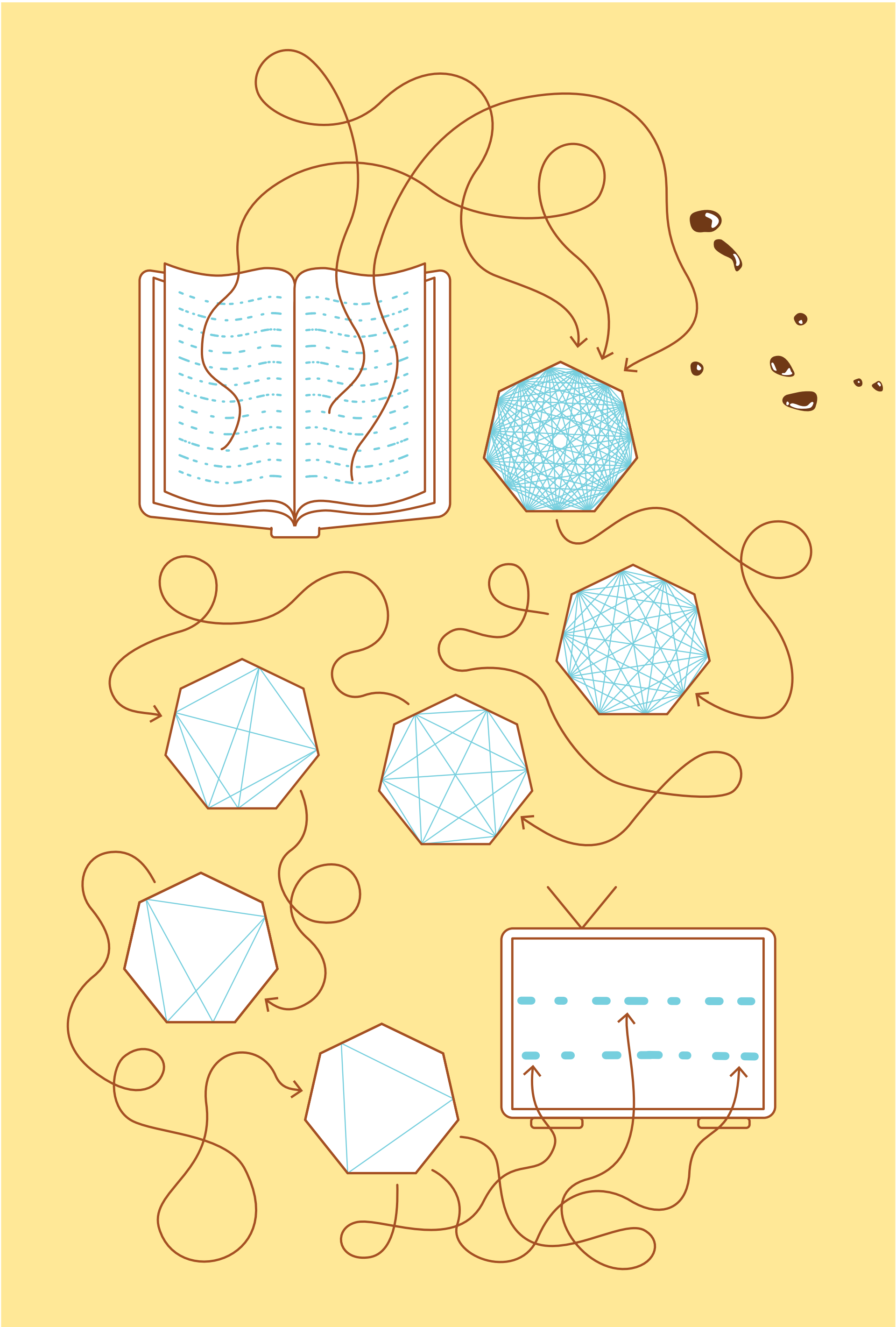
Take the much lauded and closely scrutinized HBO “Girls,” written and directed by Lena Dunham. At her most successful, Dunham engages in what has been called “male gaze punking” by unapologetically stripping down for

her copious sex scenes, challenging the usual body standards expected of women in mass media. Most recently, the Indian American comedy writer and actress Mindy Kaling premiered “The Mindy Project” on Fox, a trite, at times amusing, 30-minute show with standard romantic comedy plots. Even as one of the only women of color to be both the protagonist and the creative force behind a network TV show, her racial identity does not take center stage, she’s just another “ordinary” woman, desperately looking for love. In “The Mindy Project,” it has been pointed out, “race is not a punchline.” Television is getting smarter, Zeisler said, but it is still part of a system that needs to be critiqued.

Bitch Magazine has strived to provide more analysis than reporting on relevant issues, advocating for media literacy and combating a monolithic opinion of what feminists do. It was co-founded by Zeisler with the purpose of bridging a gap between academic writers and mainstream magazines that focus on producing content for women. When it is still common knowledge that a self-congratulatory publication like the New York Times remains wary of hiring women’s studies majors and continues to publish the majority of stories related to women in the “Style” section, Zeisler pointed out, complicated questions about popular culture must continue to be raised.



Bitch Magazine has strived to provide more analysis than reporting on relevant issues, advocating for media literacy and combating a monolithic opinion of what feminists do.



FILM

Magnificent messes

‘Cloud Atlas’ and the Legacy of Cinematic Disaster

BY JOSHUA MICHAEL DEMAREE

This summer, I picked up David Mitchell’s 2004 book, “Cloud Atlas,” in preparation for the Tykwer-Wachowski Brothers’ movie adaptation. Mitchell’s book takes the reader on a meandering trail of human lineage from the Pacific Ocean in the mid-19th century to a distant post-apocalyptic future and all the way back again, anchoring the epic in the possibility that everyone, no matter how seemingly insignificant, can have a grand impact on generations to come. Recreating a dense, literary plot structure like this in cinema is no easy feat for a director — let alone three.

When the “Cloud Atlas” film project was announced a general cry of disbelief arose from both critics and fans regarding the book’s plot and charm as seemingly impossible to adapt. Tykwer and the Wachowskis subsequently released a five-minute trailer and impassioned video defense. This, of course, was meant to assuage the fears of fans and critics alike. However, when a filmmaker cannot reduce the movie plot down to the MPAA-regulated trailer length of two minutes and thirty seconds, this is a sign of two things: either the film is a complete mess or its scope is so bold that it just can’t be simply boiled down. In the case of “Cloud Atlas,” it appears that both are true.

As the reviews from the Toronto International Film Festival rolled in, critics were, unsurprisingly, split between declaring the movie a magnificent epic or an overwrought mess. Even the film’s tag-line reveals the ambitious proportions of the plot, production and potential impact: “Everything Is Connected.” Yes, the novel is an intricate read. It takes a little work to truly appreciate the themes and characters linking the stories together. Casual readers may find the novel’s narrative structure to be

pure gimmick.

This problem is ten-fold for the movie adaptation. Audiences expect novels to make us work — in a way that we don’t usually want to work to appreciate a movie. When a novel becomes demanding it can be put down and returned to later; movies come full force for two hours. Until the DVD comes out, there is really only that one chance to piece it all together. For this reason, movies have to work doubly hard to present the same kind of themes found in novels, which is why “Cloud Atlas” runs the risk of flopping.

