



f

A STUDENT JOURNAL OF ART, CULTURE AND POLITICS

APRIL 2010

NEWSMAGAZINE

THE SCHOOL OF THE ART INSTITUTE OF CHICAGO

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High in the Sky Apple Pie Hopes

A letter from the editors

Spring has supposedly arrived (at least the sun shines more, even if the temperature is consistently inconsistent). Hopefully you are all flourishing creatively and taking your multi-vitamins as we plunge into the second half of the semester.

This semester has been a transitional period for F, and we've got big plans for the future. Be sure to check out fnewsmagazine.com for our new staff blog, multi-media supplements to printed articles and increased web-exclusives. Follow us on Twitter (@fnewsmagazine) to keep on top of happenings around Chicago and to find out when new content is posted. Every issue, we will continue to offer reviews of work in all media throughout the city; provocative interviews of old, and new, faces in the art world; and featured student artwork (including our beloved comics page).

This month we examine the historical significance of William Eggleston, whose work is on display at the Art Institute of Chicago; have an exclusive interview with renowned art critic Hal Foster (who spoke to a packed house at Fullerton Hall in March); cover the 13th annual EU Film Festival at the Gene Siskel; joke about filing taxes as an artist; and, on the cover, imagine what a true infiltration of Columbus Drive would look like. Plus, we have added a number of monthly features:

IN-DEPTH COVERAGE OF SAIC DEPARTMENTS

This month we highlight the Sculpture Department; look for the Fashion Department in May (including details about FASHION 2010).

F NEWS QUESTION

Our very own sounding board for the SAIC community. Thanks to all of you who commented on the inane number of Best Picture Oscar nominations in March, this old F favorite got off to a great start. This month we solicited commentary directly from specific alumni, faculty and students in response to recent graffiti controversies in Chicago (looking forward to comments you post online). And, for May we want to know what improvements you think could be made at SAIC. Look for details in the weekly school e-mail bulletin, or just send your ideas directly to editors@fnewsmagazine.com.

CHICAGO-BASED, ART RELATED NOT-FOR PROFITS

The city is full of them, yet most don't get nearly enough press and are always in need of volunteers. We're going to fill you in, starting this month with The Arts of Life studio on the West Side.

APARTMENT GALLERIES & ALTERNATIVE SPACES

A look at unique exhibition and performance spaces to give you a welcome breaks from the sterility of institutional art spaces; this month "Artists and Residents" (curated by MAAAP candidate Tang Zehui) is featured.

SAIC AUDIOPHILES

Profiles of four different artists in the SAIC community who work both visually and aurally. Sound samples are posted on fnewsmagazine.com; e-mail brandonkosters@gmail.com if you want be interviewed.

NOTEWORTHY

News from the art world you need to know and upcoming events that should not be missed.

Finally, be sure to visit our website throughout the month of April — we will be posting coverage and reviews of the BFA show, tons of theater reviews (this is Chicago, after all), short interviews with SNL alumni, and supplements to all of the content you're about to read.

Enjoy ...

Emily and Brandon

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Cover "Infiltration of Columbus Drive" by Megan Issacs, Elliott Beazley, and Annalise Fowler

Elia Bryan

OCTOBER 16, 1988 - MARCH 26, 2010

Elia Bryan, an SAIC student, passed away on March 26, 2010 from alcohol-related injuries. A second-year student, Elia was an avid and highly gifted painter with an effervescent, passionate personality.

Elia's mother, Irene Bryan, said that an art and architecture class Elia was taking this semester had become a strong influence, sparking a decision to switch to an architectural track at SAIC, merging her love for painting and drawing, mathematics and architecture.

The oldest of three, Elia was born October 16, 1988, in Fayetteville, Arkansas. She grew up mostly in Fairfield, Connecticut,

finishing her high school education in Massachusetts, where her family now lives.

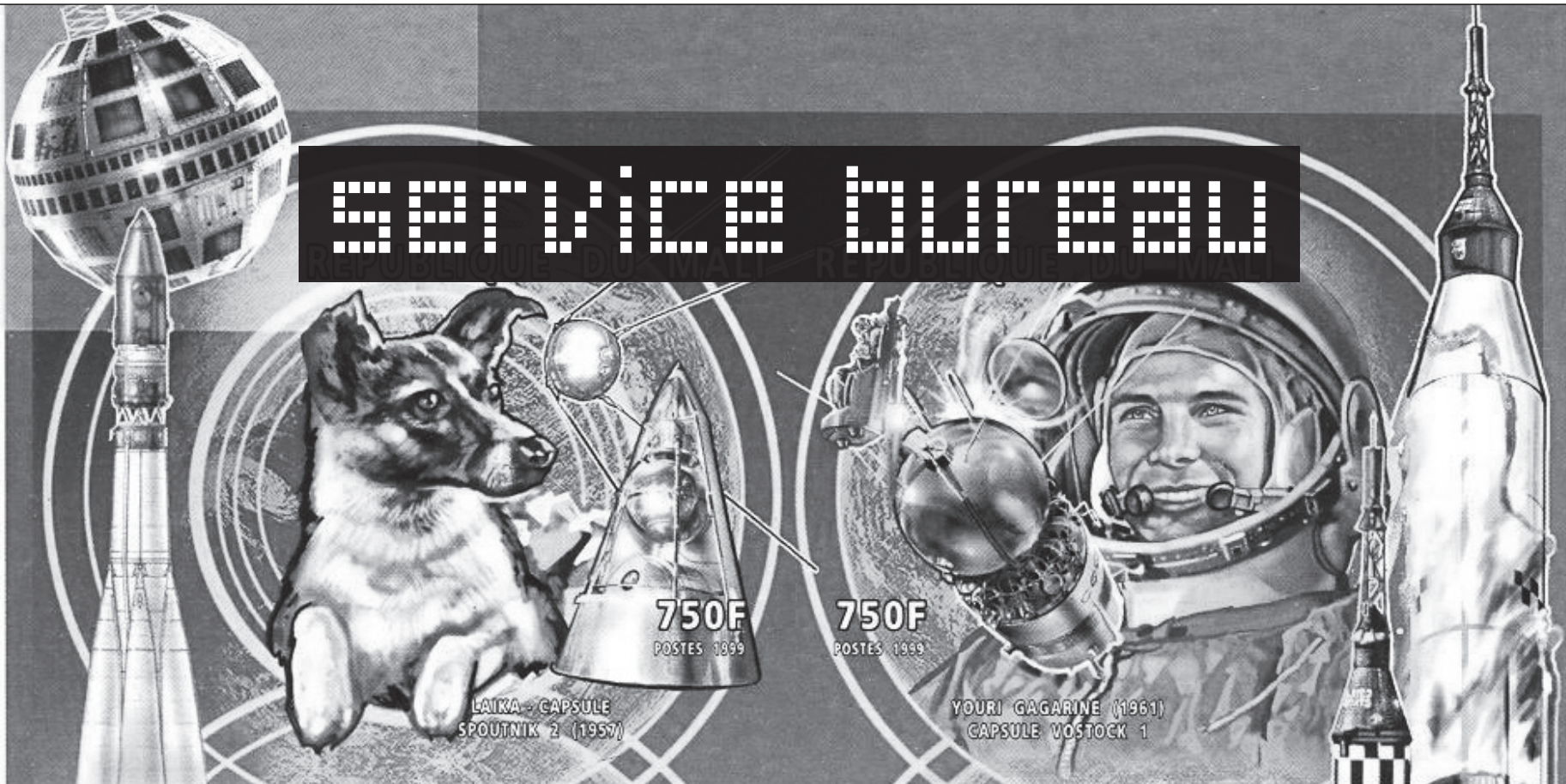
Living in Chicago, Elia very much enjoyed the school, as well as the group of friends she made throughout her year and a half at SAIC. She was a fan of soul, rap and old school rock music who loved shopping with her friends.

Those close to her describe her as a carefree, spirited individual who would do anything for those she cared about. Always laughing and engaging others with her outspoken personality, Elia was a highly social, well-loved individual who strove for perfection — her attention to detail and

critical nature exhibited in the skill level of her art work.

Elia's family thanks the school for the kindness and support the SAIC community has shown. "Elia was very proud to be in the school," Irene Bryan remarked. "We encourage the students to be careful. The School has an excellent counseling department, and Elia's father and I are always available to talk. We would like to take this experience and to be a source of strength for others."

Services will be held Saturday, April 3, at 1 p.m. at the Acton Congregational Church in Acton, Massachusetts.



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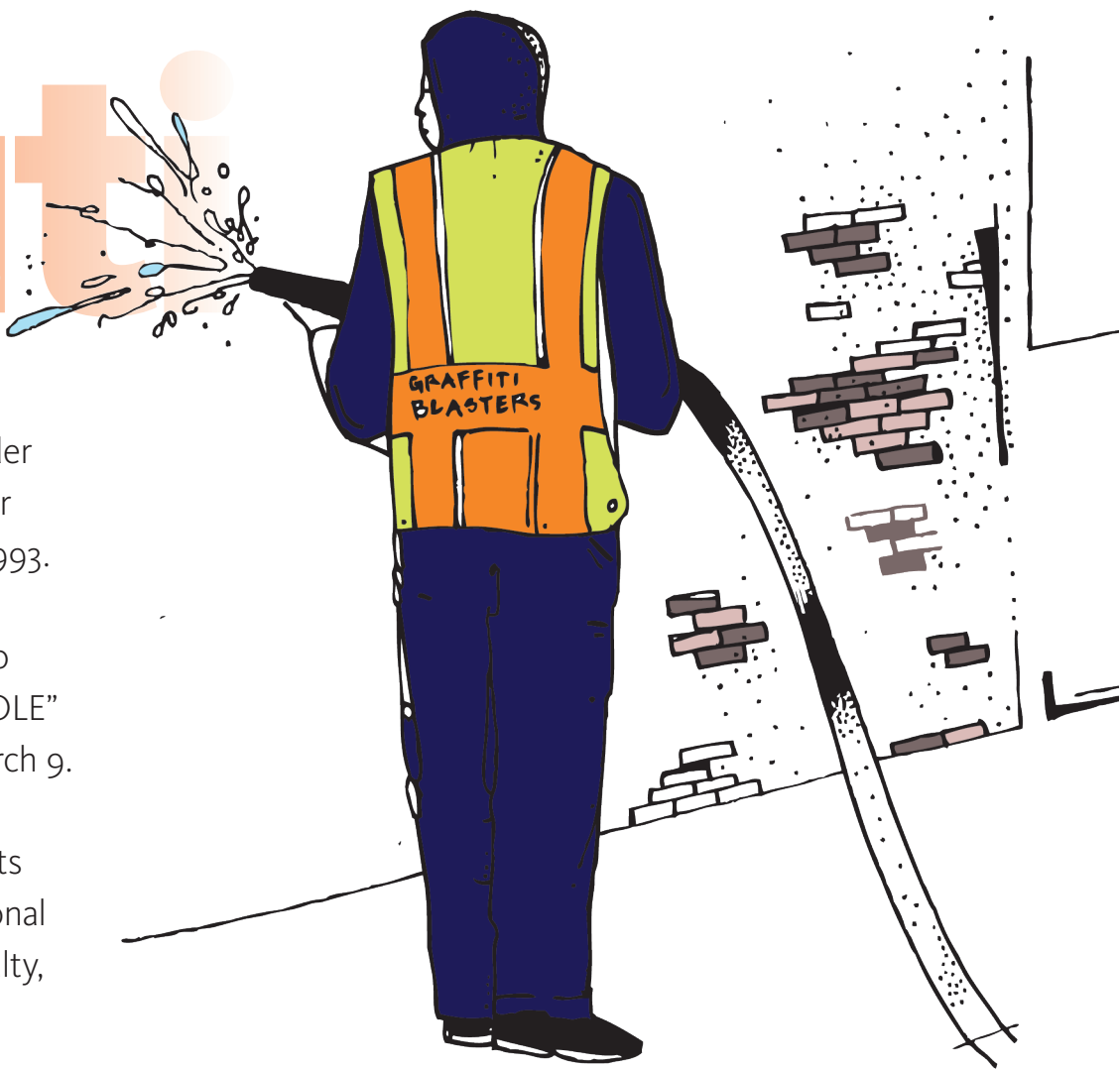
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What is Graffiti



Chicago has a long history of tension between the broader arts community and city officials — both before and after Mayor Daley’s establishment of The Graffiti Blasters in 1993. Two recent events have highlighted this relationship: the “bombing” of the east wall of the Art Institute of Chicago Modern Wing on February 23 and the death of Jason “SOLE” Kitchkeg while being pursued by Chicago police on March 9.

For this month’s F News Question, we bring you thoughts on graffiti — theoretical and philosophical stances, personal experiences and responses to recent events — from faculty, students and alumni with, well... experience.

Email editors@fnewsmagazine.com with your opinions or post comments directly on fnewsmagazine.com/question.

A Quick Critique

BY RAY NOLAND
BFA 1995

While I admire them for their gusto, I wasn’t too impressed with the pieces on the wall of the Modern Wing. I mean I know they had to do them quick and all but that was introductory. Check out STATIK, eL MAC or CHOR Boogie.

