

A STUDENT JOURNAL OF ART, CULTURE AND POLITICS

MARCH 2010

f NEWSMAGAZINE

THE SCHOOL OF THE ART INSTITUTE OF CHICAGO



THE OSCARS

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WTF OSCARS?

F Newsmagazine asked SAIC students, faculty and staff the following question via email:

This year the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences has nominated ten films instead of five for the Best Picture Oscar. The last time this occurred was in 1943, when “Casablanca” was the Best Picture recipient.

Which five of the Best Picture nominations do you feel did not deserve to be nominated? Which one stands out as truly achieving the status of Best Picture?

THE RESULTS WERE MIXED. If it was up to the SAIC community to vote on Best Picture there would be a three-way tie between “The Hurt Locker,” “Inglourious Basterds” and “Avatar,” with “Precious” coming in at a close second. “Up” and “District 9” also received enthusiastic Best Picture votes; however, both were also frequently listed as unworthy of the nomination. Overall, opinions on the eligibility of “Avatar” and “An Education” as Best Picture were each split 50/50. “The Blind Side” and “Up in the Air” were almost unanimously chosen as undeserving.

From amongst the rants and raves — including such responses as “the Oscars are a joke,” “This is stupid. You guys should quit,” and “I’ve just given up [on movies]” — we have culled together a variety of opinions for you to consider. For complete and additional responses, and to post your own comments, go to fnewsmagazine.com/question.

First of all, ten movies is ridiculous. AMC Theatres used to do an event where they would show all five nominations in one day for a discounted price, free refills on drinks and popcorn, and now I doubt that they’re going to do that — no one in their right mind could actively watch ten movies in a row, especially rubbish like “Avatar.”

Both “Avatar” and “The Blind Side” are complete jokes. Yes, “Avatar” may have insane technological advances in CGI effects, but it’s like the movie version of “World of Warcraft.” As for “The Blind Side,” it’s only nominated because it’s based on a true story. That supposedly automatically makes it “good.” You know what else was “based on a true story” (keyword: based)? “A Million Little Pieces.” You know what happened to that? Oprah destroyed it.

I don’t know that any of them are all round the best picture. I am mostly just shocked that “A Single Man” wasn’t nominated. Colin Firth rules.

—Liana Jegers
First Year Program

I’m not going to pick five to knock off the list, considering I have not seen all of these movies, but I can comment on a few.

“Avatar”: A very entertaining movie, with groundbreaking special effects and 3D technology that actually made you feel as if you were in the same environment as the characters. Brilliant, but only visually. The story is a classic cliché, making it (in my unprofessional opinion) only worthy of an Oscar having to do with effects.

“District 9”: A fantastically well-done metaphor, but I definitely would not say it’s best picture material compared to other movies this past year.

“Inglourious Basterds”: Shot beautifully, detail in places movies neglect nowadays, very culturally accurate (accents, etc.), and a historically inaccurate plot that only Tarantino can twist into a story you have no problems with. Again, not sure if it’s best picture material but this one is definitely what I will be cheering for.

“Up”: To nominate an animated movie is really tricky, its not often that they can stand up to a full, awesome cinematic work. But this one might just be good enough. It holds family tragedy, loyalty, heroes and what happens when those heroes are not what you thought they’d be. On top of that, it pulls off the almost impossible feat of entertaining all ages. This is definitely one that I would keep in the running.

I guess my “bottom line” is that they seriously look at all aspects of these films, and don’t just give it to “Avatar” because it was “cool.”

—Kaitlyn Hope Polles
BFA Photography, Junior



Illustration by Kira Mardikes

I would say none [deserve to be nominated]—movies have usually been pretty sucky over the last couple of years, so I think the bar is a lot lower. There are always movies that should be nominated, but they are too much over the general public’s heads. Maybe I’m a snob, but I know when a movie is a piece of crap.

—Dominic Senibaldi
Printmaking, Post-Bacc

As for the ultimate best picture ever, “UP” all the way. Maybe I am a little biased because I am an animator, but people do not get how hard it is to achieve such brilliance that Disney/Pixar spews out every year!”

—Danielle Albert
BFA Animation, Senior

I cannot believe that the following seven films were nominated:

“Inglourious Basterds”: No where NEAR Tarantino’s best work, and waaaay too many Tarantino clichés:

1) Every typeface he’s ever used show up in the opening credits.

2) If you’re going to make a period film about WWII German-occupied France, maybe Samuel L. Jackson isn’t the best choice for narrator. There are probably 80,000 in Hollywood better suited for the task.

3) Lame 70s action movie “Hugo Stiglitz” pop up text — that he only (ineffectively) did once.

I could go on all day — seriously.

“The Blind Side”: An inspirational football movie where a selfless do-gooder helps a ‘wrong-side-of-the-tracks’ underdog realize their dreams—HOLY CRAP!!! Hollywood churns out three or four of these EVERY YEAR! They could have their own Oscar category!

“Up”: Uh, yeah. Glad they opened it up for a Disney cartoon. I can’t imagine what the public uproar would be like if “Up” got snubbed.

“Avatar”/Dances with Fern Gully: Proof that you can, indeed, purchase an Oscar.

“District 9”: Kinda interesting, but Best Picture? Really???

“A Serious Man”: Again, not the Coen Brother’s best work. Better than “Ladykillers,” but not by much. If this wins then the “Big Lebowski” and “O Brother, Where Art Though?” should both receive retroactive Best Picture Oscars.

“Up In The Air”: In such a shallow pool of potential Best Picture films, I can see how this one would get nominated. However, I can think of at least eight recent years where this film would not have been nominated — years with only five movies nominated.

I haven’t seen “An Education” or “Precious,” [but] given their limited media hype I can only assume that they are bona-fide contenders. That leaves “The Hurt Locker” — the only movie on the list (that I’ve seen) that I believe deserves a nomination.

Maybe this year’s nominating process was such an exercise in “standards-lowering” that they finally said “Fuck it! Open the goddamn gates!”

—Cody Petruk
MFA Visual Communications,
2010

This whole business of adding five Best Picture nominees is ridiculous. Why not just do away with any sort of prestige and let all films who feel they deserve the award apply in some sort of free-for-all Oscars Extravaganza?

I believe that “The Blind Side,” “Up,” and “Up in the Air” definitely need to be removed from this list.

While these three films may have been enjoyable, poignant or somewhat cathartic, they push the boundaries of the film aesthetic, or genre, the way that others on the list do. Particularly “Avatar,” which is a visual/editing/storytelling spectacular (say what you will about the storyline — love, money, government, culture are themes recycled throughout the best of films); or “An Education,” a film which features brilliant acting, and all of the elements of a raw, character-driven story, making it a powerful representation of reality. “Inglourious Basterds” is masterful in its witticism, and acting, and “Precious,” while criticized for employing a bevy of shock tactics, explores a story not often represented.

Awarding high art should include a measure of elitism, otherwise it just becomes an “anything goes” catch-all that discourages artists and filmmakers from striving to create art. If we just start awarding every blockbuster that sweeps that box office, what has the Academy become?

—Amanda Aldinger
MA New Arts Journalism, 2011
F Newsmagazine School News Editor

BEST PICTURE NOMINEES:

- Avatar
- The Blind Side
- District 9
- An Education
- The Hurt Locker
- Inglourious Basterds
- Precious
- A Serious Man
- Up
- Up in the Air

Go to page 25 to see what the critics have to say ...

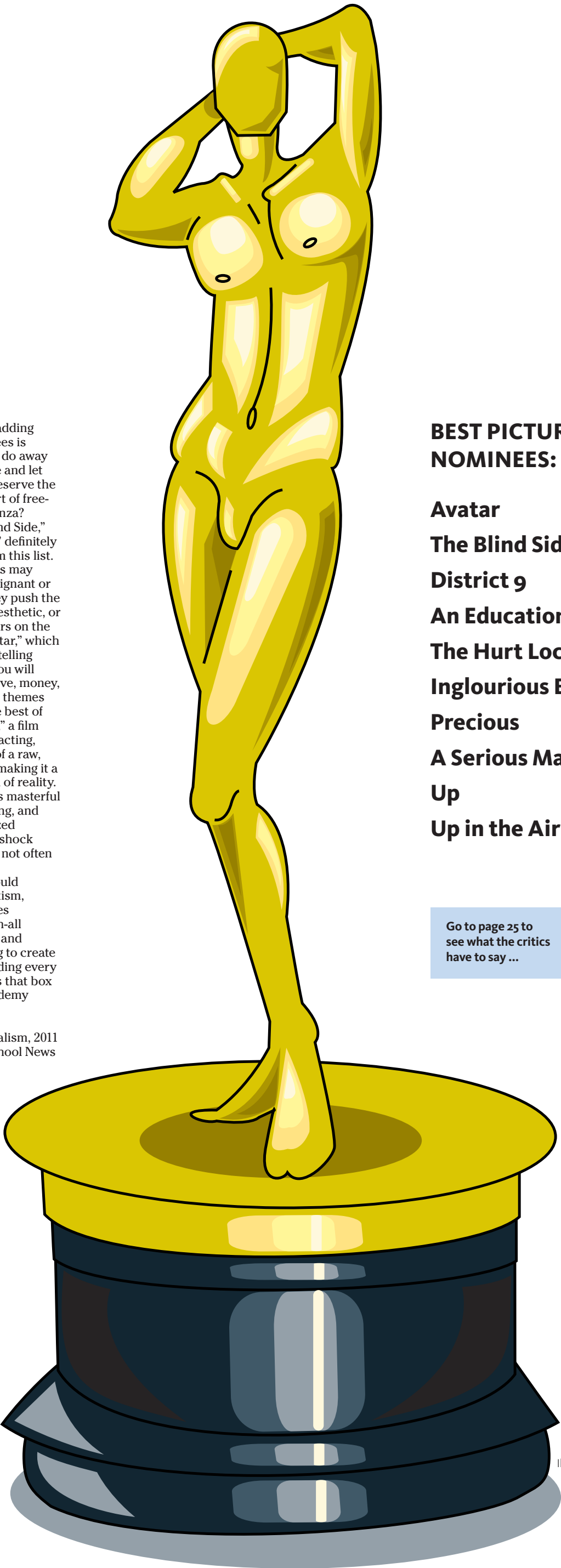


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IN THE TRENCHES

A Weekend with the College Art Association

BY ANIA SZREMSKI

THE CHICAGO ART COMMUNITY can count February 10 to February 13 as a lost weekend, thanks to an all-consuming cultural invasion called the College Art Association (CAA) conference. Thousands from around the country converged on the Hyatt Regency for four intensive days of panel discussions, seminars, career counseling, job interviews and a book

and trade fair, not to mention the wealth of associated programming at various cultural institutions throughout the city.

2010 marks the first time in nine years that Chicago has played host to the conference, and this time around SAIC played a special role by helping to organize the conference.

However, while no SAIC student could remain oblivious to the fact that the CAA conference was in town, the College Art Association itself may remain something of a mystery as an institution. The CAA is a professional association founded nearly a century ago, and today counts over 14,000 individual members and about 2,000 institutional members. In addition to producing the largest annual professional conference for artists, critics and art historians in the nation, the institution produces the online publication *caa.reviews*, as well as *Art Bulletin* and *Art Journal*.

Membership to the CAA gives you the chance to propose paper and panel topics for the conference, get into the conference at a reduced rate and a subscription to the institution's publications, but it doesn't come cheap: the lowest membership level starts at \$60 a year.

For those who missed out on this year's conference due to scheduling conflicts or the exorbitant price of admission, read on to learn more about it from those who made it in the door, including panelists, professors, students and volunteers. Find more CAA coverage at *fnewsmagazine.com*, and for more information about CAA visit www.collegeart.org.

Illustrations by
Luke Armitstead
and Seung Jung Baek

CAA attendees share their experiences



Patrick "Q" Quilao

SAIC MFA Ceramics '10

"While attending an SAIC college info session, it was really stressed that we attend the CAA conference ... It was really driven home that we take advantage of its being here [in Chicago], for it to be right at our fingertips."



Kathleen Tahk

Art History grad student, Northwestern University

"I'm most excited about the broad variety of topics, and to see multiple lectures in dialogue with one another. I'm primarily interested in the Modern Consumer lecture, and Central Europe, post 1889."