This is certainly not the first time that such a grandiose movie has teetered between genius and flop. For comparison it may be helpful to consider one of the biggest box office bombs of all time: Michael Cimino’s “Heaven’s Gate” (1980). Cimino was fresh off “The Deer Hunter,” for which he won Best Director and Best Picture at the Academy Awards. Winning at least one of the two most coveted film awards will usually set up a director for two or three years of freedom in terms of project scale, budget, production time, etc. Similarly, Francis Ford Coppola used “The Godfather” (1972) to finance “The Conversation” (1974), which won him the top prize at the Cannes Film Festival. He would go on to use “The Godfather Part II” (1974) to finance one of the messiest films of all time: “Apocalypse Now” (1979).

Cimino’s “Heaven’s Gate,” in spite of a bloated budget and an entire year of principle photography, completely bombed upon release. Does this mean it was a bad movie? For financial backers, producers, and the studio — yes. United Artists, the studio that financed the film, racked up staggering yearly losses and was forcibly sold to MGM. While the sale of the studio was the result of many factors, Cimino’s epic was never able to wash off the stench of being what many

critics called “the flop that sank a studio.”

Though few films reach the infamy of “Heaven’s Gate,” there are many films that have bounced back from similarly bleak theatrical runs. Frank Capra’s “It’s A Wonderful Life” (1941), the holiday classic, which most cannot pass through the month of December without seeing at least once, lost \$500k in its initial run. “The Wizard of Oz” (1939) didn’t make substantial earnings until it was re-released ten years after opening. The same goes for Orson Welles’s “Citizen Kane” (1941), Sergio Leone’s “Once Upon A Time In America” (1984), Terry Gilliam’s “Brazil” (1985) and many other films that cinephiles now hold dear.

But just how important is making a profit to a movie’s general success? The box office is often thought of as a Darwinian selection for movies. Sometimes if a good movie slips through with box office losses, it is redeemed with an award and re-released the following year. Awards give critics a sort of checks and balances with the studios regarding a movie’s success. But what can be done for the works of genius that inexplicably take the route of the Dodo bird; those movies that aren’t absolved of their messiness till years later? Perhaps too much emphasis is placed on critical and box office success to judge a film’s artistic merit.

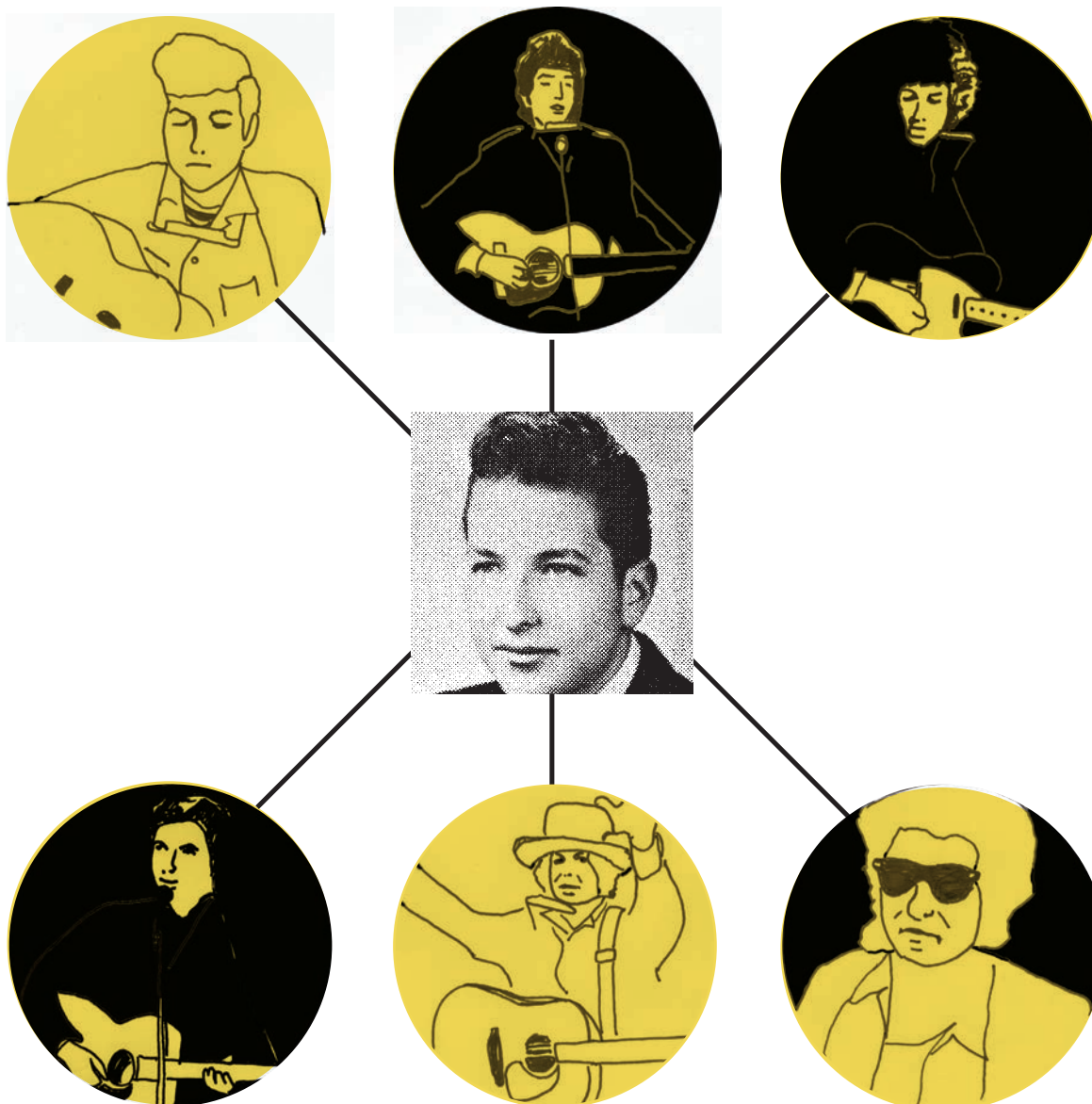
So where is “Heaven’s Gate” today — 32 years after its release? This winter you will be able to pick up a copy from the Criterion Collection. That’s right: the Criterion Collection, bastion for the world’s forgotten masterpieces. While negative press, Cimino’s perfectionist personality, Kris Kristofferson’s ridiculous hair, and the movie’s eye-drying four-hour run time were enough to net \$41m in initial losses, “Heaven’s Gate” is actually quite genius. Cimino’s

film is a brilliant anti-Western set in 1890 Wyoming. Rich coloration, intensely gritty realism, and sweeping landscapes that easily rival those of David Lean and Terrence Malick, make “Heaven’s Gate” a veritable feast for the eyes. Kristofferson and Isabelle Huppert turn in subtle yet powerful performances. An amazing fiddle-based soundtrack from composer David Mansfield — who can be seen minstrelling throughout the plot — beautifully knits all the film’s elements together.

Will “Cloud Atlas” be the next “Heaven’s Gate?” It very easily could. Even in the era of torrents and Tumblrs, amazing films slip past the radar. Tarsem Singh’s “The Fall” (2006) and Gaspar Noé’s “Enter The Void” (2009) have yet to earn the critical and popular interest that they deserve. The truth of the matter is that Hollywood released 610 movies in 2011, which marks a substantial increase from the 135 movies that premiered in domestic theaters in 1980. The Wachowski-Tykwer trio has even bleaker chances than Cimino due to more competition and an incredibly intricate plot to relay. This is not to mention the Wachowski’s penchant for ambitious follies that have few redeeming qualities: the last two-thirds of the “Matrix” trilogy as well as 2008’s “Speed Racer,” which rivals “Heaven’s Gate” for biggest box office flop.