Is this not all part of the learning process of being an artist though? Originally kids go out with the basic intent to FUCK SHIT UP and graduate into artists that really MAKE YOU QUESTION the lines between street art and corporate advertising, or graffiti and fine art. If someone had gotten up with something more thoughtful and noteworthy, I may have a different opinion.

Folks have been writing and commenting on objects and utilizing the public space for creative, social and political purposes for centuries — and will continue. It’s a conversation with the many.



Falling Up: A Call to Arms

(RIP Sole UAC)

BY KEVIN COVAL
Instructor, Visual & Critical Studies

the factory he was painting on used to manufacture paint. tomb stone for the industrial age near the stevenson express way, along the south branch of the Chicago river.

Pilsen, Little Village, used to be Back of the Yards, giant butcher in the center of the country.

cops gave chase in an abandoned building. whose interests were they serving. the city didn’t protect the bodies working while the factory smoked.

the building is a heap of grey rot.

graffiti artists tribute the hands that sealed paint cans. conjurers bringing life back.

graffiti writers are superheroes who astound and scale the possible, who defy gravity, who commemorate and communicate in secret codes.

graffiti writers are the recorders of a city rotting. painters of walls, resisters of death and dying industry.

graffiti writers Upton Sinclair, journalists investigating the g-d forsaken with aerosol.

graffiti writers can’t fly.

when Sole jumped off the roof of the empty building, he thought he could swim, maybe thought the river would break his fall and it did break him maybe. or maybe the ghosts of the river held him there. *great leviathans disporting themselves in the depths** of bubbly creek. there is no oxygen in the water. bloodworms feast on sunken organs buried in the riverbed, corpses slaughtered in the stockyard decomposing for decades, entrails and industry, the hands of workers pushed out of job and home.

Sole choose to be free Under A Crown, United Artists, Crew of the working. he was twenty-six, a year into marriage, recently laid off. a city worker remembering the left out, the margins and maimed, the garnished wages and real income of regular people, in this city on a lake, plummeting like stone off a roof top, a body from the heavens, Sole falling in the Chicago River where workers and remnants of slaughter disturb the water bubble up, and sometimes catch fire and burn.

*Upton Sinclair (1906). *The Jungle*. Chapter 9.

An Activist’s Perspective

BY MATT PING

Sophomore, Writing and FVNM
(Film, Video, and New Media)

The distinction I see (in my limited knowledge) is that commissioned public art is probably brought into existence by some government planning agency or arts council to “enhance” the beauty of the city; an artist gets some money and puts a piece of themselves in a public space for everyone to walk around and contemplate; and, the graffiti artist is someone who goes outside of those resources to find a space that they can confront the world in quite a different way.

Graffiti is also a tool for people to use to subvert commercial advertisement and social ideas. I appreciate the graffiti artists that paint a picture as to the usual name or gang tags. I think if the laws weren’t so harsh then we would see more graffiti art with artistic value.

Unfortunately, today you can rarely find an intricate piece on a train ride. In my experience, the best pieces are now found tucked away in drainage ditches and the lost corners of cities. Artists like Banksy are bringing message-based graffiti to the forefront and it seems like a significant change in American society that will benefit the spirit of a people if used properly.

I think mud graffiti is an excellent way to put out a non-destructive message considering it’s temporary nature. There is debate about the cost of damage, but never-the-less it is a means of expression without significant monetary damage.

Look online for the IVAW mud stenciling at a Madison recruiting building and you can also check out a great video when you search for “retooling dissent” on Google video to see other graffiti options as a protest tools.



Courtesy of mudstencils.com

An Art Educator’s Perspective

BY JESS KASWINER

MA in Arts Education candidate, 2010

I held a workshop at my apartment recently, and we discussed the medium of spray cans and how it is technically illegal to purchase the cans in the city of Chicago — does its inaccessibility make it more attractive? We worked on a sanctioned wall in front of my apartment. Members of the student group National Art Education Association (NAEA) created a fake “crew” named No-Pales (No-Police AND nopales being Spanish for cactus ... we were in Pilsen at the time).

The purpose for this Skill Share, as the NAEA workshops are called, was both to discuss the technique (we had a 14-year-old neighbor of mine help lead the session) but also to gain a greater awareness about the social implication around graffiti, with regard to tagging signs and street corners. The group consisted of art educators, mostly art teachers in-training; it was an unfamiliar medium for most of us.

We followed this workshop with a visit from a Chicago Policewoman who gave a lecture on gang symbols. This was particularly important for us, as we will be working in schools and need to know if students are using gang symbols in their artwork.

With its obvious ties to gang demarcation, the art form of graffiti has gotten a bad rap over the years. Yet, isn’t it interesting that flocks of people come to Venice Beach in California and even Pilsen to see the graffiti art on the street?

We cherish the work though our gawks and approving comments, as we are often surprised and impressed by its presence and size; but in theory it still continues to come under scrutiny as a valid or valued form of art.



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In Response to the Bombing of the Art Institute’s Modern Wing

BY IDRIS GOODWIN
MFA in Writing 2003

“We began shocking common sense, public opinion, education, institutions, museums, good taste, in short the whole prevailing order.”
—The Dada Manifesto, 1918

“Dada philosophy is the sickest, most paralyzing and most destructive thing that has ever originated from the brain of man.”
—American Art News, 1918

So somebody went and done drew a mustache on the Mona Lisa.

Which is to say, somebody took aerosol to staple, mocked how we consume our culture. I imagine them smiling when they did it.

Because it's all just make believe, isn't it? Private space // public space. Unreal lines. Agreed upon modes of presentation.

The tags have long since blasted away. It's business as usual at the Art Institute of Chicago: Euro-centrism and expensive cheese shoved down throats that reflux the same tired conversations.

Law abiding artists, civilized, pontificate: What does it mean? Building upon the legend, filling up temporary space. Vandalism? Street Art? Graffiti?

Whatever it is has proven gatekeepers ignorant by infiltrating the institutional art machine.

Terms like “hip-hop” woo corporate philanthropists, “urban” a call to arms for chic intelligentsia the world over.

It's emulated from pole to pole. Detroit, Michigan. Cheyenne, Wyoming. Santa Fe, New Mexico. Amman, Jordan. Iowa City, Iowa. Those same bubble letters, jutting angles, stencils, ego.

I am a rapper introduced to hip-hop culture through commodity.

My early engagements with rap music were mediated by radio, cable television, the monitored confines of the mall record chain.

I experienced the renegade of rap after it had been scrubbed, bleeped. I felt the furious wild style from a safe distance, then copied the styles I heard.

I didn't cipher in the lunch room, my homeboy beating on the table. I didn't cut my teeth in MC battles. I didn't even meet my first DJ until I was 19.

I, like many artists, have benefited from those who risked their bodies crossing invented boundaries.

Those who risk their bodies to steal, hustle, con, bend the bars to prove another paradigm is possible.

We pick and tear, wear their skin, swallow their tongues to better define ourselves.

We press their remains on t-shirts long after they've been crushed by narrow, elitist agendas.

It's all make-believe. Institutes are machinations like constructs of race, wealth, success. A shared hallucination.

All that is real and undeniable is this animal need to survive, the human desire to exist after the flesh dissolves.

There will always be those who stand outside our hallowed halls, those who haven't a taste for stinky cheese.

And if they are not greeted, they will introduce themselves. It will not be creased nor presentable.

It will test the patience of the liberal and learned. We will have to stop for a moment, mute ourselves, and think about what it means.



Courtesy of creativerescue.org



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Here at F, we spend a great deal of time digging through Chicago's vast art scene to bring you coverage of the city's art communities. However, amongst our seemingly segregated studies at SAIC, a seminal aspect of Chicago's art world lies within the buildings of our own campus.

So, we decided to delve in and investigate the school, one department at a time. This month we are featuring the Sculpture Department, a tactile world far removed from the glare of the computer screen and obsessive RSS feed the F staff deals with on a daily basis.

Through conducting a series of interviews with faculty, staff, alumni, students (inspired by SAIC's interdisciplinary spirit, we decided to throw a Ceramics student into the mix), we bring you an exploration of the sculptural practices at SAIC and the department's home base on Columbus Drive.

Space & Place, Permanence, Systems, Public Practice

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F reporter Britany Robinson explores the world of SAIC's Ceramics Department with undergraduate **Luke Armitstead**.

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Focusing on metal, F presents a profile on faculty member **Ron Lancaster** and a preview of the 20th annual Iron Pour.

PAGE 11

2009 MFA Fellowship recipient **Raquel Saral Mendoza** discusses SAIC's Sculpture Department, the MFA, and life post graduation.

SAIC's Sculpture department strives to teach students how to use a vast array of materials while working in different spatial settings in order to fully understand the study and practice of sculpture.

The department uses its funding to take graduate students on study trips; to host special lectures from notable artists; to bring visitors into the classroom to work with students on class projects; and for equipment, tools and materials (in addition to other operational costs).

"We are given \$700 to take our graduate students out on study trips — last year we went to Detroit, Michigan," explained Laurie Palmer, head of the Sculpture Department. "We also have an honorarium [budget] of \$7,000 that goes towards special lectures and \$2,000 for our grads to invite practicing visitors."

Although interacting with others in the sculpture world is important, so is having the financial support to create art. Another major portion of the budget is allocated to instructional supplies; the Sculpture department spends \$10,000 on materials each year for both the wood shop and metal shop.

Expenses include tools that hold cold and hot fabrication capabilities; materials for mold-making, plasma cutting and figure modeling; the foundry space, where students are able to cast bronze and aluminum; an off-campus space for cast-iron pours; industrial sewing machines; and a computer lab designed to assist with modeling, animation development and 3D digital visualization.

"We also have classes that are site- or concept-based, rather than material-based," said Palmer. In one such class, "Walking the City," students focus on the idea of walking as a central component to understanding and positioning themselves within the landscape of the city.

In the class, "KnowledgeLab," students collaborate with one another on group projects, working specifically towards the development of a Living Lab — an experimental greenhouse project space related to research on sustainable living and climate change.

With seven full-time faculty, five adjunct professors, an average of 15 part-time instructors, the department works together to focus the curriculum on four major philosophical points: space and place, permanence,

systems, and public practice. Space and place focuses on site-based explorations; systems encompasses the relationship of organic and inorganic worlds to human activity; permanence addresses the notions of making and materiality; and public practice emphasizes concepts of exhibition and sculptural participation in social situations.

Students who are not in the first-year program, but are still interested in exploring sculpture, can take classes within the department. It's recommended that they take "Concepts, Materials, and Processes," a class in which students are challenged to respond, construct, and align themselves with a theory and practice in order to produce work that communicates a certain concept. One of the projects assigned for the class requires students to construct an ego-driven piece, and another asks students to make a piece that is a one-liner.

Students in the first-year program who are looking to begin their study in sculpture should explore "Introduction to Sculptural Practices," which, unlike "Concepts, Materials, and Processes," directly complements the first-year curricula.

First-year student Mara Goldfine took "Introduction to Sculptural Practices" in the fall of 2009 with instructor Juan Chavez. "My favorite part of the class was learning to 'do it yourself,'" said Goldfine. "The assignments were so open-ended, you could really do anything." Next semester, Goldfine plans on taking either "Metal Practices" or "Centrifugal Casting."

Aside from introductory classes, the Sculpture Department, similar to other departments at SAIC, divides classes into different levels: beginning, intermediate and advanced.

"Most classes are quite uniquely crafted by the individual teachers," said Palmer. "Almost all sculpture studio classes include readings, slide lectures, discussions, visiting artists and critiques, as well as technical demos and studio work time. We also have seminars that require writing."

In addition to material practices, students learn from their professors — and one another — to understand, negotiate and contribute to the changing cultural landscape of sculpture. "Sculpture has a very expansive territory," said Palmer. "If we think about it, the whole world could be understood as sculpture."

Two Worlds, One School

An outsider's introduction to the life of Ceramics student Luke Armitstead

BY BRITANY ROBINSON

Students in the Ceramics Department may seem to be elbow deep in a big-kid's version of Play-Doh, but the intense concentration on their faces as they hunch over their creations looks far from playful. This is my first time in SAIC's Columbus Drive building, which houses the studio spaces for many of the Fine Arts departments — including Sculpture and Ceramics.

As an SAIC New Arts Journalism graduate student, I hesitantly admit that I have never even seen this part of the school, nestled away from SAIC's main drag between the museum and the lakefront. I walked over with Luke Armitstead, a junior Ceramics student, who is here to introduce me to a world I know nothing about.

This disconnect between Luke and me seems typical of the often disjointed community of SAIC. We are all so focused on our own work — often overwhelmed by the pairing of our classes with the overachiever attitudes that got us here in the first place — that we tend to miss out on the plethora of art made by the students around us. I was elated at the opportunity to speak with someone whose experience is so vastly different from my own.

The Ceramics Department is dusty, noisy, and full of intriguing works-in-progress. Luke is on break from a painting class and has some green smudges on his face and hands. I feel slightly envious of the hands-on activities that make up his education here.

