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A STUDENT JOURNAL OF ART, CULTURE AND POLITICS

APRIL 2009

NEWSMAGAZINE

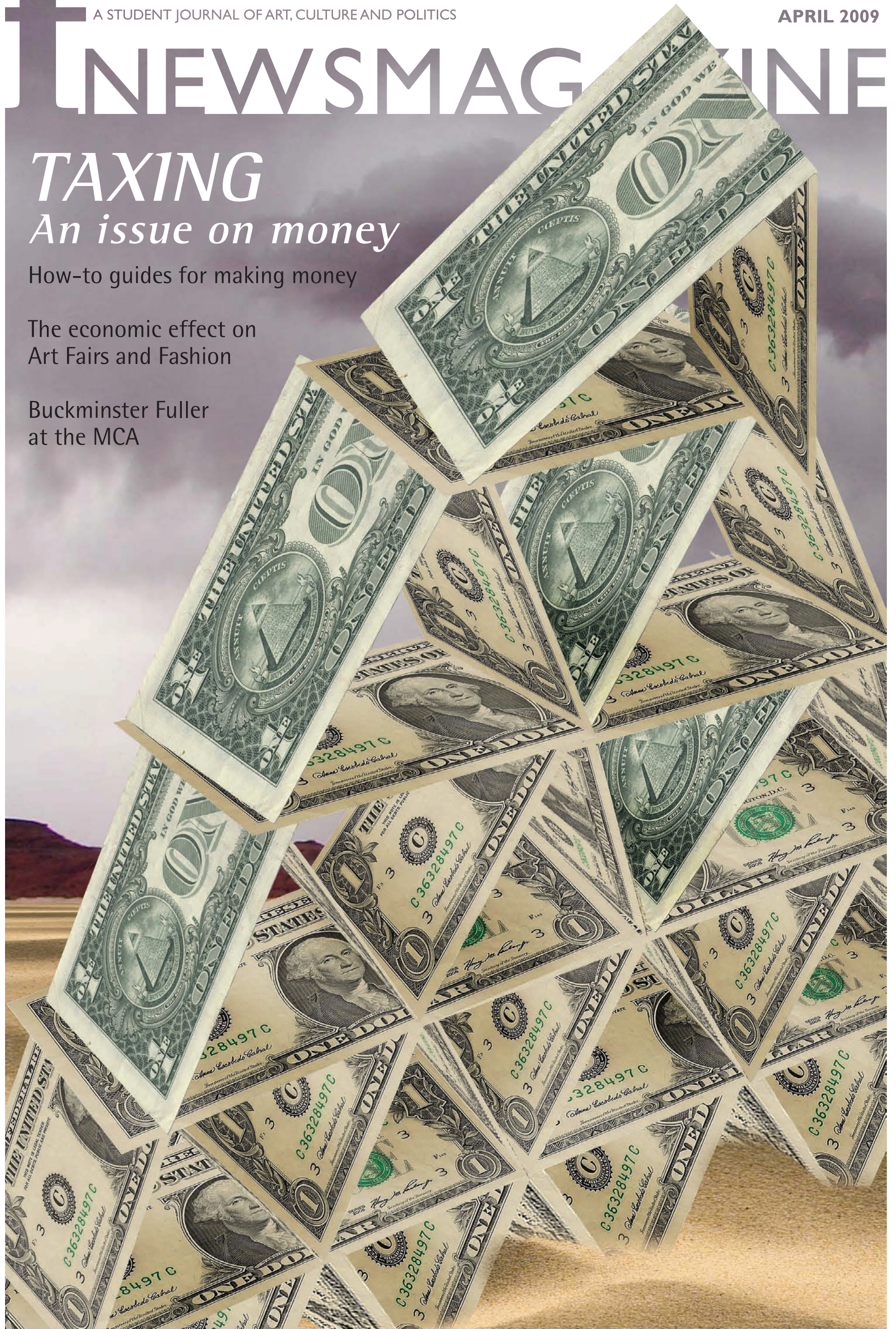
TAXING

An issue on money

How-to guides for making money

The economic effect on
Art Fairs and Fashion

Buckminster Fuller
at the MCA



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find a job

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Composed under the supervision and care of the F News staff and easily accessible for your entertainment

The organization may have to use a copy of this return to satisfy state reporting requirements.
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The School of The Art Institute of Chicago

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Part II Who Wrote and Designed Stuff, etc.

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Clockwise from left: Opening night of the BFA show; Staff photo by Adam Neese; Orlando Camacho, Mixed media installation detail; Kara Cassidy Hall, *End of An Era*; Caitlin McGrinn in collaboration with Whitney Oliver and Thomas Bosworth, *Untitled*, Mixed media installation; Staff photos by Aaron Hoffman.

BFA show roundup



Left: Emma Wasielke *Untitled*, Charcoal and acrylic on cardboard;
Right: Cassandra Davis *Veneration of the Saints*,
Wood, velvet, gold leaf, dyed fabric;
Staff photos by Aaron Hoffman.



Highlights from SAIC's 2009 Undergraduate exhibition

BY EMILY BAUMAN

I left the madness that was Opening Night of the BFA show, thinking, “Hmmm, dinos and unicorns.” And while this superficial theming of the show—developed in the overwhelming haze of encountering such a massive exhibition—is quite perfunctory (although dinosaurs do star in some of the best art in the show), it does mark a surprising development in the work overall. I would characterize this move as an interesting grasp to perform a new kind of utopia; a land before time or, at least, before adult-time—or maybe it is just a mocking of utopia, without the characteristic cynical dystopic vibe.

Once one gets past the trade show feel of the Sullivan Galleries’ current set up, the artwork of the BFA show starts to come to life, and the variety of forms, concepts and influences that SAIC’s current graduating class is grappling with begin to impress. While it is typical that many works throughout the show wear their inspirations like an awkwardly fitting off-the-wrack suit (the true mark of young artists who are still grappling with the intricacies of their media and command of progressive and persuasive expression), this in no way means that they are not successful. Perhaps a better way to say this is: these are not the emperor’s new clothes, but a mock up for an eclectic new wardrobe that may borrow just a little too much from the incompletely digested politics of the past.

The exhibition is punctuated by insightful (and inciteful) stabs into the art historical lexicon, and cunning play with pertinent cultural themes. Although many of the artists may be reaching back to a land before (their) time, many of them manage to point to a positive future (at least for their art work). ■

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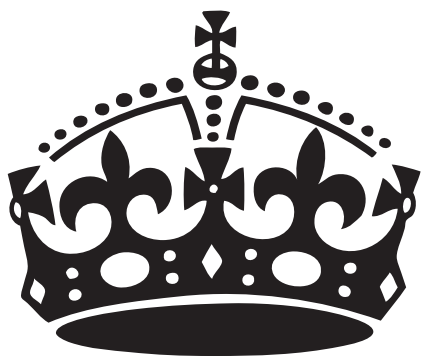
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what moves you



KEEP CALM AND CARRY ON

BY AURÉLIE BEATLEY

By all accounts this is a very stressful time for everyone, especially those of us in the fine arts. We're mired in a recession, job prospects are down, everyone's depressed, God is dead, etc. In order to cope, I've done two things and I can recommend them both to you. 1) I've stopped following the stocks. It isn't useful, and I find that I do not want to know how dead the NASDAQ is today. 2) I've turned to the past, because it puts everything into perspective.

I'm not the only one. There's an interesting phenomenon occurring in Great Britain right now, which I find charming and very helpful. Once upon a time, during the first few weeks of World War II, the British government set about developing propaganda posters to bolster the British public's morale. The posters were three-phased: "Your Courage, Your Cheerfulness, Your Resolution Will Bring Us Victory" was used at the very beginning of the war, "Freedom Is In Peril" was used at the start of the blitz. There was a third and final poster, to be deployed if the Nazis ever invaded, and that one read "Keep Calm and Carry On." Since there was never any invasion, the poster was never used and was eventually forgotten until Stuart Manley of Alnwick, Northumberland, found a copy folded up in the bottom of a box in his attic. Since then, it's been everywhere. As the frazzled masses turn to the work of an anonymous British civil servant sixty years after it's original conception and plaster it all

over the modern Anglophone world, the clear, simple, unflappable message continues to ring true in the midst of a different sort of demoralization.

It is important to remember, in these taxing times, that troubles are cyclical. The last major economic crises that this country faced down was the 1973 oil bust, followed shortly by the "stagflation" phenomenon that left the country reeling due to inflation coupled with high unemployment, which wasn't even supposed to be possible. Then we survived the 1979 smokestack recession, which saw most of the U.S.'s heavy industries exile themselves offshore. Then we elected Reagan. This country has, in the past thirty years alone, stared down the barrel more than once and come through the trial to continue on with its characteristic kamikaze optimism.

As we emerge from art school, laden with debt and full of woe over the state of the world which is being bequeathed to us, I think the most important, most constructive thing we can do is take a leaf out of our grandparent's book and heed the advice of that nameless civil servant. If we continue to build and to innovate, to create new systems of progress and come up with novel ideas about how to operate as artists and as cultural leaders, then we will continue to come through each successive crisis with a better understanding of our society and our capacity to change things. There has never been a time, in our lifetimes, where this impetus to action has been more critical. So let's do it. Let's keep calm and carry on.

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APRIL ~~march~~ gallery

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Mike Gibisser	Andrea Slavik
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Szu-Han Ho	Lisa Young-Kutsukake

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Thursday, April 23rd, 7 pm:	<i>Appointment with an Air Guitar: A Neighborhood Jukebox Tour</i>
Thursday, April 30th, 7 pm:	<i>Performing the Absent Body: Looking To Be Touched</i>
	<i>I lost my gloves and my hands are cold</i>
	<i>Slum Love: A Screening of Films and Videos Exploring Reality Tourism</i>
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Letters to the editor

WHAT ABOUT THE FILM COMMUNITY AT SAIC?

Dear *F Newsmagazine* Editors,
This morning I was delighted to see that the March issue of *F News* was dedicated to the Moving Image. It was a well put together issue, but I think it lacked a section extremely vital to a huge chunk of your audience: a section on what SAIC has to offer. You had a lot of great information about the cinema world in Chicago, however you forgot that there is stuff happening right here! Even though you did mention Conversations at the Edge, I think it would have been wise to have a whole section on the FVNM department and all of the other already existing screening opportunities that SAIC provides. There is a student-run broadcast platform, ExTV, which screens student work on the Internet through a series on CanTV, a student-curated Undergraduate Film/Video Festival, etc.

These options are open for public viewing and exist right here at our disposal! ExTV has a rolling call for submissions and is also open to any kind of curatorial ideas. There is also the Experimental Film Society that holds meetings to make and discuss experimental film. The student group Platypus has a weekly screening event too. Maybe it's just me, but I'd like to know when our own community is creating things as exciting as this and it's a shame our own newspaper doesn't recognize them.

—Kali Heitholt
ExTV Outreach Coordinator
Student Association Member



REPLY: DIVERSITY AT SAIC

Hello Editors,

I read February's article on SAIC's diversity, and I think that all the wrong questions were being asked. Though correlation doesn't necessarily mean causation, it does bring up things worth looking at. The reason why there aren't any black students at SAIC has a lot more to do with money than anything else. Economic diversity is something that was not mentioned once in the article. It is no secret that the black population suffers from a higher poverty rate than any other race in the United States. The numbers show that the black population's median income is significantly lower than the white population's.

SAIC carries a \$31,000 price tag (just tuition) per year for undergraduates, and only 20% percent of students receive Pell Grants. Many of those Pell Grants go to students who would qualify as Independents. When you go down the street and look at another private art school at half the price, Columbia College, you will notice that the black population increases by comparison: 15%—and 27% of the students have received Pell Grants. Harvard recently has started promising full tuition scholarships for any student's whose income is less than 40k.

While Harvard has the power to do this (they have the second highest endowment only to The Vatican), the gesture says a lot. I have always had a love-hate relationship with the school. I always felt that not enough was being done to create awareness. It's almost as if nobody cares to notice. Coming from a Chicago public high school where at least half of my classes were filled with non-white students, my integration into SAIC has been long, and heartbreaking.

—David Beltran

NOT A FUNNY JOKE?

In response to "A day in the life..." article posted in the March issue of *F Newsmagazine*: whoever would choose to write such an audacious article, should man up to their opinions. If you really choose to publish such a disgusting article, put your name next to it and show your face. For a TA to call their students stupid in the school publication is plainly offensive. To us, a TA is someone who is interested in what we are doing, who chooses the position out of their interest in helping young artists (not in a sexual way).

By associating violence with sexuality, you are clearly sending the wrong messages. I see that it is in the "comics and humor" section but the content is very serious, not to be made a joke. Basically, there is better material and better writing in this school. We understand that you have these opinions but the school paper is not the right venue to express them in.

By including "creepy" in your subhead, does it give you authority to express your blatant sexual opinions? Does being "creepy" make it ok? Don't you have any better material to publish? We do have a writing program.

—Lauren LoPrete and Wesley Kloss

Dear Lauren and Wesley,

Thank you for your well thought out response to the article. We regret that the intent behind publishing this article, which was meant as an apocryphal self-deprecating comment on the student body, was lost in print translation. We do however stand behind our decision to publish it. We believe that the ability to make fun of ourselves in a humorous yet critical manner is important. In a school where S&M is a visual language that is continuously investigated in the work of both student and faculty members, we did not consider the references to "spanking" to be an endorsement of violent sexuality, and certainly we do not believe that acts of aggression—sexually motivated or otherwise—are in any way acceptable. But we do not pretend that this kind of behavior does not exist. Neither do we pretend that there are not sexual innuendos and feelings that exist between students and TAs (or even teachers) at this school, although to reiterate, in this instance the account was entirely fictional. The credit line of "anonymous" had nothing to do with the writer not wanting to be named, but was a literary choice in keeping with the diaristic format of the writing. Additionally, as any TA at this school knows, the Einstein/Eisenstein slip that is alluded to as a reason for the student being stupid, reflects a persistent issue at this school of students not properly researching or paying attention to their assignments—as opposed to stupidity per se. We certainly expect that our readership (aka the student body) is intelligent and we would not assume to condescend to you in any way. We hope that this stance is clear in what we decide to publish in this paper, and are once again sorry that there was a miscommunication relating to this article in particular.

Sincerely,
The Editors

LIBRARY WHAT-WHAT!

Thanks for the shout out to the Flaxman Library on p. 7 of the February issue. Most of the credit for the new Professional Practices section goes to Holly Dankert and Jenn Smith—and yes, they are taking suggestions.

As for the administration "cutting" the library, I haven't heard that rumor yet. Seems like a no-brainer that we're in for some budget tightening all around, but Duke Reiter is really focused on pushing for library improvements. Long run, the picture looks good. Stay tuned!

—Claire Eike
Library Director



To read the original articles, go to fnewsmagazine.com.

ART NEWS DISASTER REPORT



Staff Illustration by Aaron Hoffman

Cultural institutions in crisis...so what else is new?

BY NATALIE EDWARDS

If Chicago's 10.5% sales tax and the constantly unfilled potholes didn't clue you in on the economic collapse, then the demise of cultural institutions should tip you off. Early reports of the recession pointed towards a sustainable, resilient art market, with the economically street-wise talking heads projecting that the wealthiest would continue to act like the wealthiest, doing what the wealthiest do: buy, sell and trade commodities (like big ticket art that most people can't touch).

But, the wealthiest aren't acting like the wealthiest after all, affecting everything from museums, university galleries, orchestras and even arboretums and aquariums. Prominent institutions like the Getty in Los Angeles are among the many suffering from declining ticket sales, dwindling endowments, hiring freezes, disappearing board members and dips in donations. Doors are closing, buildings are stopped mid-construction. There are layoffs, and fine art yard sales.

Some cultural organizations are being priced out of their homes, prompting unconventional partnerships. In St. Louis, a prominent arts organization is using a mall food court as a gallery. Hundreds of people came out for the first open house, held in the glow of a Panda Express.

Some museums are renting their collections out to museums and hotels. The Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego is currently renting art from its collection to Las Vegas' Bellagio Hotel and Casino at a bargain price. The museum will receive a flat fee based on revenue received by the Casino, which charges \$15 to view the exhibit.

The Art Institute of Chicago, which can't be moved to a food court, has raised prices (from \$12 to \$18 for general admission and \$5 to \$12 for students and seniors) to make up for rising operating costs and to accommodate the costs of the new Modern Wing; AIC hasn't increased prices in five years—although they did eliminate the suggested donation admission several years ago.

Even The Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City, a seemingly untouchable institution, is in trouble. The museum is firing 74 retail workers and closing seven of its shops nationwide. They have already closed eight stores and fired another 53 retail employees in recent months. These are the first lay-offs since NYC's financial crunch in the '70s. While the

Met's chairman, James Houghton, says their budget, which has projected a 25% decrease in their endowment, is not set in stone, layoffs are permitted to continue throughout June (although no more are scheduled).

Many university and major museums are so desperate for money they are selling portions of their collection. The Museum of Modern Art is also gearing up to auction off a chunk of its American art collection.

The National Academy Museum in New York decided to sell two Hudson River School paintings for \$15 million dollars to help keep their doors open, and Brandeis University, expecting a budget deficit of around \$10 million dollars over the next five years, closed its 49 year-old art museum, The Rose, and will sell their collection, which includes Warhols and de Koonings. The collection was appraised at about \$350 million in 2007. The Rose Art Museum situation is particularly complicated, because it was not only affected by the general economic crisis, but their most important donor was substantially hit by the Madoff scandal.