With the amount of mixed reviews coming in there is no mistake that “Cloud Atlas” is messy. But will it bomb, passing through Oscar season, only to re-emerge briefly for a Best Sound Mixing nomination before trailing off to the recesses of fandom? Or is it possible that we can appreciate its chaos as an epically large labor of love and not lose this film’s importance for three decades? After all, a magnificent mess is still magnificent.

MUSIC



It Ain't Me, Babe

The Many Sides of Bob Dylan

BY CHRISTOPHER KARESKA

When it comes to appreciating the work of Bob Dylan one can, as Dylan himself has, choose a character to focus on. There's the Dust Bowl-indebted rural protest singer, the speed-freak beat poet with a rock and roll band, the cowboy gypsy, the gospel preacher, and the ancient Delta bluesman with his deepest roots in minstrelsy. His ideas have been expressed in races, genders, words that are not his own and in mediums and genres outside of songwriting. It may be that the one fact we know about Dylan is that he hasn't allowed himself to be put in any categorical boxes, and that the career of singer-songwriter, which he helped to invent is still being used by artists today.

Dylan has always had a remarkable sense of where and when to employ each version of himself and how to sound convincing when doing so. On his first album he name-dropped Woody Guthrie and covered blues standards. Guthrie and the blues greats were his heroes and he invoked them in his early material, but he knew when to drop the homage and play the right parts.

David Yaffe is author of a recently published collection of essays about Dylan's unique sense of identity and relevance today titled "Bob Dylan: Like a Complete Unknown." In it he writes: "Dylan's time in the trenches of the civil rights movement

coincided with a notable absence of the black musical influence he absorbed elsewhere, consciously or unconsciously, Dylan seemed to sense that this was not an occasion for musical blackface." In conversation with F News magazine, Yaffe elaborated on the point, "Dylan's engagement with race is so unique. It was so special, and I think it told you so much about racial appropriation in American music and culture. Much of Dylan's career is based on having a persona that includes this element. It's partially imitating black music, but it's partially his own intonations. He's not going to pretend that he's not who he is."

Dylan made the most clear statement about himself during an 18-month stretch of the mid-1960s. "Bringing it All Back Home" (1965), "Highway 61 Revisited" (1965), and "Blonde on Blonde" (1966) give listeners a true sense of the artist at his most original and unaffected. All of his influences from Odetta to Rimbaud are in these records, but filtered through Dylan's mind and delivered with his own voice. "If you think about the way he sings 'Love Minus Zero/ No Limit' he doesn't sound like a Woody Guthrie imitator and he doesn't sound like somebody that's imitating the blues," Yaffe said, "He's almost singing the way he talks."

"Like a Rolling Stone," from "Highway 61 Revisited" and "Sad Eyed Lady of the Lowlands" from

"Blonde on Blonde" are prime examples of Dylan leaving folk, blues, and protest behind to deliver something personal and groundbreaking.

To fully arrive at his newfound artistic freedom, Dylan had to betray the following he had cultivated during his years of finger-pointing protest songs and character development. When he went electric at the Newport Folk Festival in 1965, he alienated his dedicated fan base at a time when he had them hanging on his every word. His 1966 electric tour with the Hawks was met with intense booing from fans in England, but he was giving them what Yaffe calls "some of the most powerful rock and roll ever recorded." Then when he had the opportunity to embrace and elevate his counter-cultural icon status in the late-60s he instead retreated to Woodstock, New York, to record a country album and did not tour again until 1974. These seemingly career-killing moves allowed him to stay ahead of his audiences by avoiding a typecast situation that would keep him a folk singer, a rock and roller, or the voice of any movement.

After returning in '74 Dylan went back into role playing mode, unsatisfied or disinterested in being the rock and roll poet forever. "Desire" (1976) was an ornate collection of gypsy storytelling co-written by theater director Jacques Levy. The tour for that album was the circus-esque Rolling Thunder Revue — a

travelling show with wild costuming meant to distance Dylan from his painfully vulnerable divorce album "Blood on the Tracks" (1975). He made yet another dramatic change in the late 70s by publicly converting from Judaism to Christianity and releasing the albums "Slow Train Coming" (1979) and "Saved" (1980). After a creative lull in the 1980s, Dylan returned in the 1990s as a character hybrid of the grizzled bluesman he once aspired to be, and the natural aging process that has left his voice ravaged.

I asked Yaffe why he thinks Dylan has remained a pervasive cultural force at 71 years old, having released his best-loved and most influential work in the 1960s: "He invented this job, and the job is singer-songwriter. He was aspiring to something beyond his own time," he said. "He was aspiring to wisdom at a very early age and that was something that wasn't true of the early rock and roll. So even though pop music has gone through so many manifestations, I feel like the model that Bob Dylan set in motion, and is still doing on "Tempest" (2012), is still a model that's being used."

"Bob Dylan: Like a Complete Unknown" by David Yaffe is available in paperback from Yale University Press

AUDIOPHILES

Dylan Paints his Masterpiece

Half a Century of Bob Dylan Distilled to Ten Essential Tracks

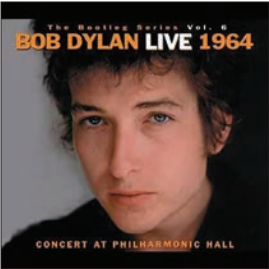
BY CHRISTOPHER KARESKA

David Yaffe concludes his book “Bob Dylan Like a Complete Unknown” with a 70 song best-of playlist celebrating the icon’s 70th birthday. He writes, “Diehard Dylanites will surely be scandalized by some omission or other.” Well, this iteration of Audiophiles attempts to capture the enigmatic and ever-changing songwriter’s essence in 10. The true Best of Bob Dylan.



“I Was Young When I Left Home”
Bootleg Series Vol. 7 No Direction Home: The Soundtrack

In 1961, Robert Zimmerman dropped out of the University of Minnesota and travelled to New York City. He then renamed himself after poet Dylan Thomas, made a major label folk record, and mythologized his past with tales of train hopping and travelling with the circus as a child. When Dylan recorded “I Was Young When I Left Home” at a friend’s apartment in Minneapolis during the winter of 1961, he was just revisiting the land of his actual middle class Jewish Midwestern upbringing.



“Mama, You Been On My Mind”
The Bootleg Series, Vol. 6: Live 1964: Concert at Philharmonic Hall

Dylan as the out-of-love poet remembering an ex, “though [his] mind, it might be hazy.” He was a notorious heartbreaker but on this song it’s all warm interest with no strings attached: “I’d just be curious to know if you can see yourself as clear as someone who has had you on his mind.” This take, recorded live with Joan Baez, is a striking duet of her songbird prowess and his youthful yelping. He forgets the lyrics before the last verse and struggles to get through, but Baez recovers and the crowd goes wild for the king and queen of folk.



“Stuck Inside of Mobile With the Memphis Blues Again”
Blonde on Blonde (1966)

In 1966 Dylan was at his electric rock and roll poet peak. His crowded, cryptic verses were an unstoppable force of circus freak imagery and micro-storytelling. In 1965 he released two seminal albums, “Bringing it All Back Home” and “Highway 61 Revisited,” but “Blonde on Blonde” was arguably his strongest album of that decade. “Stuck Inside of Mobile With the Memphis Blues Again” is a seven minute slideshow of visions accompanied by a frantic Nashville session group trying to keep up. This material would later be taken apart and analyzed by fans and “Dylanologists” for decades to come.