Although his focus is on ceramics, Luke has taken woodworking, sculpture and painting classes as well — all of which he feels add dimension and marketability to his skill set. One of the reasons Luke chose SAIC was because it allows students to move from department to department in order to develop a range of artistic skills.

While showing me around the studio, Luke directs me to a piece he is working on. A giant blue hand is all that is available for me to see; the rest of the body to which it will eventually be attached is left to my imagination. The hand has angular edges and a very geometric feel, but, from a distance, it looks organic and lifelike — lifelike, of course, if there were such things as giant blue monsters with hands the size of one's dormitory mini-fridge.

I ask him about the inspiration behind the hand (which will eventually be part of the main piece in his BFA show). "The idea of my ceramic body was really an impulse to make something difficult to acquire," he explains.

So far he has completed the torso, the hand, two legs and two feet, and is undecided as to how it will all come together in its completed state. The shelves where the

hand is stored are full of other partially completed ceramic pieces, and I wonder where all of these materials come from.

Luke tells me that the strongest aspect of the SAIC Ceramics department is the free materials: "You can make whatever you want in ceramics [with free clay and glaze]. A lot of people come down here from other departments.

don't have as much money, and the school to help me out — I'll probably be dealing a lot more with wood and found objects," Luke says.

As we chat on the window seats of a hallway in the Columbus Drive building, various faculty members and students walk by, all of whom wave "hello" to Luke. An obvious network exists in the department, and his relaxed demeanor with both students and teachers tells me that this is a supportive community.

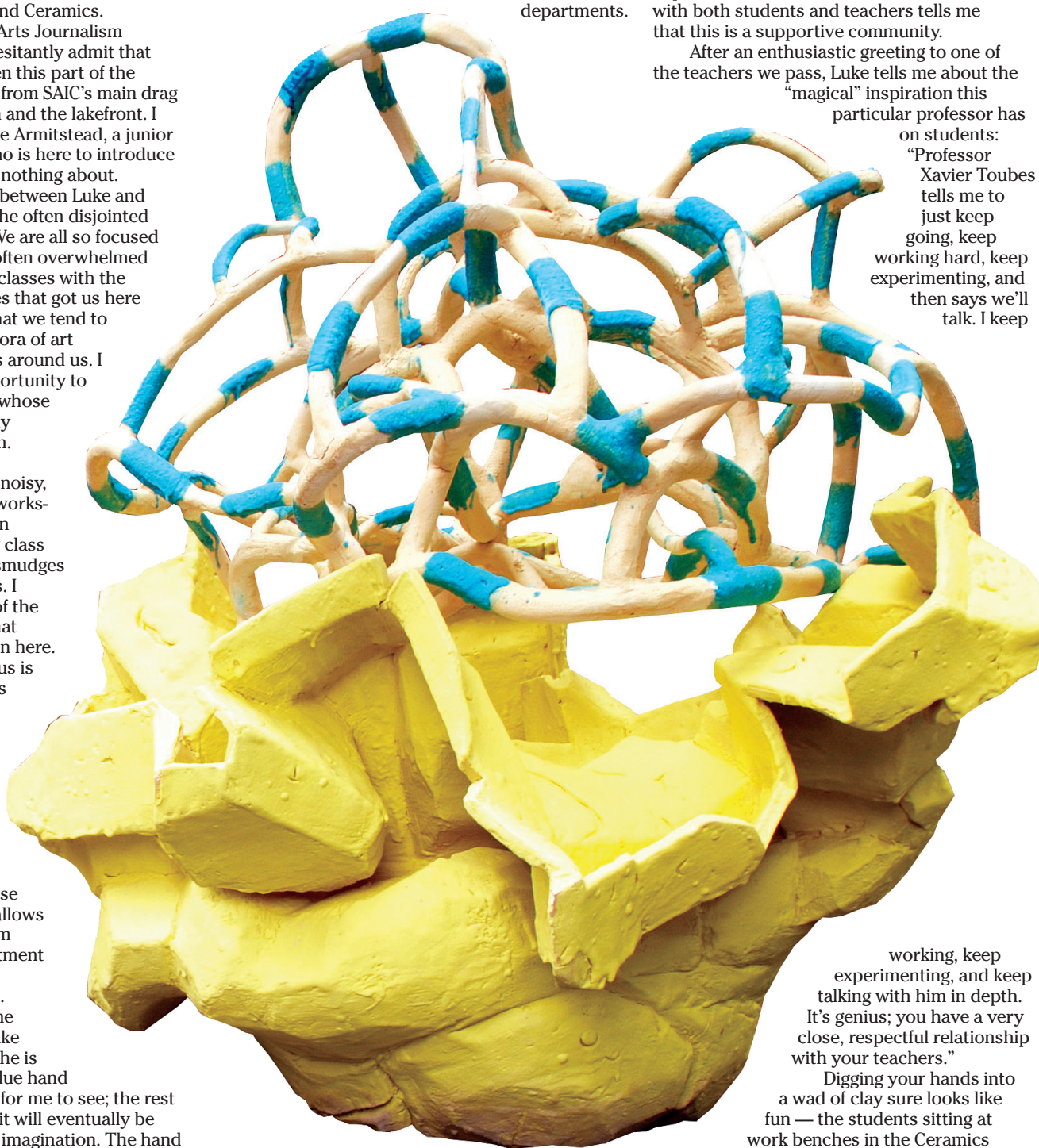
After an enthusiastic greeting to one of the teachers we pass, Luke tells me about the "magical" inspiration this particular professor has on students: "Professor Xavier Toubes tells me to just keep going, keep working hard, keep experimenting, and then says we'll talk. I keep

working, keep experimenting, and keep talking with him in depth. It's genius; you have a very close, respectful relationship with your teachers."

Digging your hands into a wad of clay sure looks like fun — the students sitting at work benches in the Ceramics Department appear to be enjoying their projects. However, the program is actually very demanding. Luke spends at least forty hours a week in the studio.

When I ask him what sort of advice he could offer to incoming students who are interested in ceramics, he vehemently says to "work as hard as you can. Tackle everything there is to know about ceramics."

Pleased with an afternoon well spent, I took Luke's passion for his work back to the MacClean building, returning to my own artistic practice — writing.



The material is very malleable. The glaze can be very much like painting."

Unfortunately, the access to materials only lasts until graduation. After that, ceramics becomes an expensive art to practice. Luke seems slightly daunted by the cost of running a kiln for any pieces he might want to create after graduation — that is where his skills in other mediums will come in handy.

"[Ceramics] is what I love. ... Eventually, in the future, I'm going to find myself back in ceramics, but I think after school — when I

An obvious network exists in the department, and Luke's relaxed demeanor with both students and teachers tells me that this is a supportive community.

Photograph courtesy the artist

A Passion for Shaping Metal

SAIC Instructor (and Rolling Stones enthusiast) Ron Lancaster

TEXT AND PHOTOS BY JENNIFER MOSIER

The basement of the Columbus Drive building may not see a lot of sunshine, but SAIC metals professor Ron Lancaster illuminates the space with a hot torch as he shapes cold metal into art. In this secluded underground space, Lancaster stands out in his signature Rolling Stones jacket and hardened hands. The Stones have been around since his youth; the look of his hands took time.

“Goggles down,” he says, as he strikes up a torch with the ease of lighting a match. With this quick action he melts a pool of gold and flings the nearly 2,000-degree puddle into a mold. His classes are

In this secluded underground space, Lancaster stands out in his signature Rolling Stones jacket and hardened hands. The Stones have been around since his youth; the look of his hands took time.

about the craft of small-scale metal fabrication, and also embody the controlled chaos of rock ‘n’ roll.

In his early years, Lancaster was exposed to two genres of music: Country-Western and Blues. When he heard the Rolling Stones for the first time he was immediately hooked. Now, fifty years later, he still proudly works in a jacket with the signature Rolling Stones tongue tour patch on his back, a Stones t-shirt and Stones wristwatch — all punctuated by the “Sympathy for the Devil” ring tone on his phone.

Before becoming a faculty member at SAIC, Lancaster was a lab technician for an industrial company; but he always had art on his mind. Like a wayward rock god who (for a time) lost his way amid practical reality, he finally followed his passion and went back to school for a second bachelors degree (this time in studio art), and then continued on to receive a masters degree in metal-smithing.

As he pursued his MFA at the

University of Wisconsin-Madison, a fellow professor suggested that Lancaster consider teaching — a career he thought he’d never fall into. Today, he loves teaching more than producing his own work. However, he hasn’t forgotten what it’s like to be a student of the craft: “A bad idea brought to fruition is a bad project.”

“[Teaching] is about connecting with the students, passing on my knowledge and watching what they do with it,” Lancaster explained. He’s an old-school metal-smith who is inspired by the creativity of his students, splitting his time as a metal-smithing professor between SAIC and Northeastern Illinois University.

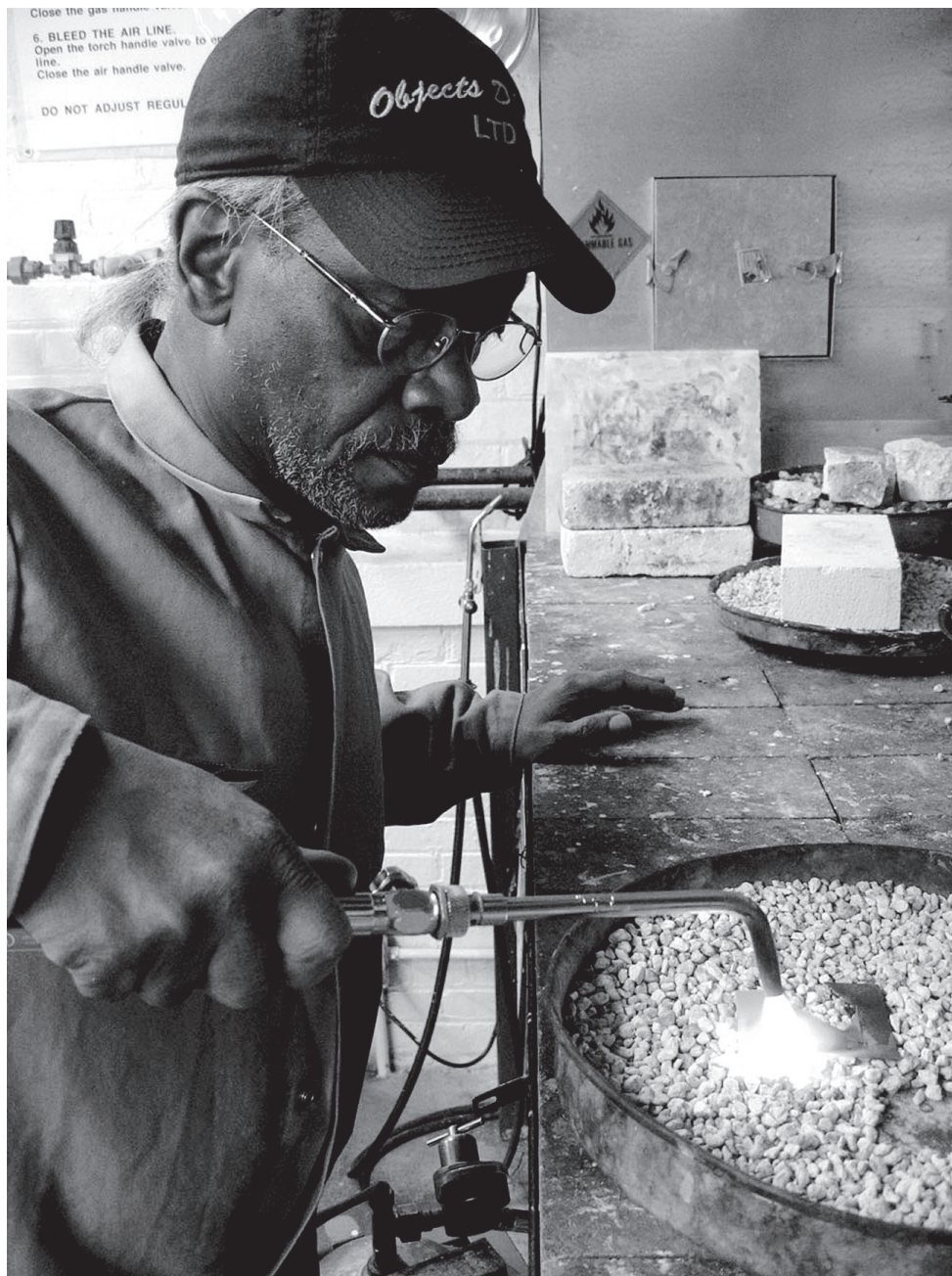
In the metals studio at SAIC, he sits at the head of a long worktable, surrounded by walls of tools, with his computer in front of him and students scattered around him. At times, laughter will erupt from his station at the head of the table — this can only mean one thing: more blonde jokes have appeared on Lancaster’s computer screen.

Unlike some professors, he doesn’t wander the small classroom; but he is always watching his students, peeking out from behind his screen to keep an eye on his flock of budding artists. He doesn’t have to say much — he radiates wisdom, and students know to trust his advice and down-to-earth insight.

Although his ponytail and Stones jacket suggest a relaxed classroom, Lancaster does not tolerate slackers. He admires, and quietly demands, diligence and determination.