Noel Moricalt

SAIC BFA Fiber and Material Studies '11

"The lack of intimacy can cause the exchange of ideas to get lost ... I was pleasantly surprised by Julia Bryan Wilson's subject matter, the Angels of Light and the Cocketts [part of SAIC's Common Languages Lecture Series]—by what she was talking about and how she was discussing it. I'd love to see a revival of this. I wish I could have come to more."



Jessica Walker

Recent graduate of San Francisco State

"I actually just chaired a panel, 'New Media/New Terrain: Pioneering a Ph.D. in Creative Research.' I'm really excited to be talking about Ph.D. programs in the arts. In relationship to the MFA, what does that do to the old guard [MFA degree]?"



Stephanie Chapman

Medieval Art and Archeology Ph.D. student, University of Missouri

"I went to the 'Questioning Geographies and Temporalities: Postcolonizing Medieval Art' lecture. I'm really enjoying the variety of speakers, time periods, and the variety of different mediums being presented. I've seen sculpture, paintings,



Maggie Leininger

Professor, Arizona State University; SAIC BFA '93

"I've seen 'Art as Event' and 'Public Art Dialogue.' I really thought 'Public Art Dialogue' was so awesome; it's what all conference sessions should be about—such a great discussion and dialogue between the panelists and the audience."



The CAA goes DIY

An examination of the Do-it-Yourself movement through some of Chicago’s most influential artist collectives

BY WHITNEY STOEPEL

ON FEBRUARY 13, the College Art Association (CAA) conference hosted a panel titled “Meta-Mentors: DIY.” Members of Temporary Services and Mess Hall were represented, as well as individuals from other Chicago DIY collectives including Industry of the Ordinary and Bertran Projects. Although each of the collectives has its own objective, they all share the same non-competitive artistic spirit that refuses to rely on capitalism to survive.

New York Times art critic Holland Cotter penned an exploration of do-it-yourself art groups in 2003, titled “Doing Their Own Thing, Making Art Together.” It loosely chronicled the nature of a collective, from the 1960s nonmilitant movements to today’s art collectives that strive to make art “outside the centralized, market-determining power structures of the mainstream art world.” The only Chicago-based collective that Cotter mentioned was Temporary Services, a West Town collective which focuses on experimental, non-competitive art within created or found infrastructures.

When Rogers Park resident and building owner Alan Goldberg read Cotter’s article, he contacted

Temporary Services, offering them a storefront space rent-free in order to enrich the cultural life of the north side neighborhood. Temporary Services decided the most effective way to take advantage of this offer was to invite individuals and groups to join them in utilizing the space, and to seek out artists with the time to invest in additional projects. What eventually developed was Mess Hall, a space modeled after European social centers, anarchist infoshops and the drop-in centers of the ’60s and ’70s that host workshops, exhibits and a printed material archive.

One of Mess Hall’s rules — and there aren’t many — is that it will never engage in a money exchange. Without the burden of rent, they find it unnecessary to charge for any service they offer. To illustrate the group’s mission, Dan Wang of Mess Hall quoted passages from essays by American sociologist Immanuel Wallerstein during the CAA panel, including: “The five century-long ride of capitalism is nearing its closing stages. Owing to its status as the first of the world systems to actually encircle the entire planet, capitalism’s end is sure to be grandly chaotic.”

Industry of the Ordinary co-founder Adam Brooks also spoke, describing many of the collective’s projects as “challenging pejorative notions of the ordinary,” infused with a good dose of tongue-in-cheek witticism. Recently, Industry of the Ordinary organized the “39 Verbs” exhibition at Packer Schopf Gallery

“I would like to encourage all of you to think about what you can build with others outside of this system ... so that we don’t have to compromise our integrity, beg for crumbs, kiss ass and slide resumes under hotel room doors.”

— Marc Fischer, Temporary Services co-founder

in which people were asked to create works of art based on verbs given to them. Brooks also played a short film that documented their project “Ten.” “Ten” originated as a response to Roy Moore—the judge who commissioned the statue of the ten commandments for the State Judicial Building in Birmingham,

Alabama in 2001, and now tours the statue on a flat-bed truck across the country. In response, Industry of the Ordinary created their own version of this project: reconfiguring the ten commandments into ice sculptures along Michigan Avenue, and then bottling the melting residue and giving it away.

During the panel, Marc Fischer of Temporary Services focused mostly on the collective’s published work, touching on the incarcerated Angelo’s “Prison Projects,” Bonnie Fortune’s interview with women’s health activist Suzann Gage in their interview series, “Temporary Conversations,” and their nationally-

distributed newspaper, ART WORK: A National Conversation About, Labor, and Economics.

Fischer also doled out a collection of inspiring moral lessons, ending his presentation with a poignant plea to CAA attendees that adequately summed up the panel: “A lot of people have come to CAA Chicago to compete against one another, to compete for scarce teaching jobs. I would like to encourage all of you...to think about what you can build with others outside of this system, to think about what kind of infrastructure we might be able to create and sustain so that we don’t have to compete against each other for extremely limited resources, so that we don’t have to compromise our integrity, beg for crumbs, kiss ass and slide resumes under hotel room doors.”

Appealing to creative unity, Fischer finished the panel by saying, “I would encourage everyone to apply the same creativity and energy, money and imagination that went into coming to Chicago and gambling on a miserable job market to instead think about ways to replace this system and take better care of each other.” ■

Relational Aesthetics

A discussion with SAIC faculty on the challenges faced by Art Criticism

BY BROOK JONQUIL

CHAired by Kathryn Hixson, with panelists Joseph Grigely and Michelle Grabner, the “New Challenges for Art Criticism” panel on February 11 turned out to be populated entirely by SAIC faculty (João Ribas of MIT was absent due to airport conditions). The presenters set out to elucidate how art criticism has evolved alongside art itself, particularly with regards to so-called “relational aesthetics.”

Grigely and Grabner each read brief papers that proved to be not so much the meat of the session but the appetizers. The real fun started with the Q and A, which quickly became a lively and entertaining discussion.

The paper that Grigely presented framed the conversation, though in fact it was not his writing at all but that of the late Gregory Battcock, the counter-institutional art critic whose estate is the material of Grigely’s recent work. Battcock’s writing loomed over the room with his assertion that critics provide nothing but free PR, and that the whole art world is just a trumped-up cog in the money machine.

Hot topics also included ethics in relational art, where material issues such as where an event happened and who or what was involved tend to be of less importance than the fact that the event happened at all. This was contrasted to ethical norms in science.

It was noted that critics themselves are in fact relational artists

by definition; criticism itself is a “relational machine.” That is, the panelists viewed themselves as provoking debate, bringing people together and generating new connections between artists, viewers and critics, similar to how “relational” artists like Jeremy Deller or Rikrit Tiravanija encourage the development of new relationships with participants in their pieces. The topic of the artist’s intentionality also arose, since critics have a willingness to engage with the intention of the artist, whether or not it manifests in the work.

Grabner, who writes for both Art Forum and X-TRA, raised interesting points regarding the publications of criticism, addressing how the former limits the reviews to a few hundred words and discourages opinions for or against, while the latter, which she prefers, allows her to write 2000-word reviews.

The final question was whether design could be a useful model for the criticism of art — in the field of design, the success of a piece is entirely contingent upon its use. While this is an interesting proposition, the question really boils down to that old gadfly “What is art for?” Leaving so much room for spontaneity was an unusual move, but thanks to the intelligent and humorous panel, and an engaged and conversant crowd, the result was a very satisfying conversation ■

It was noted that critics themselves are in fact relational artists by definition; criticism itself is a “relational machine.”



Informative, Enthralling, Absurd

A student reflects on CAA’s most memorable panels

BY ARIEL L. PITTMAN

I SPENT the weekend of February 10-February 13 deep in the underbelly of Chicago’s Hyatt Regency hotel attending sessions at the annual College Art Association conference. In between panels, papers, and cups of absurdly bad coffee I participated in the strange dance that is “professional networking,” air-kissed former colleagues, and exchanged eye rolls and tips on surreptitious napping with friends old and new.

Like most discipline-specific academic conferences, CAA is incredibly vast, with this year’s topics ranging from “The Future of Criticism” and “Contemporary Art History in 2020,” to “Violence in American Art 1870-1917” and “Art and the Televisual.” The sheer length of this year’s session catalog was daunting, and while I managed to attend nine sessions I’ve only managed to think somewhat coherently about three.

CONTESTING THE CITY: EXPERIMENTS IN TRANSNATIONAL PUBLIC ART

My presence at “Contesting the City” on February 11 was driven by loyalty to a friend and SAIC alum, Steven L. Bridges (dual M.A., ‘09). Friendship notwithstanding, I can objectively say that Bridges’s paper examining Jens Haaning’s piece “Arab Jokes” (1996) was the best of the bunch. Making a careful comparison between Haaning’s “jokes” and xenophobic propaganda posters published in Denmark (where the piece was initially installed), Bridges described the oscillations between the legibility and illegibility of Haaning’s posters, depending on the viewer’s cultural background and ability to read or even recognize Arabic script. The result was a cogent discussion of how one might understand the value of artistic interventions of text and image in public space.

Bridges’s paper was followed

by Jo Novelli’s interesting, if less coherent, discussion of Francis Alÿs’ work “Seven Walks,” performed in London in 2005. While her linguistic interpretation of “Seven Walks” was interesting, especially in terms of how art encourages us to read public spaces in new ways, what really stood out was Novelli’s discussion of Alÿs’ development of catalogs that function as archive-cum-art objects in and of themselves.

Finally, in what was one of the most absurd experiences of the entire weekend, Australian artist Richard Tipping gave an overview of his practice, which involves modifying traffic signs in order to create silly puns. The tipping point of the talk was his concluding sales pitch, in which he informed the audience that he had many small, factory-produced versions of his signs for sale, if anyone was interested.

ART AND THE TELEVISUAL

Among the best sessions of the weekend was “Art and the Televisual” on February 12, featuring papers by Melissa Ragona (Carnegie Mellon), Andrew Weiner (UC Berkley), Margot Bouman (Parsons), and Maeve Connolly (Dun Laoghaire Institute of Art, Design and Technology).

Ragona’s snappy and enthralling riff on Warhol’s Proto-TV production in the late 1970s as *Gesamtkunstwerk* (or total work of art) brought a level of clarity and criticality to Warhol’s oft-dismissed late career work, overturning the reading of the Proto-TV work as media-whoredom and representing it as a sophisticated parody of celebrity culture and American cultural values.

Equally successful was Weiner’s paper on Frank Gillette and Ira Schneider’s 1969 work “Wipe Cycle.” The scholar presented the success of early video as an aspect of its own spectacular ability to refer formally to minimal sculpture, monumental murals,

the living room, and the television studio and surveillance post.

Taken together, Ragona and Weiner’s papers made a strong case for video as a cultural medium capable of taking on aspects of fine art, popular entertainment, psychology and the transformation of protest from real event to media fiction.

Bauman and Connolly’s papers focused on more contemporary aspects of video art’s interpolation with television, and their incursions into and transformation of public space.

DISTRIBUTING OURSELVES: NEW MEDIA ART, CURATING, NETWORKS, AND COLLABORATIONS

“Distributing Ourselves” on February 12 was centered around a presentation by Beryl Graham, co-editor of the Curatorial Resource for Upstart Media Bliss (CRUMB) website (www.crumbweb.org). Graham’s incredibly informative, pragmatic and exuberant presentation on curating new media work addressed the ways in which artists and arts professionals might generate a more transparent dialog in regards to best practices of exhibiting new media work. In particular, she discussed how institutions can better communicate the content and importance of seemingly inscrutable work to their publics.

SAIC Professor Bruce Jenkins (FVNM and Art History) responded to Graham’s presentation with a clear historicization of the

relationship of new media and institutions. Jenkins reminded us that in addition to specific technologic innovations, this art also presents new ways of looking at the art of the past.

Next, Abina Manning, Director of SAIC’s Video Data Bank, gave a touching talk detailing the effects of the “digital revolution” on the VDB’s collection. Like Graham, Manning stressed the importance of making these works accessible to a broad audience, in order to encourage consistent maintenance of the archive and assessments of its treasures.

Following Manning, Professor Adelheid Mers (Arts Administration) spoke to the unique demands that new media work makes on the audience and the instituion.