“My Back Pages”
Another Side of Bob Dylan (1964)

Dylan made it big in the Greenwich Village folk scene as a Woody Guthrie acolyte with popular “finger-pointing” protest songs like “Lonesome Death of Hattie Carroll,” and “Masters of War.” He was celebrated as a civil rights activist and reluctant leader of the folk movement. On “My Back Pages” he sounds apolitical and personal while singing “I was so much older then, I’m younger than that now.” The next year he’d be disowned by the folk community for going electric and in “My Back Pages” you can hear it coming. As he’d later sing on “Bringing it All Back Home” (1965), “forget the dead you’ve left, they will not follow you.” Still, many did.



“Goin’ to Acapulco”
The Basement Tapes (1975)

While enjoying reclusive domesticity with his young family in upstate New York during the late 1960s, Dylan recorded organic and literary music that undermined the artifice and trendiness of kaleidoscopic psychedelia. “Goin’ to Acapulco” from the Basement Tapes (recorded in 1967) is a stunning example of the raw, rural, and relaxed Dylan of the late 60s — the artist who allegedly remarked of Sgt. Pepper’s Lonely Hearts Club Band (1967) “turn that shit off.” Playing with his bros in The Band, Dylan sounds like he’s growing up [at the age of 26] when he sings, “Now if someone offers me a joke, I just say no thanks/ I try to tell it like it is and stay away from pranks.”



“Visions of Johanna”
The Bootleg Series Vol. 4: Live 1966, The “Royal Albert Hall” Concert

“Take me disappearing through the smoke rings of my mind,” a lyric in “Mr. Tambourine Man,” was a playful ode to recreational surrealism written by Dylan on a stoned road trip through the U.S. in 1964. “Visions of Johanna” is the less playful but no less picturesque sister-song. By 1966 Dylan had completely disappeared down that road. A casualty of his amphetamine diet, he is caught howling into the dark English concert hall about “the ghost of ‘lectricity.” It’s the last stand for an era of his career. After suffering a motorcycle crash that nearly killed him later that year, the whimsical days of electric ghosts and smoke ring visions were behind him.



“Idiot Wind”
Blood on the Tracks (1975)

From his “divorce album,” “Blood on the Tracks,” “Idiot Wind” is venomous and unrelenting. When Jakob Dylan said the album sounded like his parents fighting, this is likely what he was referring to. Before recording the official release of “Blood on the Tracks” with a local band in Minnesota, Dylan recorded a solemn and sparse version of the album in New York. The Minnesota version is angrier than the New York tapes and it’s difficult to imagine lyrics like, “I can’t even touch the books you’ve read” and “you’re an idiot, babe / it’s a wonder that you still know how to breathe,” being as effective at a slower pace. Only when he closes with “we are idiots babe, it’s a wonder we can even feed ourselves,” does the crippling sadness over his failed marriage surpass his fury.



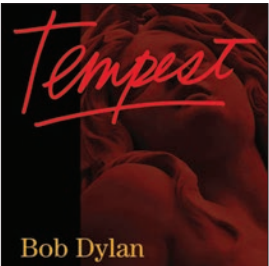
I Threw It All Away
Nashville Skyline (1969)

During the outside world’s musical and political rage of 1969, Dylan changed characters again and went country. The rustic nature of “The Basement Tapes” (1975) and “John Wesley Harding” (1967) was now complemented by Dylan’s new voice — a mellow croon. “I Threw it All Away” is a simple tune advising, “So if you find someone that gives you all of her love / Take it to your heart, don’t let it stray.” He’s melancholy, sincere, and totally reinvented. After releasing some the most unsettling and profound music of the 60s, the most radical thing he could do was release a modest country album. His grin on the “Nashville Skyline” album sleeve contrasted with the austere scowl of the “Blonde on Blonde” (1966) cover says it all.



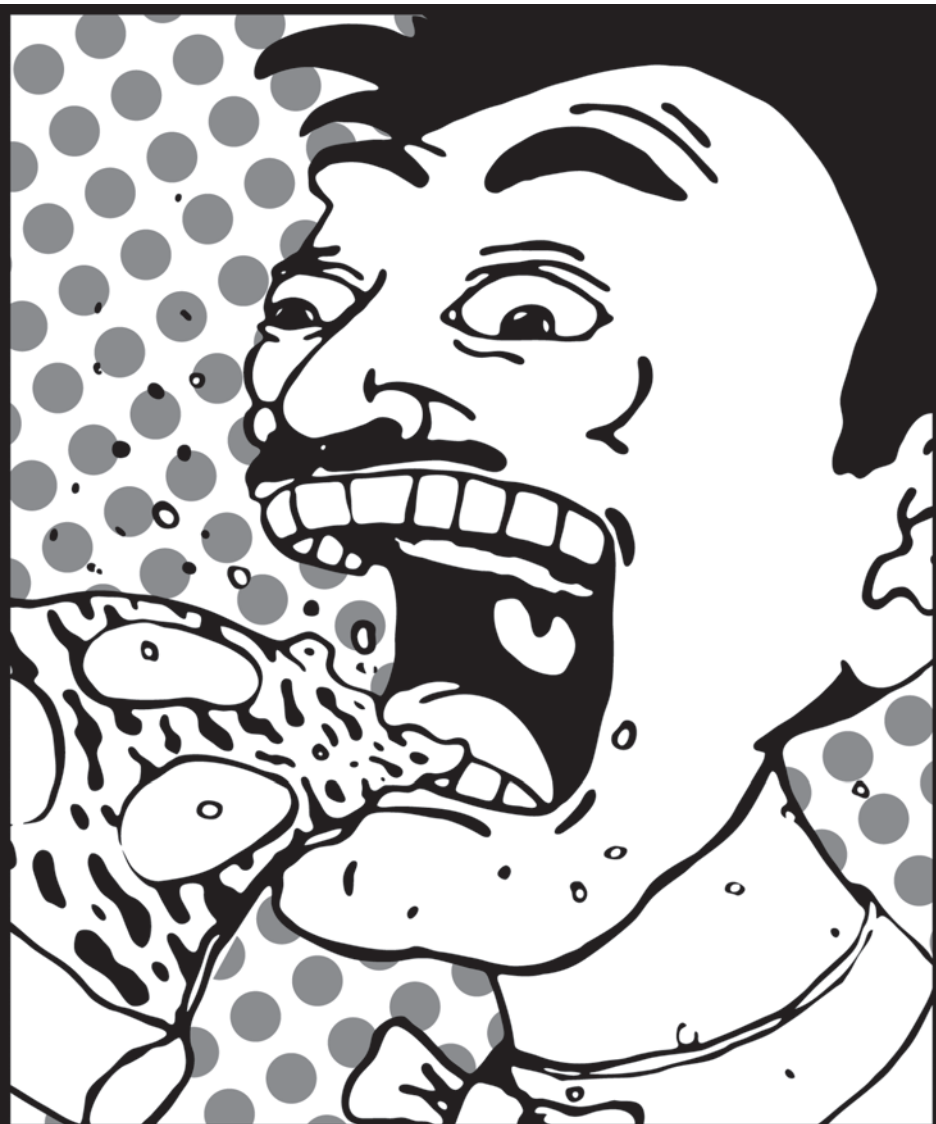
“One More Cup of Coffee (Valley Below)”
Desire (1976)

“Blood on the Tracks” never saw a proper tour, as Dylan found the material too painful to revisit on a nightly basis. So in 1976 he embarked on the Rolling Thunder Revue tour where he performed the wild gypsy-folk of “desire” on a crowded stage while wearing white face paint and flowers in his cowboy hat. The songs evoke gypsy storytelling and outlaw mysticism. “One More Cup of Coffee” details the life of an illiterate girl who can “see the future” (like her mama) and “throw the blade” (like her daddy). Dylan’s unhinged voice is matched by the wailing violin of Scarlet Rivera.