Melissa Lytle, his current teaching assistant, knows Lancaster as a man who speaks his mind openly and honestly without pause. “He’ll drop anything and go out of his way to help me with my project needs,” she said.

While he enjoys practicing his Mick Jagger moves in the studio, the artist in him is ready to take his practice to other locales. Ron is considering setting up an artist community in New Mexico, where he can continue to pass on his knowledge and support to other emerging artists. A free spirited rock ‘n’ roll artist, indeed.



Ron is a master at his craft of working with metal.

SAIC iron artists reunite at the 20th Annual Iron Pour

Iron artists are a different breed at SAIC. For one thing, they don’t use cameras that rival the cost of a down payment on a Lexus, and they definitely aren’t working with dainty paintbrushes. Iron artists don’t buy their tools — they make them. DIY all the way, these “metal heads” literally play with fire. Their spirit and lust for heat unifies their craft, and will be on proud display at “Fe20” — the 20th Annual Iron Pour event in Lake Bluff, Illinois May 6–9, 2010.

The annual iron pour, where iron artists have the freedom to melt and shape iron together, has become a getaway from urban studios. It’s here, in these surroundings, that metal arts students, faculty and alumni gather amid roaming chickens and wide-open pastures to practice their craft. And, in a larger scope, they are unified with iron artists of the past who have perfected the practice through the millennia. At one time, taming and

shaping iron was as big of a cultural game changer as the bow and arrow, the repeating rifle, the automobile and the Internet. Having successfully endured, artists of the contemporary cast-iron community have revised commercial processes from the Industrial Revolution to produce high-end art. Carolyn Ottmers, the SAIC foundry supervisor, organized the first Lake Bluff iron pour in 1990. To celebrate the tradition, she is currently teaching an iron class to get students prepared for Fe20. Additionally, she has invited two internationally known metal artists, Hans Wolfe and George Beasley, to create site-specific projects that demonstrate their skills with liquid-hot iron. Generations of people who have passed through the foundry at SAIC will be able to meet and exchange stories of their experiences at this year’s pour. Ottmers said she’s excited to reconnect with past students: “It’s more than an iron pour, it’s a reunion.”



The “Institutional Womb”

2009 MFA Fellowship recipient
Raquel Sarai Mendoza

INTERVIEW BY WHITNEY STOEPEL

Raquel Sarai Mendoza received her Bachelors of Applied Arts and Sciences with an emphasis in Sculpture from San Diego State University in 2007, and her MFA in Sculpture from the School of the Art Institute (SAIC) in 2009. In an email interview F Newsmagazine learned more about her artistic practice, as well as her perspectives on SAIC.

Why did you choose the SAIC sculpture program for graduate school?

Mendoza: I was interested in the department’s interdisciplinary practice. During my MFA, I was able to explore various departments, students, and mediums outside of sculpture. [Once at SAIC] I found myself playing with field recorders and video, hanging out at the Art & Tech lab for free wires and motors that I still can’t figure out. Trying hard to keep up with extremely knowledgeable art history students, I should’ve known I was in for a treat when I was the only studio student in the class.

Also, I liked the idea of moving away from California. There’s something exciting about turning down what you always wanted, in my case grad school in San Francisco, for something that was never in your plans.

What are the strengths and weaknesses of SAIC’s sculpture program?

Mendoza: Strengths: The sculpture department has a wide range of faculty, each one different from the next. I met some great advisors who shared their experience, offered support and provided “tough love” when they saw that I wasn’t working to my full potential.

Weaknesses: At first I thought it was the two years we had to complete our degree. It goes by so fast. But now that I’ve graduated — I realize it’s perfect. Get in, get out and start working. Everything is so different once you leave the institutional womb. Then the fun really begins!

How has your work evolved?

Mendoza: My art practice began with a humorous approach of replicating and transferring social environments into condensed spaces. For example, the installation “Mini Bar” consisted of an entire bar — its functions of drinking, dancing, live music and sports television — squeezed into a tool shed. At that time, I didn’t view the space in my artwork as restricted, but rather as an artist taking advantage of the space with which she is provided.

Towards the end of my undergraduate studies my art practice became strongly influenced by social events. It began with local events such as San Diego’s fondness for boats. The installation “Fishing Hole” involved the transforming of a 17-foot boat (that had been parked on a driveway for two years) into a personal fishing environment.

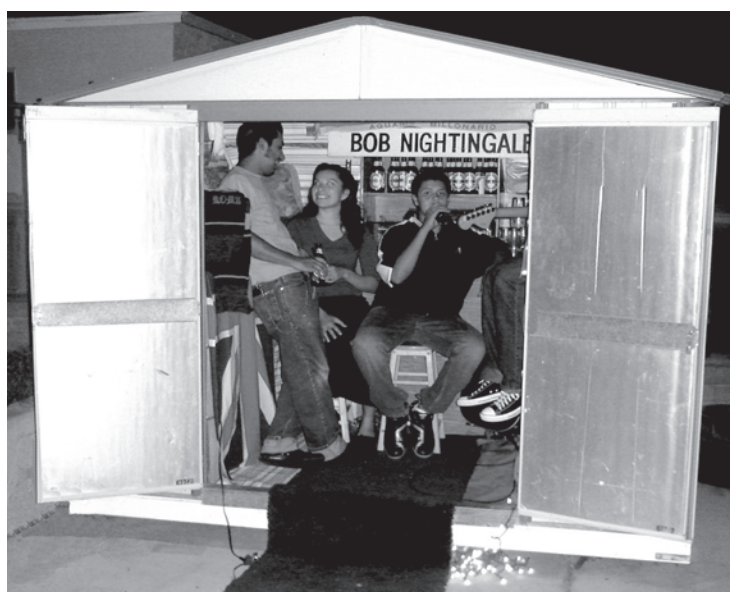
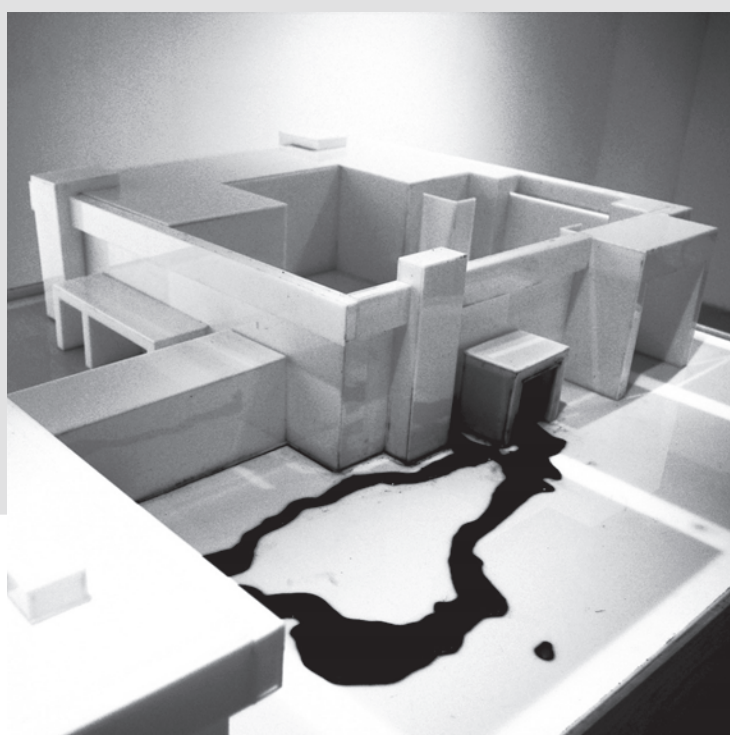
My practice also started to focus on international events such as North Korea’s announcement of nuclear bombs. This led me to transform an old refrigerator into a “Bomb Shelter” just like the fall-out shelters that were built during the Cold War.

Upon entering graduate school at SAIC, I expanded from physical spaces towards mental, social and cultural spaces. I began to question how physical spaces change our mental perception of a space. I’m currently expanding my interest in space and current/historical events and applying it to my artistic practice.

What do you plan on doing with your MFA?

Mendoza: Tough question. Let’s see — so far I have used it to teach art and design classes for undergrads, applied it towards my studio practice and, of course, I use it to open the doors of opportunities that come my way.

Getting an MFA is a powerful tool but it’s not everything. Once you have it, it’s up to you to use it by applying what you learned.



(above) “Leak” Raquel Sarai Mendoza, photo courtesy the artist
(below) “Minibar” Raquel Sarai Mendoza, photo courtesy the artist

“[Once at SAIC] I found myself playing with field recorders and video, hanging out at the Art & Tech lab for free wires and motors that I still can’t figure out.”

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Exploring Performance Art

SAIC and the Department of Cultural Affairs team up to present IN>TIME 2010 March 26-27 at the Chicago Cultural Center

BY AMANDA ALDINGER

The world of performance art is not widely experienced by those outside of the performance community. In an effort to change that, the Chicago Department of Cultural Affairs and the School of the Art Institute Chicago's (SAIC) Performance Department teamed up to present their second iteration of IN>TIME, a weekend-long performance series which ran March 26-27, uniting local, national and international artists in an exploration of new performance practices through a variety of media.

The project was spearheaded by SAIC Performance Department faculty member Mark Jeffrey, and SAIC alum Sara Schnadt, currently a webmaster for Chicago Artists Resource. "Sara Schnadt and I came together in 2006 feeling disappointed with the performance scene as a whole here in Chicago. We were interested in bringing a visual arts, movement-based mission to the work that we wanted to be seen here in the city. So in 2008 we began the first iteration of IN>TIME," explained Jeffrey in an interview with F.

Having already begun a collaborative dialogue with Claire Sutton, the Director of Theatre at the Department of Cultural Affairs in 2006, their combined discourse and shared concerns led to the eventual conceptualization of IN>TIME.

More than just a chance for others to see them perform, it was important for Jeffrey that the series expose the Chicago performance community to emerging and established work by national and international artists, as well as give burgeoning performance artists a post-school opportunity to see their work develop professionally.

"As we know, or, as I certainly remember, one of the biggest challenges about being a student is to make work post-school. How do you do it? And how the hell do you get the support?" Jeffrey said. This is something that he has continued to explore throughout his career.

"The other thing that has affected my career in performance, even after 16 years, is how I continue it," Jeffrey commented. "What I've begun to realize, especially being in the United States of America as compared to being in Europe, is that one has to sort of multiply oneself in order to sustain oneself." To help mentor the transition from student to working artist, Jeffrey and Schnadt developed an incubation program that functions within the IN>TIME series. Interested students can submit their portfolio to an advisory board called the Chicago Performance Network (CPN), also founded by Jeffrey and Schnadt, and if chosen, have the opportunity to develop a piece with the support of Jeffrey and the CPN while utilizing free studio space provided by the Chicago Cultural Center.

SAIC alum Justin Cabrillos (MFA '09) was lucky enough to score one of those spots. "One of the best things was having the space at the Cultural Center. I was working in the studio theatre and in the dance studio, because my piece involves movement and voice and various tasks and actions and so forth," he explained. "There were different meetings throughout the fall with the CPN ... and that was really helpful for me because in the past I've struggled with describing my research and making sure that I'm being held accountable to what I'm saying. Figuring out different ways to present

my information and how it compares with my practice was really helpful," Cabrillos continued. Columbia student Jessica Hannah was the other student chosen to participate in this year's incubation period, and she also presented at IN>TIME.