Jon Cates (SAIC Professor in FVNM), who had been wildly tapping notes into his MacBook throughout the panel, gave a charming wrap-up response that spoke to the radical political potential in the development of new media, and the as of yet undiscovered potential of whatever newer mediums lie in wait.

While these reflections fail to do justice to my pages of notes and the thoughts and questions expressed throughout the conference, I hope that they at least convey what I think is the most exciting aspect of the field of art-studies: its willingness to take on anything and everything as fodder for critical discourse, aesthetic experience, and ideological table tennis.

Finally, I’d just like to say that while I didn’t have the nerve to try and sum up a panel that included papers by Whitney Davis, Thierry de Duve, Walter Ben Michaels and Stephen Melville in 150-200 words, watching four old white guys battle it out on the conference floor is at least as entertaining as the Super Bowl ... But, CAA, next time can you serve snacks? 🍷

In between panels, papers and cups of absurdly bad coffee I participated in the strange dance that is “professional networking,” air-kissed former colleagues, and exchanged eye rolls and tips on surreptitious napping with friends old and new.



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Professional Development: A Professor’s Perspective

BY ANIA SZREMSKI

CAA IS an amazing opportunity to see the field’s top practitioners present their latest work, but it’s also about reconnectwting with old colleagues and classmates, schmoozing and networking, and most of all, finding a job. Even as scholars expound on new theories in conference rooms, the hotel rooms above are buzzing with nervous energy as hopeful job candidates conduct interviews with potential employers. That’s right, in hotel rooms. SAIC’s own Professor Daniel Quiles (Art History) went through this unusual cattle call himself, stating, “Most interviews take place in the hotel rooms where the interviewers have been staying, which is probably the most disconcerting thing about them!” In order to beat the stress, Quiles counsels, “I would say that for me the dead time around the interviews was far more stressful than the interviews themselves, which tend to be cordial and quick. Dealing with friends who are also stressing out, however, can be toxic. You have to either avoid it completely or just charge through; luckily, there’s always a bar.” Professor Adelheid Mers (Arts Administration) also emphasizes

the strangeness of the hotel bedroom interview, and advises bringing plenty of extra resumes, just in case. Quiles and Mers each presented at this year’s CAA conference, a quasi-obligation for those pursuing careers in art history or criticism. Both professors are old hands at presenting under these circumstances, where time is short and the audience is restless. To students pondering their own future presentations, Quiles suggests keeping it brief: “There is nothing more humiliating than having the chair of the panel slide a note from presenter to presenter until it gets over to the podium, whereupon you must face the withering scrawl: ‘SPEED IT UP.’” Despite the professional need to present at the CAA, both professors caution against hoping for profound, meaningful exchange. Mers says that presenting is mainly “a networking tool. The best discussions have happened at dinners or other social occasions among panelists.” Quiles agrees, stating, “Don’t expect a life-changing exchange of ideas afterwards the tone at CAA tends to be combative and tense, and often there is very little time for questions.” f■

“There is nothing more humiliating than having the chair of the panel slide a note from presenter to presenter until it gets over to the podium, whereupon you must face the withering scrawl: ‘SPEED IT UP.’”

—Daniel Quiles, SAIC Assistant Professor of Art History

Working for My Admission: A Room Monitor’s Perspective

BY ELISSA PAPENDICK

I ARRIVE AT 7:30 A.M. Thursday morning for training, which in reality amounts to a two-minute explanation of my tasks for the day. I will be a room monitor, assisting with career development mentoring sessions. Settling in at the table, I meet my co-room monitor, Sarah, a current graduate student at University of Wisconsin, studying printmaking. She went to SAIC for undergrad, spent four years teaching art in Chicago high schools and is interested in book arts. I am in good company. At 8 a.m. conference attendees start trickling into the Hyatt, a maze filling two towers with rooms titled after locations around Chicago. It is possible to stay inside the Hyatt all day (and in fact I stayed confined within its walls for 15 hours), yet one travels between rooms with names like Wrigley, Gold Coast and the Water Tower, as if it were possible to sight-see within the sterile, impersonal environment of the hotel.

IMPROMPTU INFORMATION BOOTH
Frenzied, frantic guests approach the table; I quickly become of more use giving directions than monitoring the career development sessions. I am not working at an information table, but I immediately find myself directing one woman to the correct room for the session on Brazilian art. I rapidly learn where Wrigley, Comiskey, Water Tower, Picasso and Columbian are located, that “SEP” stands for “Student and Emerging Professionals,” and how to get to the East Tower without going outside. Unwittingly, I have become an Information Booth. The bombardment continues: “You should really turn on the AC.” “Could you please tell me where the lights are?” “How do I get transcripts from the sessions?” “I am a member but don’t have my registration information with me.” Clearly there were many confused attendees in need of assistance. Perhaps better signage and actual information booths would ameliorate this problem.

STATE OF THE JOB MARKET
The popularity of the career mentoring sessions, along with the number of conference attendees desperate for career counseling, confirmed what we all already know: jobs are scarce. Hopeful job seekers stopped by at least every half hour, trying to weasel their way into the schedule for one-to-one speed-counseling sessions with career mentors. With up to eight mentors trapped in New York due to the weather, demand for a session far exceeded the number of invited professionals. The ones who were lucky enough to score a 20-minute session left elated, thanking us for the service and granting accolades to the mentors.

CAA WITHOUT NEW YORKERS
Perhaps most interesting is the effect the East Coast snowstorm had on this year’s CAA Conference. A conference organized by a New York institution with so few New Yorkers in attendance, particularly when that city is deemed the center of the art world, is an ironic situation. Regardless, in the Second City, CAA continued without delay. Some CAA staff managed to evade the weather and descend on Chicago, but most were not so lucky. Several career mentors and panel speakers were absent.

Working at the career development table gave me free admission to the conference, but was a trade off, as it also meant missing those eight hours of the conference. With the conference squished into three days, time was precious. In the end, the time I lost for free admission probably wasn’t worth it. Will I become a member and pay next year? Most likely. Will I sit behind a table? Nope. Hopefully, only behind a podium. f■

The popularity of the career mentoring sessions, and the number of conference attendees desperate for career counseling, confirmed what we already know: jobs are scarce.





Kerry James Marshall, *7am Sunday Morning*, 2003. Collection Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago, Joseph and Jory Shapiro Fund by exchange. © 2003 Kerry James Marshall

Studios on Display

Production Site: The Artist's Studio Inside-Out at the MCA

BY WHITNEY STOEPEL

THE COMPLEX AND poetic role of the studio in an artist's life and work is explored in "Production Site: The Artist's Studio Inside-Out," which opened February 6 at the Museum of Contemporary Art (MCA) and closes May 30.

This exhibition is part of Studio Chicago, an ongoing collaborative project that began in October of 2009. This enormous, year-long project involves the city's major cultural players, including SAIC, the Chicago Department of Cultural Affairs, Columbia College Chicago, DePaul University, Gallery 400 at UIC, Hyde Park Art Center, the Museum of Contemporary Art and threewalls.

According to studiochicago.org, the project hopes to engage Chicago artists, the Chicago "art-curious" and the international

Molon rather unimaginatively asks why there is a need to focus on the artist's studio when a dedicated physical space is becoming less necessary in the "age of the iPhone." Molon is particularly interested in depicting the significant shift occurring in the art world during the present state of economic duress, and how production may change in a time when consumption isn't guaranteed. The curator is also interested in engaging with traditional ideas of the studio as an incredibly personal space, in which artists experience some of their most profound and devastating moments, a place where success is born and disappointing projects are discarded.

Fortunately for the success of the exhibition, each of the 13 represented artists answers this less than challenging question in intriguing and productive ways. This diverse show includes

The studio is where success is born and disappointing projects are discarded.

art community in a year-long exploration of questions around the definition of the artist's studio in the 21st century. Programs and exhibitions ask: How and why does the studio matter to art and artists today? What is the artist's studio today? What infrastructure is needed to sustain thriving art practice, and what role does the studio play within this infrastructure? What Studio Chicago's organizers fail to question, however, is how relevant this question even is for 2010; after all, avant-garde artists have been questioning, challenging and destroying the romantic myth of the studio since at least the mid-20th century.

This question of relevance is problematic at the MCA, where "Production Site" curator Dominic

international and Chicago-based artists, preeminent veterans and up-and-comers. The main second floor gallery begins with local emerging artist and UBS 12x12 alum Deb Sokolow's 5-part acrylic on wood, "You Tell People You're Working Really Hard On Things These Days." This large piece tells the story of her studio and the neighborhood surrounding it using line-drawn maps and blueprints, illustrations, and some tongue-in-cheek anecdotes. As the stories change, so will the work—Sokolow will return once a week to update the piece, transforming the gallery into a sort-of studio.

Alabama-born and Chicago-based painter Kerry James Marshall has eight pieces on display, including some preparatory drawings of the



Amanda Ross-Ho, *Frauds for an inside job*, 2008.

Courtesy of Cherry and Martin, Los Angeles; Mitchell Innes and Nash, New York. Photo by Robert Wedemeyer

The artist hopes the walls might "absorb the production energy" from her studio and carry that to the gallery space.



Nikhil Chopra, Yog Raj Chitrakar: **Memory Drawing XI**. Part of Production Site: the Artist's Studio Inside-Out, Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago. February 9, 2010. Photography © Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago. Photographer, Nathan Keay

Hailing from the overpopulated city of Mumbai where work space is scarce, Nikhil Chopra believes, “The studio is where I am.”

kind usually thrown out after a completed painting. Marshall is known for his strong and eloquent statements on African-American culture, and “Untitled (Painter)” continues in this vein of inquiry in its depiction of a black woman artist in her studio completing a paint-by-number composition. Molon cites this piece as Marshall’s response to female Kenyan artist Wangechi Mutu, who herself was inspired by a photo of black artist Carrie Mae Weems in her studio.

Marshall combines traditional and contemporary styles to hint at changing notions of African-American identity throughout history, and engages with the struggle of female artists as well. The woman in “Untitled (Painter)” is depicted in the style of the French Rococo, reminiscent of self-portraits by Élisabeth-Louise Vigée-Le Brun, but her ears are lined with gold hoops, and the use of the Warhol-esque paint-by-number references add a pop aesthetic.

Accompanying this work is “Black Artist (Studio View),” a photo of Marshall in his studio taken under a black light, and “7am Sunday Morning,” a large painting that depicts the view from Marshall’s studio on the South Side.

Nikhil Chopra engages with the exhibition’s theme in a radically different way: he has no studio. Hailing from the overpopulated city of Mumbai where work space is scarce, Chopra believes, “The studio is where I am.” Performance is central to his work, and his piece for the MCA became the documentation of a 16-hour performance titled “Yog Raj Chitrakar: Memory Drawing XI.”

Before Chopra’s performance in the space at MCA on February 10, the room was painted a pale blue and littered with only a few artifacts, including a ladder, chair, some silver bowls and a small broom (the

appearance of the room will evolve throughout the exhibition). Chopra invites the viewers to act like “forensic scientists,” imagining what happened in the space before they arrived.

While Chopra chooses to forgo a formal documentation process, others in the show, like William Kentridge and Bruce Nauman, employ the use of film and video to document their studios. Taking place in separate rooms and displayed on multiple screens, Kentridge is shown toying with and sketching charcoal drawings within his studio, while Nauman films his studio with infrared light after the work has been finished and shipped off. The only remnants of life are a cat and the occasional rat flitting by.

Amanda Ross-Ho created the most literal interpretation of the theme by removing the walls of her studio and replanting them in the MCA, entry door and all. This is the second time “Frauds for an Inside Job” has been exhibited, and it is mesmerizing. Eye-catching graphic elements like a Notorious BIG poster immediately grab the viewer’s attention. As one spends more time with the installation, however, more subtle details begin to emerge, like a phone number scrawled in pencil on the wall.

Like many of the other artists, Ross-Ho wants the audience to ponder what might have happened in this space, which she occupied for nine years. An intriguing struggle Ross-Ho deals with is the inevitable loss of translation between studio and gallery; the artist hopes the walls might “absorb the production energy” from her studio and carry that to the gallery space. Other artists featured in the exhibition are Justin Cooper, Tacita Dean, Fischli/Weiss, Ryan Gander, Rodney Graham, John Neff and Andrea Zittel.