Locally, I Space, which is associated with the University of Illinois, will be closing its doors by the end of the summer, and the Terra Foundation, a Chicago-based source of funding for artists and art institutions, has pulled out of their Paris museum to reallocate their resources and focus their interests more closely to home.

And, after 43 years in business, New Yorker Films, an independent distributor that owned the rights to a vast collection of foreign and art-house works, closed its doors on February 23 2009. Its collection remains in the hands of Technicolor, the company that forced New Yorker Films to cease operations due to an outstanding debt.

Somehow, according to the *New York Times*, "cultural professionals" remain optimistic. Many hold out hope that President Obama will be "The Arts President"—following in Roosevelt's footsteps. He has dedicated a good \$60 million dollars to the National Endowment for the Arts and has also (unofficially) chosen Chicagoan Karem Dale to head his newly created Cultural Ambassador-ish post—a position that artists and organizations have lobbied for years to introduce. Baby steps. f■

ART NEWS TICKER:

Two ex-Broadway producers are now ex-Broadway accountants. **Garth Drabinsky** and **Myron Gottlieb**, co-founders of Livent—the theater company in the '90s that brought the world such gems as *Showboat*—were convicted of one count of forgery and two counts of fraud. There IS money in theater after all... **Sotheby's** chief executive officer **William F. Ruprecht** has agreed to a 14% decrease in salary, amounting to \$100,000 less per year in his pocket. Other top execs will follow suit. In November, right before the big ticket holiday season, Sotheby's suffered a big burn: selling less than 68% of lots at auction. OUCH. Many auction houses experienced a tremendous loss in revenue this year, despite the sale of big ticket items not meeting their estimated value at auction. They are reducing estimates to attract buyers, but the falling price of art has put the brakes on the desire for art sellers to put their shit up for auction. Bitches... **Prickle Jones**, a political artist with the coolest name ever, died in California, March 15. He was 95. He photographed migrant workers, landscapes and social movements and was a student of Ansel Adams. He also photographed the Black Panthers and *The Death of a Valley* (1956)—a series of photographs documenting the Napa Valley before the completion of a dam flooded the landscape... An Australian two-year-old, **Aelita Andre**, just had her first solo exhibition—which should make every grad student in painting feel like absolute crap. Is she a prodigy or a tool for her washed-up artist parents to gain publicity? Ask the Internet... **Frank Gehry's** Atlantic Yards project in New York has been put on hold. He told *the New York Daily News*, "I can't believe it. I spent a lot of time crumpling up pieces of paper to find the right shape for this project." He didn't really say that. But he just laid off all two dozen employees working on the project in November... And finally, a 53-year old heroin addict stole 39 paintings from several New Haven Connecticut art venues, including \$40,000 in art from **Yale's Slifka Center** and the **New Haven Free Public Library**. The paintings were found during a bust at a drug dealers home. He had been accepting the art in exchange for bags of heroin, which is interesting, because sometimes looking at art makes you want to do heroin. —NE

SCHOOL NEWS TICKER...

Tiffany Holmes, electricity wrangler and Eco-friendly professor at SAIC, has an installation on view at the MCA (April 4-26). Her installation consists of lamps and monitors and startling revelations regarding your own electricity use... **Michael Bonesteel** just signed a contract to write a 3,000-word biography of Chicago's own **Henry Darger**, including a selection of Darger's 15,000 tome *In the Realms of the Unreal*. Indie rockers rejoice!... Super hot **David Getsy** just received the Alisa Mellon Bruce Senior Fellowship which sends him to the National Gallery for a year. Will his rippling biceps ever come back? We'll just have to wait and DC... **Spring Art Sale** is right around the corner, April 17 and 18 in the Ballroom. Go spend your parents' money on screen printed totes and felted jewelry. It's the least you can do... A shit ton (230) of students participated in **the BFA show** this year. If you didn't have the chance to brave the line of art-lookers trying to get into the Sullivan Galleries on opening night, you only have until April 3 to check it out. Bring a canteen and comfortable shoes... **Joseph Grigely**, **Kathryn Hixson** and **Lori Waxman**, household names for SAIC students, just received Capitol-Warhol Foundation Arts Writers Grants. Stop them in the elevator and ask them what that means... *Chicago Magazine* features **SAIC's Fashion Design Department** this month. It has a glossy cover and makes great wrapping paper when you're finished, so check it out... Alumn **Robert Donley** has a show at **Corbett vs. Dempsey**... Author **Fanny Howe** will be the juror of the MFAW's Creative Fellowship this year... Tickets to the **SAIC Fashion Show** are really expensive, sure, but snag a dress rehearsal ticket for \$20 bucks. Stop by the ARTICARD office to pick your tix... Alumn **Henry A. Bishop III** (1955-2009) passed away. He studied avant-garde film at SAIC, and was the longtime sommelier at Spiaggia... SAIC Alumna **Lara Miller** is the new executive director of the **Chicago Fashion Incubator** at Macy's State street store. She'll be leading a group of six local, promising fashion designers into fashion fame... speaking of which... **Annika Connor** (BFA 2002) was featured in a ballgown in the *New York Times*' "Sunday Style" collage page, where every fancy person goes to benefits and gets their pictures snapped. SAIC is fancy! —NE

TAXING

AN 155U3 ON MON3Y

Lights out for Neon and Holography?

Are Fashion and
Art Fairs facing their end?

How are you going to
survive with no job?

Will alternative music
die in Chicago?

Why is capitalism
awesome and
charity crap?



WTTV



10

Creative Ways to Earn \$\$\$

BY ED ENGEL

Well, boys and girls, the prospect of finding a job out of art school was pretty dismal from the beginning, so if you've been following the news recently, you are aware that things aren't looking any better. But don't hit the panic button just yet! Here are some tips that will enable you to earn a little extra money while still retaining your gag reflex.



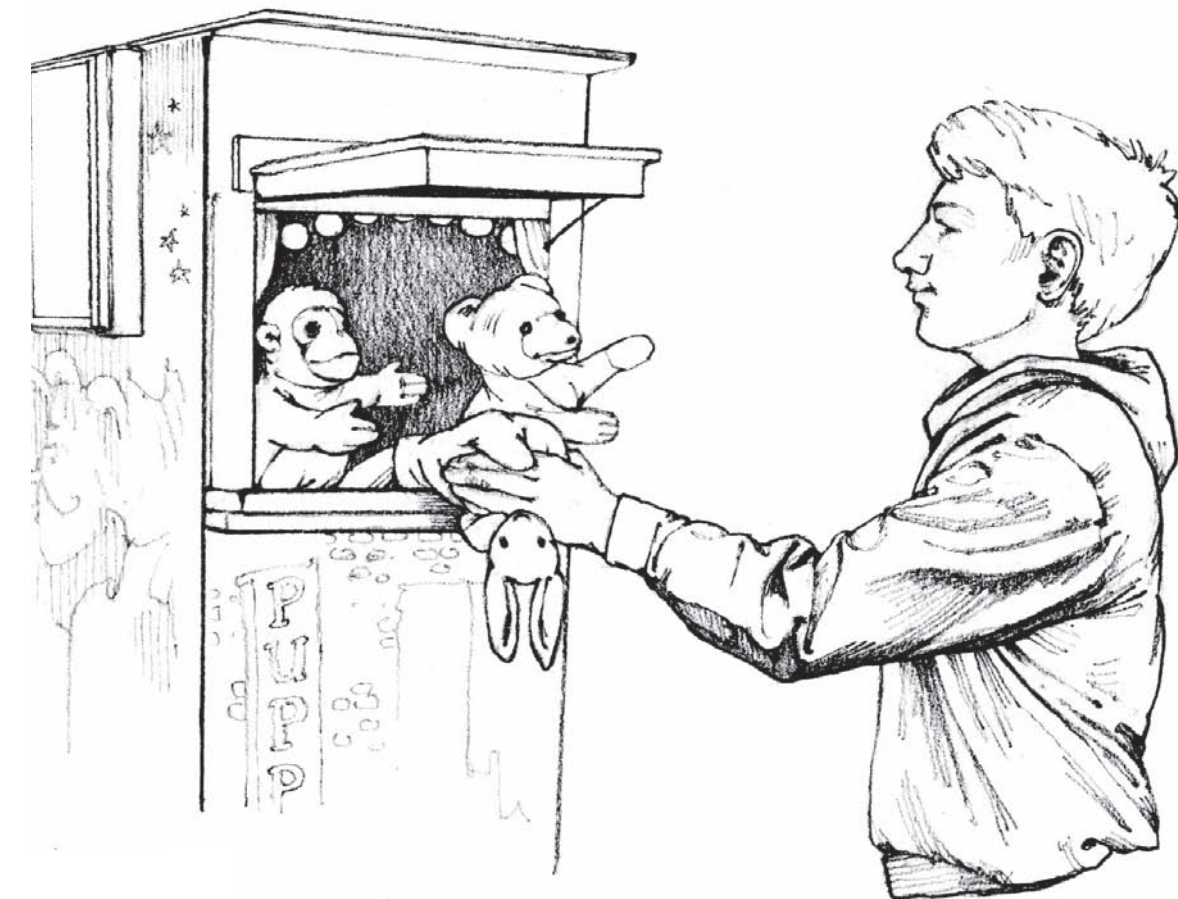
1. Balloon Fetish Video Production

According to the source of all contemporary knowledge (i.e., Wikipedia), balloon fetishism was until very recently a virtually unknown phenomenon. The Internet has provided a forum for "looners," as they are apparently called, to meet people of like fetish and exchange videos.

Reasons you should start producing balloon fetish videos: 1) I'm sure the market isn't as saturated as it is with foot fetish videos or even adult baby fetishism. Capitalize on this unique opportunity while you still have the chance to become the Walt Disney of Balloon Fetish "Porn." 2) There was, in the videos I reviewed (STRICTLY as part of my research, I promise you) no nudity whatsoever. 3) No economic hardship can ever curb the demand for esoteric masturbatory material: videos of girls inflating balloons are, quite possibly, the most wholesome means of supplying it.

2. Three words: Bath-Tub-Gin

Brew your own booze, and convert your apartment into a makeshift speakeasy. All you need is a friend who can play hot jazz piano, and slutty friends to form a burlesque troupe. Party like it's 1929!



Staff Illustrations by Alexandra Westrich

3. Take it to the streets

Your art, that is. Obtain a permit, and begin performing on the streets.

Change accumulates quickly. Befriend the gentlemen who beat on buckets, and the "puppet bike." Collaborations are always a possibility. Don't get shacked.

4. Run inventive scams?

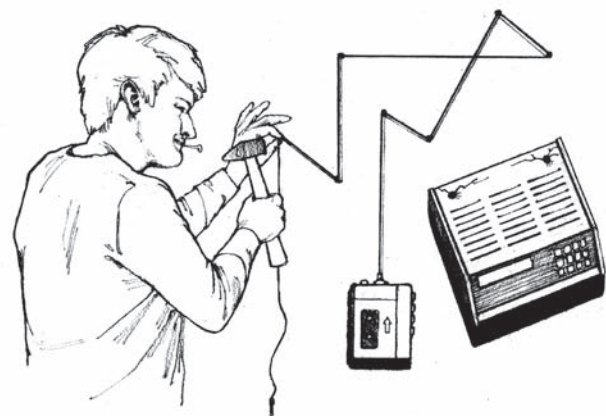
I knew this kid in middle school who used to sell pencil shavings as pot. Clearly, this isn't going to fly with the more discerning upper classmen (I'm never making that mistake again). Thanks to the \$40,000 hazing ritual this school calls its "First Year Program," you'll have a new batch of freshman to swindle out of their money every semester.

5. Lemonade stand?

...because everyone likes lemonade.

6. Sing "You"

I was talking to this guy who had worked for a period of time as a lounge singer. He told me, "Deano never figured it out. Sammy never figured it out. But Frank? Frank knew. When you're singing to the girls, you never refer to them by name. You always say 'you.' That way, every single girl in whatever place you're singing thinks you're singing for her. You'll make millions."



7. Artistic Piracy. Yarr!

Intellectual property, shmintellectual property. The distinction between what has been authored and what has been appropriated is...well, there's a fluid line. To reduce material expenses, purchase cheap reproductions of famous portraits and deface them. "Rip" videos off of YouTube, edit them in an interesting way and set it to novelty music that is now in the public domain. Go to an antique shop in Ohio, purchase something technologically obsolete and put it in a gallery.

8. Remember Ed Hopper's tactics?

You do a sketch of someone's house, and then try to convince the occupants of the house to pay you to do a full painting of their home.

Why the hell would you want a painting of your house, within your house? That's another discussion entirely. What Hopper was doing is in the same realm as the shoe shiners in Chicago. You find someone, perform a task for them that they did not ask you to perform, and persuade them to pay you for it (pretty sweet, huh?).



9. Play to your strengths

Are you a musician? Provide the soundtracks for the films other art students are making. Charge them. Are you a photographer? Document other students' work. Charge them. There's got to be some unique talent you possess that other students would be willing to pay you for.

10. Well...Who needs a gag reflex anyway?

Go to www.sugardaddyforme.com or www.Milf-Date.com, depending on your preference.



LIGHTS OUT

Can Neon and Holography be saved?

BY MORGAN GLIEDMAN

On a Saturday in January, a frozen pipe in the basement of the 112 S. Michigan building burst, flooding the school's Neon and Holography labs. For all of the Spring 2009 semester the labs have remained closed, with the students who were supposed to be the Holography TAs working to pack up the equipment, rather than assisting their students.

"The teacher we were supposed to TA for called us that day," said second-year students Emily Boksenbaum and Adriene Lilly. "There was visible water damage on the ceiling, but the equipment still worked and the rooms weren't trashed." The two would-be TAs, who both credit holography with changing how they see the world and deeply impacting their artistic practice, were told that the future of these classes looked bleak, although there hasn't been much follow-up since then. Even before the flooding, however, there was talk of closing the labs—emblematic of the school's increasing emphasis on design over traditional hands-on art, according to a longtime member of the Art and Tech faculty.

Although the official line is that the curriculum and the proposed cuts to the course catalogue are still under review, advanced registration starts on April 13 and SAIC's Fall 2009 schedule will be finalized any day now. Lisa Wainwright, Interim Dean of Faculty, said, "The economic situation demands that we scrutinize everything, and now the decision [about Neon and Holography] is with the curriculum committee. Sometimes institutions need to make unpopular decisions."

An influential administrator told *F Newsmagazine* that arguments for not rebuilding these labs include that "it is costly to run these programs that have a relatively small student capacity, that the Holography curriculum was never properly integrated into the department, and neon is an outdated technique," as well as that the space could be better used. (One possible new use for the space that has been discussed would be graduate studios, which would allow the school to admit a few more grad students a year.)

According to Art and Tech staff, it is a myth that these classes are expensive to run, because the students provide all their own materials from resale, the equipment is not costly to maintain, and the insurance money from the flood should cover the cost of rebuilding the rooms. Between the Neon Techniques, Neon Animation, and Beginning and Advanced Holography classes being offered each semester and in the summer, the Neon lab actually serves about 54 students a year, and the Holography lab serves 40, which combines to servicing nearly 100 students per year.

Greg Mowery, SAIC alum and longtime Neon guru, combats the small classroom space by over-enrolling his Neon Techniques classes to fit 12 instead of 10 students a

semester, with 6 students coming in the morning and 6 in the afternoon. The situation is not ideal, as it limits the amount of work time each student gets, but it seems like the problem is not that the labs are extraneous, but that they are in fact too small. The Neon classes, especially, are very popular and always fill to or beyond capacity.

These classes are not offered by other art schools, and one of the only other places to study Holography is MIT. As Emily Boksenbaum said, "These are the classes that make this school unique. I could take painting anywhere."

The bottom line is that the programs are mothballed as of now, and it seems the teachers of these classes are either not interested in fighting for their survival or are scared of retribution. At this point, the students are the only ones who can possibly impact the administration's decision.

Aaron Greene, who decided to transition from being a Continuing Education student

to a fulltime Undergraduate after taking Neon Animation in Fall 2008, has been working hard to save these labs. He recently founded the Neon Underpants, a student group working to save the integrity of the Art and Tech curriculum, as well as to facilitate frank discussion between students, faculty and administrators.

"I came to this school for the unique classes, especially Neon," Greene said. "It's false advertising for the school to attract students with the breadth of courses and then take the best ones off the table." The Neon Underpants succeeded in getting over 200 students (10% of the undergraduate student body) in just three afternoons to sign petitions in the form of applications to transfer to other schools. Greene found that "not all, but definitely the majority of students I spoke to either have taken Neon or Holography in the past or want to in the future. The student body seems very passionate about these classes remaining in the curriculum."