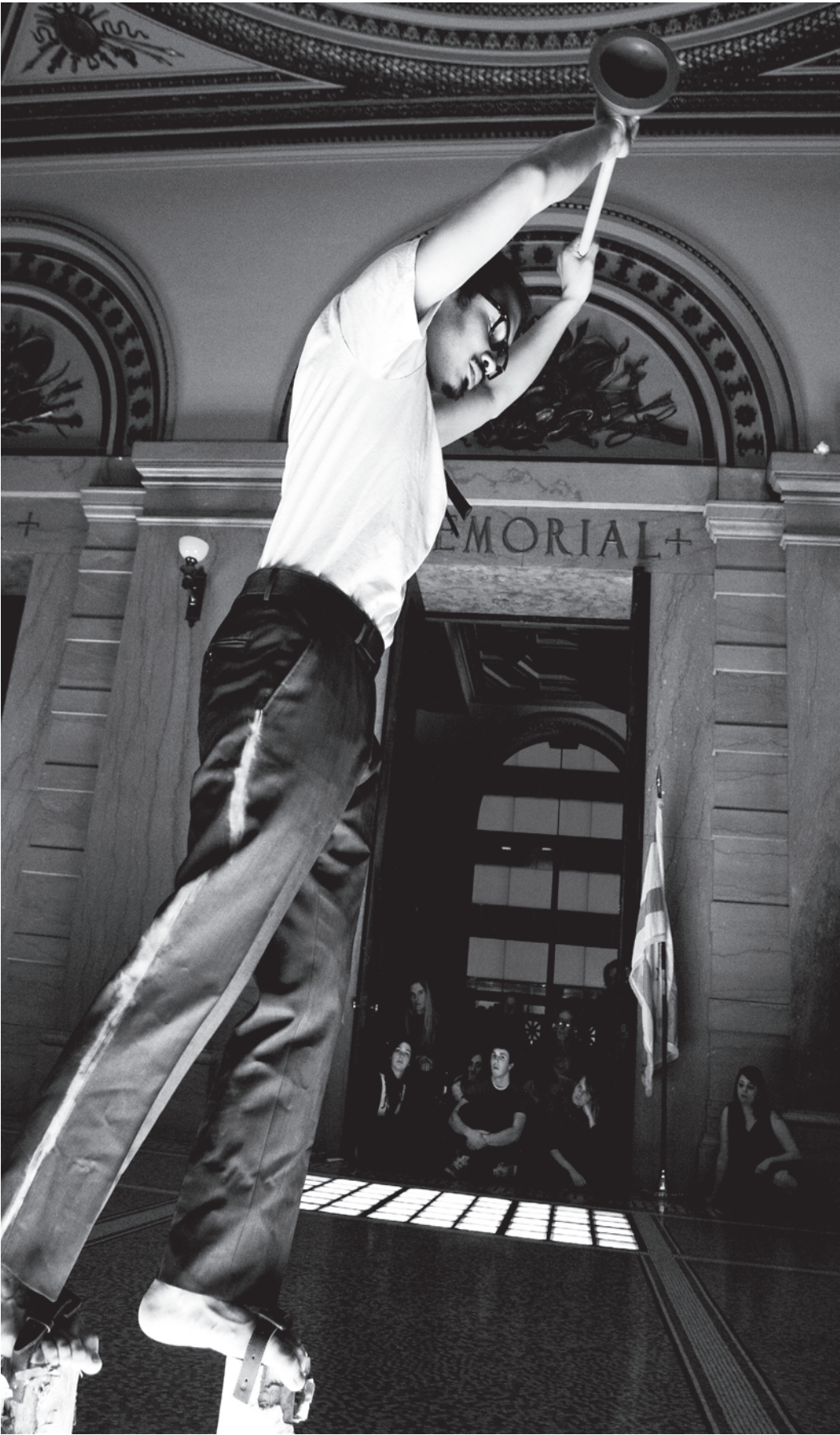
The weekend kicked off with a free symposium on Friday, March 26 from 1 p.m. - 5:30 p.m. at the Chicago Cultural Center. IN>TIME artists and curators gathered together with special guests, including Sara Jane Bailes, Julie Laffin, Nick Lowe, Trevor Martin, Abina Manning, and Tricia Van Eck to discuss strategies for creating and sustaining a performance art practice.

Examining questions of how one keeps a performance practice alive and moving, as well as what a self-created performance practice looks like were among other important discussion topics during the symposium. Cabrillos's piece explored this notion: "I want to see how different contexts can have a dialogue, and how my work can have a dialogue within these different contexts — how they can be mutually transformative." Hoping to reach out to individuals beyond just the performance community, Jeffrey anticipated a positive discussion, "What I love about being here in Chicago is that you feel like there are a lot of people working very hard with very few resources to make things happen. I like that about the school as well. There's definitely an entrepreneurial spirit."

The performances on March 27 from 6 p.m. - 9 p.m. — which included national performance artist Angela Ellsworth, and local performance group Every House has A Door — were not tied by a specific thematic framework, but rather, came together to stimulate and expose new and local performance work, as well as to introduce the Chicago community to national and international performance practices. "One of the things that I'm concerned with, as an artist and as a person in the world, is where is one's attention? Where is our attention? I think that all the artists within IN>TIME are looking at that," explained Jeffrey.

In response to the question of what audience members would come away with after seeing his piece, Cabrillos said, "I know this may sound like a cop-out, but I don't really have a set package that I feel the audience is supposed to get out of it, *per se*. I don't mean to say that I want people to take whatever they want from it, but I don't feel as controlling about what that needs to look like. I like the proliferation of a vast field of responses." Jeffrey agreed, adding, "It's this idea of how we can all process something together and try to understand something together without it being 'no' or 'yes.' It's about being respectful of one another, and the creative act."

So how do viewers less familiar with performance art process what they're seeing? Jeffrey said, "I always ask people to step back. It's okay to not know what's going on. Something may be happening that you've never seen before, or the artists may be framing something in the context of a performance that is familiar, but the way that they're working with it becomes slightly awry." He continued, "In this constant state of updates, we tend to produce immediate responses. I like something where I'm having to process something over time, and it may not be something that I can respond to immediately. As a culture, we're always hungry for the money shot."



Justin Cabrillos, "Faces, Varieties, Postures"
Photograph courtesy of John W. Sisson, Jr.

"What I love about being here in Chicago is that you feel like there are a lot of people working very hard with very few resources to make things happen. I like that about the school as well — there's definitely an entrepreneurial spirit."

—Mark Jeffrey IN>TIME Co-Founder, SAIC Performance Instructor

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A cartoon illustration featuring a muscular superhero-like figure with a cape and a mask, holding a paintbrush. He is standing next to a man in a suit who is also holding a paintbrush. A speech bubble from the man in the suit says: "ENGLISH 1001-020 FIRST YEAR SEMINAR 1: WRITING FOR THE SCHOOL NEWSPAPER TUESDAY 6-9pm". In the top left corner, there is a logo that looks like a stylized 'f' inside a square. At the bottom left, there is a text box that says: "THIS JOURNALISM WORKSHOP TAUGHT IN COLLABORATION WITH F NEWS - MAGAZINE IS A USEFUL COURSE FOR STUDENTS INTERESTED IN WRITING NON-FICTION FOR NEWSPAPERS AND MAGAZINES AND FOR THE WEB, AND ESPECIALLY FOR STUDENTS INTERESTED IN WRITING FOR F NEWS MAGAZINE AND FNEWSMAGAZINE.COM." At the bottom right, there is a starburst shape that says: "FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT PAUL ELITZIK, FACULTY ADVISER FOR F NEWS, PELITZ@ARTIC.EDU".

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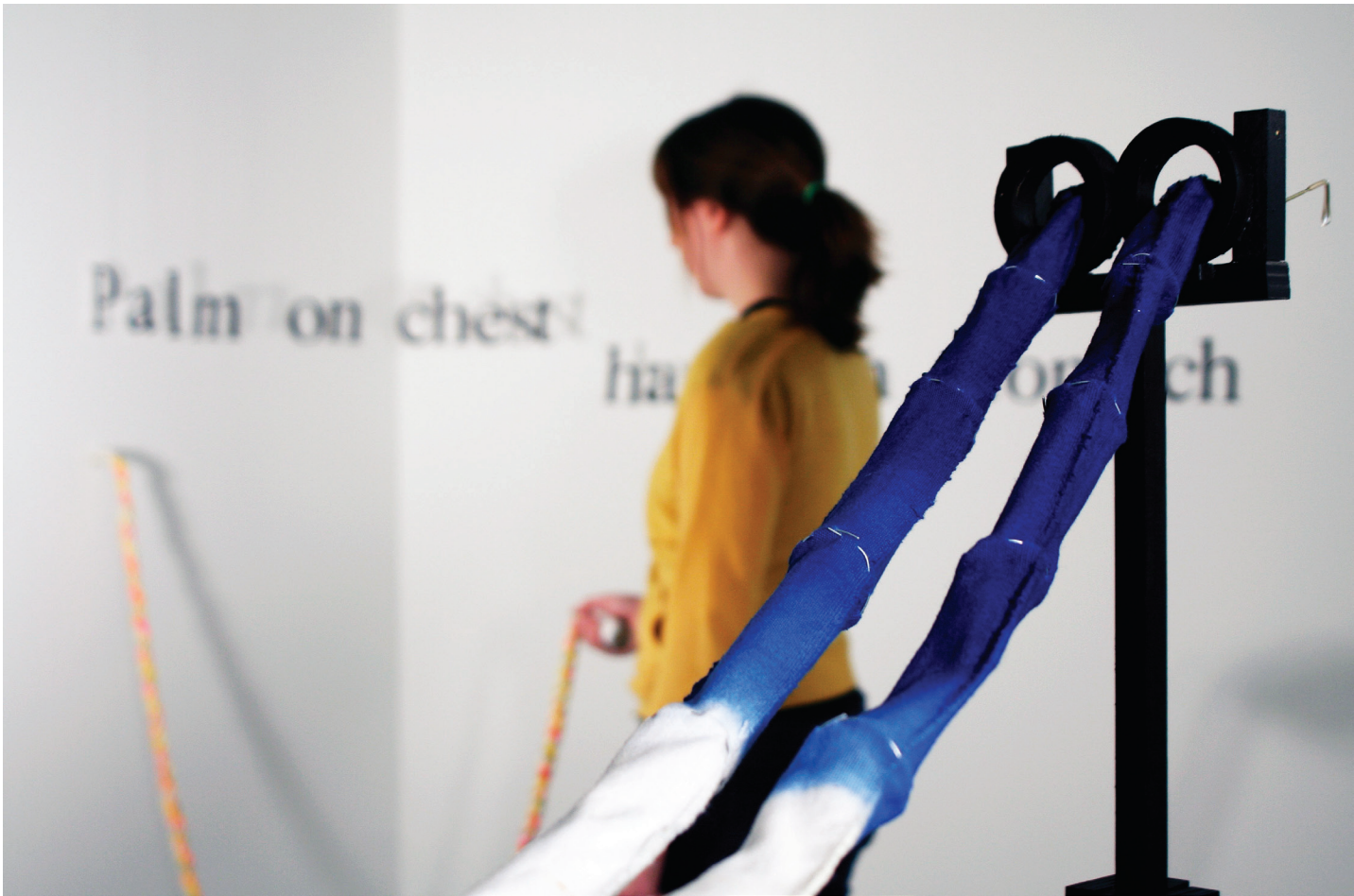
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HUMAN RELATIONS



A look at SAIC’s Student Union Galleries March exhibitions

REVIEWS BY PAUL DAVID YOUNG

Friends in Common

Playful, approachable and multivalent are the three best words to describe Cole Chickering’s “Friends in Common” at the SUGS LG Space in the Sharp Building. The inspiration for this solo show of new work was ignited when Chickering noticed a “random” friend on Facebook; he had never met this woman, but for some reason she was in his network — and even more importantly, she had a public profile. Intrigued, the artist decided to look a little closer.

Chickering thus had the opportunity to discover the most intimate details of the unknown woman’s life through the photos and comments that were posted for the entire world to see. The artist monitored her daily existence, or at least the life she lived on Facebook, and was witness to such milestones as the divorce she went through during that time.

A B.F.A. candidate with a focus in Fiber and Material Studies, Chickering was moved to translate this voyeuristic spectacle. He created felt masks and body suits, using them to re-create actual photos and a video from the content available on Jane Doe’s Facebook page. The original video depicts the couple dancing at their wedding reception, complete with a voiceover describing them “going out for breakfast, getting divorced and then getting a beer”.

Positioned on the walls of the show are images of the couple at what looks like a high school sporting event (complete with North Face jackets), in front of the Rainforest Café and having a good time at a party; below these recreational photos are albums containing the original images from Facebook. The show’s opening reception on March 18 was complete with one of Jane Doe’s favorite meals: appetizers from Bannigan’s.

When F spoke with Chickering about the show and its origins, he referenced artists, such as Kaari Upson, who work with found objects. Chickering works with found people. The indelible mark that Facebook has made on the



landscape of human interactions is surely manifested in the fact that a person’s Facebook life can become the subject matter of a fine art exhibition.

Chickering states that his conception of the show isn’t necessarily “anti-Facebook” — he’s more interested in exploring and processing the large amounts of information we consume on a daily basis.

In choosing to use masks, Chickering said he was forced to think and interact with the content much more slowly than the way he would encounter it on the Internet. The handmade felt masks have a playful, almost comic quality to them, yet when regarded in the context of their explicitly voyeuristic origins, the concept of the project becomes more complicated.

The paradox of “Friends in Common” is that although the Facebook profile itself and Chickering’s interpretation of it ostensibly reveal something intimate, the very use of mask and costume suggest the idea of hiding something. The show as a whole is marked by these tensions, vacillating between the hidden and revealed, the tragic and the comic.

Are we to laugh at the banality of someone whose favorite food is the appetizers at Bannigan’s? Or should we cry for the loss of a relationship and its absurd tragic-comic portrayal in a public forum? Are the pictures of masked people at a party humorous? Or are they a kind of memento mori for a reality that we’ll never truly know? “Friends in Common” effectively straddles this continuum by displaying a life on display.

Anatomy of a Circle

For the exhibition “Anatomy of a Circle” in Gallery X in the Columbus Building, Tanya Fleisher, Sayward Schoonmaker and Soo Shin (all of whom are MFA students in the Fiber department) came together to develop a visual vocabulary built of text, video, fibers and ultimately, experience. Although the exhibition initially appears willfully obscure, particularly in comparison to the easy accessibility of “Friends in Common,” it merits an investment of time and quiet contemplation.

In a mustard yellow room, an obscure poetic text on the wall speaks of fountains, French bicycles and “Henry.” The esoteric nature of the text sets the tone of the show in general. This admitted work in progress interweaves multiple themes and characters that literally surround and encircle the viewer.