“Production Site” is successful in that it prioritizes strong visuals

and aesthetic experience over an academic investigation of the artist’s intimate work space, although a slightly voyeuristic tone is problematic. It remains to be seen, however, whether future iterations of the Studio Chicago project will be as successful. f



Kerry James Marshall, **Untitled (Painter)**, 2009. Collection Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago, gift of Katherine S. Schamberg by exchange. Photography © Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago. Photographer, Nathan Keay

Museum of Contemporary Art
220 E Chicago Ave
Production Site: The Artist's Studio Inside-Out
February 6 - May 30, 2010
www.mcachicago.org

A Celebration of Imagination

Aspen Mays at the MCA and Hyde Park Art Center



Aspen Mays, “Every Book” detail. Image courtesy of the Museum of Contemporary Art

BY CARRIE MCGATH


ALBERT EINSTEIN ONCE said, “The true sign of intelligence is not knowledge but imagination.” Recent SAIC graduate Aspen Mays puts that maxim to the test in her current exhibitions at the Museum of Contemporary Art (on view until February 28) and in the Cleve E. Carney Gallery at the Hyde Park Art Center (on view until April 25). In these exhibitions, Mays works as a dedicated scientist guided by a creativity and imagination that Einstein would have admired.

AT MCA
Mays’ 12x12 exhibition features her meticulous and meditative “Every Leaf on a Tree” from 2009-2010. Spread over two walls of the gallery, this photographic installation is made up of a grid of 900 small photos of the individual leaves of a tree outside her studio. The total impression is that of an immersive, conceptual forest. As the viewer walks through the gallery, her movements cause the photographs (which are affixed to the walls with long nails) to gently flutter, thus reminding the viewer of the forces of exertion and gravity. The beauty of the installation is in

the precise capturing of an intimate moment with each individual leaf; beauty is palpable in Mays’s archiving of these dynamic, textured moments. On the central wall of the gallery is “Every Book,” a piece that playfully considers notions of the archive, Einstein’s scientific revolution, and the concepts of light and gravity. 21 photographs comprise a grid that reveals a rainbow of color, constructed from the spines of hundreds of books meticulously placed on metal arcs that rest between two chairs. A closer look reveals that the books are all about Albert Einstein; in fact, the photographs document every book on Einstein that the artist could order from the Illinois Inter-Library Loan Service. Again, the artist seems to be humorously pondering the artistic extensions of scientific revelations. “Every Book” is an imaginative composition that turns scientific history and abstract concepts into a harmonious, compelling image, and both works in the 12x12 eloquently reveal how our perception of the individual can alter our experience of the whole.

The beauty of the installation is in the precise capturing of an intimate moment with each individual leaf; beauty is palpable in Mays’s meditative archiving of these dynamic, textured moments.

AT HPAC
Aspen Mays’s playful approach to science continues with her exhibition “From the Offices of Scientists” at the Hyde Park Art Center, where the artist takes a risk by leaving photography behind in favor of a sculptural installation. Here, Mays strives to construct the bureaucratic setting (complete with metal filing cabinets and yellow legal pads) where scientific “knowledge” is ostensibly born. The exhibition opens with the striking “Boulder Desk” from 2010. Two cubicle walls are the only elements left standing after an apparent catastrophe: a desk has been crushed by a boulder (or meteor) that appears to have fallen right out of the sky. There is a humorous but sinister quality in this, a conspiratorial indication that perhaps this scientist discovered a truth that she shouldn’t have. Indeed, the narrative of the entire installation hints at corruption, secrets and silly conspiratorial moments. Other objects, which the artist claims to have gleaned from her own visits to scientists’ offices, include a sign proclaiming, “If you find a meteor, bring it here and we will check to make sure”; a jar filled with black jelly beans entitled “Jellybean Universe”; and a dry-erase board covered with small marker points, one of which has been circled and labeled “Big Bang.” The exhibition has its playful moments, but is less visually

engaging than the 12x12 installation. Nonetheless, it is encouraging to see a young artist strike out in new directions and tackle new modes of working, quite like a scientist. Taken as a group, these exhibitions are related by similar interests in the production of knowledge, scientific insights, and gravity and time, but they also reveal a multiplicity of diverse feelings and concepts, resulting in very different experiences for the viewer. “Every Leaf” and “Every Book” feel far more realized than “From the Offices of Scientists,” and the difference in these exhibits comes down to time itself. At the MCA, viewers encounter playful notions of gravity, exertion, and relativity, but also a meditation on imagination and the poetry in individual moments pulsing around us. At the HPAC, viewers see a satirical cosmic joke, a joke that seems almost too clever and too hurried to work solidly. Mays’ talent seems to be in photography, when she has the ability to contain a moment within a frame, simplified and sustained like a piece of music. However, both exhibits are worth seeing as visually eloquent celebrations of the imagination. Unfortunately, Chicago is on the verge of losing this gifted artist, as Mays has been awarded a Fulbright to work with astronomers in Chile through 2010. Only time will tell where this journey will take her work in the future. 



Aspen Mays, “Boulder Desk,” Hyde Park Art Center
Photos by Carrie McGath

Museum of Contemporary Art
220 E Chicago Ave
UBS 12x12: Aspen Mays
February 6-28, 2010
www.mcachicago.org

Hyde Park Art Center
5020 S Cornell
From the Offices of Scientists
January 25-April 25, 2010
www.hydeparkart.org



Demo by Jesse Butcher (video still) Photo courtesy of Jesse Butcher

Storefront Art

“Usefulness: Construction, Deconstruction, Reconstruction” at the Sharp

BY JOE IVERSON

WITH THE semi-completed renovation of the Sharp Building revealed, the SAIC community has murmured its delight over the return to unencumbered access. Rumor has it that the glass-walled ground level is destined to become a much needed student center, exhibition spaces, or some combination therein. It is probably not a coincidence that “Usefulness: Construction, De-construction, Reconstruction,” the first exhibition to occupy this ambiguous space, presents the same questions of function and use—value that the building itself inspires.

Curated by Cecilia Vargas, a third-year M.A. student in Modern Art History, Theory and Criticism, and Arts Administration and Policy, “Usefulness” has brought together SAIC student works that reconsider the function of objects with either an obvious, pre-determined utility value, or seemingly no useful purpose at all. The exercise is less concerned with the practical, modernist sense of functionalism than the idea of how something operates (or doesn’t) within a larger system.

For example, Scott Jarrett’s

untitled photographs of his spontaneous site installations built from city detritus resurrect abandoned mattresses and chairs, giving them new life as graceful aesthetic forms. By contrast, Sean Ward’s compact installation of objects, much like the pile one would build when moving to a new apartment, echoes the memory of their intended use through video documentation of their “proper” arrangement.

What would normally be painful distractions—peering through window reflections of the city while bracing yourself against the bitter wind—are valuable sensory experiences that reinforce the material and contextual sensibility of the work on view.

“Usefulness” recalls Chicago’s long history of using window display to promote mass consumption of modernist manufactured objects, as well as more recent trends of installing walking art exhibitions in empty window fronts to revitalize dead urban spaces. But, what ultimately makes this exhibition so successful is how the work it contains summons these same conflicts of purpose and repurpose.

Only viewable from the street, what would normally be painful distractions—peering through window reflections of the city while bracing yourself against the bitter wind—are valuable sensory experiences that reinforce the material and contextual sensibility of the work on view.

The exhibition is not immune to the restraints of window display, however, and some of the more delicate work suffers. Take Brookhart Jonquil’s piece, “On the Einstein Podolsky Rosen Paradox,” made up of six identically crumpled pieces of paper printed with Bell’s Theorem. The work seems to require a more intimate interaction and inspection than can be achieved by the

window-shopping perspective the exhibition provides.

Regardless, the street level exhibition provides invaluable exposure for SAIC’s students. “Demo,” Jesse Butcher’s voyeuristic film, documents the artist spray painting “PUNK IS DAD” on a blank interior wall before violently tearing it down with his bare hands. Just as tearing down the wall reveals a space formerly inaccessible to

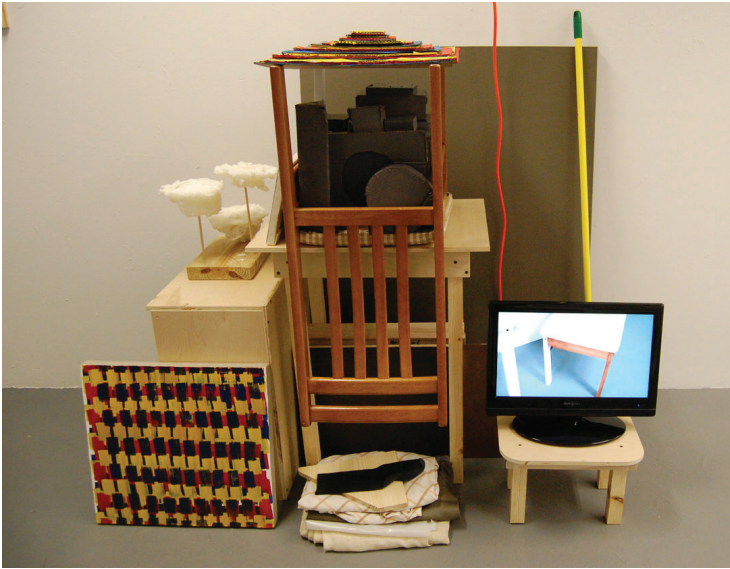


(untitled) by Scott Jarrett
Photo courtesy of Scott Jarrett

Sharp Building
37 S Wabash Ave

Usefulness: Construction,
De-Construction,
Reconstruction

January 28 - February
26, 2010 (dates may be
extended)
www.exrx.blogspot.com



(untitled) by Sean Ward Photo courtesy of Sean Ward

the viewer, the work implies a glimpse into the studio spaces just above that are hidden from public view for most of the year.

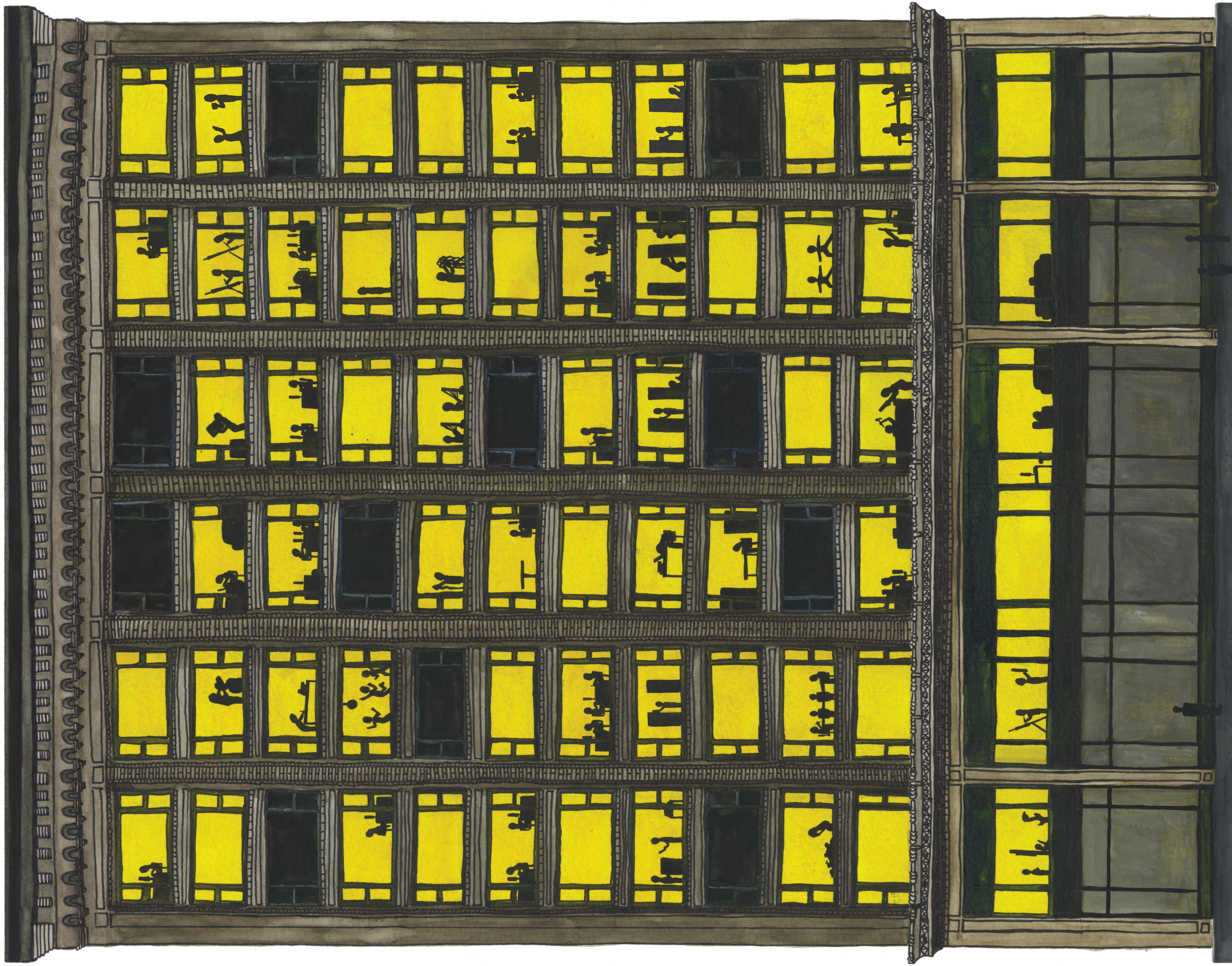
The inability to interact with the interior in a more traditional way is unfortunate. Nonetheless, the strange limitations of the space that “Usefulness” exploits for its benefit point to the grand educational opportunities this space could provide for artistic and curatorial experimentation—for the benefit of both students and public audiences.