Greene delivered his sizable stack of petitions to the President, who was very receptive and seemed open to further discussions with the students. In this conversation, Duke agreed that neon is an applicable trade right out of school, but qualified his statement by saying that it is an extremely limited field. Greene later responded to this, saying, "Making it on your own in fine arts is a considerably more limited field. I think the students need to be involved in these discussions about where vocation and high art meet, and the future of the classes we came here to take. In the end it is our futures on the line, and we need to be thinking about what we will do when we get out of school and how school will facilitate our futures." ■

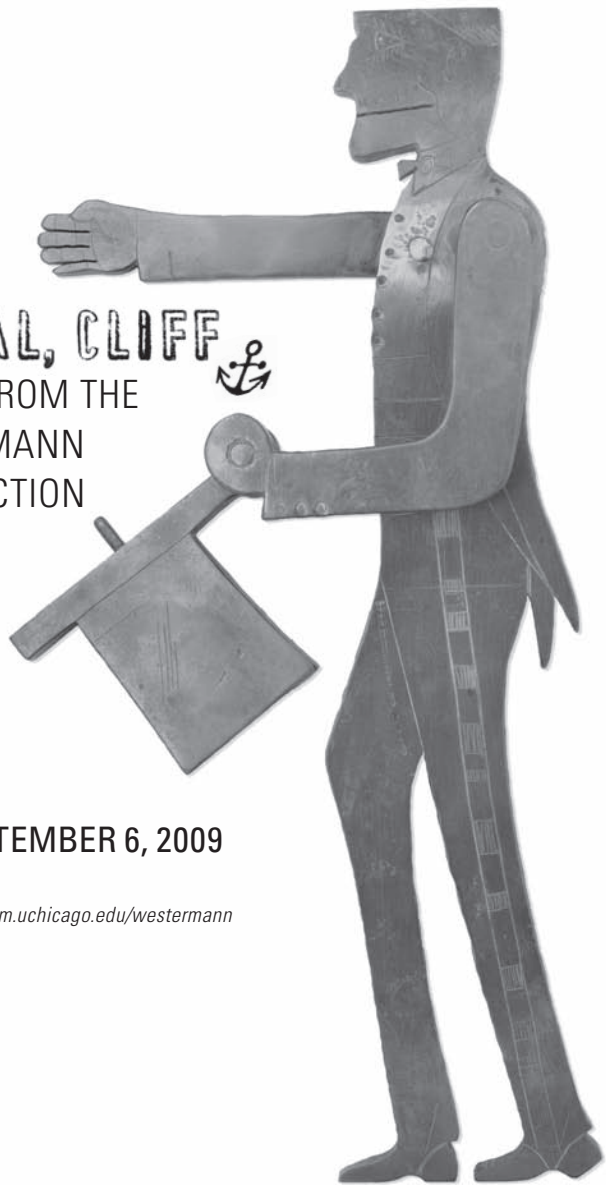
To sign a petition to save the Neon & Holography labs, visit us online at www.fnewsmagazine.com.



Illustration by Olivia Liendo and Amy Luo

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Horace Clifford (H. C.) Westermann, Untitled (Base HCV Personage), 1979, Base, Smart Museum of Art, University of Chicago, The H. C. Westermann Study Collection, Gift of the Estate of Joanna Baer Westermann, 2002.130. Art © Estate of Lester Baer / Licensed by VASA, New York, NY

VISUAL & CRITICAL STUDIES

UNDERGRADUATE SYMPOSIUM

PRESENT IMPRESSIONS

4:15-5:40p

BODY
LANGUAGE

Moderated by Terri Kapsalis,
Adjunct Associate Professor,
Visual & Critical Studies

BEVERLY TAYLOR
Tickets to the Gun Show:
Bodybuilders, Steroids and 21st
Century Gym Culture

CAROLINE CARLSMITH
Small Game: On the Nature of Furs

LISA SEE KIM
Parts of Speech

SAVA WOLF-YELESIEVICH
Disposable Women: A Comparison
of Contemporary Sex Trafficking in
the United Kingdom to Elements
of America's Erotic Entertainment
Industry

6:00-7:45p

ENCOUNTERING

Moderated by Maud Lavin,
Professor and Chair, Visual &
Critical Studies

EMILY ENSMINGER
YY U R, YY U B, I C U R, YY 4 ME

LAUREN SHIMEL
Abstracted Warfare: Inquiries Into
Photographic Expression

YOGI PROCTOR
Given & Taken

AMY HARVEY
Storified Object: The Saliera Epic

BREAK: 7:25-7:45p

7:45-9:10p

CREATING
METHODOLOGIES

Moderated by Kai Mah, Assistant
Professor, Department of Art
History, Theory & Criticism and
Department of AIADO

KARLY WILDENHAUS
Convergent Practices: Approaching
Contemporary Curation Through the
Internet

JAIME GROETSEMA
Reconsidering Alternative Structures:
Education, Organization and Public
Space in Chicago's Non-Traditional
Galleries

ZACHARY PARSONS
Avant-Org: Social Organization and
Aesthetic Critique

RECEPTION: 9:10p

BREAK: 5:40-6:00p

APRIL 24 2009

4:15-10:00p

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To Blockbuster or Not to Blockbuster?

{ That is James Cuno's Question }

BY EMILY BAUMAN

In 1976 the Metropolitan Museum of Art put on its infamous “King Tut” exhibition, which broke attendance records for the New York epicenter, and ushered in the era of blockbuster exhibitions. Blockbusters draw in huge crowds of out-of-towners and, thereby, huge sums of money for both the museums that host them (which often charge an additional fee for admission to the special exhibitions), the cities they are in (local businesses, hotels, restaurants, etc.), the galleries that surround them, the curators who produce them, collectors who own works by artists in the shows, and more.

The old faithful blockbuster is generally an Impressionist exhibition—Monet really knows how to draw in the crowds—but they have ranged from national treasure exhibitions to kitschy subjects that bend the definition of fine art. However, in an 1980 interview with Brenda Richardson, Richard Serra snarkily remarked: “I’m never sure anymore when I go to the Whitney [Museum of American Art] whether I will see Arnold Schwarzenegger flexing his muscles in the hall or another Edward Hopper retrospective, either one of which is essentially a sales pitch to bring in the masses.” In 1998 when New York’s Guggenheim opened its “The Art of the Motorcycle” exhibition, I have to admit, I had exactly the same feeling. In fact, I swore off going to the Guggenheim ever again, (that is, until they drew me back in with Daniel Buren in 2005.)

But during recessions, or when public funding has been cut, or even during a renovation, the publicity and funds that a blockbuster can bring to a museum can prove invaluable. Take, for example, the “Matisse Picasso” exhibition that the Museum of Modern Art put on during its tenure in Queens (while it overhauled its Manhattan site). Billed by New York Magazine as “Picasso vs. Matisse: MoMA’s Subway Series—The battle of the titans of twentieth-century art is taking place in Long Island City, which brings up a new issue: Which is New York’s left bank?,” the show was an attempt to maintain the museum’s stature while it was in (metaphorical) exile. With over 3,000 visitors a day, at 20 bucks a pop, I would guess: it worked.

AIC has been complicit in this strategy over the years, mounting a Monet retrospective in 1995 that drew about 965,000 visitors, and a Mary Cassatt one in 1998 that charged a \$14 entrance fee. But things have (supposedly) changed since James Cuno came to town in 2004 with his anti-blockbuster stance. Cuno views the internationally touring major exhibition as a distraction from the permanent collection of a museum—it doesn’t hurt that he is now working with the nation’s third largest encyclopedic collection. Ironically, though, AIC is known for its Impressionist collection, theoretically making the works on permanent display a perpetual blockbuster.

But it is also the gift shops, restaurants and commercial partnerships that Cuno rails against. Even wall texts, catalogues and education have come under his scrutiny. “The

author of the discourse replaces the maker of the object as the primary agent in the experience,” Cuno told *The Harvard Crimson* in 2004. “We have to see that museums are not only places of learning...We shouldn’t presume that the only way to justify the museum experience is the extent to which you learn something.” He believes that the museum has a responsibility to the public to gain its respect and trust: members should not be paying for special access to traveling exhibitions, but should be investing in the institution, its collection and its goals.

And, who can argue with his basic point? Exhibitions like “Sensation,” back in 1999-2000, and the circus that surrounded it, definitely take the attention away from scholarly genuine endeavors and give undue power to collectors like Charles Saatchi. But, it also put the Brooklyn Museum of Art back on the map, and names like Chris Ofili and Damien Hirst on the front page of the news. But, while Saatchi and Hirst have helped make the art world what it is today, they haven’t necessarily done so without sullying the waters.

Cuno argues that the money made from such exhibitions does not outweigh the toll it takes on the museum’s reputation. But Cuno is known for raising money for museums via other means. During his nearly 12 years as director of the Harvard University Art Museums (1991–2002), he doubled the size of the staff, budget and the collection, raising \$55 million in a capital campaign there in the 90s. He has managed to raise more than two-thirds of the

And, while Cuno derides the tendency to focus on the “theme park” experience of the museum that blockbusters, gift shops, cafes, etc., bring, the first major changes that were made to the Modern Wing’s plans upon his arrival were the addition of a restaurant, an elevated sculpture terrace and an 800-foot bridge over Monroe St. that leads right into Millennium Park. The restaurant (not unlike MoMA’s exquisite *The Modern*), will be run by a top Chicago chef (Tony Mantuano from *Spiaggia*) and will be separated into a bar/lighter meal area and a fine dining space. Cuno was quick to credit the popular draw of Millennium Park and its accessible public sculpture program with the revitalization of and additions to the new wing’s design.

The museum’s recent program has betrayed some ambiguity as well: while Jasper Johns’s “Gray” show may not be as colorful and crazy as any Picasso exhibition, it, along with the recent

{ Cuno views the internationally touring major exhibition as a distraction from the permanent collection of a museum. }

money needed for the Modern Wing during his tenure (he came in with around \$120-125 million of the approximately \$370 million price tag already accounted for). However, during the renovations and construction of the Modern Wing (set to open on May 16), Cuno has made a couple of moves that seem to question his anti-blockbuster commitment.

For example, the museum loaned almost 100 of its famed Impressionist and Post-Impressionist works to the Kimbell Art Museum in Fort Worth, for an undisclosed, but hefty sum. The works were presented as a blockbuster exhibition in Texas under the title: “The Impressionists: Master Works From the Art Institute of Chicago” (June 29-November 2, 2008), with an accompanying catalogue used to bolster the image of AIC. So, even though the blockbuster wasn’t held at the museum itself, there is no doubt of its complicity and intentional self-promotion in the loan agreement’s conditions. This practice is not unusual however—using MoMA as our comparison again: parts of its collection were sent during its renovation to Tokyo, Moscow, Berlin and Frankfurt. Fees were charged for these shows (it was reported that Berlin paid \$2 million for the loan).

Turner, Homer and Hopper shows were definite crowd pleasers. (Not to mention the exclusive showing of the Benin exhibition earlier this season and last year’s “Silk Road Chicago” extravaganza, which were nothing to be scoffed at either.) Meanwhile, the current Edvard Munch exhibition got first page billing in the *New York Times*, and, like blockbuster shows at most museums, the museum is charging a separate entrance fee—a full entrance fee during February’s “Free Month” and about a \$5 add-on to admission for March and April.

Only a month and a half away from the greatly anticipated opening of Renzo Piano’s new Modern Wing, AIC is expecting major publicity and record attendance to its new galleries and its inaugural special exhibition of Cy Twombly’s 2001-07 paintings (not a blockbuster per se, the Twombly exhibition is spuriously rumored to be a bid for the artist’s estate). So, while some of AIC’s recent exhibitions appear to have been blockbusters-by-accident and the new wing’s opening is so much more than a blockbuster, which should be bringing in a financial windfall starting mid-May—especially with the newly instituted \$18 entrance fee—it is possible that the traditional blockbuster is not a necessary avenue for AIC at the moment. ■

HIGH NOON?

How the financial situation affects SAIC faculty



Illustration by Aurélie Bestley

BY MORGAN GLIEDMAN

In the wake of Deanna Isaac's provocative March 12 "High Noon at the School of the Art Institute?" article in the *Chicago Reader* about the conflictual relationship between the school and its new leadership, the entire SAIC community is a bit wound up. However, even before the *Reader* article hit news stands, this academic year has been one of whispers, rumors and heated discussions over what changes our new president, Harvard-educated architect "Duke" Wellington Reiter, has up his sleeve.

On March 19, Reiter held a faculty-only meeting in the Michigan Avenue Ballroom to clarify the school's economic standing as well as to quiet the chatter and speculation regarding proposed cuts.

At the relatively cordial discussion, Duke, along with Vice President of Finance & Administration Brian Esker, Interim Dean of Faculty Lisa Wainwright and Associate Dean of Academic Administration Paul Coffey did their best to reassure the room that the proposed budget cuts are, they said, modest.

Duke began his remarks by saying, "My personality is not mean-spirited or about causing you pain in any way."

Despite the fact that the school's endowment has dropped 24% in six months due to the overall market meltdown, and its current debt is \$130 million, Esker said: "We're actually in a better financial position than we've been in the last decade."

In Fall 2008, an ad-hoc committee was formed to address and interpret the current situation, which is complicated by the school's ever growing dependence on tuition and the difficulty of projecting fall enrollment—especially since 18% of SAIC students are international, and their continued attendance is often tied to fluctuations in world currencies.

72% of the school's total revenue comes from tuition, and 80% of that from under-

graduate students. A debt-addled student might wonder where all his or her money is going, so one of Esker's pie charts showed that 52% of the school's total 2008 budget was used for faculty salaries.

The admissions office reports that applications are up 20%. However, new enrollment remained flat last year, in part due to an increasing concerns about affordability and

course catalogue, so that SAIC offers 70 fewer classes a semester, will be heaviest in bigger departments without impeding on core curriculum.

The school's part-time faculty are most affected by these cuts, as an additional 27 classes currently taught by part-timers will be taken over by full-time faculty, whose release days—time reserved for out of classroom committee work and research—will be significantly reduced.

The majority of classes are currently taught by 150 full-time faculty, plus about 500 part-time instructors. In reality, there is little correlation between status and teaching load, as often full-time faculty end up teaching less than the part-timers who are running around to several different institutions to try and cobble together a paycheck.

This dependence on underpaid part-time faculty is not unique to SAIC. Non-tenure-track positions now account for 68% percent

emphasized that SAIC is a faculty-governed institution, and it is our talented staff and faculty who provide the progressive programs that make SAIC one of the premiere art schools in America.

She explained that while she does not want to have to cut anyone, in this economic situation priority has to be given to full-time and adjunct faculty, because they receive their benefits through the school. While the majority of the cuts will undoubtedly hit the unranked and less senior instructors hardest, she stressed the importance of keeping a detailed narrative of the process to reconstruct and rebuild cut courses after we weather this financial situation.

Following Duke's presentation, Therese Quinn, President of the newly formed SAIC chapter of the American Association of University Professors (AAUP), asked him to commit to making SAIC a fair-wage institution. She stated that the average instructor teaching four classes only brings home \$11,000 after taxes, and that part-time faculty have subsidized the institution for years.

At this crossroads, Duke is looking at the whole experience of being a student at SAIC, including the First Year Program, assessment, majors and advising. The breadth of course offerings is commonly touted as the beauty of this school, but Reiter forthrightly asked, "When talking to students and their parents regarding our competitors, like RISD, this question often arises of what is the value of the education received here. Is it negative to ask for a degree of accountability?"

"I saw in a faculty-to-faculty email that we should be 'questioning the President's motives,'" Duke told *F Newsmagazine*. "I'd like to understand what they're talking about. My motive is really simple: how to provide the greatest student experience we can, and that's the bottom line." ■

Higher-ups at SAIC are understandably concerned with ensuring that the downsizing process is conducted with a measure of transparency and legitimacy. Lisa Wainwright

"My personality is not mean-spirited or about causing you pain in anyway."

— "Duke" Wellington Reiter

higher credit standards for student loans. While history has proven that in times of recession people go back to school, only time will tell whether the goal of 2% growth annually over the next ten years will be met.

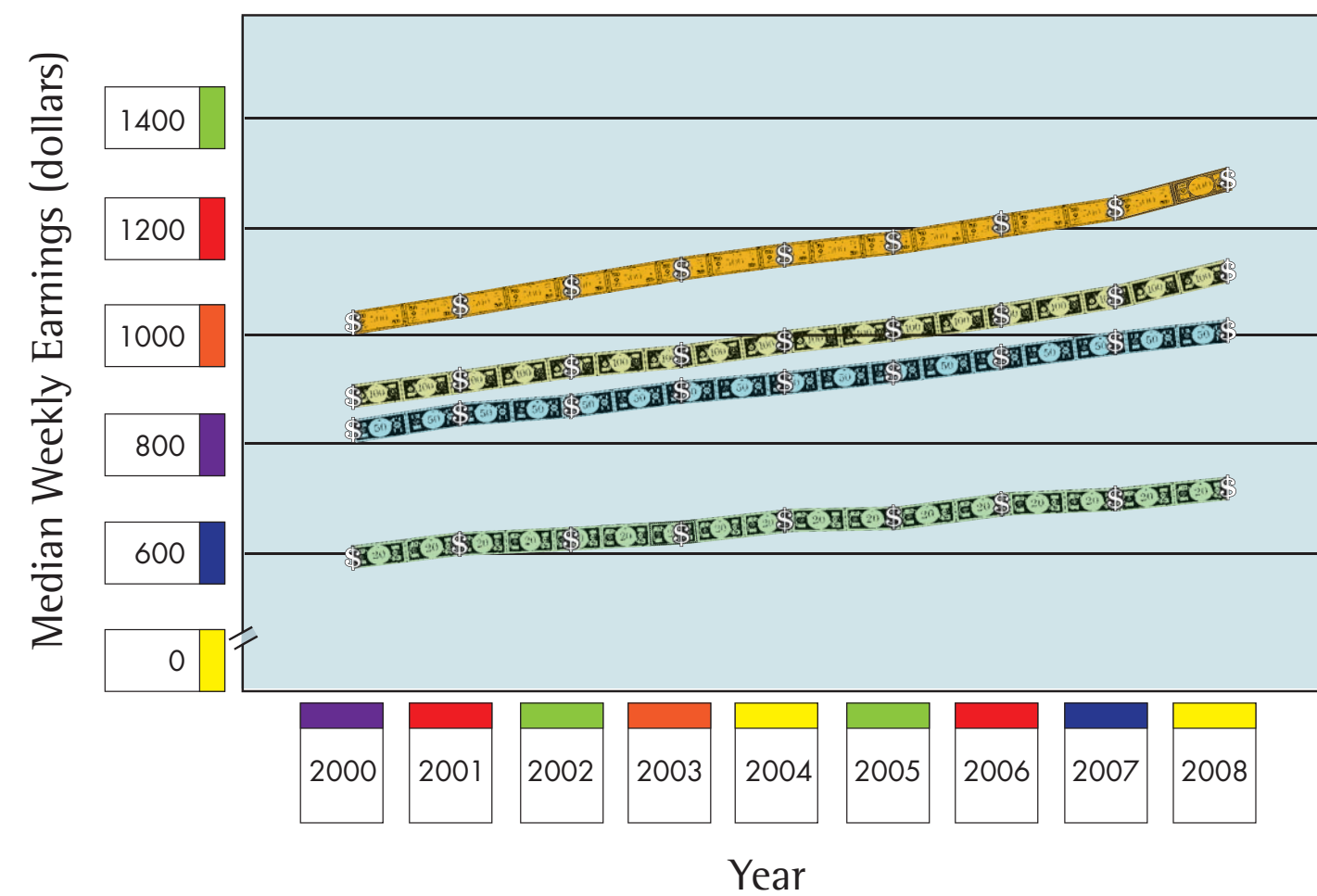
SAIC has an additional hurdle to overcome: 25% of first-year students do not return for their sophomore year, and alumni donation lags behind rates of giving at other high-ranking art schools.