One of the most interesting elements of the show is the video projected from the ceiling onto the floor. Running over 50 minutes in length, it presents people performing strange, abstracted human interactions; the strangeness is intensified by the unusual angle of projection. All of the movements are somehow circular in nature, including a group alternately swaying and leaning into one another, juggling tennis balls, jumping rope, and hula hooping.

The show also contains two pairs of glasses connected with tubular

fabric constructions, which allow two people to see one another when stretched out to the limit. A jump rope sits connected to the wall with one handle resting on the floor, while a projector from the floor broadcasts “wait” and “weight” as they ascend from a curved board in the adjacent corner.

At the show’s opening reception on March 16, a visitor referred to the movements in the video as a kind of “human Ouija board” — this may be a more fitting description of this show than they perhaps realized.

While at first glance the exhibition appears to be a disconnected assortment of objects without any identifiable meaning, the more the viewers engage with the objects on display, the more they get caught up in the riddles of relationality that the artists’ propose.

The show’s flier has a quote from Terry Eagleton about the materiality of poetry, and the way language creates a kind of texture: “It is true, even so, that all we literally have are words on a page. Reading these words as a poem means restoring to them something of their lost material body.” Keeping this quote in mind is helpful to navigate this fairly obscure show.

Also helpful to have in mind is the artists’ discussion of the circle as a kind of enigmatic icon, something so basic, so fundamental and yet impossible to obtain in a perfect form. Human interactions rely so heavily on it, whether a hug, a wheel for transportation or as a way of seeing. Thus, using the motif of the circle as a framework for navigation, the “Anatomy of a Circle” is really about the profound mystery of human interaction.

(top) **Anatomy of a Circle**
Photograph courtesy Katherine Pill

(bottom) **Friends in Common**
Photograph courtesy Cole Chickering

Every photo brings with it a quiet feeling of isolation, and even pictures taken outside of the artist's hometown convey a sense of familiarity.



(above) William Eggleston. Memphis, c. 1969-70, from William Eggleston's Guide, 1976. Dye transfer print, 15 15/16 x 19 15/16 in The Reader's Digest Association, Inc., Pleasantville, New York.
(top left) William Eggleston. Memphis, c. 1969-71, from William Eggleston's Guide, 1976. Dye transfer print, 24 x 20 in (61 x 50.8 cm.) Collection of John Cheim.
(top right) William Eggleston. Morton, Mississippi, c. 1969-70, from William Eggleston's Guide, 1976. Dye transfer print, 13 3/8 x 8 11/16 in (34 x 22 cm.) Cheim & Read, New York.
All Photographs © Eggleston Artistic Trust, courtesy Cheim & Read, New York.

Democratic CAMERA

A look at photographer William Eggleston's first U.S. retrospective

REVIEW BY WHITNEY STOEPER

After a long Chicago winter, it's good to see color. The William Eggleston retrospective, "Democratic Camera, Photographs and Video, 1961-2008" at the Art Institute of Chicago is a fitting way to celebrate the return of spring. Organized by the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York and Haus der Kunst in Munich, this exhibition is Eggleston's first retrospective in the United States. It is expansive, filling the Abbott Galleries and Carolyn S. and Matthew Bucksbaum Gallery in the Modern Wing. The title of the exhibition comes from the legendary photographer's idea of photography as "a democratic way of looking around. Nothing was more important or less important." While this perspective isn't ground-breaking, Eggleston is renowned for his early adoption of color photography as a legitimate art form. "Democratic Camera" contains all of Eggleston's notable color photographs of the American South, including such famous images as "Red Ceiling" (1973), a ceiling drenched in blood-red

paint with a light bulb tethered by creeping wires. Also on display are that recognizable tricycle looming above the camera on an empty suburban Memphis street, and the neon confederate flag. But the show delves much deeper than those famous images — it also includes earlier black and white photographs from the early sixties, the rarely seen "Stranded in Canton" (a video shot on a Sony Portapak that documents Memphis and New Orleans in 1973), journals with his abstract drawings, and recent digital prints. The range of this retrospective reveals the importance of this artist to the history of photography as an art form. When Eggleston began printing using the dye-transfer process it changed the way artists thought about color photography. His first published book of photographs, "William Eggleston's Guide" (1976), was accompanied by the first ever one-person exhibition of color photographs at the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA). Artist John Szarkowski, who wrote the text for the book, explains how photographers were baffled by the dawn of artistic color photography. In short, after spending a century perfecting the medium in black and white, photographers suddenly

had access to cheap color film, which had first been intended for commercial purposes. The 1976 exhibit also featured a quote from Janet Malcolm, in which she compares color photography to "retrograde applications [such as] advertising, fashion, [and] National Geographic travel-type pictures." The book itself and most of its photographs are on display in the AIC retrospective. The process of dye-transfer printing is extremely complicated, but most photographers and critics agree that it is unparalleled in its ability to showcase chromatic nuance. Photographs appear hyper-real — the visual effect is sometimes compared to Technicolor. This method of printing is also admired for its accuracy and stability in a wide range of temperatures and over long periods of time. Although his printing process is complex, Eggleston's subjects never were. "William Eggleston's Guide" is a series of simple (if not mundane) moments from his hometown of Memphis and the surrounding area. Rarely are there more than two subjects in a photograph, and they are always represented in their own surroundings: sometimes a backyard, sometimes a gravel road, sometimes an empty suburban street or bedside. Every photo

brings with it a quiet feeling of isolation, and even pictures taken outside of the artist's hometown convey a sense of familiarity. This exhibition is separated into chronological themes, including his photographs of the South from "Guide," as well as the "Los Alamos" series (1965), "Election Eve" (1976), "Graceland" (1983), and "Democratic Forest." Eggleston has said that he never takes the same picture twice. If he has a roll of 36 exposures, he will have 36 different pictures. This roving, impulsive eye is apparent when the viewer examines his work from any locale. The subject of Eggleston's photographs isn't always centered, and sometimes the entire frame is skewed; but in spite of the apparent simplicity of the imagery, the artist is adamant that his photographs were not "snapshots." In fact, he doesn't even believe in the word itself. In his book "Democratic Forest" he writes, "I am afraid that there are more people than I can imagine who can go no further than appreciating a picture that is a rectangle with an object in the middle of it. ... They want something obvious. The blindness is apparent when someone lets slip the word 'snapshot.' Ignorance can always be covered by 'snapshot.' The

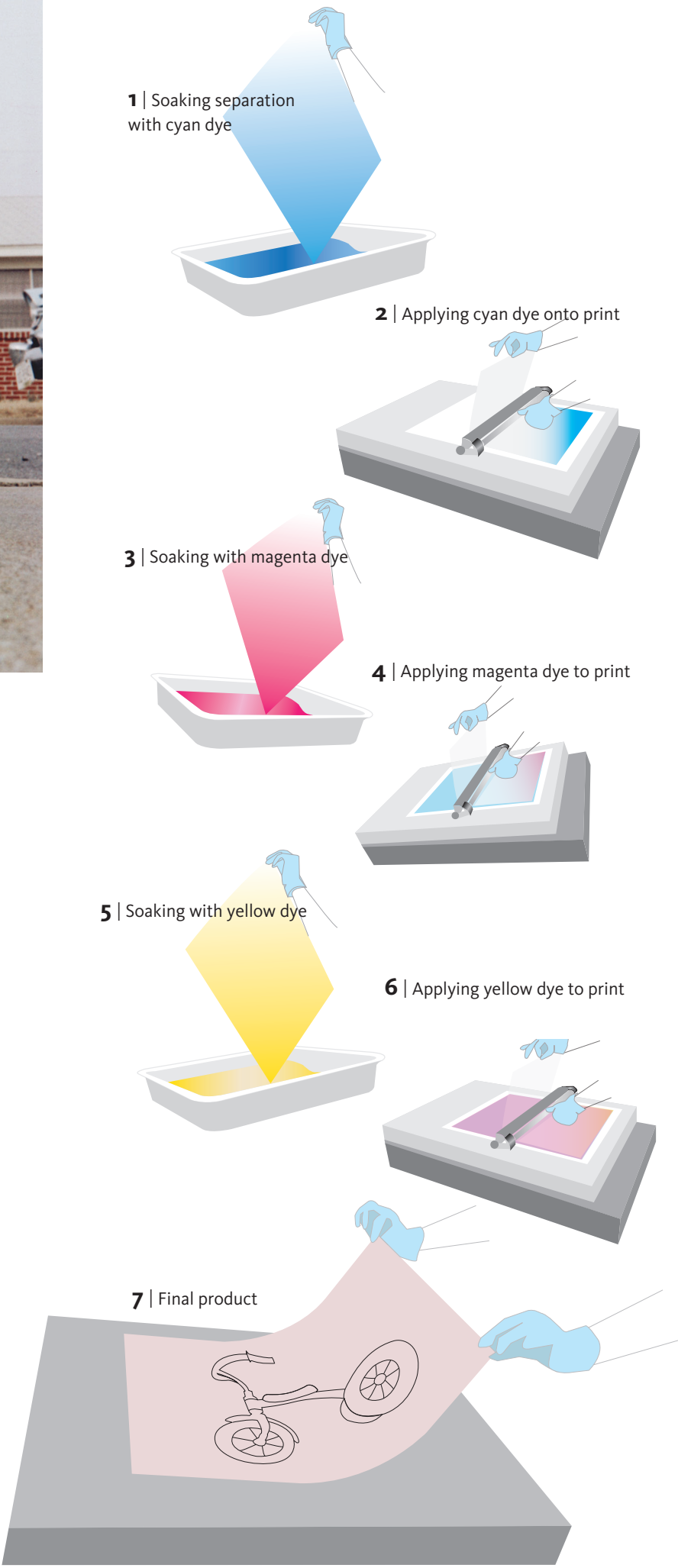
word has never had any meaning. I am at war with the obvious." Particularly revealing in this exhibition are the journals that contain colorful drawings which evoke Kandinsky, Eggleston's favorite painter. When Ann Landi of ARTnews asked him if the drawings were related to his photography, the artist replied, "Does not tie in a bit. ... The abstracts are absolutely not connected in any way whatsoever with the photographs." Indeed, although the drawings reveal a wild and saturated use of color, like his photographs, that is where the similarities end. Eggleston not only dabbled in drawing; he is also a musician. As a child, living on a cotton plantation, he believed his future was to be a concert pianist, and his work has always had ties to music. In a display case at "Democratic Camera" lays a record cover for the Memphis band, Big Star, a band that Eggleston has accompanied on piano. The cover of the LP "Radio City" features Eggleston's photograph "Red Ceiling." His work has graced many other album covers as well, including covers for artists such as Joanna Newsom and Spoon. In another connection to the music world, Eggleston was the photographer for Talking Heads

front man David Byrne's directorial debut, "True Stories," and these images are also on display. In Eggleston's book "Ancient and Modern," Byrne said, "I find these pictures pleasantly disorienting. Some look like accidents, like somebody accidentally pressed the shutter button on the camera while examining the strap, or something." To truly appreciate this exhibition, visitors should drop by the Art Institute twice. Because of its enormous size, but also because the retrospective demands serious contemplation on this artist's lifetime of work, even if the work itself is not inherently complicated. Eggleston said it best in Michael Almereyda's film, "William Eggleston in the Real World": "Art... you can love it and appreciate it, but you really can't talk about it. Doesn't make any sense."

The Art Institute of Chicago
111 S Michigan Ave
www.artic.edu
"William Eggleston: Democratic Camera, Photographs, and Video, 1961 - 2008"
February 27 - May 23, 2010

The Dye-Transfer Process

Used by William Eggleston, the dye transfer printing process achieves a richness of colors and control over the image unrivalled by other photographic methods. Pre-cursors of this method date back to the late 19th century; and, it was commercially popularized by Kodak in the 1930s and 40s. In pre-digital days, the process was often reserved for commercial photography and advertising because of the expense and labor-intensive nature of the process; however, it did increase in use amongst artists following Eggleston's 1976 MoMA show. At the most basic level, this process requires the photographer to make three separate negatives using red, green and blue filters. These negatives are exposed to make three positive relief separations on film, which are then soaked respectively in a cyan, a magenta and a yellow dye. These dyes are then applied to paper with a squeegee to produce a print. The fact that each negative is worked with individually means that greater control can be exercised over the final result and a more-nuanced image with more detail and a wider color range can be achieved — enabling the photographer to come closer to what can be seen by the human eye.



Infographic by Jee In Park.
Source: www.dyetransfer.de; Eliot Porter Collection Guide website of the Amon Carter Museum

SAIC School of the Art Institute
of Chicago

SAIC 2010 FINAL STATEMENT

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BFAW READINGS
April 2

MFAW THESIS READINGS
May 21

**MA/MS THESIS
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April 29–May 21

**GRADUATE THESIS
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May 1–21

SAIC FASHION 2010
May 7

**BFA PERFORMANCE
PRESENTATIONS**
May 8–9

**MFA THESIS AND BFA
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Own it.

“Fair Use” at Glass Curtain Gallery

REVIEW BY ANIA SZREMSKI

In his landmark letter “No Patent on Ideas” of 1813, Thomas Jefferson claimed that ideas are free entities that can be shared by everyone. Ironically, nearly 200 years later, the right to republish the phrase “No Patent on Ideas” carries a price tag of 12 dollars.