Other exhibited artists include Chris Bradley, Scott Carter, Anthony Creedon, Benjamin Lipkin, Ben Stagl, Allison Wade and Georgia Wall. [f](#) [i](#)

See video footage of “Usefulness”
at fnewsmagazine.com

SHARP AFTER DARK

BY MEGAN ISAACS



WHAT'S IN YOUR WINDOW?
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Art for Your Living Room

SAIC partners with Lincoln Park furniture boutique West Elm



Art (left to right) by Hyounsang Yoo, Kait Doyle, Emile Ferris, and Cheryl-Ann Fakes

BY CHRISSY TURPIN

THE LAST PLACE one expects to see good art is over the living room couch. Or the bed. Or even the dining room table. But that's typical art community mentality—one that separates artists and audiences worldwide. In an effort to break this stereotype, SAIC recently partnered with West Elm, a national modern furniture catalog and store, to celebrate the grand opening of its Lincoln Park location. Featured among the designed showrooms and collectible room decorations were a variety of original pieces by SAIC students, also for sale. The inclusion of these pieces suggests that art created by students from one of the nation's premier art schools is easily accessible to anyone.

It's clear that West Elm is hoping to redefine what it means to mix style with comfort. On their website, westelm.com, they state that "great design can be affordable, and that it can also make a positive impact on people and the environment." Aspiring to "appeal to style-savvy customers who love modern, affordable design," West Elm completed the look at the store's special pre-opening event February 2 with complimentary wine, vodka cocktails and canapés for its invitation-only crowd.

By incorporating roaming waiters and scattered art pieces, West Elm encouraged movement and conversation

among guests. It wasn't just about the art or furniture, but the connection between people and their tastes and styles.

The featured artists were culled by West Elm from the Betty Rymer Gallery and SAIC's Department of Special Exhibitions. The department's associate director, Jeanne Long, works with Creativity in the Workplace, a program that showcases student artwork in nontraditional settings by loaning the artwork to companies and stores to display for six-month periods.

Students are always encouraged to submit digital copies of their work to the Rymer Gallery so that they can be used later in shows there or outside the SAIC community. "These types of projects are another opportunity for students to gain experience in curating and working with corporate America," said Long in an email.

With help from SAIC student curators Ashleigh Hite and Lizzie Amundsen, Long drew from the department's reserve of student artwork for the West Elm exhibition. After a visit to the store, she decided which pieces would best blend and complement the merchandise. The chosen pieces included watercolor and ink, photography, paintings and screen prints.

"West Elm had the final approval of what works they would accept. They were

"For me, the idea of someone ordering a limited edition print of my work in a catalog and putting it on a wall in their home is an exciting possibility"

— SAIC artist and West Elm participant Emile Ferris

thrilled with everything we presented to them for their review and accepted all of our submissions," said Long.

At the event, each of the artists were given name tags, personally introduced to the West Elm CFO, and approached by various attendees who were genuinely interested in their work.

There are certainly rewarding benefits. "For me, the idea of someone ordering a limited edition print of my work in a catalog and putting it on a wall in their home is an exciting possibility," said SAIC student Emile Ferris, whose digital print "Windchill" was featured at West Elm. Ferris describes "Windchill" as "an abstract piece about the relationship between us and the environment. Not everything here is conspiring to freeze our nipples off."

For Ferris, it's been exciting to work outside of SAIC and with a place like West Elm. Not only because of the exclusivity of an opening event, but also because it gave her the

opportunity to connect with otherwise distant individuals through art. "Submitting plus exhibiting equals not [being] an educated hobo after graduation. This a good thing, right?"

Other participating students include Ling Chun, Kait Doyle, Colin Grimm, Misato Inaba, Jae Young Kim, Jane Song, Cheryl-Ann Fakes and Hyounsang Yoo. Artists received 60 percent of the sales of their work throughout the showing; and, an additional 10 percent of sales from the pre-opening event benefited SAIC student scholarship funds.

Work showcased for the store's grand opening was on display through the month of February, and future collaborations may be in store. [f](#) [b](#)

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Radical LITERALISM

Putting the “Green” in “The Greenhouse Chicago”

BY JENNIFER SWANN

GREEN IS MORE than just a color. Aside from its relationship to grass and envy, it is also the new behavior, material and political mindset of choice for many Americans. Frances Whitehead and her husband Jim Elniski have applied, challenged and redefined the standards of meaningful “green living” by reconstituting their personal space into one of Chicago’s examples of sustainability.

Professors at SAIC, Whitehead (Sculpture) and Elniski (Art Education) didn’t realize their home would become a visual pun until they started designing it with James & Kutyla Architecture. Whitehead discussed ways in which green living could be applied to her home in an interview with F News magazine: on-site energy generation, a green house solarium on the roof, as well as a green-colored roof and green-colored bricks at the home’s entrance.

Although Whitehead admits that the green bricks weren’t consciously installed as a pun, it’s no accident that everything from the bricks to the elm flooring and Galvalume façade found its way into their home because of their limited carbon footprint. Essentially, all of the additions to Whitehead and Elniski’s home—which used to be a brick warehouse before it was readapted—were sourced from the United States and, whenever possible, from Chicago and its surrounding areas.

After finding the green bricks from a nearby brick manufacturer, Whitehead and Elniski chose them so as to remain unified with the streetscape. “We were tuned in to localization, but also factoring in additional cultural considerations at the same time,” said Whitehead. “My husband likes to refer to it as a Rubik’s cube. It was like a puzzle: how can it be local and affordable?” Whitehead and Elniski continued to find materials made locally. The couple’s knowledge of small mills



From left: Exterior of Frances Whitehead and Jim Elniski’s home; Solar panels on the top of the house and the artists in their rooftop garden. Photos courtesy of Michelle Latvin

and lumber companies throughout the Midwest led them to a local company called Urban Forest Products. “We ended up with these great wooden floors that are Chicago recycled street trees,” said Whitehead, who appreciates the American literary significance of the elm tree.

“It absolutely became a big sculpture that needed to be made,” Whitehead remarked, the materials of which were restricted with regard to their source.

“In that way, it follows a classic

metaphoric comes from being the most literal.” Whitehead and Elniski weren’t concerned about whether or not their solar panels, wind turbines, rainwater cisterns and green roofs would pay off financially. “The whole question of payback is a really bogus question because it doesn’t account for many assumptions regarding modern life,” said Whitehead. “Many people would think, ‘I can’t afford that,’ but they don’t say that about their car. You might say the architect would ask questions about the investment or whether or not we would get the performance out of these devices, but for us they had another job to do.”

This project dealt with one of Whitehead’s primary objectives as an artist—making the invisible visible. “We kept hearing everyone talking about all these alternative energies and all this stuff you could do, but who was doing it? No one is doing it, right?” Whitehead said, explaining why she and Elniski decided that readapting an unused brick building was worth doing in order to set an example for the future.

For not having started as an art project, Whitehead and Elniski’s home, which they have aptly titled, “The Greenhouse Chicago,” quickly became a functional and habitable embodiment of Whitehead and Elniski’s art practice. “After thirty years of being an artist, you turn everything into an art project. It’s really hard to keep separate,” said Whitehead about creating meaning through architecture, space, material and, of course, sustainability.

While planning to install two solar arrays for hot water, Whitehead and Elniski stumbled upon the idea of



incorporating a complete set of sustainable additions to their home. “A lot of artists play around with the idea of the collection, the ‘wonder cabinet,’ and having one of each thing—the ‘encyclopedic.’ And so we went ‘Oh, it could be the encyclopedic greenhouse.’ So I went looking on the Internet... and we found all these additional things we could do. I’d say that’s the moment we started driving the architect crazy,” said Whitehead, who insisted that the project was no more and no less an obsession than everything else she and her husband do.

The resulting living space, which also contains Whitehead and Elniski’s artist studios, has been visited by at least 50 tour groups, including the American Institute of Architects, as well as classes from SAIC, DePaul University and Kent School of Law, and individuals who simply want to experience

Whitehead and Elniski’s most sustainable sculpture yet—a kind of contemporary Winchester Mystery House of Sustainability, an ADA wheelchair accessible example of living “green” in Chicago.

Whitehead acknowledges that the project, which began in 2003, might lose its meaning within a number of years, when she hopes that sustainable energy will become commonplace. Regardless, the Greenhouse Chicago serves as a landmark. It also led Whitehead to teach the Knowledge Lab, a sculptural course at SAIC that explores the role of artists in creating a better future.

Currently, Whitehead works with the City of Chicago Innovation Program, proposing a city of the future in which “alternative” energy becomes mainstream, and green is more than just a trend. ■

“The most radical thing you can do is literal: modeling, creating, showing. It’s not just a representation; it’s a literal example, the real thing. The most metaphoric comes from being the most literal.”

sculpturalist idea entitled ‘truth to materials,’ where things look like what they are. We have a raw cement floor that looks like cement. Everything pretty much looks like what it is.” The concept of truth to materials is largely a metaphor for the entire building itself, and one that Whitehead sees as a fundamental entryway into living sustainably.