The projected trimming of the school's

Mo School, Mo Money

BY MONICA LABELLE

So you're graduating in a hopeless economy and you're wondering if this school gig has been worth your blood, sweat, and tears. Or maybe you're pondering leaving school altogether before even graduating. Well, hold that thought. According to data collected by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, more schooling can equal higher earnings.* We charted out the data below for your perusal. So soldier on, students.



*The data on this chart shows the median weekly earnings of all survey U.S. citizens regardless of major or profession.

Staff Infographic by Amy Luo



Friday, April 17 & Saturday, April 18

MacLean Center Ballroom, 112 S. Michigan Avenue

Free Admission

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Friday, April 17, 2009

Saturday, April 18, 2009

11:00 a.m.–7:00 p.m.

10:00 a.m.–5:00 p.m.

The Spring Art Sale is sponsored by SAIC Student Association and Campus Life. All work at the Spring Art Sale is created by current SAIC students. Work includes: photographs, ceramics, prints, sculptures, gifts, jewelry, paintings, drawings, and accessories.

For more information about the sale, contact Campus Life at 312.629.6880, student_life@saic.edu, or www.saic.edu/life/community_diversity/campus_act.

Spring Art Sale graphic designed by SAIC students Natasha Zerjav and Zach Tyree.

Visit us online at

fnewsmagazine.com

to read

- our web exclusive interview with John Kricfalusi, creator of "Ren and Stimpy"
- view video of Bill Ayers's SAIC talk, "The Right to Think"
- view or sign the petition to keep holography as an SAIC course option.

Art School Finances in 6 easy steps.

BY AURÉLIE BEATLEY

I got accepted !!!



Have 50 cents! Now begone.



yes, well I believe in my own
fractiousness within the universal
continuum... my body
is a bla bla bla bla bla bla bla bla bla bla...



No, there's no mistake.
You made 5\$ last year



so FAFSA expects you to contribute
10000000\$ to your tuition. We've
slashed your fin. aid accordingly

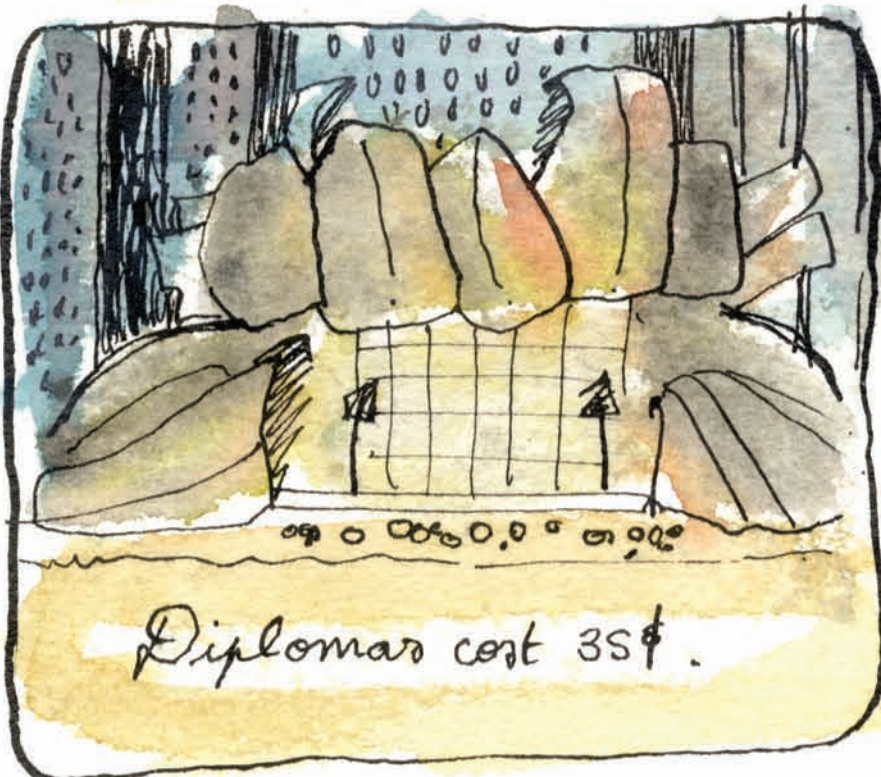


Illustration by Aurélie Beatley



Pick A Dollar From The Pretty Kitty

Keeping Your Money Safe

Is your money protected, or is it in a bank? Some alternative savings plans.



Well preservation



Arrest your expenditures



Cold hard cash, cold hard fish

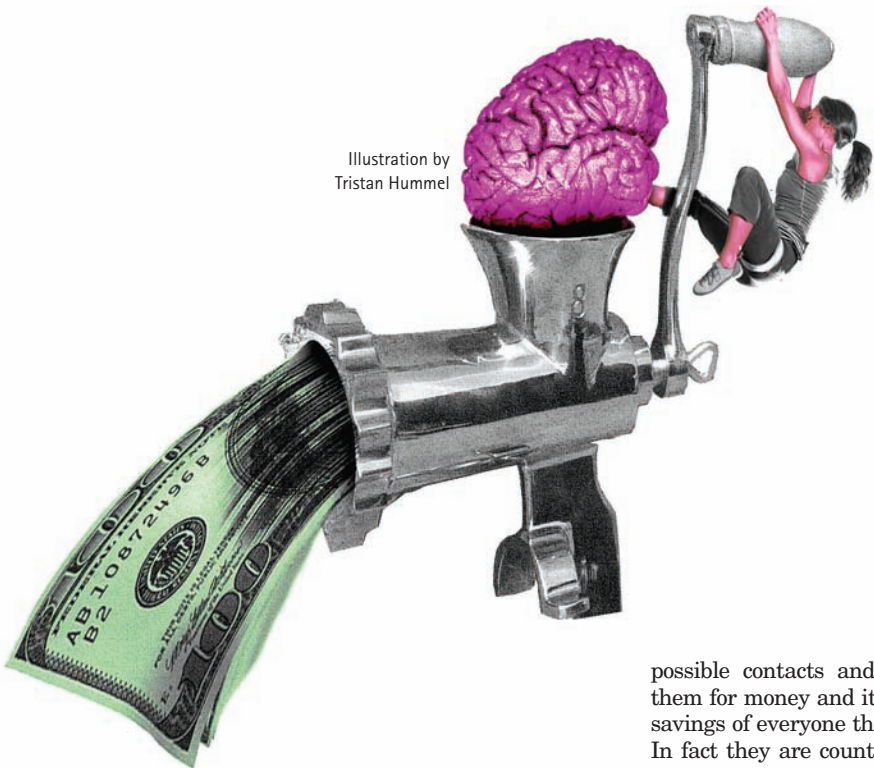


Illustration by
Tristan Hummel

Finan¢ing your ideas as an emerging artist

An alternative to grants, fellowships and awards

BY TRISTAN HUMMEL

As an emerging artist there are some serious roadblocks to financing your ideas. Whether you want to create a painting or open a gallery space, there is a significant amount of capital that you need to invest. The first step towards securing seed money is not just figuring out how to get it but who to get it from.

So whom does the artist go to? Major financial institutions are out, so let's look at the other possibilities, which include almost anyone. Your friends, family, professors, that guy who owns a bar down the street, your landlord and your cable guy are all possible financiers. Don't be shy about asking for money if you believe in your idea. My friend's mother used to tell him, "You get 80% of what you ask for." In my experience this number is closer to 45%, but that's still huge.

Speaking of mothers, ask your folks for help. I'm not talking about hitting them up for cash—your parents have been on this earth for who knows how long and have spent most of that time meeting people and forging connections. Ask your folks who they know, and who could lend you time, advice, or even capital. Most importantly, don't forget to ask for advice, not money. Never ask for money on the first conversation, you need to talk to people and feel it out.

Anyway, catastrophe: you asked your parents about

possible contacts and nothing turned up. You even asked them for money and it turns out their entire savings, and the savings of everyone they know, tanked with the stock market. In fact they are counting on you to make enough to care for them in their old age. It's OK, you go to SAIC, you know at least eight people who are wealthier than most third world countries. Get together a professional proposal for them, offer them some return and make it worth their while. They may come to your aid.

The point of all of this is that every person is a potential investor and you should ask them for their help. Nothing wagered, nothing won. A single large benefactor is amazing but rare, a few smaller revenue streams are more likely and may be to your advantage.

There are three main categories of financing available to you: investments, indirect returns, and donations. A standard investment is when you receive a set amount of capital and pay back the initial amount plus interest (usually 6% to 10% annually). An indirect return is when you receive money and do not have to pay any of it back because your investor believes there are non-monetary rewards to funding you. This type of investment is similar to advertisements. The last and most tantalizing type of financing is donations. The basic idea is that you get a lump sum and are sent on your way to do whatever you wish with no financial obligation in return. Oftentimes, however, there are progress

reports or other 'check-up' strategies employed by the donor.

When you approach any of these resources, follow the same basic guidelines. Presentation is the first key step. Make it look like your idea already exists, have a rough draft, a super-imposed graph of a planned location for the piece, a timeline for completion or any other sort of information that shows that your project can actually be realized. Your investor is going to need help visualizing what you are talking about, so your proposal should show exactly what you want to do and how you are going to achieve it. Be brief with words and heavy on images. As part of your proposal include a supporting document defining why you will be able to get this done. If an investor likes your work but hates you they are not going to give you money, conversely if they aren't moved by the artwork but like you personally they may still invest.

If people have confidence in you and can clearly visualize your ideas, they will give you money. Remember that they are more interested in you than your work at this point in your career. You aren't expected to have everything figured out yet, people will give you breaks because they see that you're a good long-term investment. Show them you have it in you, and you will be able to catch a lift out of the "emerging artist" world and make a living selling your work, at which point (congratulations) you'll be able to start worrying about banks. Good luck! 🍀

If people have confidence in you and can clearly visualize your ideas, they will give you money.

BUCKMINSTER FULLER

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MARCH 14–JUNE 21, 2009

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TAX DOs & DON'Ts

a little tax advice for artists

BY JULIE RODRIGUEZ

April is here, and that means it's time to file your taxes! Generally, there tends to be a lot of confusion over what exactly needs to be claimed on your tax return, especially for small business owners and the self-employed—and with good reason. The IRS seems hell-bent on making the process as complicated and confusing as possible. With that in mind, *F Newsmagazine* is here to help. (Drum roll, please!) Here are some tips on how to avoid being fined, audited or thrown in jail once you graduate and your parents tell you that you have to grow up and get a job.

DO: Write off business expenses as a tax deduction—this includes anything that you use to create your product or which is necessary to running your business. You can claim materials such as paints and canvas, write off purchases such as computer equipment and you can even claim the cost of gas used to drive to business meetings. (But be careful to keep accurate records, because claiming a large amount of travel expenses is a good way to get audited!)

DO: Report all taxable income—any artwork you sell must be reported as income to the IRS. Grants and other monetary awards must also be counted as income. (Tips from your day job as a barista or server must also be reported.)

DO: Set aside funds to pay your taxes throughout the year. When you work for a company, taxes are automatically withheld and paid to the government, but when you're self-employed, you are responsible for determining what you owe. To avoid nasty surprises or bounced checks at tax time, it is best to determine the taxable amount of any income on a monthly or quarterly basis and set it aside.

DO: Hire an accountant to help you figure out what you owe and what expenses can be written off. This can help you save money and avoid having your records audited.

DO: Write off donations to charities. A great way to reduce the amount of taxes you have to pay and get some good PR is to do work for charity.

DON'T: Write off household items or personal expenses. It doesn't matter if you think it's an essential part of your art practice, the IRS is not going to accept your beer budget as a valid business expense. (Also avoid trying to claim deductions for your Netflix subscription, your daily grande mocha latté habit, a new puppy or debts accrued due to your gambling problem.)

DON'T: Report income obtained from drug deals or prostitution in the event that your art career is not lucrative enough to sustain you. Transactions in illegal activities are probably best done on a cash-only basis: "under the table." (Remember: stripping and performing in porn are respectable professions—well, legal anyway—as is bartending, so these safer alternatives are probably better career options.)

DON'T: Spend all your earnings and resort to borrowing money from the mafia in order to cover the amount owed to the IRS at the last minute. (Consider pawning your possessions or putting your MacBook up for sale on eBay instead.)

DON'T: Bribe IRS officials in the hopes they will overlook errors on your tax return.

DON'T: Claim your cat, mother or significant other as a charity. Giving them artwork for their birthday, while thoughtful, is not tax deductible.



Installation view of "WALL ROCKETS" at the FLAG Art Foundation, curated by Lisa Dennison. Image courtesy Genevieve Hanson.

When Private Becomes Public

Collectors who form Foundations to exhibit their art

BY JULIE RODRIGUEZ

Private collectors form a significant part of the art world—one that most of the general public never has the opportunity to experience. They hold exclusive parties attended primarily by other collectors and other art world elite. Sometimes portions of their collections are loaned to museums for traveling exhibitions—but not necessarily donated for permanent display. They are not artists and do not tend to have an arts education. They are business tycoons: people with the disposable income to buy and sell Picassos and Van Goghs.

In the Renaissance, most of the innovations in art were not done simply for the benefit of the artist or out of a selfless desire to express their innermost beings. The work was commissioned or funded by rich patrons, royalty and merchants. So it should not be all that surprising that today the patrons of the arts should be cut from essentially the same cloth (although it is more rarely ecclesiastic). The patronage of collectors means living artists can support themselves without having a day job. However, so much art residing in private hands can result in it not reaching a wider audience. To try to remedy this, some private collectors have formed foundations to share some of their prize pieces with the general public.


One prominent and enormously influential face of the art world is Greek industrialist Dakis Joannou. Joannou began his collection in 1985 with the Jeff Koons' piece *Equilibrium*, and has been obsessed with acquiring art ever since. His goal is to immerse himself in the pieces he collects, decorating his home with Duchamp and Warhol (even using a Brillo Box as a coffee table). He had Jeff Koons design his private yacht, as well as his daughter's wedding cake! However, he does not hoard his collection away so that nobody can see it. Joannou founded the DESTE Foundation for Contemporary Art in Athens in order to share his collection with a wider audience. DESTE puts together its own exhibitions and publications, hosts external projects, awards a biannual prize to a Greek artist and has created a searchable archive for curators looking to borrow works for exhibition.

There is also Peter Norton—developer of Norton AntiVirus and the Norton family of products—who founded the Peter Norton Family Foundation. The foundation offers financial support to non-profit arts organizations and has donated and loaned parts of its collection to museums and galleries, some of which are on permanent display. The family is known for

its annual Christmas project, commissioning contemporary artists to create art objects and then sending the pieces as gifts to friends—an exciting opportunity for the selected artists, so long as they are unconcerned about their work being restricted to such a small group of people. The foundation gives away more than a million dollars a year.

In New York, the FLAG Art Foundation, founded by Glenn Fuhrman, started a gallery in 2008 to showcase curated exhibitions drawn from various collections, including Fuhrman's personal collection. Partner and co-founder of MSD Capital, Fuhrman is the chairman of the American acquisitions committee of the Tate Museum and vice-chairman of the contemporary arts council of the Museum of Modern Art. The FLAG art gallery is open by appointment only one day a week in the middle of the afternoon, and to the general public on one Saturday a month. In other words, it is not exactly easily accessible to working people's schedules: keeping overhead to a minimum, but also potentially preventing the art from reaching a wide audience. Unlike other foundations that attempt to introduce more appreciation for contemporary art into the general culture at large, this gallery venture seems

geared more toward those who are already immersed in this exclusive art world (its location in Chelsea makes it prime for visitors who are already gallery-going). However, the FLAG foundation does also loan work to institutions and Fuhrman is clearly personally invested in expanding the contemporary art collections of major museums.