“Duquesne Whistle”
Tempest (2012)

On his 1962 self titled debut album, Dylan channelled the gravelly voices of delta bluesmen. By 2012 that affectation has become his only natural option. During the 80s Dylan was in a creative slump marked by over-produced records and an unwillingness to let go of his once available vocal range. Since the 90s he’s become a cigar smoking, moustachioed legend who has gracefully embraced old age. On “Duquesne Whistle,” he croaks along to a shuffling swing beat managing to sound every bit as passionate, and even more authentic than the kid singing Blind Lemon Jefferson on Bob Dylan.



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FOOD FOR THOUGHT 11.2012

Look in your pantry. How many half filled boxes of pasta are lurking around?
My point exactly. It's time you conquer the world of starchy goodness by
following what's in this week's newsletter.

TOP TEN THINGS TO PUT IN YOUR SAUCE

1. Carrots (*they naturally sweeten*)
2. Red Wine
3. Fresh Basil (*only at the end*)
4. Thyme
5. Garlic
6. Yellow Onions
7. Good Olive Oil
8. Parmesan Rinds
9. Red Pepper Flakes
10. Uh, Tomatoes!



Pasta Carbonara
Serves 2
10 oz Pasta Noodles (Fettuccini,
Linguini or Spaghetti)
2 Egg Yolks
2 Tbsp Italian Parsley, minced
3 oz Parmesan Cheese, Shredded
6 Slabs Bacon
2 Tbsp Extra Virgin Olive Oil
Salt & Pepper to Taste
1/4 cup Reserved Pasta Water

METHOD

In a 8 qt Stockpot bring 5 qts of water to a boil. Add 1 tsp salt to flavor water. Boil Pasta for the recommended cooking time. Keep in mind you need to reserve 1/4 cup of pasta water for the sauce. Meanwhile, chop the raw bacon into bite size pieces and cook in a sauté pan (Save the bacon fat). While bacon is cooking chop the parsley. When pasta is cooked strain through a colander keeping that 1/4 cup of pasta water in the pot. Add pasta to the bacon pan, toss in the parsley, cheese, egg yolks, salt, pepper and olive oil. Stir to incorporate and add the pasta water. Don't worry about the raw egg yolks, they cook with the hot pasta. Adjust the seasoning and you are good to go! FYI Weight Watchers would not endorse this...

Tips for Making Fresh Pasta
Don't Destroy the Dough!

AVOID THE GLUEY-NESS AND DON'T OVERPROCESS

If mixing the dough in the food processor, pulse just until you get moist clumps—not until an entire ball of dough forms.

DON'T BE KNEADY

The dough should feel supple and just a little bit elastic. When kneading, sprinkle with as little flour as possible if the dough is sticking.

GIVE IT A REST

The pasta dough will be easier to roll out and cut if the gluten relaxes for at least 20 minutes at room temperature, or up to 2 hours.



save the water!

Yes, pasta water—that unappetizing gray soup you've been flushing down the drain all these years... it's a miracle ingredient. *Why?* Pasta water is a common ingredient that's often left out of sauce-less pasta dishes—it has the starchy goodness from the leftover cooked pasta that binds sauces, butter and oils together. Drain your pasta in a colander over a bowl (you can keep a measuring cup in the bowl—so you don't forget to use it) and return it to the pan. Add all the ingredients you want to use, some butter or olive oil and cheese. 2 minutes before your are ready to serve, add the reserved pasta water. You will notice your noodles jumping for joy because they are now in perfect harmony.

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INTERVIEW



Animating the Ghosts

Filmmaker Chris Sullivan Talks Midwest, Production and the Implications of the Word “Ugly”

BY MICHELLE SINISKY

Chris Sullivan's animated film, "Consuming Spirits," made its Chicago debut with a special private screening in September of 2011. Following a deluge of reviews and coverage since the Tribeca Film Festival this April, the feature-length film premiered at the Chicago International Film Festival on October 16 at the Siskel Film Center to a wide-eyed audience.

Over a span of 135 minutes, the film comes together in a fragmented but powerful narrative about the complications and consequences of love, longing, disappointment and bitterness, punctuated by the dysfunctions of life in the small Appalachian town of Magusson. "Consuming Spirits" takes the entire repertoire of Sullivan's animation projects and visual style, from stop-motion modeling and paper collage to traditional line-drawn animation. Sullivan's film alludes to the nearly 15-year conception and production process, but only in its meticulousness of narrative — and the math adding up to 3,240-plus frames shot to make up the landscape.

The film centers around three major characters depicted in seemingly unconnected scenes: Earl Grey, a sleepy, sage-like radio-show host; Victor Blue, a newspaper paste-up man turned drunk-driving pickup truck owner; and Gentian Violet, who in the first minutes of the film runs over a nun and hides the body.

Sullivan's characters are flawed and grotesque, and his animation inhabits the same space, piecing together the events of the town and the psychology of its characters with the same sense of grit and detritus native to its setting. I caught up with Sullivan — who, in addition, composed the film's score and voiced Victor Blue — to discuss the film.

F Newsmagazine: You grew up in Pittsburgh, which seems to account for some aspects of the grotesque and post-industrial imagination in the film. How closely was Magusson based on Pittsburgh?

Chris Sullivan: Magusson has Pittsburgh roots, but it is really closer to a place like Wheeling, West Virginia. Rust belt beauty and grotesqueness is surely there.

F: How did you work to construct the physical landscape and mythology of Magusson?

CS: The setting was based on initial sketches and an overhead map I drew. It is the actual characters that unfurled, and changed as the film progressed.

F: You've mentioned your upbringing in a rust belt city a lot in interviews. Do you find that your upbringing inextricably influences the aesthetic components of the film?

CS: I do think that my upbringing and the landscape I grew up in is an undeniable part of the fabric of my work, but I do not think that it is a block. I've talked to people from many different social and geographi-

cal environments, and the film touches them. I relax about this when I remember being a viewer; if I watch a film from China, I do not sense any alienation, because it is a place I do not know. The audience is an observer of the film, empathy comes from things that are very core to the human condition. And the landscape of my film is specific, but the family dynamics very recognizable.

F: Did “Consuming Spirits” take the amount of time to complete that it did primarily because of the process of filming at 24 frames per second (FPS), or was generating the script a big part of it? How did the decision to shoot on 16mm film complicate or change the production methods and rate?

CS: Writing went on throughout, but it was the animating itself that took the time. I also lived my life during its production.

Shooting on 16mm made perfect sense at the beginning of the film and only became problematic at the end phases, but the film was finished on HD. Getting a good transfer was a problem with the film, but Astro Film Lab here in Chicago came

through. After transferring the footage, things went smoothly as far as sound design — though I did sound for over a year and a half.

F: What were some of the reasons for using so many mediums over choosing one to focus on, considering the non-linear narrative and knowing it was going to be shot at 24 FPS?