“At this point in history there is nothing more metaphoric than to do what we should all be doing,” explained Whitehead. “So the most radical thing you can do is literal: modeling, creating, showing. It’s not just a representation. It’s a literal example, the real thing. The most

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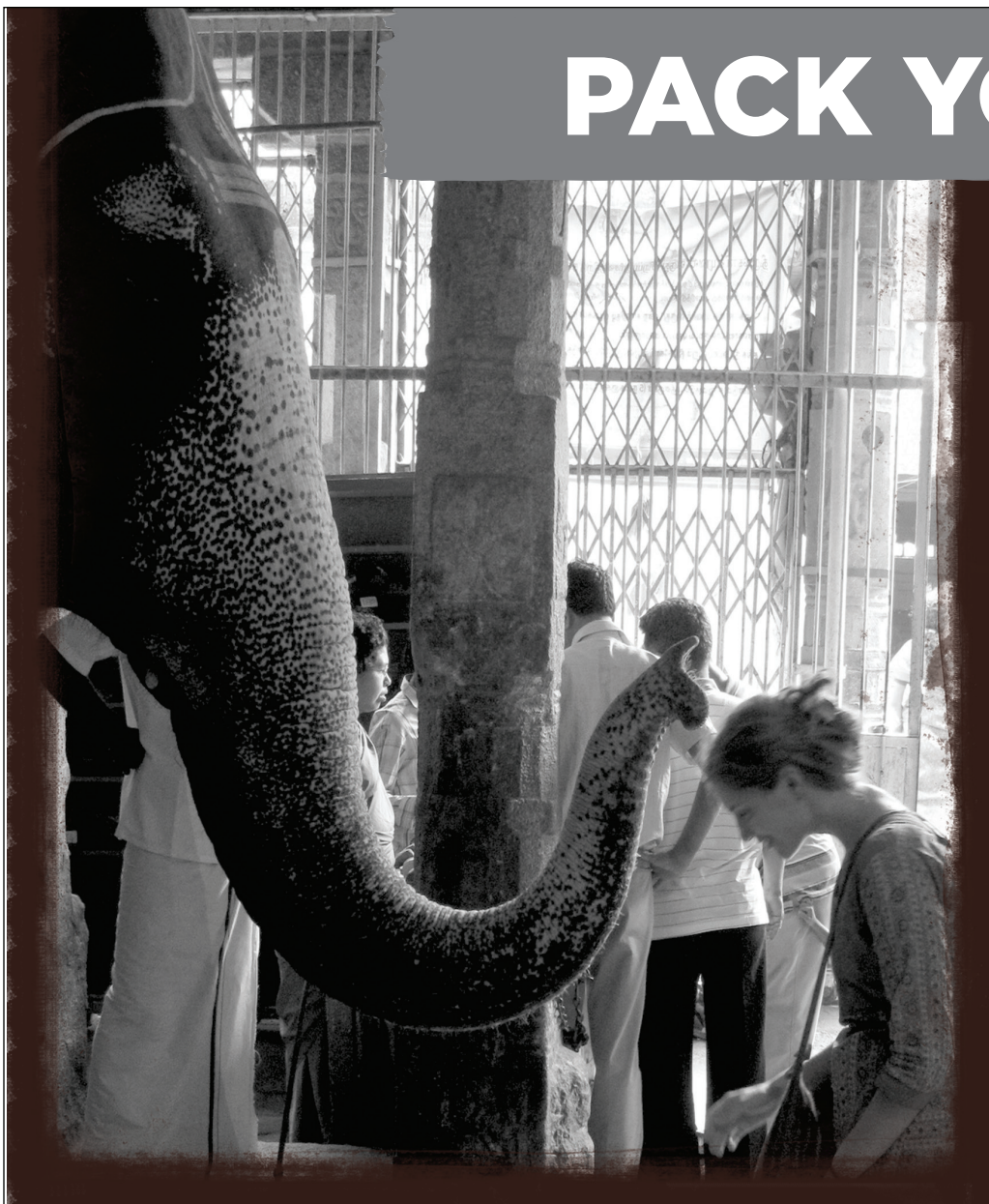
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AUDIOPHILES

BY BRANDON KOSTERS AND MOLLY SHEA

MUSIC AND VISUAL ART are like youth and acne, or Laurel and Hardy, or maybe even Cap’n Crunch and that roughed-up feeling on the roof of your mouth. For some, they are inseparable.

This is the first installment of Audiophiles. Every month, we will look at four different SAIC artists whose creative impulses propel them towards producing both sound and imagery. If you, or someone you care about at SAIC, is an audiophile, write to BrandonKosters@gmail.com and tell us about it.

COLIN SELF

Using a collection of small keyboards and synthesizers, Self began making recordings in his bedroom in Portland as a teenager. Over the years he has developed his love of music and performance art into flamboyant, gender-blending diva disco.

“I was raised in a very musical and artistic family,” Self said. “My sisters and I grew up playing instruments and reading music, so by my teen years, I had a lot of self-realization through playing music. Once I started going out to see shows in Portland, I came to understand that you could make really good pop music with minimal equipment. I discovered the politics of independent music scenes and lo-fi production, and really got going with that.”

Self’s practices as a musician and a performance artist are deeply intertwined. “It’s hard for me to imagine one without the other in my practice,” he said.

Self is highly influenced by feminine performers in the Pacific Northwest. “They made pop music embellished with feminist critique that you could really dance to,” he said. “Three specific girls, Susan Ploetz, Anna Huff, and Khaela Maricich, all taught me about combining spectacle with queer subjectivity.”



Photograph courtesy of Colin Self



Photograph by Brandon Kosters

JENNA CARAVELLO

This SAIC undergraduate and multimedia artist is very eclectic in her taste.

In addition to collecting instruments, Caravello has built a few ukuleles and some lyres (a stringed instrument common in Ancient Greece) and is also an accomplished vocalist. “In my songs I tend to leave out instruments altogether and just layer my voice because it’s the easiest thing to do,” she said.

Though she’s been playing autoharp and mandolin at shows with SAIC alum Patrick McGuan lately, she says that one day she’ll have “a loud band” in the vein of her favorite 90s rock groups that her father introduced her to, such as My Bloody Valentine, Pavement, and Slowdive.

“I’d rather be in a 90s metal band,” she said. “I play bass like Kim Deal. I mean, I play bass like gggg-ggg-ggg-ggggg.”



Photograph courtesy of Frans Ibon Svensen

SNORRE SJONOST HENRIKSEN

Henriksen, the Norwegian born undergraduate, is thankfully with us at SAIC once again after nearly being deported.

Having his passport stolen raised issues with immigration officials regarding what he refers to as his “trouble with the Norwegian police in 2007 after a violent emotional outburst with my closest friend in a taxi on a drunken Christmas night.” He found himself right in the middle of a struggle between “the personal and the political,” a recurring theme in his work.

Henriksen has been working for several years with the BorderClinic, a collective, that produces, performs and hosts live art and activism.

He also started the annual “Out of Time” festival of time-based arts “themed around a much discussed and criticized interpretation of the Mayan calendar as it was perceived by various new age groups—the day out of time.” Henriksen plans to hold an “Out of Time” festival in Chicago this summer.

Aside from his ongoing band White Electric, and his Mp3’ing alter ego “The North,” Henriksen said that he is “dreaming of putting together a guerilla mourning choir. What that would imply is not easy to say at the present moment, other than it does follow the lines of border crossings and will address issues of “terrorism and the war on terror.”



Photograph by Duran Blakeley

KYLE EVANS

Evans is a sound/video artist and performer whose emphasis is in sound synthesis, electronic instrument creation and computer interfacing.

His work “commonly explores such themes as the combination of modern and obsolete technologies.” For example, Evans plays an electronically modified didgeridoo (a traditional Australian wind instrument). He explains that his intention is to experiment in combining didgeridoo with computer programming and sound synthesis. “I built a didgeridoo with externally mounted control modules that allow a performer to manipulate the sound of the didgeridoo in real-time,” he said.

Evans has also built synthesizers, performance-based computer interfaces and real-time audio/video instruments. He worked in video and film before becoming interested in sound. “The school greatly encouraged my decision to shift my focus,” he said.

Visit the multimedia section at fnewsmagazine.com to hear samples from these four artists!

THE COMPANY PICNIC

Panelists at the Gene Siskel Film Center discuss the 2010 Oscar nominations

BY BRANDON KOSTERS





Pictured L-R: Michael Phillips (“At The Movies” co-host/Chicago Tribune), Hank Sartin (Time Out Chicago), Janet Davies (ABC 7), Chaz Ebert (Oscar Night America benefit honorary chair) and A.O. Scott (“At The Movies” co-host/The New York Times) participated in an Oscar Nominee Panel at the Gene Siskel Film Center on Tuesday, Feb. 2, 2010.

On February 2, the Gene Siskel Film Center hosted a panel of Chicago film critics to discuss the 2010 Oscar Nominees. The panel featured: Michael Phillips, film critic for the Chicago Tribune and host of At the Movies; Hank Sartin, the film section editor for Time Out Chicago; Janet Davies, producer for ABC 7; Chaz Ebert, Roger’s wife; and A.O. Scott, New York film critic and co-host of At the Movies. The event started with footage that had been recorded earlier that morning of Tom Sherak, president of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, standing alongside actress Anne Hathaway announcing the nominees. The conversation centered around the addition of five films in the Best Picture category, and what this development means for the integrity of the award. Other issues included Oscar politics, financial gain, recent changes to the nomination process and Sandra Bullock’s surprise appearance on the list of nominees. Here are some of the panelists’ responses to the issues.

TEN TOO MANY?

This is the company picnic for Hollywood: ‘A Serious Man?’ ‘An Education?’ The fact that they’re in this list is heartening to me. [The switch to ten nominees] is the Academy all but admitting that they are willing to [move away from] insular, artsy, and I hate that word, bunch of daunting pictures. —Michael Phillips

I think that one thing that’s nice about the five is that everyone says it’s an honor to be nominated. Does ten make it less of an honor somehow? It does seem that even with ten nominees, you have a list that represents a range of styles and scales of movie making. You have what was a popular genre nerd movie, ‘District 9,’ ‘Blindside,’ I think that the ten serves as a snapshot of where movies were and what they were in 2009. —A.O. Scott

MERYL VS SANDRA

When I saw Meryl Streep, I saw Julia Child. When I saw Sandra Bullock, I saw Sandra Bullock the actress. When it comes down to the actual “tour de force,” I think it’s Meryl. —Janet Davies

Meryl’s only won twice, but she’s been nominated 16 times. She is without a doubt the greatest living actress. Sandra Bullock may never be nominated again. Especially if she keeps making movies like “All About Steve.” Sometimes these political considerations play into the voting. —Chaz Ebert

There’s a lot to be said about perseverance. Here’s the story of someone [Sandra Bullock] who got dismissed over and over again critically. None of us have quite forgiven her for “All About Steve.” —Hank Sartin

ACADEMY POLITICS

I got a funny tweet today. Someone asked me, “Are you saying that the Oscars are all about money now? Now??” The [Oscars] don’t reflect popular tastes, they don’t reflect artistic merit. It’s about what the industry thinks of itself. —A.O. Scott

The academy split it. They gave an award to F.W. Murnau’s Sunrise for “unique and artistic achievement.” They gave the award to Wings for a “schlocky hit that was going to make a lot of money.” Good luck to F.W. Murnau today. —Michael Phillips on the inaugural Oscars ceremony in 1929.

THE CRITICS’ PICKS

When asked about what their choices would be if each were president of the Academy, Scott said he would have listed “The Hurt Locker,” “Where the Wild Things Are,” “Summer Hours,” and “A Serious Man” as the five nominees for Best Picture. Phillips would have listed “The Hurt Locker,” “A Serious Man,” “Up,” “Where the Wild Things Are,” and “Zombieland.”



The Academy Awards will be broadcast live on March 7 at the Gene Siskel Film Center. This is Chicago’s only official sanctioned Oscar screening. For more information, visit www.siskelfilmcenter.org



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Love, Luck & Music

The unlikely success of Sad Brad Smith



Critics have likened his sound to Simon and Garfunkel, but Smith shies away from that comparison, preferring to cite artists such as Leonard Cohen and The Flaming Lips as major influences on his work.

BY BRITANY ROBINSON

IF LOVE is not what you need, then maybe luck is.

The release of Chicago native Sad Brad Smith's first album, "Love is Not What You Need," follows an unlikely stroke of luck that changed his musical career from an idling hobby to Oscar-worthy attention in one of the year's biggest films, "Up in the Air." His song, "Help Yourself," plays prominently in the emotional climax of the Best Picture nominee, and was briefly in the running for Best Original Song before an unfortunate technicality made it ineligible.

"Help Yourself" was Smith's first release, included on the soundtrack to "Up in the Air." Before his song's inclusion in a motion picture, he had no following other than close friends, and he rarely performed outside of his apartment. Jason Reitman, director of "Up in the Air," happened upon Sad Brad Smith's music when Smith accidentally left a CD of his in a friend's car—a friend of a friend who happened to be Reitman's brother-in-law.

"I used to be, I don't want to say embarrassed of my work, but I didn't want to push it on anyone who didn't want to hear it. So unless I was asked to play somewhere, I usually wouldn't," said Smith in an interview with *F* News magazine. Smith's hesitancy to "force" his music on anyone is endearing, considering his song was played during the

Golden Globes nearly every time the film was mentioned.

Smith's touching lyrics just skirt sappy, with charming sarcasm and quirky musings on life and love scattered throughout. His lilting voice lends honesty to his chirpy melodies, and you'd never guess the singer-songwriter recorded the entire debut in his apartment with Garage Band—a free application that anyone with a Mac can play around with—without much thought to its potential success or failure. Not that he's careless about his music—he simply felt the need to release something soon after his song's appearance in "Up in the Air," and

ballad that lends perfectly to the scene in "Up in the Air." It succeeds in tugging the viewer's heartstrings even harder than the simultaneous emotional awakening of George Clooney's character, Ryan Bingham.