A criticism of these kinds of collections and foundations is that they represent just one person's opinion of what art is important or worthy of notice, and each show presents only a small fraction of the total collection. As Paul Ardenne noted in a 2004 review of a Joannou exhibition, "The catch comes when the visitor becomes an inspector and asks the simple question: why should this art be showcased, legitimized and consecrated in such fulsome fashion, and not other art? If you take 'Monument to Now' literally, you will get only a highly selective and rather skimpy view of recent art." But, of course, these collectors work with art advisors, curators and the other art world employees who run their foundations to form and present their collections, so a serious question to ask is: how similar is a regular exhibition by a museum curator to the ones put on by private collectors? 



Chicago taxes independent culture

The death of underground music?

BY BETH CAPPER

Last Spring, intense public outcry from the local music community led to the tabling of the event promoter ordinance in the City Council. Both Jim DeRogatis in the *Sun-Times* and Miles Raymer in the *Reader* wrote forceful and informed critiques of the ordinance, which, if it had passed would have prevented many independent promoters from putting on music shows at a wide range of venues across Chicago. On March 3, a revised version of the ordinance was leaked, although sources in the Council suggest there are no plans to vote on it any time soon.

Geared at making independent promoters “more accountable,” the ordinance “would mean that promoters would have to register with and be fingerprinted by the city, pay a two-year license fee ranging from \$500 to \$2,000 and obtain \$300,000 in liability insurance—even if they are working with an established venue already licensed by the city,” DeRogatis wrote in the *Sun-Times* the day the new ordinance was released. Although many revisions have been made to the current document, it is worth saying, as Miles Raymer does on the *Reader's* “Crickets” Blog, that “the ordinance will still force honest small-time promoters—the ones who put on safe events but don’t have the money, time, or resources to meet the license requirements—out of business.”

The music ordinance was apparently initiated as a response to the E2 Nightclub incident in 2003, in which 21 people were trampled to death. Yet an ordinance such as this one will do little to prevent something like this happening again. Promoters who do abide by laws will simply stop promoting, while others will be forced to break the law. “And,” Raymer writes, “the people who show up at these independently promoted events—the ones this regulation is supposed to protect—won’t be any safer.”

Further, this legislation would not only affect shows at smaller spaces. It would put a lid on shows organized by independent promoters at more established venues such as the Metro, The Empty Bottle and Subterranean. These promoters are often more tapped into an underground music scene that many of the more established promoters may be unaware of (or are uninterested in).

This brings me to the current battle between the city and the AV-Aerie, a non-profit community-oriented art space on Fulton and Damen. Marshall Preheim, who runs the space, told *F Newsmagazine* that on February 27 “twelve members of the Department of Business Affairs and Licensing and the Department of Revenue came to the space, based on an inaccurate description of a benefit we were having for the Dill Pickle Food Cooperative, which stated that there was a ticket price. We have a Cease and Desist order until my court date on the seventeenth.” The space, like many similar ones in Chicago, operates music

shows on the basis of “suggested donation.” My own relationship with the AV-Aerie dates back to 2007, when I was part of a group of organizers who put on a four-day music, film and visual arts festival called Ladyfest Chicago. All of the music events for three days of this festival took place at the space. A significant amount of the funding for the festival came from donations received at benefit shows also hosted by the venue, and \$3,000 were raised in suggested donations that went to two local women’s charities.

This festival would never have been possible without a space like the AV-Aerie. The costs we would have incurred to use a more “legitimate” venue for live music would have amounted to thousands of dollars—and that’s before paying the 30 or so bands that played at the festival (even with many of them performing solely for their travel expenses). The AV-Aerie made it possible for organizers such as ourselves to put on a large-scale event with a shoestring budget, as well as providing us with an all-ages space with the possibility of being alcohol free.

Needless to say, my most memorable live music experiences have not been seeing Nick Cave play at the Riviera Theatre (which cost \$48 dollars) or Sonic Youth at Pitchfork Music Festival. In these vast, often corporate-sponsored and monitored spaces, there is no intimacy, and most often the force of the music is sapped, or lost entirely. That’s not to say I wish Pitch-fest or the Riv out of business, but that there are numerous other ways of enjoying live music that don’t involve extortionate ticket prices, elevated stages and overly aggressive security. The AV-Aerie provides one such space, and I have been thankful for that on multiple occasions.

According to the AV-Aerie website, the space estimates their legal costs at \$5,000, as well as potential fines of up to \$10,000 from the city. At the time of writing, no news is available as to the outcome of Preheim’s court appointment, and he has been unavailable for comment—likely too busy worrying about the future of the space he has long belabored to keep afloat.

If we lose spaces like the AV-Aerie, and gain a new event promoter ordinance that will likely put some of the music community’s most energetic promoters out of commission, it will be a sad day for Chicago’s independent music scene. If this does happen, I want to apologize to my neighbors in advance, because I will be telling them: “The bands simply had nowhere else to play.” ■

To find out more about the event promoter ordinance go to: www.chicago-music.org or www.4themusic.org
To read updates on the AV-Aerie or to donate to the cause go to: www.av-aerie.org



Green Lantern Presses On

BY JENNIFER SWANN

Caroline Picard, who runs Green Lantern Gallery and Press, is not leaving her Wicker Park residence and art space of four years quietly. Recently, she was ticketed by a city official because she didn’t have a permit for the sandwich board outside her gallery, which is run out of her second-floor Milwaukee Avenue apartment. The city official proceeded to step inside the gallery and ask to see Green Lantern’s business license. Green Lantern has 501(c)(3) status, which federally classifies it as a charitable organization, but it never occurred to Picard that she also needed to obtain a civic business license in order to host exhibitions, readings, and performances that are often free admission.

“As it turns out,” Picard recalled, “we don’t have a business license and I can’t get one at this location because there are zoning issues. My landlord would have to apply to change the zoning to make it commercial, and, as it is now, I can’t apply for a live/work permit, because too much of this space is reserved for the business.” Though Picard admits the gallery should be closed now due to the ticket, she feels it is important to finish the season and follow through with the remaining shows she has planned, treating them like private parties with print-out invitations.

“I love this space and I love living here, but it’s probably a good time to let the context mature a bit and sort of see what the long view is,” said Picard, who will probably choose not to live in her gallery space once she relocates. Picard has noticed a trend of more traffic cops handing out tickets, even into the late night hours, she thinks “because [the city] just needs money.” Even her landlord, a longtime Wicker Park resident who owns the sewing shop beneath Green Lantern, was asked to take down a sandwich board that has probably been on the street for over 30 years.

All over the city, small art spaces like Hyde Park Art Center, AV-aerie, and now Green Lantern, are suffering from rigid restrictions the city imposes upon non-profit businesses. This year, the Hyde Park Art Center has seen reductions in budget by 15%, in staff by 25%, and in gifts from foundations by 30%. The city’s licensing does not allow HPAC, a non-profit, to impose a suggested admission donation, and the licensing even forbids the art center from serving refreshments at artists’ lectures. Meanwhile, AV-Aerie, a non-profit art and music venue, has been issued citations resulting in fines up to \$10,000 for operating without a Public Place of Amusement license. These citations and fines can be detrimental to a community of art and music in which non-profit organizations have little means or budget to comply with unattainable permit and zoning demands by the city of Chicago.

Though Green Lantern has fallen victim to the city’s non-profit restrictions, Picard has good reason to be optimistic about the future of the gallery and press. After all, Green Lantern has an extensive board of editors, designers, coordinators, curators, and assistants in Chicago, San Francisco and New York City, among other places. Green Lantern also has the support and allegiance of teachers, students, artists, and writers, including former *Punk Planet* editor and independent publishing guru Anne Elizabeth Moore, who met up with Picard in the earlier stages of Green Lantern to share some advice.

“[Moore] pointed out how these kind of practices are in some sense political, which I think I might’ve intuitively understood, but I don’t think that I would have described it that way or thought about it in those terms,” said Picard. “Basically, creating an alternative to contemporary mainstream culture is something that I think is important.” This is why, in addition to publishing a blog and podcasts online via The Parlor, Green Lantern Press continues to print small editions of books with hand silk-screened covers that also function as “discreet art objects.”

Even with the city’s crackdown on non-profit businesses, Picard’s advice for anyone thinking of starting an independent art space is simply “that they should. In some sense, the coolest thing about starting this place is that you learn a lot, and it’s like, ‘Oh wow, that’s how the world works?’” ■

www.thegreenlantern.org



WHY I LOVE Capitalism

BY AURÉLIE BEATLEY

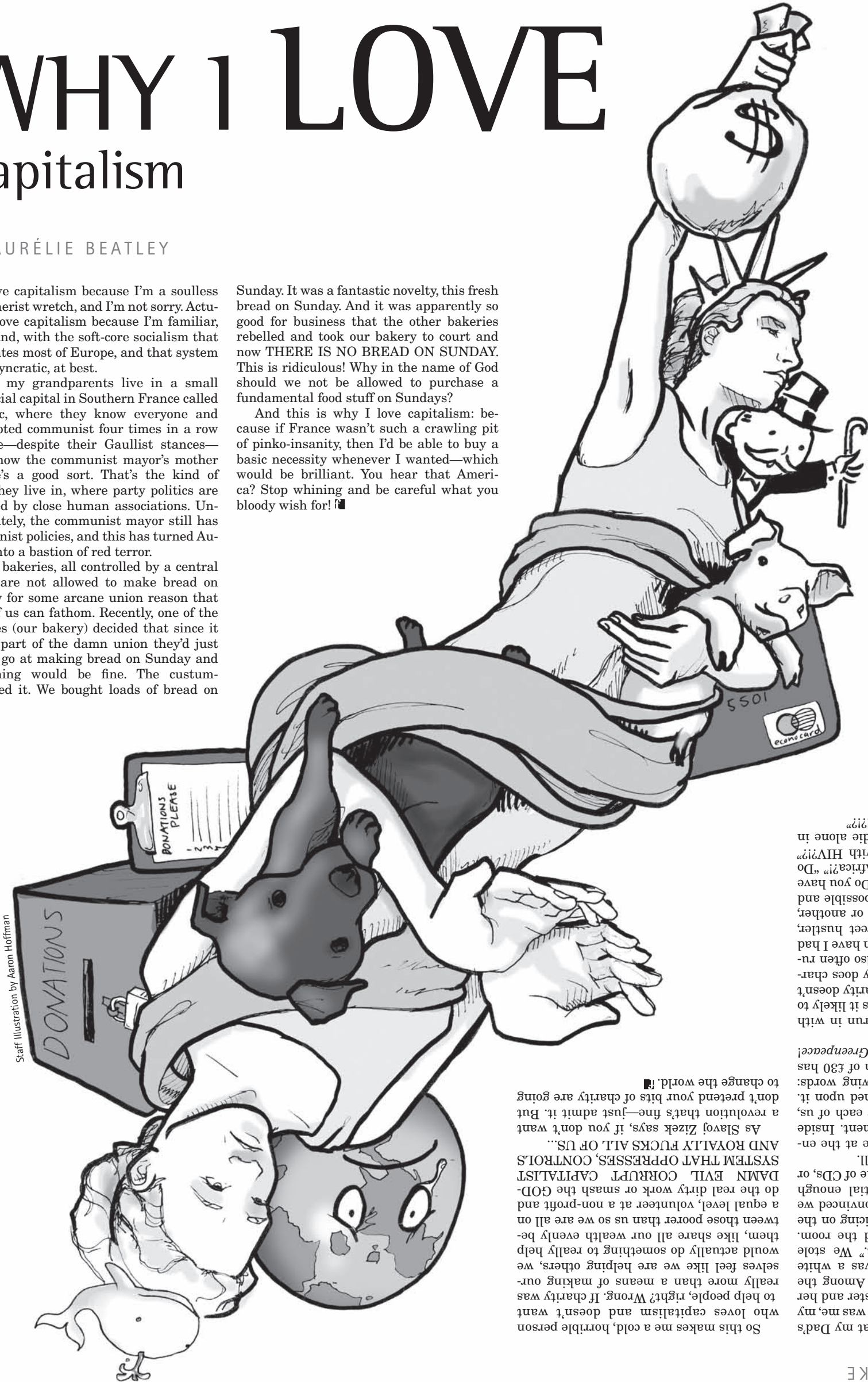
I love capitalism because I'm a soulless consumerist wretch, and I'm not sorry. Actually, I love capitalism because I'm familiar, first-hand, with the soft-core socialism that permeates most of Europe, and that system is idiosyncratic, at best.

See, my grandparents live in a small provincial capital in Southern France called Aurillac, where they know everyone and have voted communist four times in a row because—despite their Gaullist stances—they know the communist mayor's mother and he's a good sort. That's the kind of place they live in, where party politics are trumped by close human associations. Unfortunately, the communist mayor still has communist policies, and this has turned Aurillac into a bastion of red terror.

The bakeries, all controlled by a central union, are not allowed to make bread on Sunday for some arcane union reason that none of us can fathom. Recently, one of the bakeries (our bakery) decided that since it wasn't part of the damn union they'd just have a go at making bread on Sunday and everything would be fine. The customers loved it. We bought loads of bread on

Sunday. It was a fantastic novelty, this fresh bread on Sunday. And it was apparently so good for business that the other bakeries rebelled and took our bakery to court and now THERE IS NO BREAD ON SUNDAY. This is ridiculous! Why in the name of God should we not be allowed to purchase a fundamental food stuff on Sundays?

And this is why I love capitalism: because if France wasn't such a crawling pit of pinko-insanity, then I'd be able to buy a basic necessity whenever I wanted—which would be brilliant. You hear that America? Stop whining and be careful what you bloody wish for! ■



Staff Illustration by Aaron Hoffman

WHY I HATE Charity

BY ANNABEL CLARKE

A couple of years ago I was at my Dad's house for a Christmas Dinner. It was me, my sister, her boyfriend, my step-sister and her husband, and my step-mother. Among the assorted Christmas presents was a white envelope for each of us "kids." We stole glances at one another around the room. This was it, we imagined—the icing on the cake of presents. We were all convinced we would soon receive a substantial enough amount of money to buy a couple of CDs, or perhaps even pay off a utility bill.

When the time came we tore at the envelopes with haste and excitement. Inside there was an identical card for each of us, with the *Greenpeace* logo adorned upon it. Inside the card read the following words: "Dear [insert name], a donation of £30 has been made in your name to *Greenpeace*! Have a Merry Christmas!"

"This has not been my only run in with *Greenpeace* over the years, nor is it likely to be my last, but my hatred of charity doesn't simply stop with them. Not only does charity ruin my Christmas, but it also often ruins my day. On many an occasion have I had to scuttle quickly by some street hustler, turning tricks for some charity or another, in order to avoid answering impossible and spirit-crushing questions like: "Do you have time for starving children in Africa?" "Do you care about people living with HIV?" "Do you want to see the aged die alone in cold apartments, eaten by cats?"

So this makes me a cold, horrible person who loves capitalism and doesn't want to help people, right? Wrong. If charity was really more than a means of making ourselves feel like we are helping others, we would actually do something to really help them, like share all our wealth evenly between those poorer than us so we are all on a equal level, volunteer at a non-profit and do the real dirty work or smash the GOD-DAMN EVIL CORRUPT CAPITALIST SYSTEM THAT OPPRESSES, CONTROLS AND ROYALLY FUCKS ALL OF US...

As Slavoj Žižek says, if you don't want a revolution that's fine—just admit it. But don't pretend your bits of charity are going to change the world. ■



Art will not go gentle into economic blight

The state of Art Fairs, as Art Chicago approaches

BY DANA BOUTIN AND LAURIE ROJAS

With spring in Chicago comes the big regional art fairs. This year will once again bring a series of local and international art fairs including Art Chicago, NEXT and the Merchandise Mart International Antiques Fairs—collectively known as Artropolis.

Despite the ongoing economic uncertainties, thousands of dealers, curators, collectors and art appreciators flocked to the most recent Art Basel Miami Beach and the Armory Show in New York. Galleries coming to Chicago seem optimistic, but the light wallets inside those skin-tight pants must be keeping a few art dealers awake at night—with booth prices ranging from \$16,800 to \$50,400 for Art Chicago, who wouldn't worry?

Artropolis is managed by Merchandise Mart Properties Inc. (MMPI), one of the nation's largest trade show and property management firms. In 2006 MMPI stepped in to salvage Art Chicago, when construction of the 25,000-square-foot tent came to a halt due to financial difficulties and labor disputes, by buying it from Thomas Blackman Associates. MMPI has been credited as revitalizing Art Chicago with an increase in dealer participation and a spike in attendance in the last few years. The addition of the NEXT art fair added to the excitement about Art Chicago's comeback in 2008. An invitational curatorial project of emerging art, developed in collaboration with Kavi Gupta and Christian Viveros-Faunéfor, NEXT is what will most likely bring the young, fabulous and broke to Merchandise Mart this year.

Accounts of this year's Armory Show (held March 5-8) may aid in predicting how art fairs can sustain long term stability in light of the economic crisis, with reports from its organizers claiming that attendance surpassed the 52,000 visitors in 2008.

However, the Armory Show's financial woes were not lacking. Last August, before the full impact of the economic crisis had come to light, over 200 booths, costing between \$9,700 and \$75,000, were filled. But, as the Armory's opening approached, some dealers found themselves struggling to pay for their booths. Katelijne De Backer, the Armory Show's Executive Director, told the *Huffington Post*, "I've never seen anything like this. I was constantly on the phone working with galleries to help them stay in the fair." In order to keep the booths filled, De Backer helped structure payment plans for some galleries and allowed others to share booths.

Additionally, the low demand led to decreased sale prices at some galleries, with works being discounted up to 30% (rather than the customary 10%). David Zwirner, a gallery owner who failed to sell a controversial painting of Bernard Madoff, expressed his disappointment to the *New York Times*, stating, "I went there with low expectations and they were not met."