CS: I knew that I would have the four elements: the cutout puppets, the drawings, the tabletop models, and the photo cutouts. I like what each method does. But it was a trade for clarity, and having people really fall into the picture at times.

F: How did you come across the voice actors and were you composing all of the music and effects?

CS: The voices were all recorded before shooting, and more recordings were made as the script progressed. The actors were hand-picked by me, as were other artists who I felt I could work with. I did 98% of the sound recording and editing for the film.

F: How do you feel about the explicitness of the word “ugly” being thrown around so much

in interviews and articles on the film? Do you feel like “ugly” is a complicated word?

CS: It was appropriate and interesting. I throw it around myself: “And you're not very beautiful, so no one will go out of their way to find you” is my writing. I do have an affinity with ugly people who climb social barriers. It is no small thing.

F: “Consuming Spirits” was Tribeca's only animated feature film. Did that generate some interest for distribution since then?

CS: I am self-distributing as I speak. And that may change, but I would like to not bring another figure into the picture.

F: Were there any major cohesive challenges in getting the edits to feel like 15 years might not have passed?

CS: Yes, there were. Voices change, kids grow up, and people have to be reintroduced to their characters.

F: What would you say to anyone expecting to see the character archetypes and moral tropes of animated feature-lengths?

CS: This film is structurally challenging, but if you stay with it, you will find yourself drawn into these characters and accepting their Pagliacci oddness. And let the film soak into you. Feature filmgoers are welcome, though those who favor Charlie Kaufman, Robert Altman, Lynne Ramsay, Wes Anderson, Denise Potter, or Igor Kovalyov will fare better than those wanting streamlined narratives. Sift through the evidence and artifacts of this film, and I think you'll be satiated by it.

FILM

Around the World in Two Weeks

A Sample of World Cinema at the Chicago International Film Festival

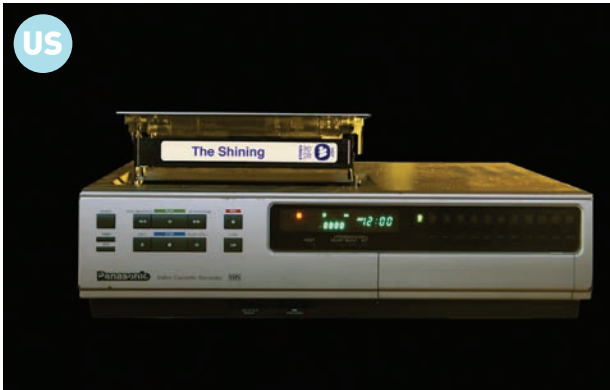
BY DIJANA KADIC

For two weeks in October, Chicagoans got a glimpse of films from around the world at the 48th Chicago International Film Festival. F Newsmagazine sampled the vast number of films to give you a look into what’s to come.



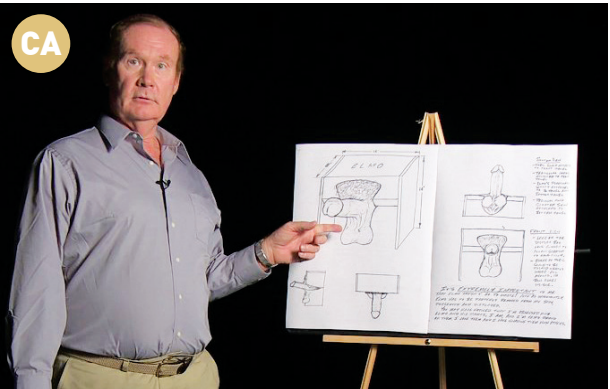
Postcards from the Zoo
Edwin
INDONESIA

With a slow pace and quirky style, “Postcards from the Zoo” tells the tale of a girl who was raised in a zoo and falls in love with a cowboy musician. The story serves as window-dressing for a look inside the world of brothels, crime and poverty. While this subtle strategy is commendable, problems with editing are disorienting, and plot holes distract from revealing a deeper truth.



Room 237
Rodney Ascher
USA

A treat for film nerds everywhere, this documentary breaks down Stanley Kubrick’s cult classic “The Shining.” Through historical research, drawn out maps and conspiracy theories various cinephiles share their obsessively analyzed speculations about Kubrick’s apparently complicated film. While Ascher is playful with soundbites and scene breakdowns, he is careful to show that a true masterpiece never elicits only one opinion.



The Final Member
Jonah Bekhor and Zach Math
CANADA

Sigurdur Hjartarson is on a quest to find a human penis. It started as a joke, but his almost complete collection of mammals’ phalli soon developed into the world’s only phallogological museum. This genuine, funny, and, at times, disgusting documentary follows Hjartarson on his journey to complete the museum’s collection as two human donors emerge with their own ideas of how to preserve the cherished member.



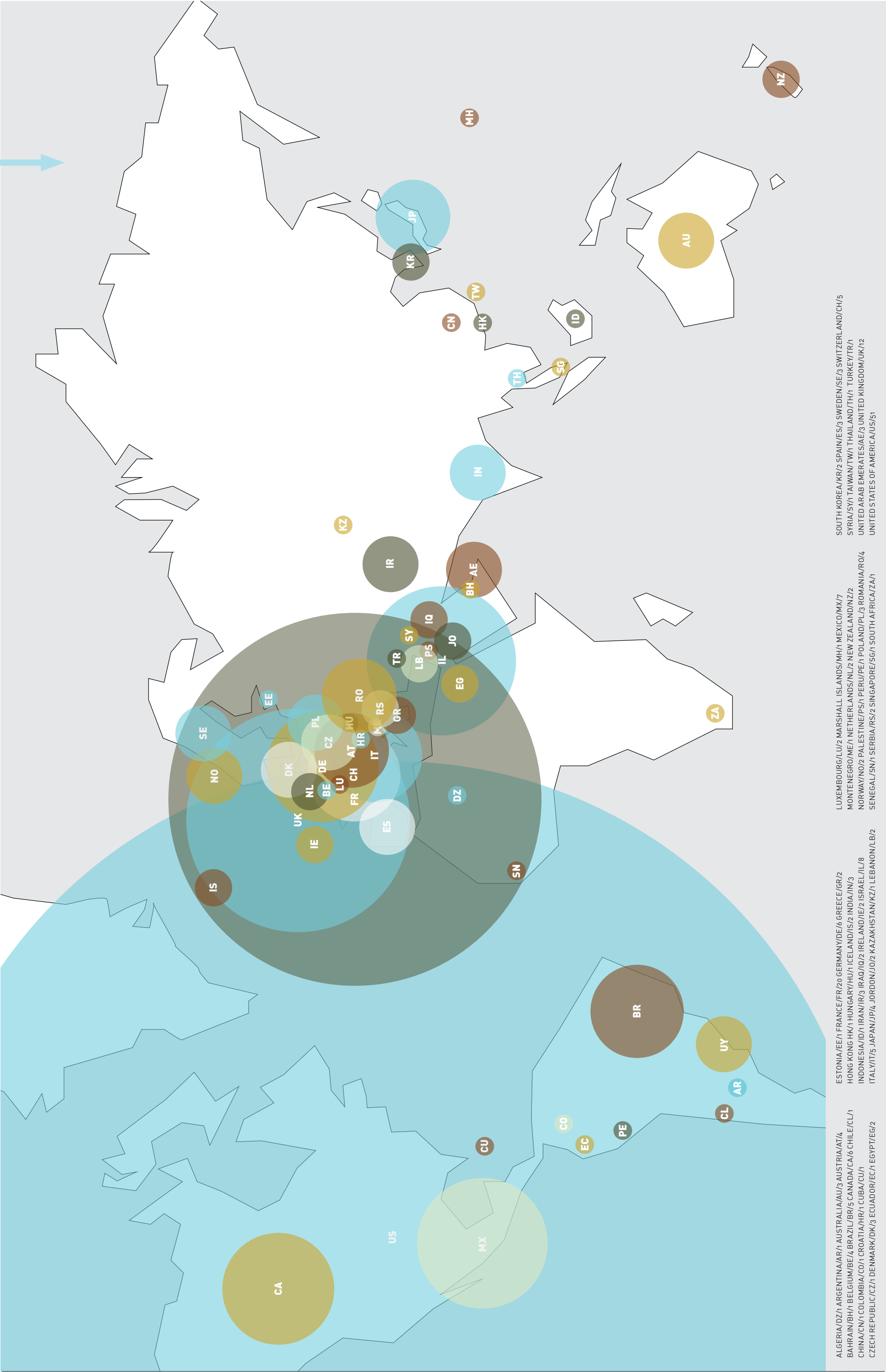
Out in the Dark
Michael Mayer
ISRAEL/PALESTINE/USA