At least, that’s what local artist and curator Brandon Alvendia states in the catalogue accompanying his current exhibition, “Fair Use: Information Piracy and Creative Commons in Contemporary Art and Design,” now on view at Columbia College’s Glass Curtain gallery.

The contested freedom of information in contemporary society is at the heart of this critically salient, intensively researched show. The exhibited artists (working in a variety of media, including photographs, designed objects, sound, video and new media) employ diverse strategies to question the mainstream circulation of images, ideas and objects.

The phrase “No Patent on Ideas” is the conceptual cornerstone of the show. It’s also the title of Alvendia’s curatorial essay, as well as the subject of a poster by Thai artist Pratchaya Phintong, included in the exhibition. The poster was printed using a special blueprint process that will cause the phrase to slowly disappear over time, thus making the idea something that truly cannot be owned.

The concept behind “Fair Use” is certainly timely, but it’s hardly new. Concerns over the channels through which information is disseminated, and the way those channels are molded by power structures and economic forces, became especially prominent in the 1960s and ’70s.

Fluxus artists, for instance, delighted in mail art and alternative publishing ventures as a provocative means of circumventing traditional art world networks. At the same time, the early champion of Conceptual art Seth Sieglaub experimented with things like exhibitions of photocopied books in a similar anti-establishment vein of inquiry. More recently, issues around the ownership of ideas and images came to the fore in the ’80s, with the rabid appropriation techniques that became a hallmark of Postmodernism.

This historical trajectory informs the curatorial concept behind “Fair Use.” Today, though, these ideas have even greater urgency in the context of an Information Age where a vast volume of texts, images, videos and music can be accessed with a mere click of the mouse. Paradoxically, even as the dissemination and appropriation of information become easier,

copyright and intellectual property laws restrict artists who use these very strategies.

The work in “Fair Use” engages with the political and historical aspects of intellectual property rights in various ways. Not all of the exhibited projects demonstrate overtly political or economic critique, though, as one might expect.

In fact, the curator states that he’s less interested in institutional provocation than in creative responses to the limits placed on the flow of information: “The artists and designers in ‘Fair Use’ are not concerned with culture jamming politics nor an institutional critique of cultural authority ... the focus is on how artists mine culture for new semiotic possibility and formal invention at the service of personal and aesthetic agendas. Perhaps for a moment, we can leave the tearing down of the patent monopolies ... to the real world so we can imagine new ways of living within it.”

Sze Lin Pang’s series of four deep blue light boxes are an example of this less overtly critical type of work. Covered with an illegible, invented script (one that bears a resemblance to either the Hebrew or Greek alphabet), which is also used to title the piece, the light boxes seem to be steeped in the more poetic, theoretical dimensions of conceptual art.

This invented alphabet is a translation of an unknown source text, and the fact that any information is resolutely inaccessible to the viewer could be read as a commentary on information asymmetry in the global knowledge economy. However, rather than a social critique, the work feels more like a theoretical exploration of the nature of language as an empty, inherently meaningless vehicle for communication.

On the other end of the spectrum are the Brazilian designer Bea Correa’s “Fakewear” pieces (2004) — a much more obvious commentary on copyright and market issues. The project consists of counterfeited Louis Vuitton handbags, including the brand’s logo, with the word “FAKE” stenciled over them in bright red letters. The artist explains on her website that her goal with the project is to acquire the counterfeit bags from the black market, legitimize them with the “fake” label, and resell them, in part to allow lower-income women the chance to acquire a luxury item.

Correa also states, “My goal is not to make profits with these sales ... in this context, faking should be seen less as a crime and more as an attempt of sharing welfare.” However, the artist has since been ordered by the Louis Vuitton corporation to cease selling the bags and to destroy any that remain; on the web they’re now labeled as “Prohibited For Sale.”

The inclusion of “Fakewear” points to another notable aspect of the exhibition: the marked emphasis on design. The title “Information Piracy” might inspire visitors to come to the gallery looking for subversive digital works or net art, but “Fair Use” features tangible, object-based work instead. It might be even more interesting that way — the idea of how artists grapple with evolving information systems, and the economic dynamics they’re bound up with, in relatively traditional materials and forms is intriguing.

On the other hand, the almost overwhelming presence of projects like the Totem Collective’s “Original C Plus Systems” seating and shelving units, as well as Superflex’s “Copyright” lamps suspended from the ceiling, give the entire gallery the appearance of an Ikea store. This may be purposeful, given the appropriateness of Ikea hacking to the show’s concept.

Conceptually, the idea of DIY, open-source furniture design is fascinating. Unfortunately, the dominance of a slick design aesthetic throughout the gallery overwhelms the potentially interesting grittiness of the do-it-yourself impulse that motivates many of the works.

For instance, a slightly grittier, punk aesthetic is felt in Seth Price’s series of mixed CDs, accompanied by essays that the artist wrote for Sound Collector Audio Review. Especially interesting is the CD of video game soundtracks from the 80s that were extracted from old arcades and game cartridges, and placed on the Internet by nostalgic fans.

Artists and curators like Chicago-based Pedro Velez have distributed mixed tapes at exhibitions since at least the ’90s as part of their strategies of institutional critique. But the concept still has currency today — perhaps even more so given the high visibility of legal struggles surrounding music piracy on the internet. Price pushes the envelope a little further by stating that all the exhibited media is also freely available for download online.

In terms of the Ikea aesthetic, particularly worthy of note is Guy Ben-Nar’s digital video piece, “Stealing Beauty,” which features soap opera-like vignettes featuring the artist and his family in Ikea stores across the world. As bemused (but mainly oblivious) shoppers wander in and out of the picture field, the Ben-Nar family goes about the business of daily life in the model kitchens, living rooms and

bedrooms on the showroom floor.

The plot revolves around Ben-Nar’s son, Amir, who was caught stealing; extended (and hilarious) conversations ensue regarding the nature of property and ownership, production and authorship, and the consumption of goods, with a little Freudian psychoanalysis thrown in for comic relief — at one point, Amir asks, “Is Mom your private property? Can I marry Mommy when you die?”

Finally, one of the most interesting pieces in “Fair Use” is one which viewers may not even consider as part of the exhibition: the catalogue itself. Alvendia’s own artistic practice is concerned with appropriation and alternative distribution models, something he experiments with in his publishing initiative, Silver Galleon Press.

Those interests are manifest in the catalogue, which is replete with sly conceptual gestures — the essay itself is actually written by multiple authors, with some of the content appropriated (or “adapted”) from landmark texts on piracy and authorship. Alvendia also claims that the dog-eared corner on the page following the essay is the only physical presence of one of the invited artists (who, apparently, remains anonymous).

For a relatively small show, “Fair Use” manages to assemble a body of work that raises fascinating, provocative aesthetic and conceptual questions. This is certainly an exhibition that should be visited more than once, preferably with friends, so that the conversation can continue well beyond the confines of the gallery walls.

Glass Curtain Gallery

1104 S Wabash
www.colum.edu

“Fair Use: Information Piracy and Creative Commons in Contemporary Art and Design”
March 1 - April 30, 2010

“Perhaps for a moment, we can leave tearing down of the patent monopolies ... to the real world so we can imagine new ways of living within it.”

—Brandon Alvendia, curator of “Fair Use”



Image courtesy of Glass Curtain.

Film Festival FOUNDATIONS

An interview with the European Union Film Festival Organizers

BY BALTAZAR PEÑA RIOS

The 13th Annual European Union Film Festival was held at the Gene Siskel Film Center March 5 – April 1, 2010. When the festival was first developed, there were only 12 nations in the European Union (EU); today, there are 27, each of which was represented in the festival.

Academy Award nominated films were featured, including: “The Misfortunates” (Belgium), “The World is Big But Salvation Lurks Around the Corner “ (Bulgaria), “December Heat” (Estonia), “Slaves in Their Bonds” (Greece), “Chameleon” Hungary), “Draft Dodgers” (Luxembourg), “Broken Promise” (Slovakia), and “Landscape No. 2” (Slovenia). “The Dancer and the Thief” from Spain opened the festival, and the event closed with the Irish film “The Secret of Kells,” an Academy Award nominee for Best Animated Feature.

Prior to this year’s festival, F Newsmagazine sat down with the event’s programmers Barbara Scharres, who has been involved since the inception, and Marty Rubin, who began co-programming the event in 2001.

How did the festival begin?

Scharres: I founded the festival in collaboration with a committee of people from different consulates and cultural institutions in Chicago — it began ... as an experiment. I had done a project that involved three of the nations. It focused on young European directors; there were various problems involved in that. You know, it was an OK series, but it wasn’t the success we had hoped for since a couple of the directors that we targeted weren’t able to come. But it was a good example of what could be done. At that time I was attending regular cultural meetings with international counselors in Chicago. We talked about cultural matters and we talked about film things. It turned out that several representatives there were really interested in doing something with film that focused more on the EU itself and brought some attention to the scene there. This idea started developing in discussions and we agreed that we would try to collaborate on [an] EU festival as a trial run to see how it went the first year. No one had to commit to continue doing it if it wasn’t a success.

What were the most difficult issues to agree on?

Scharres: I think the biggest difficulty to get over with was getting all the nations to agree that all the films had to be new — they had to be Chicago premieres. Many nations have access to films that are several years old and that their cultural ministries have designated as their official representative films. Every time they get [an] inquiry about a festival or some kind of cultural program they just bring out the same old film and say “OK, here’s our official film.” We didn’t want that kind of festival. We wanted something that was going to be a new, fresh, ground-breaking event. Every consulate would be involved in promoting the festival throughout the community. We also decided from the very beginning that the film that would be shown at the opening would come from the nation that held the presidency of the EU at the time.

How did the festival develop from that first experience?

Scharres: The [first] festival was a considerable success. It surpassed all of our expectations, but it was never a done deal that it would happen again. We had to have

some evaluative meetings and we had to talk about whether everyone wanted to participate again. So it was voted that we would do another festival the next year. And for the first several years the group really wanted to consider whether we could go on to the next one. Now, of course, it’s automatic — there’s no discussion of that.

How are films chosen? How much input do these cultural organizations and consulates have?

Scharres: We have complete artistic control.

Rubin: Recommendations are sometimes valuable in alerting us on what films they’ve heard about and have created buzz back in their home country. Sometimes they also alert us on films that we can get for free or on reduced rates through certain programs, but the final decision is always ours.

Something that I imagine happening in a film festival that takes films from every country of a specific region is that each year you could get a dominance of a specific subject. For example, the Holocaust seems to be a subject this year. Has this happened other times?

Scharres: [The Holocaust] seems to be a pervasive thing in the film world. Everything from “Inglourious Basterds” to these Holocaust films we’re showing at the festival. It seems to be a subject that a lot of filmmakers have worked on this year.

Rubin: It has probably happened other years. It’s almost the law of averages, if there is some trend that’s significant in the European cinema, the odds are we are going to pick up a few films that deal with that subject.

Scharres: The Holocaust is easier to identify as a “thing” that a movie is about, but there are more general themes. I think I’ve seen, over a period of years, a greater number of films that involve some kind of really transgressive violent behavior, and more nations have directors working in this way. Nations like Austria, Belgium and Slovenia ... definitely produce films that seem to aim in that direction.

A lot of the films in the festival are promoted as Oscar material. How present are other festivals? How about other festivals, such as Cannes, Berlin or Venice?



An eager audience at the European Film Festival's opening night on March 5
Photograph courtesy of the Gene Siskel Film Center.

Scharres: One reason we mention the Oscars is because the American public responds to the Oscars. We’re also appealing to many different ethnic audiences that might be interested in the films that their countries submitted to the Oscars, but they wouldn’t have any other way of seeing. All those other festivals you mention definitely feed into our festival too, especially Cannes.

It is a big responsibility to try to bring movies to the festival that wouldn't be shown in Chicago otherwise; and to also try to bring films that may be shown around later commercially, but that would still improve the festival. How is this balance found?

Rubin: A lot of it is circumstance. Some times there is no choice and it depends on what’s available — we don’t pick films in this ideal vacuum. A lot of factors influence our decisions. One is the premiere factor. If a film has played in the Chicago International Film Festival, it is out for us. We start out by finding out what kind of films are available to us, rather than starting out with a wish-list and then fulfilling it.

Scharres: Sometimes we really set our hearts on a film and don’t manage to get it because of budget reasons. It’s great that because of the films you show, you give an impression of a festival that everybody would want to show films at, when you really have to go and fight to get them.

How does the spirit of the Gene Siskel Film Center make its way into the festival?

Rubin: We’re very open to submissions. Unless we feel like it’s obviously inappropriate for our situation, we’ll take a look at everything we can — that is how occasionally we pick unexpected discoveries. A big part of our mission is to encourage local filmmakers.

Scharres: As far as our mission goes, we don’t consider smaller films as something outside of our scope. Everything is a possibility.

Rubin: We’re currently very religious as far as trying to show as big of a diversity in films. We’ll do Jim Henson, The Muppets and avant-garde films.