For Art Chicago, MMPI's Senior Vice President, Mark Falanga, stated that 96% of dealers last year said they would participate in 2009—however, only 100 exhibitors are currently listed in their website (a notable decrease from the 180 participants in 2008). Only seventeen Chicago galleries will exhibit in Art Chicago.

When asked to describe the difference between the Armory Show and Art Chicago, Christine Schefman, Director of Contemporary Art at David Klein Gallery in Birmingham, MI, told *F News magazine* that it was difficult to assess since this was the first year the gallery participated in the Armory Show. "We were really happy at Art Chicago last year and did very well there. We're anticipating the same kind of success."

Derek Eller told *F News magazine* that Derek Eller Gallery, NY, did not suffer at the Armory Show: "Though the economy is obviously in a different place... our sales were no worse than last year." He did admit, however, that "the selection of artists was more calculated" this year, consisting of artists whose work he was confident he could sell.

When asked if he would lower prices if the economy continued to decline, Eller responded, "I don't believe in deeply

discounting work because the work we sell is not inflated to begin with. There are artists out there whose markets have gone a little crazy. Maybe correction of this is not such a terrible thing. Cutting prices in hopes of selling more is not our goal. We'll just do our best to survive."

Christina Ziegler Campbell, Vice President of Landfall Press, Inc., Santa Fe, NM, said that prices for their prints at Art Chicago would remain the same as last year: between \$600 and \$20,000. Additionally, Schefman said that David Klein Gallery would not change prices this year either: "Everybody, in every community, is experiencing some slowness, and certainly clients are responding to the economy," she said. "But we have been fortunate."

The radius of art events and shows at the beginning of May will extend far beyond Merchandise Mart. In addition to bringing the fairs together in one building, Artropolis has partnered with over eighty-five museums, art centers, alternative spaces and schools, in attempts to unite the city in a four-day festival of the arts.

A partnership between Art Chicago and the Museum of Contemporary Art is likely to be one of this event's highlights.

Complementing the MCA's current Buckminster Fuller retrospective, one of his geodesic domes will be situated in the south lobby entrance to Merchandise Mart. In addition, the blockbuster Olafur Eliason exhibition will open the same day as Art Chicago. Concurrently, the Graham Foundation for Advanced Studies in the Fine Arts, which finances project-based grants and public programs, will showcase a Cecil Balmond exhibition, "Solid Void," that stresses geometry and spatial relations. Art Chicago, the MCA and the Graham Foundation will collectively highlight Chicago as an architectural city.

The commercial success or failure of Art Chicago may not be in sales totals for 2009. Rather, it may lie in its ability to remain innovative and maintain a stable level of participation over the span of several years. At a time when financial meltdown haunts the horizon, engaging new audiences may be the best—and only—option, while we await a more prosperous future. ■

Artropolis is scheduled to open May 1-4, with its opening preview on April 30, at Merchandise Mart, 222 Merchandise Mart Plaza.



Staff Illustration by Olivia Liendo



FASHIONABLE Freak Out



Staff Illustration by Matt Lane

Crashing economic trends affect fashion

BY AURÉLIE BEATLEY

Fashion presents us with an interesting dichotomy. It surrounds us and defines us but it is also assumed to be shallow and trivial. However, as Carol A. Smith, senior VP of *Elle Magazine*, points out: "There's nothing frivolous about fashion. Indeed it's no more frivolous than a painting and offers the same pleasures to those who understand it." It has impeccable historical precedent—there has always been fashion, full of cheerful excess and insane architecture. Fashion, in a word, abides. Which is what makes the fact that everyone in the industry is "losing it" over this recession a very telling phenomenon.

The fashion weeks, especially those in New York, London, Paris and Milan, which occur every Fall and Spring, are the watershed moments of the fashionable year. The new collections trot out, new trends emerge and those of us as casually interested in the clothes as we are in the humanity get to take the pulse of immediate culture. Some designers (mostly English) do not even make clothes, they make ambulatory performance art—which is part of the charm. The pageantry, the insane body sculpture, the impossible trends: it is all part of a twice a year spectacle that blurs the line between the workaday nature of clothing (which we all need) and high art (which

is good for the soul). This year, however, was slightly different.

Smith thought this year's fashion weeks were just bizarre, a sentiment echoed by most of the industry. "The shows were really quiet, and the timing was weird: Milan was short, Paris started in the middle of the week and went on forever," she said, noting that attendance had been down. Thirty fewer designers opted to show in the tents in New York this year. "Fewer people traveled and all the smaller houses are trying to save money, which means that, for example, you have a presentation instead of a runway show." Designers like Betsey Johnson, Marc Valvo and DKNY all cancelled shows, and opted for the more cost-effective stage presentation instead, prompting other such as Vera Wang to consider the format. Others opted to cut down their guest lists—in Marc Jacobs's case by a stunning 1,300.

Were orders down? "Definitely." If one allows that a high percentage of fashion is actually about pure excess, this is a troubling trend indeed. It is in the nature of most emerging collections to make a few wearable pieces and a lot of clothes that no one in the real world can actually wear, but with orders way down and buyers attempting to cut

losses by favoring clothes that might actually sell, that exuberant artistry has been tuned down dramatically.

This left most of the fashion world recycling shapes from past decades, most notably abbreviated sequined minis from the 80s, and designing more conservative, oatmeal-hued clothes pitched to middle-aged career women, thus hitting their two key demographics: older women with jobs who have reached a stage of life where they have money to spend, and young socialites.

But there is also an odd geographical trend surfacing. New York may have been the most somber affair in terms of clothing, turn-out and lack of pomp, but London seems to have ignored the fact that there was any recession at all. Milan and Paris are slightly too big to really be affected by financial vagaries, but New York and London showcase a group of relatively young designers who rely on trends far more than their established colleagues in the distinguished French and Italian houses.

Why then would the Americans pay more attention to the crisis than the Brits, who by all accounts had as much of a rollicking party as any other year, and managed to hail the arrival of a new magazine? Smith, whose own magazine was the only one to show any

significant growth last quarter, did not know either, but she did note that the emergence of Condé Nast's new glossy, *Love*, is a bit mystifying. "We're all cutting back, everyone's hurting," she said. "I don't know what's going on. I'm investigating. The Brits are crazy?" Maybe they are. Or maybe they're simply on to something.

With so much panic about the death of print, the death of the global economy, the death of...well, anything (simply insert it here), perhaps the best bet is to continue, carefully, with business as usual.

The hype that surrounds the ritual outing of the fashion industry every year seems to have spread from the clothes to the ambient economic collapse, and the hysterical rhetoric might make us pause: maybe we are blowing this out of proportion, right on trend. It is also telling that despite the agitation, most of the large fashion houses have not seen any dramatic decline in sales, with Bottega Veneta, for example, managing to move their \$2,000-3,000 handbags without putting them on sale until January.

Smith told me, with regards to an earlier question, that "fashion week is just a moment in time." So are crises. Fashion, however, is forever. ■



Books that are “taxing”

Bram Stoker’s *Dracula*

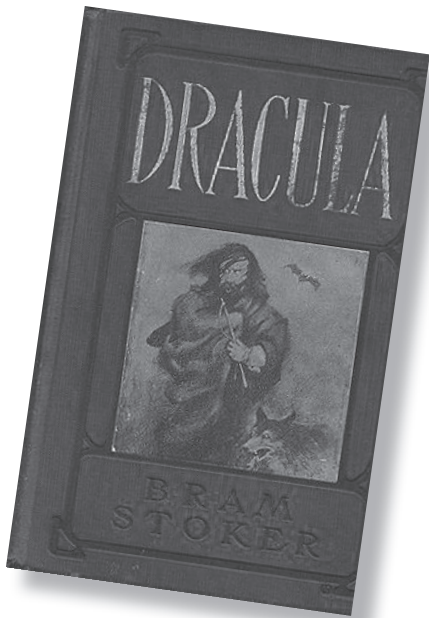
BY JULIE RODRIGUEZ

If there is one thing that Bram Stoker’s *Dracula* proves, it is that trashy genre fiction never goes out of style. Since its original publication in 1897, demand has been such to keep it continuously in print. Like many cult classics, it can be difficult to understand exactly why it has been the subject of any enduring popularity.

The epistolary novel consists of news articles, journal entries and letters from various points of view, which would be as interesting as it sounds, if it were not for the fact that every character (male and female) thinks and writes in almost exactly the same way, bringing no unique insights or perspectives to the novel.

The male characters’ observations about femininity are demeaning and antiquated alone. But, when the same degrading, condescending sentiments voiced by the men are repeated by the female characters regarding their own thoughts and motivations, the narrative ceases to be in any way engaging or convincing.

The novel is taxing for anyone who considers herself a feminist, or even believes that women have a capacity for independent thought. It might have been better written from a single character’s point of view, because then at least the limitations of the format would mask the writer’s total failure at crafting characters in any



way distinguishable from himself. Stoker isn’t to be entirely blamed for the failures of the prose: the wordy, one-dimensional writing style was in vogue at the time, and popular opinion regarding the abilities of women was less than charitable. So, perhaps it is the Victorians in general who are to blame for the lack of nuance or subtlety expressed in the novel.

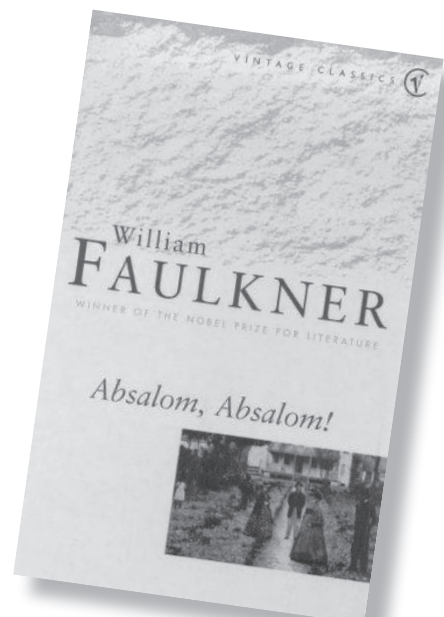
William Faulkner’s *Absalom, Absalom!*

BY MORGAN GLIEDMAN

Quentin Compson, who killed himself in Faulkner’s 1929 novel *The Sound and The Fury*, is the pseudo, by default narrator (voice of reason, if you will) in this 1936 masterpiece. “Stream of consciousness” doesn’t do justice to Faulkner’s brilliance (or insanity?), in this billowing, jagged, italicized patchwork of pre- and post-Civil War Southern life. His deftness at manipulating time and place, narrator and voice, even century, will astound you, and while there will undoubtedly be moments where you just aren’t sure who the hell is killing who and whose baby grew up to be whose baby’s daddy, have no fear. Read slowly and carefully, submit to an experience in which you are not in control, keep a dictionary handy, and consult the genealogy cheat sheet in the back of the edition if you can’t stand the chaos.

I last read Faulkner in high school: As *I Lay Dying* in Ms. Luten’s 11th-grade English class. Amazingly, after all these years of vague collegiate academia, I find myself extremely more proficient at deciphering Faulkner (though I was perhaps never more learned, and never will be again, as I was in those pre-SAT months). The plot of this story—that of troubled Thomas Sutpen and his incestuous, self-hating, fantastical dynasty in Jefferson, Mississippi—is elaborated, changed and interpreted repeatedly, through several different characters’ interior and exterior voices, over several decades. With each narrator switch, the reader garners a bit more of the vulgarly beautiful characters’ actions and emotions.

If reading on your morning commute, expect to only get through a (small) handful of pages. Remember not to be intimidated by an overwhelming sense of perplexity. As you work your way deeper into this tale, you will find your footing, learn to hear each character’s distinct yearning breaking through their words, and be swept up in the incest and filth (as scandalous as any



“Desperate Housewives” episode). It is not necessary to grasp all the subtleties—or that the title refers to a twisted, incestuous Biblical story of David’s rebellious, murderous son (Absalom, what a name)—in order to appreciate the ride. Try to refrain from reading essays on or critiques of the book before you finish it. Take this opportunity to delve into an abyss, fall in love with fate as manifested through entropy, and give your own thoughts on the story room to formulate without too much outside influence.

Sample passage: “It (the talking, the telling) seemed (to him, to Quentin) to partake of that logic- and reason-flouting quality of a dream which the sleeper knows must have occurred, stillborn and complete, in a second, yet the very quality upon which it must depend to move the dreamer (verisimilitude) to credulity—horror or pleasure or amazement—depends as completely upon a formal recognition of and acceptance of elapsed and yet-elapsing time as music or a printed tale.” ■

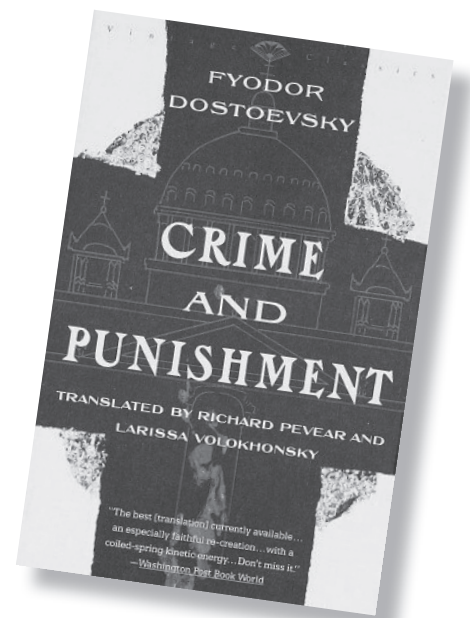
Fyodor Dostoevsky’s *Crime and Punishment*

BY MEGAN BLACKSTONE

What made my reading of *Crime and Punishment* a taxing experience was not the denseness of the language, nor its problematic and incoherent translation; it was the time and place in which I absorbed this Russian classic. One December, years ago, I was bullied into accompanying my parents on a strictly family holiday in the South—Georgia, North Carolina, Virginia—to meet and greet with a bunch of people of whom I happen to share a bloodline (but otherwise have nothing in common with). *Crime and Punishment* in this context was, far and away, the best developmental experience I ever had in terms of honing my moody teenage attitude and brooding spirits. Growl.

The trip involved endless hours of highway driving, dozy stops at Wendy’s and desperate bathroom dashes into iHop. The soundtrack to this fascinating escapade was my aunt’s relentless chatter about hypertension, corn syrup, low-calorie sweetener, peppered with “those illegals,” “those blacks,” and “I don’t think Donald Rumsfeld is really as stupid as the radical left-wing press makes him out to be”—all drawled out slowly, echoing through the air-conditioned cabin of an enormous SUV-Van. My parents kept quiet, fearful that any opposition to my aunt might cause a scene.

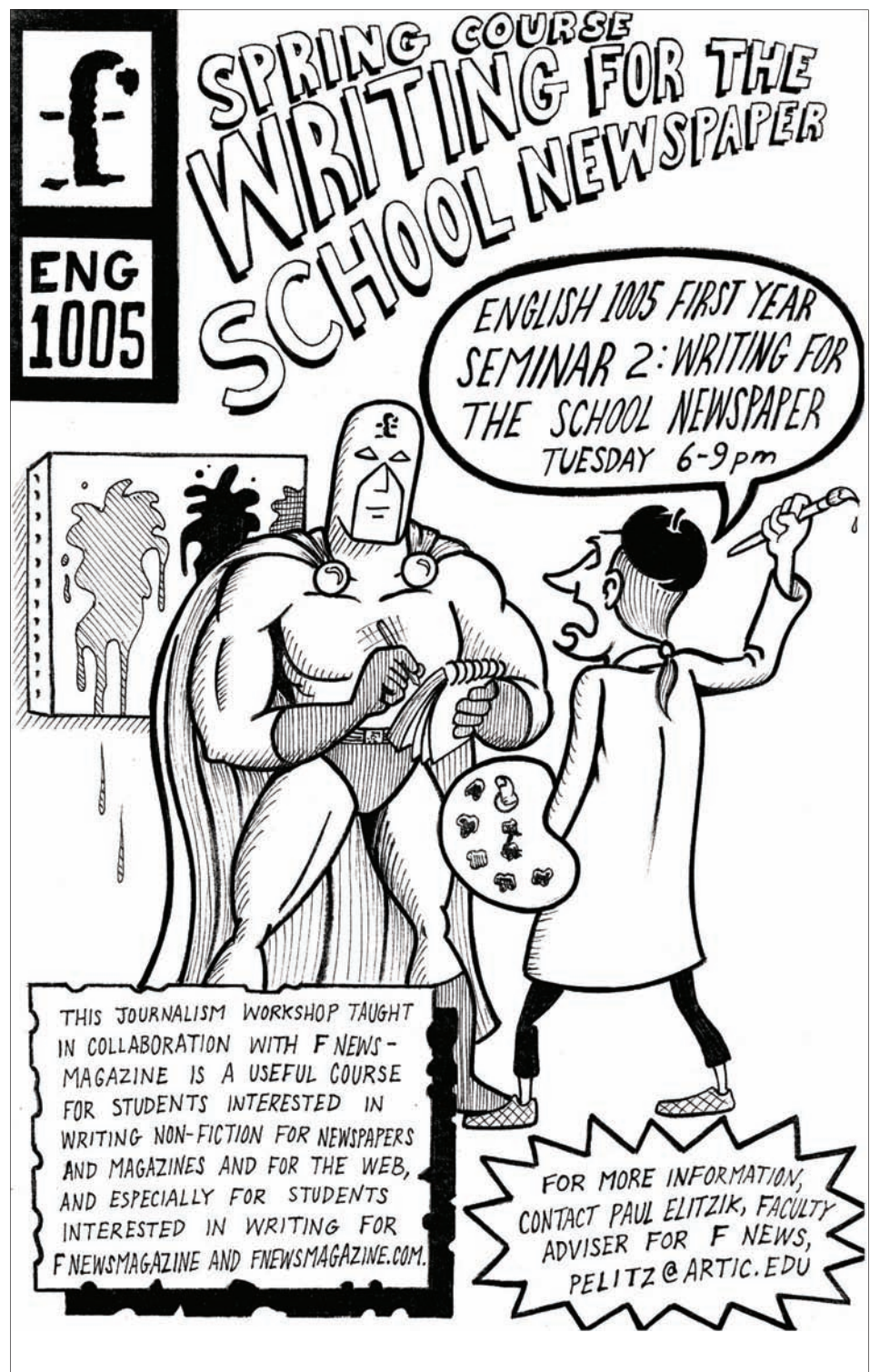
My initial strategy was homemade ear-plugs, though this was hardly subtle, and my plan was soon foiled when I dropped my



last cotton ball down the side of the car seat next to the door. Upon retrieving the ball, I regretfully concluded that five-year-old Cheetos crumbs should not go near my ear canal. So I turned to Dostoevsky. For comfort.