On the surface this film may appear to be a generic love story, except for a key detail: one lover is Israeli and the other Palestinian. Add the fact that they are both gay and the stage is set for a romance seemingly doomed to end in tragedy. While the work touches on important themes — it shows the Israeli/Palestine conflict in another light and addresses a taboo subject — ultimately it dissapoints with too obvious writing and mediocre acting.



Beyond the Hills
Cristian Mungiu
ROMANIA

Why does God make bad things happen? That is the question raised in this thought-provoking and disturbing existential drama. Two friends (Voichita and Alina), separated after leaving a tragic experience at an orphanage, reunite at a monastery where Voichita has found peace. When Alina’s plan to run away and start a new life with Voichita fails, Alina becomes disturbed and violent. After a failed exorcism, the film’s final battle takes place between the forces of faith and logic.





CREATIVE NON-FICTION BY NOELLE ROSE (MFA-W, '13)

Blame the Dragons or How to Never Grow Up

1. Sleep in a racecar. Make your dad install headlights in the base of your bed and paint #1 in-between them. When he tells you the bulbs are a fire hazard tell him there's no such thing as fire.

Grow tired of the car and sleep in a pony, where the headlights are now glowing hooves. Request a purple head with a mouth snarled open in a silent neigh above your pillow. Make your dad build this one, too, and compliment his carpentry skills as he grunts in the garage, his electric saw gliding through mane tendrils. Bring him a beer and tell him what a good dad he is. As he gulps down the beer, ask if he can add a unicorn horn to the horse head.

2. Be an astronaut, a zookeeper, a doctor. Perform surgery on your brother's Stretch Armstrong doll, tying the cord of your alarm clock around his squishy arm to act as the vitals monitor. Ask My Little Pony for the scalpel: the butter knife you snuck up from the kitchen. Slice Stretch down his center and watch glue ooze from the place his heart should be. Attempt to perform electromagnetic shock with an Etch-a-Sketch and some batteries. Watch Stretch slowly deflate, his ruptured body a tiny volcano, and understand there's no use giving life to something that never asked for it.

Be a pilot, a wet nurse, a soothsayer. When your grandfather dies, read your mother's palm. Run your finger along the center crease and tell her her lifeline is unusually long. Stare at her thumb when she starts to cry.

3. Your body will change, but always see yourself as moonscape, where your belly button is the proper crater for a moon landing, for a snazzy camera's panoramic view. Stand naked in front of a mirror and know that you are orbiting something, continuously.

4. Believe in dragons, in ghosts. At night, light a candle and try to contact your grandfather via Ouija board. When you ask the air if Heaven exists, and the Ouija glides effortlessly down to "NO," believe in Heaven anyway.

Collect erasers, trading cards. Connect two paper cups with a piece of yarn long enough for you to hide in the upstairs closet and your brother to crouch in the crawlspace downstairs. Shout your greatest fears into your cup until your ribs ache. Feel relief

when your brother reports only a faint hum came out of his cup.

5. Get good at everything but math. Win spelling bees. In fourth grade, make Sandy Anderson's brows furrow when you spell "anemone" flawlessly. In American history class, memorize the presidents hard enough to be able to list them in a minute. Be able to describe, in great detail, how assassinated presidents were killed.

Learn everything you can about dragons, that the Eastern and European dragons are composites of other animals, such as fish and snakes. Become obsessed with the legend of the Korean Imoogi, or "Great Lizard," not quite lizard, not quite dragon. When you learn that the Imoogi is a girl who's been transformed on her 17th birthday, grow hopeful. Search your shoulders for the mark the Imoogi girl is born with that signify she's the chosen one.

6. Never leave your house permanently. When your parents talk about moving or divorce, scream and cry and pound your fists on the ground until they drop the idea completely. When the three of you sit at the dinner table in stony silence, be happy knowing you're responsible for keeping the family together.

7. Read about squirrels and beavers and other animals that prize wood. Learn that the woodpecker taps the bark of trees thousands of times a day solely for the joy of bursting insects in its beak. Find a tall pine tree in your yard and decide that it's your new home. Scoop up inchworms dangling from branches and hold them in your mouth, feeling them pulse across your tongue. After minutes, release them. Decide you aren't cut out to be a woodpecker.

8. Continue to believe in dragons and leave the hoovelights of your horse-bed on, by accident. When a fire grows on your mattress and spreads through the rooms of your house, this belief will be most useful. It's easiest to blame the dragons.

9. Step through the ashy rooms of your house. Collect erasers, trading cards. Know that blackness, like remorse, is a quiet thing.

10. See your parents' bodies fail. Peer through your father's skin like wax paper. Find tiny crops of veins on your mother's thighs. Know that you are still the surface of something celestial.

11. Watch a larger house go up on the foundation of your old

house. After it is shingled and roofed, walk through the rooms and hate it. Climb the staircase and remember a dollhouse you lost, how easy it was to move Barbie from the bottom floor to the top when a dragon clawed its way in through the front door.

12. When you sit in your new bedroom, on your new bed, remember where things started. How the rooms you knew like a hand blinked on, then off.

13. Accept reconstruction. Nod when your parents tell you they're cutting down that tall pine tree, how it's simply too singed. Pretend to understand. As a stranger in a crane slices through the thick bottom branches, stay in your bedroom. Snap photos as the man in the crane moves higher and higher and the branches drop to the ground like corpses. Keep clicking as the trunk is dissected, log by log. Fill your camera's memory card with the destruction.

When it's all over, review your photos in reverse and watch how the tree grows back, branch by branch.