The rest of his album, however, has a humor to it that cannot be found in his popular single. "Calling myself 'Sad Brad Smith' was my way of calling attention to it," he said of the imbued humor of his music. "But paired just with 'Help Yourself' alone, I don't think people could discern that I'm not quite serious. Well, I'm serious, but I see no reason why seriousness and humor cannot co-exist."

"Somebody asked me if I was worried about becoming a one-hit wonder. I said I wasn't aware that I had a hit."

didn't have the time or budget to do much editing or revising.

Although clearly excited about the success of "Help Yourself," Smith hopes that listeners will tune in to the rest of his album to truly understand his style. Critics have likened his sound to Simon & Garfunkel, but Smith shies away from that comparison, preferring to cite artists such as Leonard Cohen and The Flaming Lips as major influences on his work. "Help Yourself" is a lovely

So what has this Chicago-based talent been up to since his newfound success? He performed an awkward set over the roar of a plane engine for a press junket on a plane that flew journalists from New York to LA, and had a brief encounter with Clooney at the movie's premiere. But, other than that, Smith's life is just as low key as it was before Reitman chose "Help Yourself" to be the main track of his much anticipated third movie.

The Oscar buzz that originally surrounded the single has died down since Smith acknowledged that he had a portion of the song in the works before being commissioned for the project—a violation of strict academy rules that songs develop as a direct result of the movie and interaction between the artist and the director. Despite impressive album sales of the soundtrack as a whole, Sad Brad Smith has not let the success go to his head, as one might expect. He remains modest, yet hopeful that this experience might lead to a larger following, and that his musical career can keep him out of part-time work in local cafés (opting to perform there rather than wait tables.)

Smith says he'll still watch the Oscars, despite his lingering twinge of bitterness. Regardless of his personal disappointment, he seems well aware that not many aspiring musicians chance upon his kind of luck.

"Somebody asked me if I was worried about becoming a one-hit wonder. I said I wasn't aware that I had a hit." Despite his "Up in the Air" exposure, Smith remains down-to-earth, and hopefully he will stay grounded even as his career climbs to loftier heights. ■

Stop Blaming.

Stop Complaining.

Why the U.S. Does Not Deserve Obama

BY ANIA SZREMSKI

WHEN SKEPTICALLY skimming through an online op-ed piece on why Obama has failed in his first year in office, an ad popped up with side-by-side photos of Bill Clinton, George W. Bush and Barack Obama. “Who’s to Blame?” the image exclaimed in bold yellow print. “Vote Now!”

Surprisingly enough, this inconsequential pay-per-click ad is actually a profound symbol of the ethos of 21st century America. Got problems? Then by all means, heap the blame on the nearest available elected official and wait petulantly until your whims have been catered to.

When I voted for Barack Obama in 2008, I tried to remain realistic in my expectations. Would he end racism, make the war in Iraq disappear and turn our economy into gold with his Midas touch? Of course not. Was he the super liberal knight in shining armor that leftist Democrats had been waiting for? Um, no — he had to be centrist enough to win after all.

But, I did have faith in his ability to inspire millions to action, especially those who had been mired in a sluggish political apathy until his campaign touched a nerve no one seemed to know that they had. By “those” I am specifically referring to my own generation of late teens and 20-somethings, a demographic that is historically characterized by political fervor and idealism.

I also had the naïve confidence that this enthusiastic drive to service that had inspired so many to take action during the campaign would carry over after the election. And perhaps it did — for a month or two — only to wither and die when Obama “failed” to put a magical band-aid on the world’s problems.

Working in the arts, I inevitably work with a lot of left-leaning people (often radically so); people who had been some of Obama’s staunchest supporters and pounded the campaign trail until the last hour. Exactly a year later, his presidency has become the stuff of sneers among this exact same group of people. And now, the results of certain senate races have made Obama’s ability to achieve that famous change, not to mention the very future of his presidency, all the more precarious.

I am no political scientist, of course; nor can I claim any profound understanding of the intricacies of economics or foreign policies. I do follow the news and possess a fairly rational and logical mind, however, making some of these criticisms increasingly rage-provoking in their inanity. Hence, my desire to address some of the most common complaints I encounter on a daily basis.

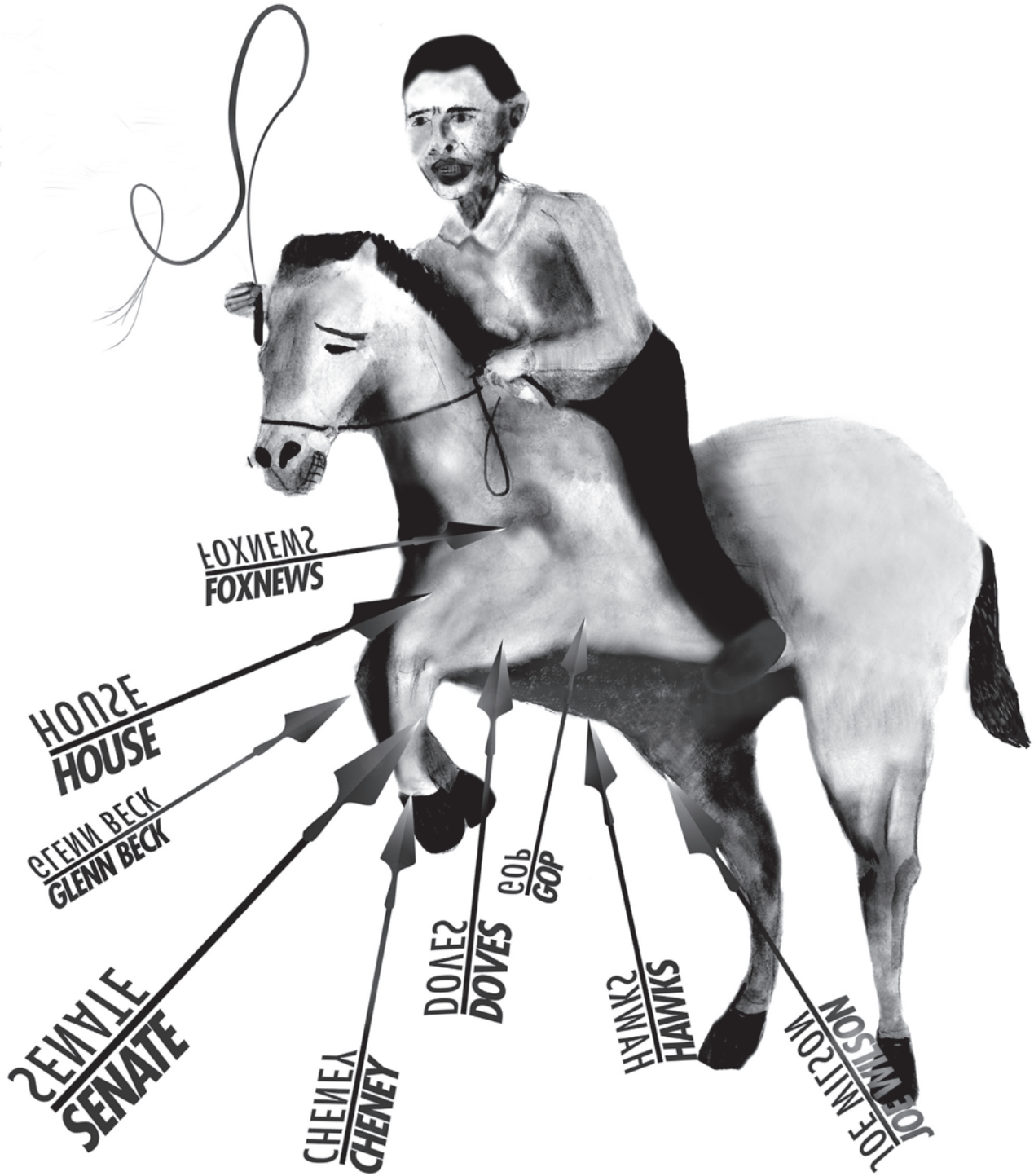


Illustration by Ya-Chi Hsu

Complaint 1

It’s been a year, and he hasn’t done anything! Why hasn’t he fulfilled his promises?

It seems to me that the attention span of some people is akin to the lifespan of a dog—apparently, one year is equal to seven. I shouldn’t need to point out that Obama has a total of four years to work on his campaign promises; and given trends in this country’s election patterns, he was probably already looking forward to a second term in which he could finish what he started.

That being said, let’s take a look at exactly what he has accomplished. According to CNBC, in his first 100 days of office alone, the President lifted Bush’s ban on stem-cell research; held his ground against an irate auto industry and imposed pay limits on top CEOs of companies that received taxpayer funds in the bailout; and managed to pass a \$787 billion stimulus package in response to one of the worst fiscal crises in U.S. history.

He ordered the withdrawal of troops from Iraq (which is, indeed, slowly taking place); ordered Guantanamo closed and is taking the steps necessary to do so; and ordered an end to “harsh interrogation methods” (i.e., torture) at that very same facility. Furthermore, he instructed the EPA to allow California to adopt stricter auto emissions standards (standards that can now be adopted by other states), reversing the ruling against those standards that had been made under the Bush and Cheney administration. Also on the green front, Obama saved nature parks from becoming drilling grounds and added more species to the endangered list.

The list goes on and on — actually, according to the White House, Obama passed more legislation in his first 30 days in office than any other president in history. To those who complain that all this legislation amounts to a lot of noise that hasn’t actually taken effect, I am compelled to counsel a virtue that is so loathed in this country: patience.

Complaint 2

Obama is compromising his ideals and trying too hard to secure Republican favor. He has betrayed his liberal values.

In case you don’t remember, Obama always ran on a pragmatist platform; he never presented himself as a radical liberal (despite all the mutterings about Bolsheviks and socialism). Also, keep in mind the sheer vitriol he faces from the GOP and that party’s utter determination to block his every move, as Obama himself so eloquently alluded to during his State of the Union Address.

Guess what, folks: he has to get the GOP to work with him, and he may have to tailor his rhetoric a bit to get them to listen. And it appears to be working: the New York Times reported on February 11 that a bipartisan agreement was finally struck in the Senate regarding a new jobs deal.

Complaint 3

Obama has destroyed his presidency with the health care reform fiasco. He used up all his political capital flogging a dead horse, and has compromised on the bill so much that it isn’t any good anymore anyway.

This problem is intricately bound to what I briefly mentioned earlier: vitriol and divisiveness in the House and Senate. This is a history-changing proposal that quite simply has to happen.

As someone who has lived in five different countries, I can personally assure you that the state of health care in this country is mind-bogglingly disturbing. Did Democrats compromise on the bill to get it through the House? Yes, but if it were to pass Senate, it could establish the precedent for even more significant reforms in the future.

IN SHORT, I don’t think Obama has failed in his first year of office. The people have, by bailing on his attempts at reform before they can possibly take effect and, in their peevishness, paving the way for the GOP’s return to power in three years.

Got problems? Stop griping and impulsively switching political allegiances. Vote, learn to be fiscally responsible and stop resorting to arm-chair apathy when you don’t agree with policy. Participation in a democratic society is not an inherent right — it is a privilege, so learn to make it work. ■



Social Media’s Response to the Haiti Earthquake

BY AMANDA ALDINGER

HAITI PHOTOJOURNALIST Frederic DuPoux tweeted, “oh shiet heavy earthquake right now ! in haiti”[sic] at 4:56 p.m. on January 12, 2010. According to the U.S. Geological Survey’s website, the 7.0 magnitude earthquake hit Haiti at approximately 4:53 p.m.—only three minutes prior to DuPoux tweeting the experience.

At 5:18 p.m. he tweeted: “this shiet is still shaking! major earthquake in haiti !”[sic] And, then again, at 6:05 p.m.: “words on the streets part of Hotel Montana fell , exagone is cracked. houses in canape vert fell down #haiti #eq.”[sic] His third tweet includes hashtags, which automatically create a list of any tweets that contain keywords preceeded by “#.”

Not only did it take just three minutes for news of the earthquake to disseminate to the public on an international level, but in barely over an hour, any Twitter follower could click on the #haiti hashtag under the site’s list of “Trending: Worldwide” topics to access first-hand accounts of the quake, directly communicating with individuals in Haiti as the aftershocks continued to occur. Haiti had become the next big thing.