Crime and Punishment thenceforth accompanied me all the way to Lawrenceville, Georgia. I was enraptured with Raskolnikov’s troubles, mostly because they seemed so much more interesting than mine—though just as bleak. I attempted to emulate his sullen affectations (though not his murderous plans). While Raskolnikov traipsed the streets of Saint Petersburg, I found myself housebound in a frightening new housing subdivision. It was the kind of gated community where people walking immediately aroused suspicion—and worse still, it was a strictly “21 and over” section: TEENAGERS WERE BANNED. Actually banned. Wow. This was great for encouraging my Raskolnikov-esque paranoia and psychological anguish. I donned my black-hooded coat, and set out upon “Sunny Way,” and towards “Paradise View Place,” desperately in search of vodka.

It was a dry town.



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The Short List

Not Your Average Art Exhibition

BY CAITLIN SCHRINER

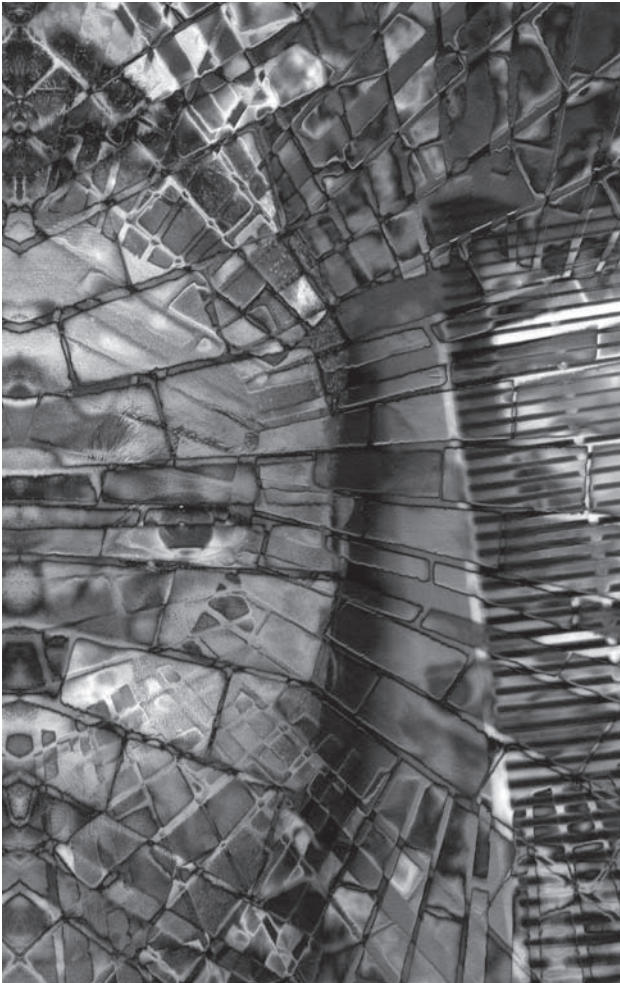
Chicago boasts a strong collection of fine arts galleries and museums, but also prides itself on its variety of exhibition spaces that specialize in social awareness and reform. The intersections of art and science, art and technology, and art and activism commonly effect our world in subtle but significant ways. The following exhibitions and museums around Chicago showcase a variety of social awareness from guiding young artists to informing and promoting sustainable design; providing weekly social documentary programs to hosting discussion-based dinners. They offer art outside of the everyday expectation of the traditional museum presentation.



Frank Ockert, *Behnisch Genzyme Center*, photo by Roland Halbe
Courtesy of Loyola-Loyola University Museum of Art



Installation view from "Alternative Labeling Project"
courtesy of the Jane Addams Hull-House Museum.



Donnell Bullock, *Untitled*, 2008.
Courtesy of Hyde Park Art Center.

Ecology.Design.Synergy Loyola University Museum of Art (LUMA)

As our society becomes increasingly eco-conscious, talented artists and designers have been attempting to work with the earth to produce more that consumes less. The exhibition "Ecology.Design.Synergy" is a show of awareness; awareness of our environment, its impact on us and our impact on it. A collaboration of Behnisch Architekten and Transsolar, the show features environments that function on less of our natural resources. An intellectually stimulating and personally affecting show, "Ecology.Design.Synergy" includes common public projects from Pittsburgh, Las Vegas and Hannover.

On view March 28–May 17, 820 North Michigan Avenue, 312-915-7600. Hours: Tues 11am–8pm, Wed–Sun 11am–6pm. Admission Free for Students.

International Museum of Surgical Science (IMSS)

Dr. Max Thorek opened IMSS in 1954 with the goal of enriching people's lives through the knowledge of surgical science. Some of its collections include "Medical Artifacts," which is comprised of over 7,000 artifacts from all over the world, spanning many centuries of medical history. "Fine Art" includes a collection of more than 600 paintings, prints and sculptures of prominent individuals and procedures. The museum's library has approximately 5,000 books dating back to the 16th century, and a manuscript collection that includes letters and papers from historic medical figures. The museum is currently showing "Surgicogenomics: Genes and Stem Cells in Surgery," which focuses on the relation between genetics, stem cell research and surgical practice. Upcoming exhibits include "Diabetes: A Global Epidemic" and "You and Plastic Surgery: Form and Function."

1524 N. Lake Shore Dr., 312.642.6502. Hours: Tues–Sun 10am–4pm (closed on Sunday through April). \$6 Student Admission.

Jane Addams Hull-House

Founded by Jane Addams in 1889 as a social settlement, the Hull-House began by providing kindergarten and day care facilities for the children of working mothers. It also included an art gallery, libraries, English and citizenship classes, theater, music and art classes, as well as many other cultural events. The house, now maintained by the University of Illinois at Chicago, still stands in the original location, working in conjunction with the Hull House Association (www.hullhouse.org) to continue the tradition of promoting the arts and social movements. The core exhibit of the Hull-House Museum is a permanent installation that connects the history of the Hull-House Settlement and Jane Addams to contemporary issues. The Museum's projects include the "Alternative Labeling Project," which allows viewers to interact with and question the ways museums interpret issues and images; a website created by Sharon Haar in the UIC architecture department called "Urban Archaeology Chicago;" a poet-in-residence program (a poem by their current resident, Kevin Coval, is available online, titled "Remains. Jane Addams' town"); and a self-guided Women's History Tour of Pilsen and the Near West Side. The Hull-House also holds weekly events and meetings such as "Re-Thinking Soup," where you can come to share a meal, ideals and debate every Tuesday at noon, and a free documentary film series called "Sex +++ (Sex Positive)" every second and fourth Tuesday at 7pm, which focuses on positive sexuality and sexual identity.

University of Illinois at Chicago, 800 S. Halsted (MC 051), 312-413-5353. Hours: Tues–Fri 10am–4pm, Sun 12–4pm. Admission Free.

Selected Shots by Young Artists Hyde Park Art Center

HPAC presents its third-annual exhibition highlighting some of the best photography from several up-and-coming artists in Chicago Public High Schools. A collection of 35mm and digital photographs explores various genres of the students' work including abstract and manipulated techniques, portraiture and still life. Curated by Benjamine Jaffe of Kenwood Academy, the show allows talented high schoolers to show their work in a professional gallery and experience the thrill of presenting a gallery show. This will hopefully be the first of many shows to come for these young artists.

On view April 5–June 28, 5020 S. Cornell Avenue, 773-324-5520. Hours: Mon–Thurs 9am–8pm, Fri–Sat 9am–5pm, Sun 12–5pm. Admission Free.

Chicago Money Museum

Take a guided tour through the history of money! The Money Museum, part of the Education department of the Federal Reserve Bank of Chicago, offers a forty-five minute tour that begins with a video about the operations of the Chicago Fed, the Federal Reserve System and monetary policy. A tour guide will then take you through the museum showing you millions of dollars worth of various denominations, teach you how to detect counterfeits and explain the impact of the Federal Reserve System has on your life. 📺

230 South LaSalle Street, 312-322-2400. Hours: Mon–Fri 9am–4pm. Admission Free.



Photo by Jean-Marc Giboux

Photos of faith in movement

“Sacred Waters” at the Field Museum

BY AURÉLIE BEATLEY

“The independence of the journalist is a myth,” says Jean-Marc Giboux, over a café au lait in Wicker Park’s Café De Luca. I cannot remember if he said it in English or in French, but I am excited because that is a great, sweeping quote and I have never really interviewed anyone before. He is speaking about his photography work, which is stunning. “You have to be in the moment to take photos, you have to feel things...” he follows up.

Mr. Giboux’s photography exhibition, “Sacred Waters: India’s Great Kumbha Mela Pilgrimage,” opened at the Field Museum on March 5 to a small crowd of cultural relations people. It is one of the few shows to have opened in the Marae Gallery on the second floor of the Field, in which the work actually seems too big for the space. Giboux’s photography is riveting. It displays a worshipful veneration of humanity, of a magnitude that is not often witnessed in the Western world.

The photos document the Kumbha Mela, Hinduism’s biggest event, and the largest religious gathering on earth. The pilgrimage spans four different holy sites, with one visited every three years, following a 12-year cycle. Giboux’s involvement with it began in 1998 when he went to shoot it with the Gamma-Liaisons photo agency, for whom he was working at the time. He tells me he went four times and was supposed to stay for a week, but he was so taken with the experience that he ended up staying for a month. What attracted him, he says, was “the India of villages, traditional India.” He speaks of socializing with people to gain their trust so that the photos would be honest. “At first, when you come to India as a Westerner you’re the center of attention,” he explains, but with time people get used to the interloper, which is when he starts to take pictures.

He deplores the trend among the younger generation, mostly brought on by the incursion of Western companies on tribal land, to reject their cultural attachments. “Looking into Indian culture,” he told me, “the kids spend

so much time in the virtual world, and they create stories there, as if the real world had nothing rich enough for them.”

There is something of the turn of the century adventurer in Giboux, though he tells me repeatedly that what he does is not glamorous. He likes projects with a wider scope, because they present him with the unique opportunity to step out of day-to-day modern life and into an experience that is utterly alien. While shooting the pilgrimage, he tells me, he lives on the ground. He sleeps on it and eats on it like everyone around. He spends a month away from the Internet—which to most of us is hopelessly exotic—and keeps a hotel room not for himself but for his photo material and the occasional shower. “People idealize this sort of life, but most people probably couldn’t do it.”

Giboux started taking pictures in high school after a drawing instructor gave him a demonstration. The gift of a Nikon F from an uncle cemented his fate, and he learned as much as he could on his own, due to the dearth of photo programs in France at the time. In the mid-80s, he relocated to the United States—Los Angeles specifically—in order to cover news, social issues and cultural trends in LA for various European publications. Giboux worked with current events—specifically gang violence and societal problems—for several years. America, he says, was like a laboratory for Europe at the time. France was perhaps a decade behind the U.S. and picking up all its bad habits, so being on hand to watch as the cultural force behind the modern world developed was a singularly privileged experience. Doing news work was draining however, “because you have to do it all the time, you can’t turn it off.”

His interest in people and cultural phenomena seems to have lingered however, because while he began to work on more large-scale projects his strong humanist bent brought him to several humanitarian endeavors: for

Doctors Without Borders he shot immunization campaigns, and for the World Health Organization he documented the attempt to eradicate polio. Throughout his photos and in his manner of describing what he does, the most obvious trait is a strong sense of integrity, coupled with a deep compassion and genuine interest for his subjects. “There needs to be meaning in your art,” he tells me. “I need emotion in my photography. Good light, good composition and emotion.”

When I ask him about funding, he smiles and tells me that that was obviously the most difficult part. Outside of a major grant he got from the Rotarians to shoot the polio project and a couple of excursions with Doctors Without Borders, his projects are mostly self-funded in a poetic Robin Hood sort of way, by his corporate work done in the States. He does not particularly enjoy shooting corporate events (he says he prefers to be an adventurer), but his attitude is that you do what you have to do in order to get to what you love.

I tell him about my own attempts to find balance between my professional life and my artwork, and he tells me that there has to be some compromise, but that anything is possible. That sort of statement usually sounds patronizing, but I believe him because he reminds me a bit of Indiana Jones, and his photos are so honest that I cannot help but think he might be onto something. After all, the work in “Sacred Waters” feels real; presenting a working artist doing it right. ■

On view through July 19 at the Field Museum, 1400 S. Lake Shore Dr, 312-922-9410. Hours: open every day 9am–5pm.

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BUCKY BRINGS IT DOME

“Buckminster Fuller: Starting with the Universe”
at the Museum of Contemporary Art

BY EMILY BAUMAN

On the top floor of the MCA, the world of Buckminster Fuller (1895–1983) has come to life. Plans, models, pictures, letters, diagrams, videos and sculptures populate the space, giving form to the brilliant inventions and heartwarming character of this seeming enigma of a man. Perhaps the most fun thing about this exhibition is that it exposes and explodes the myth that has for so long separated the artist dreamer from the engineer realist in our lexicon. Fuller's work shows where life and art intertwine, and that the visionary comes in all sorts of guises—some of them actually practical.

The exhibition takes us through a relatively chronological tour of Fuller's development, demystifying and decoding much of his abstract language and unfamiliar forms, beginning with a video called *Buckminster Fuller Meets the Hippies in Golden Gate Park*. While not as stoned as his crowd, “Bucky” seems to fit right in, with his existential language and his hyper-active demeanor. It is really quite simple, he tells us: we are not using the world's resources correctly. Renewable energy, recycling, sustainable living. All the buzz words of today, only the film is from 1967.

“If materialism wins,
humanity is licked.”

The Diligent Documenter

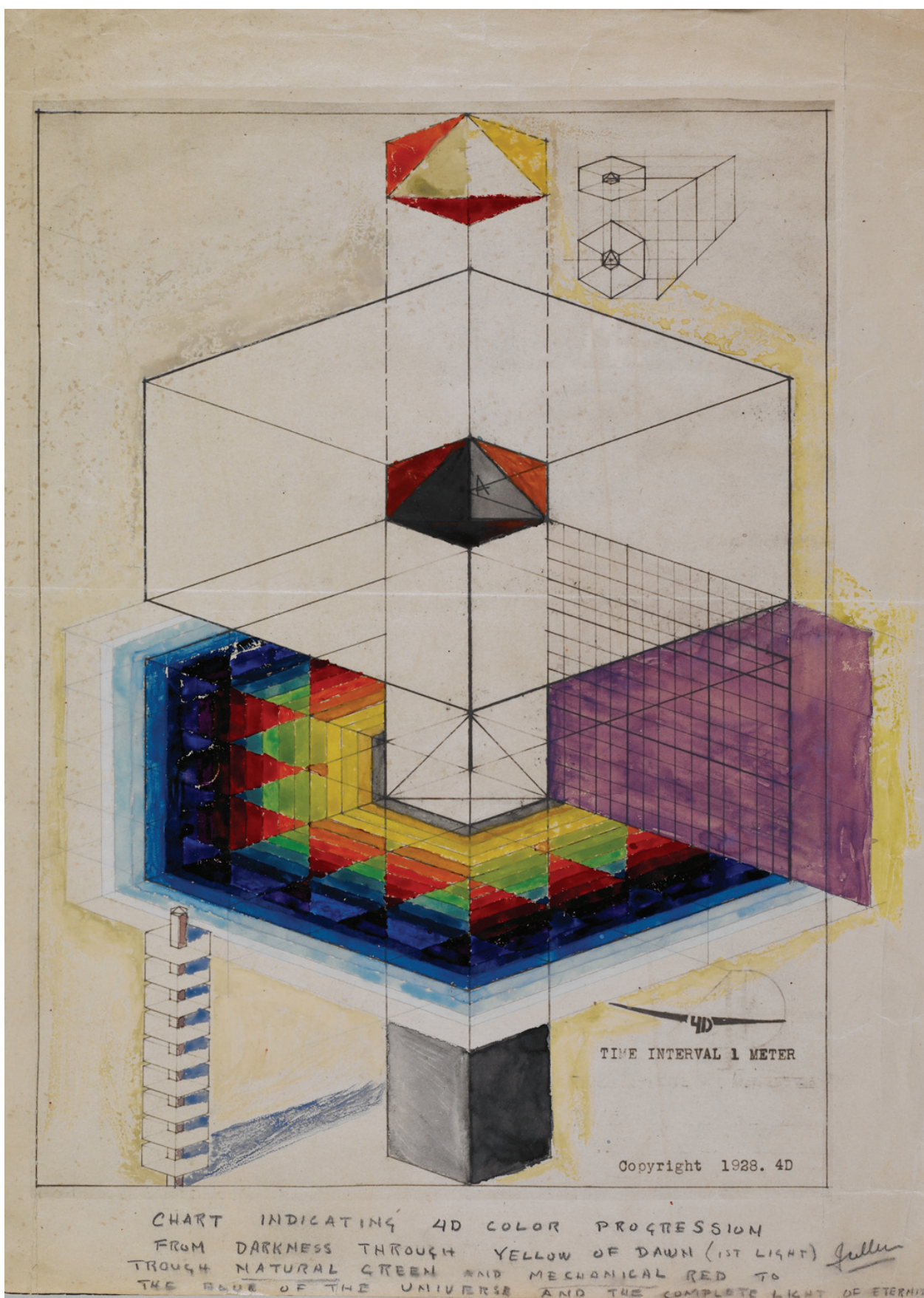
In the first room of the exhibition, we learn that after losing everything, including his first child, the young Fuller almost took his life by plunging into Lake Michigan at the age of 32, but instead decided to change the world. Possibly apocryphal or, more probably, just a dramatic autobiographical device, Fuller claimed that this moment was when he decided to become “Guinea Pig B”—his own life-long science experiment: “an experiment to find what a single individual can contribute to changing the world and benefitting all humanity.” Either way, this moment or period of despair was followed by a lifetime of great ingenuity and productivity; a life from which almost every scrap of paper and residue has been conserved.