LITERARY

POETRY BY KEVIN BERTRAM (MFA-W, '13)

ring shiner/
in herrings

in the history,
or the “*shiny it*,”
of passed time –

[full of
defeatisms, spotted
by all
and accepted
wholly without struggle,
tugged simultaneously
between then
and then
or rather
now then now
or actually –
“when won’t one
of us notice
(the passage of time)
?”
if the passage to me
is *thin! y*
es! there it is
(from the beginning)
of *this* time]

a circle,
a ring,
a thing to polish
is only shiny
for a time

tangelo or/
not al gore

before birth
i was a
thief,
a robber
who upon exit
ceded
a rope
and traded a
bib therefor

but it was not the
bib but rather
the net that caught
the left over
bits of mother
i left on the sill
of the window
below the note
labeled “hint”
which read:

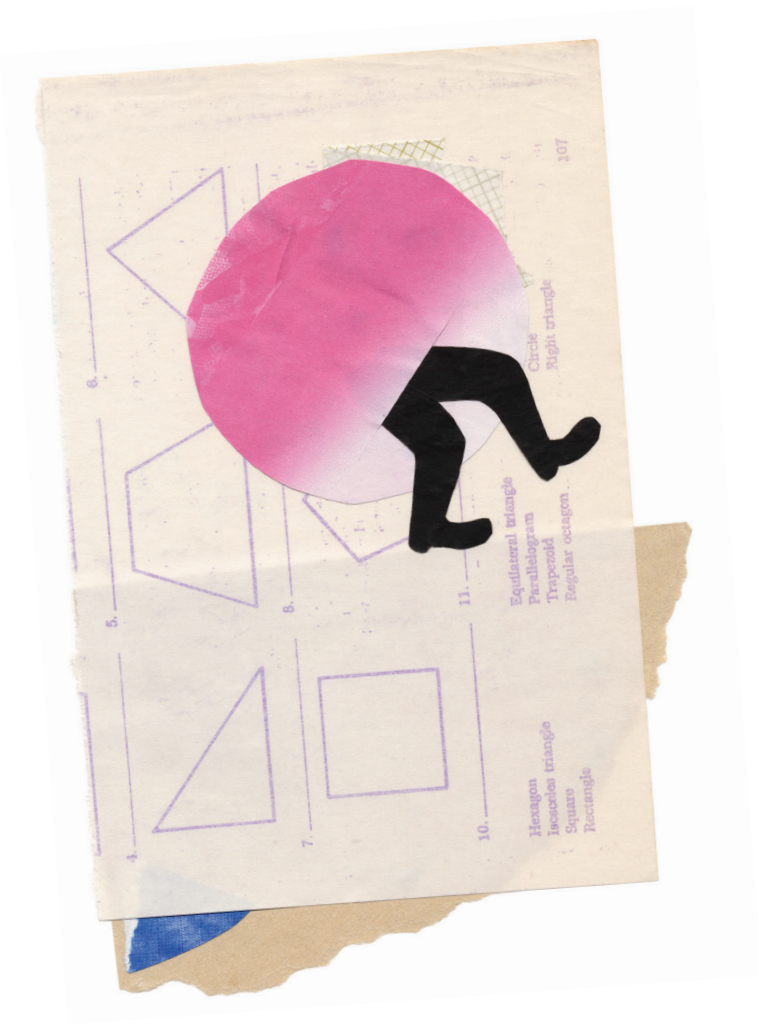
a name
is
always
a name and a key

a word
passed
and
tested
against

the right fruit
the right hero
the date of birth

and so

to keep a secret
be unaware; toothy
be not what you are



POETRY BY ABE HOMER (BFA, '13)

Stepparents are
People Too

She poured vinegar on the
anniversary roses, which withered in
his seeing.

Now she says its because she likes
the way it reminds her of tiny babies
that smell sweet, can fit in her pocket
and have soft, soft skulls.

Trapper’s Cabin

My bed
is the
trapper’s cabin;
rich with blood
but cold
despite.

A place
for that
heavy lifter,
loafer, lifer
or lithesome lover,
chronic user
as a term
of forced endearment.

When it’s over
let me sit alone.
When I sit
I’ll think for two.

When we’re done
we’ll write it down
and let our frailty
be admired.



COMICS

BY BERKE YAZICIOGLU



BY JENNIFER YUNG





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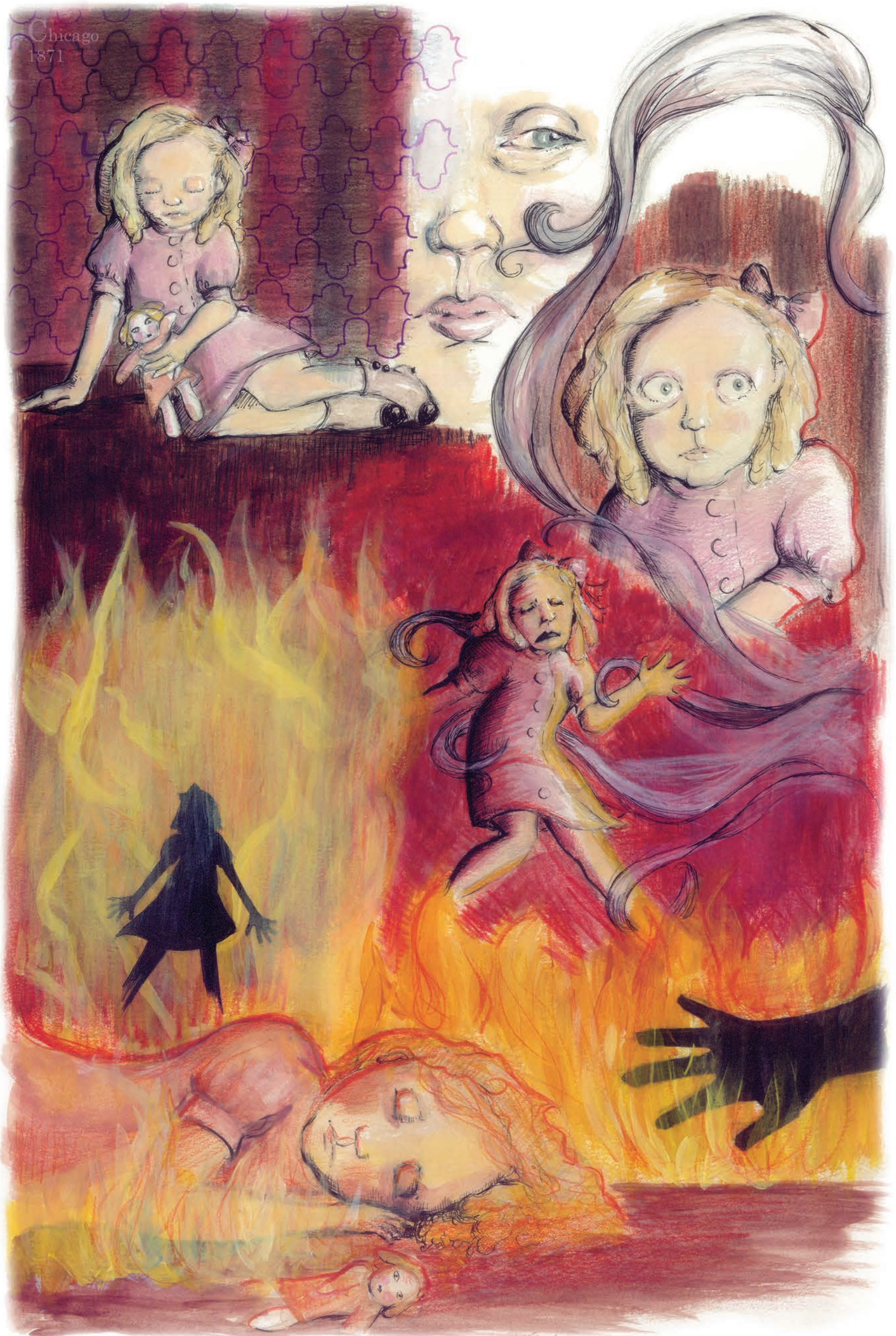


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Astrid Jones

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