As past natural disasters have shown, the global community is quick to unite in producing relief aid—monetary and item donations as well as volunteer efforts. Most recently this phenomenon was seen in New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina in 2005, and when the Indian Ocean tsunami devastated coastlines in Southeast Asia and Africa in 2004.

However, what differentiates the global response to Haiti from that of the previous two major disasters is the overwhelming influence social

media has had in spreading information, fundraising for aid and reconnecting lost families. Disaster relief quickly became as accessible as pop culture trends like sequined blazers and quoting lines from “The Hangover.”

Although there did exist technological tools like blogging and online news sources at the time of Katrina, the idea of a real-time website for instantaneous communication was non-existent—Twitter development did not even begin until early 2006.

Haiti, the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere—quantifiably the same size as Maine—had neither the infrastructure nor the resources to cope with their immediate need for aid. Yet, according to Twitter, within 24 hours of the earthquake the top five most popular trending topics were related to aiding Haiti.

Funding sites were immediately set up via Twitter, allowing Twitter users to tweet and re-tweet donation links at rapid rates. With nearly 40 million unique visitors, Twitter has overtaken social media—taking immediacy to unparalleled proportions. There is no other media concept that is capable of facilitating the immediate and international communication that Twitter supports.

And then there’s Facebook, the tech world’s true inauguration into social media. With over 125 million users logging in daily, the spread of Facebook statuses promoting relief developed as immediately as the barrage of tweets, providing a localized forum in which individuals could go to find donation websites, locate relief organizations and express their support.

Facebook was also used

extensively in searching for missing friends and family members, or to spread word of missing persons who had been found. With the recovery search well under way, the status of Agnieight Zik read: “*FOUND* Mr. Emanuel Gauthier is fine his family is in Maryland, Connecticut and his brother in Iraq if anyone knows him let them know!!!!” Suddenly a website on which users “poke” each other and share debauchorous photos of weekend activities was sponsoring one of the world’s most widespread relief aid campaigns.

Hurricane Katrina, the Indian Ocean tsunami and the recent earthquake in Haiti all received aid reinforcement at breakneck speeds; Katrina even garnered higher amounts of monetary aid than either the tsunami or 9/11. But the victims of neither Katrina nor the tsunami had access to the advances in technological aid from the likes of Twitter, Facebook or even cell phones.

iPhones were a thing of the future, and phones sans their smarts trumped those with internet capability. However, with just the touch of a button, donating to Haiti became as easy as sending a text.

Within two hours of news of the earthquake, Wyclef Jean initiated the wave of cellular donations with his tweet, “Please text ‘Yéle’ to 501501 to donate \$5 to Yéle Haiti. Your money will help with relief efforts. They need our help.” Sent to the singer’s 1.4 million followers, Wyclef Jean spurred the largest text message fundraising campaign in the history of relief aid, according to Time Magazine.

When texting, tweeting or visiting a donation site listed on Facebook in the age of smart phones, iTouches, and a world

that’s constantly connected, the immediacy of action and reaction is instantaneous. What’s the excuse not to donate, when it can be completed simply through a text or a tweet, something that many of us do up to hundreds of times per day?

“This is the first time there has been a major disaster when this type of service has been widely available,” said Yéle Haiti executive director Hugh Locke to Time Magazine on January 13. “People want a sense of participating in the response. There is an emotional need to do something.”

But social media has not only impacted the ability for one to donate immediately, it has turned causes related to a natural disaster into trends, garnering “followers” in the same way one might share a YouTube video, or re-tweet a popular link. It has done what it does best: instigating a bandwagon appeal of immense proportions.

The widespread impact of social media is undeniable, but the power of the technological mobilization for aid relief and support that was exhibited during Haiti’s crisis is overwhelming. When a natural disaster can become a trending topic within minutes, is the resulting social-media driven relief aid genuine, or is it the result of the cultural world jumping on the networked bandwagon?

Regardless of the answer, it goes without saying that the world has never before seen such a rapid dissemination of disaster information and relief aid. Perhaps there is something to being a Twitterized Facebook Fan, Digging and StumblingUpon after all. ■

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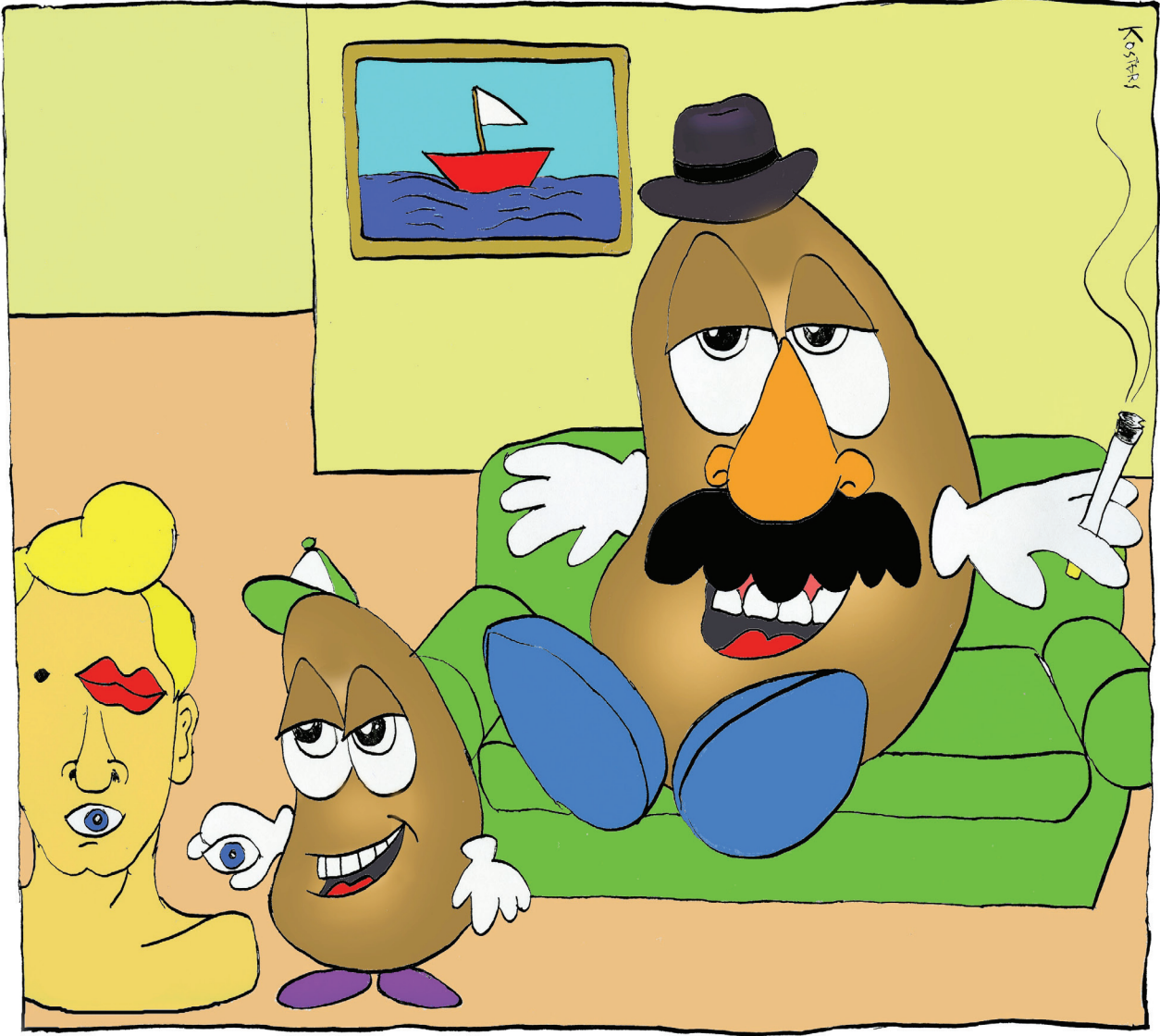
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Oddballs

by Brandon Kusters



art NEWS TICKER

Legendary and enormously influential designer **Alexander McQueen** was found dead on Thursday, February 11, in his London home, an apparent suicide. After J.D. Salinger, McQueen was the second major cultural icon we've lost in 2010. ... In February, the MCA's own **Francesco Bonami** was named a member of France's Legion of Honor. ... Ever controversial SAIC alum **Wafaa Bilal** is seeking volunteers for a performance at the Elizabeth Foundation for the Arts in New York City on March 8-9. Bilal is tattooing his back with a map of Iraq annotated with the casualties of the Iraq War, and is looking for volunteers to read the names of the deceased during this 24-hour performance. ... After a disappointing fundraiser in January, local arts institution **Around the Coyote** has declared itself "on hiatus" and may not re-open. ... Perhaps due to the stress of an enduring bear market, the international art fair circuit was rife with dissension in February. Some galleries claim they were threatened with legal action by organizers of the **Armory Show** when they attempted to opt out of the fair. This year's Armory will be the largest ever, with 285 dealers represented. Meanwhile, across the Atlantic, the increasingly troubled **Arco Fair** took place from February 17-21, after a very public 2-month squabble with 70 galleries threatening to boycott the event.

Must-Sees in March

BY ANIA SZREMSKI



Solo museum show



Group show



Lecture



Documentary



Installations



"Field Day" by Matt Saunders
Photograph courtesy of the Renaissance Society



Matt Saunders at the Ren

February 28 – April 11
5811 S. Ellis Avenue

In its usual ahead-of-the-pack form, the Renaissance Society is presenting Chicago with Matt Saunders' first solo museum show. This rising art world darling will be showing photographs, short films, drawings and paintings inspired by forgotten cultural figures (from scientists to film stars and TV actors) who lived from the early to mid-twentieth century, continuing with his predilection for exploring cinema and its iconic figures. The chances for pretension are moderate to high (this is, after all, a Yale and Harvard graduate based in Berlin who is doing pretty well for himself right now—yawn!), but I'm willing to take the risk.



Hal Foster at AIC

March 4, 6 - 7 p.m.
Art Institute of Chicago's Fullerton Hall
111 S. Michigan

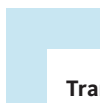
Legendary art critic-historian Hal Foster will expound on his favorite topic (the avant-garde, and specifically Dada) to what is sure to be a packed house. The notorious curmudgeon comes after T.J. Clark last October and before Michael Fried and Yve-Alain Bois this April and May as part of the Art Institute's star-studded lecture series inspired by the opening of the Modern Wing. Get there early and be prepared for a long, long line.



Fair Use at Glass Curtain

March 1 – April 30; reception
March 11, 5 - 8 p.m.
Glass Curtain Gallery at Columbia College
1104 S Wabash Ave

Curated by Brandon Alvendia, this group show tackles issues like open source, the copyleft movement, piracy, appropriation and modes of (re)distribution. Artists including Siebren Versteeg, the Totem Collective, Kay Rosen and Salter/Snowden explore how new developments in technology and software, as well as how debates over intellectual property, effect, inform and expand their work. Alvendia's also going to be working with ShopColumbia to create an adaptable, multi-purpose nomadic unit that can serve as a portable exhibition space or sales kiosk, intended to allow students to show and sell their work outside of mainstream distribution systems. Given the concept and the people involved, the show promises to be equal parts intriguing and provocative.



Tran, T. Kim-Trang at CATE

March 11, 6 p.m.
Gene Siskel Film Center
154 N State Street

It's hard to choose just one evening from Conversation at the Edge's ever-rich bevy of programming, but this showing of Tran, T. Kim-Trang's famed Blindness Series is definitely at the top. The artist will be present to present five of the cycle's eight videos, including, in CATE's words, "a provocative documentary on hysterical blindness and the Cambodian civil war ('ekleipsis,' 1998); an essay on cosmetic eyelid surgery ('operculum,' 1993); and a meditation on the phenomenon of word blindness ('alexia,' 2000)."



Irena Knezevic at threewalls

March 19 – April 17
119 N Peoria #2C

This Serbian artist and former math student at the University of Chicago is known for her occult mixed-media installations and performances that incorporate concepts culled from German Romantic philosophy, Satanism, Sun Ra, dark metal and more. Her 12x12 exhibition at the MCA in 2007, for instance, featured images of figures that had made Faustian pacts with the devil. I'm eager to see what lugubrious machinations she has in store for threewalls.