Throughout “Starting With the Universe” are displayed parts of Fuller's *Chronophile*, a journal composed of letters and notes, that grew to be thousands of pages long, along with many drawings and plans of his inventions and forms. Included are some of his earliest drawings (c. 1927): images of towers radiating off the earth's surface and into the atmosphere, and skyscraper-like buildings depicted as weighing less than a standard home measured upon the scales of justice.

Not to be missed among the many papers and memorabilia is the small telegram that hangs next to Noguchi's chrome-plated bronze *Portrait of R. Buckminster Fuller* (1929), explaining Einstein's theory of relativity (in the requisite 50 words or less), which Fuller sent at Noguchi's request.

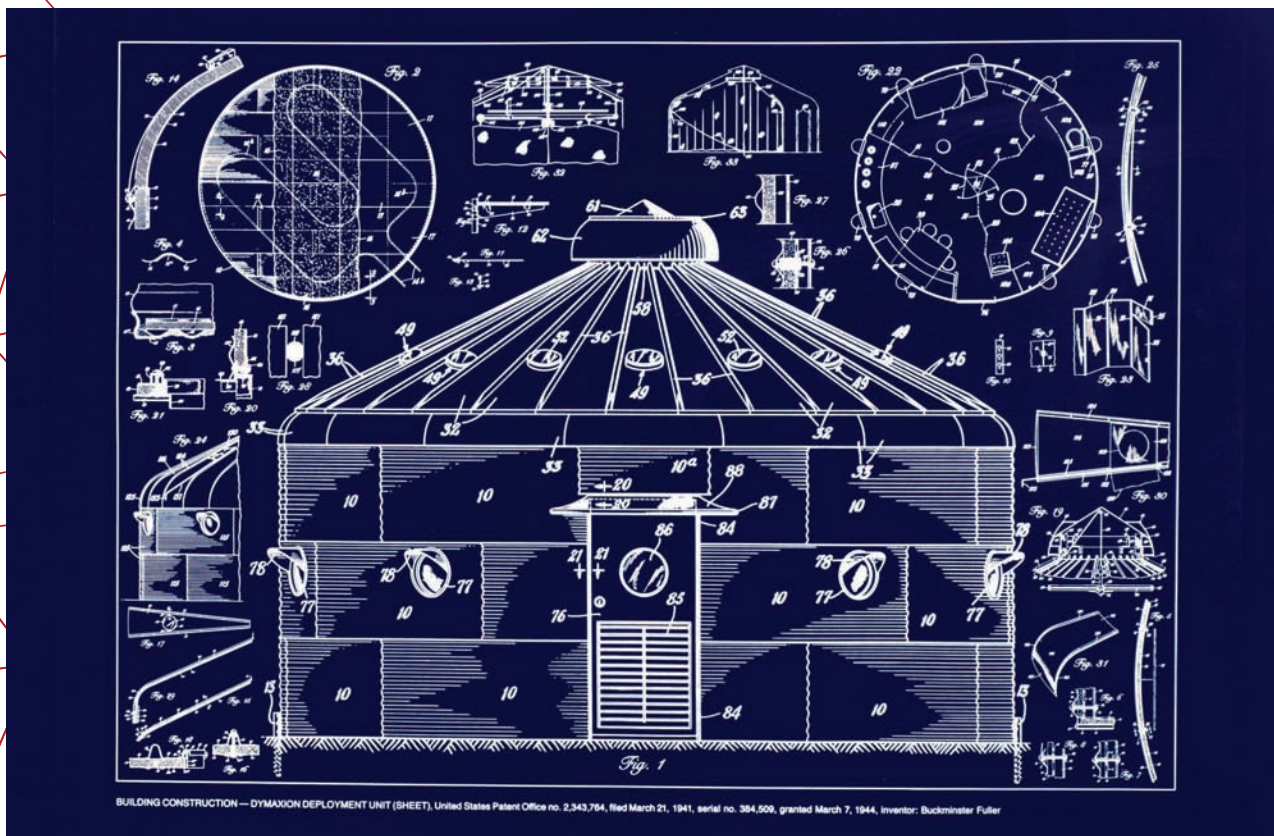
The Stable Triangle

Distributed throughout the galleries are videos of Fuller, either explaining his inventions and ideas or interacting with people in his work and life. These films are instrumental to understanding some of the underlying notions behind his radical forms of architecture—including his investment in the triangle and the geodesic dome as the fundamental forms for building.



Buckminster Fuller, 4D Tower: Time Interval 1 Meter, 1928.

All photos courtesy of MCA



Buckminster Fuller, BUILDING CONSTRUCTION-DYMAXION DEPLOYMENT UNIT (SHEET), patent filed March 21, 1941.

“Everyone is born a genius, but the process of living de-geniuses them.”

The videos also give a great deal of insight into the kind of man Fuller was, portraying his quirky social awkwardness along with his endearingly charismatic appeal. For instance, off in a side gallery is displayed a video of the young Fuller, dressed in a three-piece suit and spectacles, uncomfortably (but energetically) showing off the skeleton of his model for the *Dymaxion House*. He explains its structure and its basic form: how we use the cube as our basic structure, even though the sphere is the fundamental building block of the universe.

In a later video a couple of galleries over, using connective rods (used like flexible Erector Set components) he demonstrates how the triangle is the most stable geometric form by almost clownishly draping himself with the bending and unwieldy polygons, as he slowly breaks them down into a basic equilateral triangle.

The Charismatic Builder

The most interesting pieces in the exhibition are, however, the models of buildings, geometric forms, prototypes and more that take up most of the floor space of the exhibition. While these bizarre structures are brought to life by the ephemera (photographs, documentation, illustrations, etc.) and stories that surround them, they help the visitor understand just how “out there” Fuller must have seemed during his time.

The second room of the exhibition is devoted to Fuller’s 1929 show at Marshall Fields. It explains his switch (at the urging of the store’s marketing executives) from the term “4D” to “dymaxion”: a conglomeration of his most repeated termi-

nology that was available to Fuller. This realization is brought home by the array of models and forms that you encounter here, which play with the geometry of the sphere and atomic compositions. Although it was unknown during Fuller’s time, many of these forms turned out to be the microscopic building components of all natural life. In 1985 (two years after his death) the family of carbon molecules C60 was discovered with the same structure as his geodesic domes. It was fittingly named Fullerene, and its forms are now affectionately referred to as “buckyballs” and “buckytubes.”

The Energetic Teacher

Documentation from Fuller’s time at Black Mountain College, Institute of Design in Chicago and Southern Illinois University compose the anchor points to the exhibition. They show him working with students and artists to develop incredibly strong and self-sustaining geodesic structures as building components. These examples include a hilarious wall-sized image of his students and himself hanging off one of these dome-like forms. According to Fuller’s daughter, Allegra Fuller Snyder, his work really changed when he started teaching and working with students. She said that he always believed that the young mind was the way the brain was actually supposed to be.

His grandson, Jamie Snyder, said that Fuller would talk about a “design revolution” based around the tetrahedron as the simplest stable structure (as was demonstrated in the videos). He thought that the mostly two dimensional and limited three dimensional geometry being taught at schools was out of date, and so he immediately inducted his architecture and engineering students into a world that went beyond the xyz axes they had been instructed in.

The Legacy

The curators of “Starting with the Universe,” both at the Whitney Museum of American Art and at the MCA, repeatedly assert that the moment is “ripe” for a reassessment of Fuller’s work. In an age where sustainable living and ecological crisis are our realities (no matter what the radical conservatives claim), we can no longer look at his inventions like they are built for another planet. We now read about his ideas and the opportunities that they offered over 40 years ago, which we were not globally and environmentally conscious enough to pick up on then, and realize that these houses and cars could have changed or prevented the situation we now face. In my case, I was left asking the wishful question: would the Dodgers still be in Brooklyn if Buckminster Fuller’s domed stadium had been built in the ‘50s? Of course, this is a somewhat silly personal-desire-related question, but considering that both baseball stadiums in New York City were rebuilt/replaced this year, perhaps it is not all that off point.

This was the first show that I have ever seen at the MCA that left me not only exhilarated, but planning multiple return visits. And, after my second trip, I still have not had the chance to spend quality time in the “Dymaxion Study Room,” the last room of the exhibition. So, maybe when you go, you will find me there reading about spheres and what else could have been! 📖

On view through June 21 at the MCA, 220 E. Chicago Ave., 312-280-2660. Hours: Tues. 10am–8pm, Wed–Sun 10am–5pm. Admission free on Tuesdays and for SAIC students.

“Everybody is an astronaut: you all live aboard a beautiful little spaceship called Earth.”

nology—dynamic, maximum and ion. And so, the *Dymaxion House*, and all of its dymaxion offspring, were ushered into the world. An aluminum model of the house takes center stage in this room, while the small third gallery is devoted to the dymaxion car: a teardrop shaped, three-wheeled mini-van, that was the futuristic hit of the 1933 World’s Fair in Chicago. Included is a cast of Noguchi’s model rendering of the car.

The next gallery displays his futuristic *Wichita House* (an alternative to the dymaxion model of easily built and transportable housing), while the last gallery has two prototypes of his rowing needles and the model for his U.S. Pavilion for the 1967 Montreal Expo.

The All-Inclusive Sphere

In 1940s, Fuller began working on his *Dymaxion Air-Ocean World Map* project: an undistorted map of the earth’s surface, used to depict the land and water masses in order to accurately assess the Earth’s resources (and pollution). The map breaks the world up into numerous triangular sections that fold together to form an icosahedron (a 20-sided form). Along with his *World Game* (a play on the popular term: “war games”), the map offered up an interactive way to explore the then newly burgeoning global economy. However, before modern computing and internet databases, his *World Game* was unrealizable, and many of his projects, such as the *Wichita House*, were deemed failures, because the global, sustainable and environmental consciousness behind them were beyond the horizons of his contemporary consumers’ desires.

It is at this point in the exhibition that you realize that you have reached the mid-point of the show having seen models for houses, cars, utilities and maps that display thinking so far ahead of their time that they exceed the scope of the technol-



Buckminster Fuller, U.S. Pavilion Montreal Expo 67, 1967.



Horace Clifford (H. C.) Westermann, *Burning House*, 1958, Enameled pine, brass bell, tin, glass, and rope. Smart Museum of Art, University of Chicago, The H. C. Westermann Study Collection, Partial Gift of Joanna Beall Westermann and the Beall Family and Partial Purchase, The Paul and Miriam Kirkley Fund for Acquisitions, and through contributions from Allan and Dorothy Press, and Henry and Gilda Buchbinder, 2008.13.

EVENTS:

May 2: *The Materiality and Lost Art of Letter Writing* (Letter Writing workshop)

May 21, 7pm: Robert Storr—"Eyeball to Eyeball with Davy Jones and Uncle Sam"

June 14, 2pm: "Cliff's Connections with Jim Nutt and Gladys Nilsson" (Artist Talk:)

The dude who did everything

"Your Pal, Cliff" at the Smart Museum

BY ANNA KRYCZKA


The exhibition "Your Pal, Cliff: Selections from the H.C. Westermann Study Collection" at the University of Chicago's Smart Museum features art objects as well as ephemera derived from the collection donated to the museum by the estate of Westermann's widow, Joanne Beal Westermann. Getting a chance to encounter even one of Westermann's works is always cause for celebration, so it is a true windfall to see a show of this magnitude. Not since the MCA's excellent 2001 retrospective has there been a comprehensive exhibition of his work.

Westermann's work is notable for its profusion of diverse source material. Notable for their sophisticated and humorous linguistic and philosophical play, the objects combine a Donald Judd-like interest in the well-made (perhaps indicating a shared affinity for Shaker and other American craft traditions) with an interest in vernacular architecture, like roadside grottos or urban churches. However, unlike Judd, Westermann's well-made objects are the product of his own fastidious hands. The two-time Marine Corp veteran and sometimes acrobat's carpentry skills are matched only by the sincerity of his expressive syntax of forms. The objects are distinguished for the way in which they fuse a myriad of sources to produce a strikingly direct and profound result, that somehow exhibits both multiplicity and specificity.

Westermann's prints, drawings and letters are equally compelling in their combination of personal, collective and vernacular histories. While it is difficult to envision a

peer group for an artist as singular as Westermann, artists such as Judd, Claes Oldenburg, John Wesley, Jasper Johns, Richard Artschwager, Joseph Yoakum and Yayoi Kusama do come to mind. However, even the diversity of this hypothetical grouping is still an inadequate measurement of what Westermann is really up to.

To stop one's inquiry at the level of form or process is to neglect the unparalleled integration of Westermann's life and art—Westermann's home and workshop in Connecticut, built from the ground up in collaboration with his wife, is a testament to this fusion. While on the visiting artist circuit in the 1970s, Westermann would skip the requisite artist talk in favor of going out with his wife, their dog and the graduate students. While buying beers for the grads, he would tell stories of war, adventure and craft.

The integration of his mode of expression, manner of living and personal comportment suggest a genuineness (worlds apart from the perversions and nonsense of the mainstream art world). It is impossible to put Westermann's art in brackets; it necessarily bleeds into his life, and—while his is an extraordinary story—there is something for everyone embedded in his richly textured formal grammar. 

On view through Sept 6, *The David and Alfred Smart Museum of Art, The University of Chicago, 5550 S. Greenwood Avenue, 773-702-0200. Hours: Tues–Wed & Fri 10am–4pm, Thurs 10am–8pm, Sat–Sun 11am–5pm.*

The quirky work of Michael Smith

"Evolver" at the Chicago Cultural Center

BY QUINTIN XAVIER ROPER

Lost in a whimsical world of contrasting textures and sketchy color you will find the mind of Michael Smith, a 25-year-old artist with an impeccable style. His exhibit at the Chicago Cultural Center, "Evolver," is part of a larger series of exhibitions featured by Project Onward (an organization whose goal is to expose the community to the work of artists with disabilities).


As I looked at Smith's work, however, not once did I consider his autism, and I felt ambivalent about how this trait played such an important part in the show. His drawings are beautiful. They demonstrate the skill of a mastermind and an exceptionally refined technique. What I saw at the Cultural Center was highly original and unlike anything I have seen displayed there before. But his talent does not seem to be the focus of the show. Instead, the gallery is filled with notices about his disability, the good work of Project Onward and the importance of art for people who have been able to overcome "hardships." The Devil's Advocate would ask, "What if Michael Smith was not diagnosed with his disability? What if Michael Smith was considered normal by societal standards? Would his work be as strong? Would he be receiving my praises?"

My answer is a resounding: Yes.

Smith's drawings of people—despite their trippy-psychedelic appearance—are real and elegant. Their high cheekbones and well-groomed hair were curiously provocative. This exhibit came out of the mind of someone who understands culture, style and sophistication. The amount of

detail he inserts into the clothing and background is unique and clever (and for those of you who are studying fashion illustration, you might want to make a visit to the Cultural Center for a dose of how it's done.) His perspective offers a refreshing approach to the method of communicating the ideas of a garment to the eye. I obviously do not expect to see his grapefruit-colored polka-dot shorts or plum bow ties on the runway any time soon, but his concepts for them are charmingly communicated.

This show is excellent—don't let the "disability angle" deter you from taking it seriously. Project Onward does terrific work in ensuring that artists with special needs are able to obtain income and recognition for their artwork, and the Cultural Center is certainly doing its part for Autism Awareness Month. But as the older brother of someone with special needs, I also feel it is important that these artists are given exposure to the mainstream art world of Chicago. Their work possesses the same amount of blood, sweat and tears as anyone else's, and I think there are more ambitious ways to allow these gifted individuals to suck up more of the limelight.

I would love to see the artists of Project Onward go beyond the walls of Gallery 37. They are more than just artists with special needs. They are competition. 

On view through April 20, 78 E. Washington St., 312-744-6630. Open every day except holidays. Admission Free.



Above: Michael Smith, *Autumn Fashions*, 2007, graphite and pastel on paper.

Below: Michael Smith, *Ladies' Hats*, 2003, colored pencil on paper.

Images courtesy of Project Onward.