Scharres: The goal of the festival represents the goal of the Film Center as an organization. This year we have a range of popular movies, avant-garde films, documentaries, films directed by both men and women, and gay themed films. The festival tries to be representative at both an artistic and cultural level.

Gene Siskel Film Center
164 N State Street
www.siskelfilmcenter.org

Upcoming Events in April:

Asian-American Showcase,
April 2-16
Chicago Palestine Film Festival,
April 16-29
Conversations at the Edge, every
Thursday at 6 p.m.

“The biggest difficulty to get over with was getting all the nations to agree that all the films had to be new — they had to be Chicago premieres.”

—Barbara Scharres

A Look at the LINE-UP

REVIEWS BY ANIA SZREMSKI AND BRANDON KOSTERS



DISENGAGEMENT

(Directed by Amos Gitai. France/Israel, 2007)

With dialogue in English, French and Hebrew, this film addresses the complexity of national identity as it pertains to geopolitics. Ana (played by Juliette Binoche) learns that the daughter she was forced to abandon in her youth is working as a teacher in Israel. The will of Ana's recently deceased father stipulates that for her daughter to receive her inheritance, Ana must travel to Israel to personally speak with her.

With the assistance of her stepbrother Uli (played by Liron Levo) who works for the Israeli police force, Ana meets her daughter during the evacuation of Israeli settlers in the Gaza Strip. Gitai makes effective use of sustained silent shots, and gives us a glimpse into the macro using the micro, with the issues in the Middle East set as a backdrop for the stories of Ana's personal struggles. Actress Jeanne Moreau, star of Truffaut's "Jules and Jim" (1962), plays a notable cameo.

—BK



DOGTOOTH

(Directed by Yorgos Lanthimos. Greece, 2009)

Released in Greece as "Kynodontas," "Dogtooth" won the Prix Un Certain Regard at the 2009 Cannes Film Festival, and proved to be a success among viewing audiences at the Siskel. In this film, three adolescents are unknowingly held captive in their own home by their ambiguously intentioned father. The children are told that if they leave their front yard, they will be torn apart by house-cats. There is only one working telephone in the house that only the parents use, and the children are told that "telephone" means saltshaker, lest they catch on.

The father asserts that only when a child loses either the left or right incisor (known as dogteeth), is he or she ready to go out into the world alone. The dysfunctional family is represented in a unique way that is neither morally overbearing nor overly polite to the viewer. Lanthimos has also managed to successfully alternate between zany slapstick and profoundly disturbing violence. It may not bear repeated viewings, but I definitely recommend seeing it once.

—BK



HELSINKI, FOREVER

(Directed by Peter von Bagh. Finland, 2008)

"Helsinki, Forever" is a filmic love letter to Finland's capital constructed entirely out of found footage by renowned director, writer, archivist and film curator Peter von Bagh.

Film critic Jonathan Rosenbaum was on hand at the March 24 screening to emphasize the fact that this was a rare treat. "Helsinki" has been largely excluded from the film festival circuit (mainly, according to Rosenbaum, due to the fact that Helsinki doesn't have quite the sex appeal of, say, Berlin or Paris).

It will also probably never be released on DVD, given the enormous difficulty of obtaining the reproduction rights for each of the source materials used by the director. The film was included in the Siskel's line-up thanks to Rosenbaum himself, who had received a copy in the mail from von Bagh. Even without the glamour surrounding the knowledge that one was getting the chance to view something that most other people might never see, the film would have still been a pleasure to watch. Clips culled from documentaries, travelogues, film noir and contemporary fiction films were juxtaposed with paintings and quotations from literary sources.

Drifting back and forth between past and present Helsinki, the film created a poetic, dream-like and loving portrait of both the city itself and Finland's own history of film. A certain investment in attentiveness must be made, but the beautiful and melancholic portrayal of a city that is always permeated by its past is well worth the price.

—AS



THE MISFORTUNATES

(Directed by Felix Van Groeningen. Belgium, 2009)

In many ways, this comedy (perhaps tragic-comedy?) was an entire universe apart from the meditative quietness of "Helsinki Forever." Felix Van Groeningen's film is unapologetically and even hyperbolically raunchy, bawdy and lewd. It is an unflinching depiction of the intertwined lives of four larger-than-life alcoholic (and extremely hairy) brothers and the protagonist, Guenther, the teenage son of the heaviest drinker of the clan.

Amazingly, these baroque buffoons have real-life antecedents — the film is based on a semi-autobiographical novel by Dimitri Verhulst. And the film is really about the writing of that novel, tracing the beginnings of 13-year-old Guenther's interest in writing as born out of his troubled environment, and then jumping ahead to adult Guenther's struggles trying to get published as he juggles an unwanted girlfriend with an unwanted pregnancy.

There are quiet, melancholic moments in the film as the adult protagonist reflects on his childhood and the small village where he grew up that are, somehow, almost reminiscent of "Helsinki, Forever" — both films deal with nostalgic evocations of a specific urban environment, haunted by memories.

In some ways, this film has many of the sappy ingredients of a traditional coming-of-age tale, complete with unrequited lust, traitorous friends and the apparently required scene of a tortured soul alone in the street screaming into the night (a trope that, in this reviewer's humble opinion, should herewith be permanently banned from the film industry).

Fortunately, Van Groeningen manages to transcend the genre, and in so doing creates an engrossing and moving tale that is equal parts outrageous and hilarious, and sentimental and moving. We can only hope that, unlike "Helsinki, Forever," "The Misfortunates" will enjoy a healthy distribution.

—AS

A New Perspective

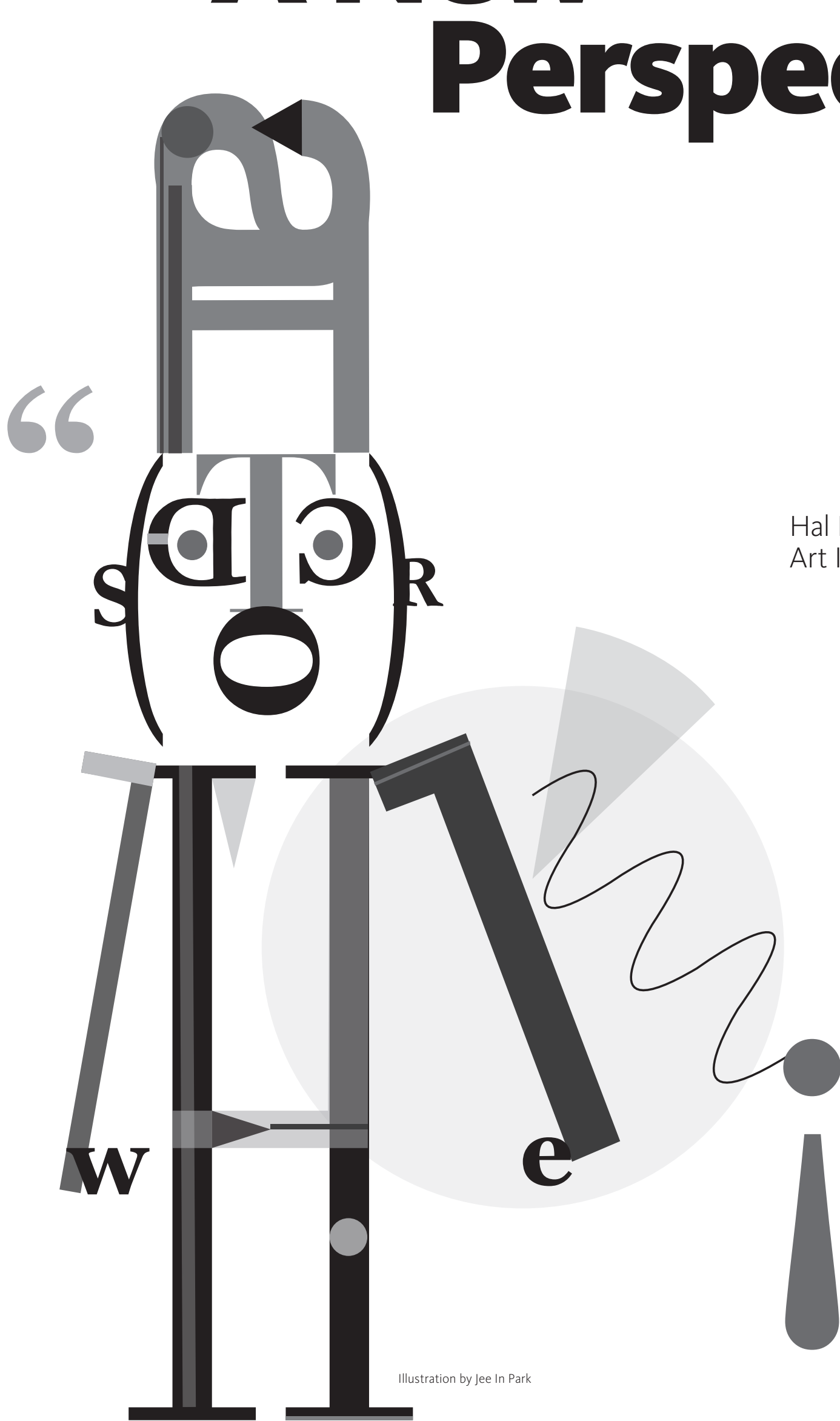


Illustration by Jee In Park

Hal Foster speaks at the Art Institute of Chicago

BY ANIA SZREMSKI

When Hal Foster walked onto the stage of the perpetually stuffy Fullerton Hall, he sighed, removed his blazer and muttered in his hoarse, quiet voice, “Is this okay? Is Chicago informal?” This move set the tone for the rest of the evening’s hour-long talk on the evening of March 4: relaxed, informal and a little less than polished.

Foster’s meandering lecture on Zurich- and Cologne-based Dada was a refreshing breather from the repetitive, pre-packaged talks that other academics and artists have delivered on campus recently; and it certainly piqued the audience’s curiosity regarding the book on avant-garde art that Foster promised is forthcoming.

Over the past 30 years Hal Foster has become a household name in the art world, thanks to publications like “Design and Crime,” “Return of the Real” and “Art Since 1900” (yes, that big book they assign in all those intro to art history classes).

Foster holds rank with T.J. Clark, Michael Fried and Yve Alain-Bois as one of the twentieth century’s most influential writers on art; and, significantly, all of these speakers have been (or will be) part of the 2009-’10 lecture series at the Art Institute.

The fact that Fullerton Hall, which has a seating capacity of close to 400, was packed to the brim reveals the excitement Foster’s appearance stirred in the SAIC community and beyond. As one art history grad at SAIC exclaimed upon learning of the line to get into the lecture, “Since when is going to see Hal Foster like going to see Prince?”

Foster’s demeanor, however,



On the Avant-Garde



was less like that of an art history rock star and closer to that of a shy college professor. His soft voice had a tendency to trail into a mumble. He endearingly off-set some of his bolder claims with mildly self-deprecating humor — including the proposition that it was truly Hugo Ball, and not Duchamp, who was the greatest innovator of the early 20th century.

This particular provocation came about halfway through Foster's attempt to trace what he terms an alternative history of the avant-garde — following the influential "Theory of the Avant-Garde" (1974) by German theorist Peter Bürger, art historians have discussed avant-garde art in terms of a division of the "historical avant-garde" (meaning art work from the first three decades of the 20th century, as typified by Dada) and the "neo avant-garde" of the 60s (as typified by Pop).

In his seminal "Return of the Real," Foster endeavors to resurrect the reputation of the neo avant-garde; however, in this lecture, he revisited the issue from a slightly different angle — trying instead to show that there is no real break between the "historical" and "neo" avant-gardes. Instead, for Foster there is a continuous line of avant-garde production throughout the mid-century.

The lecture consisted of loosely organized notes for a forthcoming publication, in which Foster proposes a general evolution of the avant-garde from the "bathetic" (encompassing Dada artists like Hugo Ball and Max Ernst), the "brutal" in the mid-century (artists like Jean Dubuffet and the COBRA group), and the "banal" in the latter half of the century (Warhol and Pop).

During the course of his hour at AIC, however, Foster

concentrated just on the "bathetic" moment, corresponding historically to the height of Dada in Zurich and Cologne during World War One. His speech consisted of ten points with evocative titles — such as "Negative Expressionism," "Mickey and Odradek," and "Muscle Man" — which were liberally filled with lengthy quotations from the epoch's major and most symptomatic literary sources, including letters and diary entries by Ball and other artists; essays by Nietzsche, Benjamin and Adorno; and prose and poetry by Kafka and Rilke.

Foster proposed a portrait of this period as a time when artists were desperately attempting to propose a new man, and creating work that revealed, and even reveled in, a disintegrated, schizophrenic subjectivity in reaction to the trauma of the historical moment. Along the way, the critic compared works by Dada artists to those of the contemporaneous (and much more orderly, rational and optimistic) Russian constructivists.

He also focused on works such as Hugo Ball's "Magical Bishop" performance of 1916; Max Ernst's "Little Machine" of 1919; and Paul Klee's "Angelus Novus" of 1917. He expressed a particular interest in those artists' near obsession with dolls, masks, puppets and miming, also eloquently illustrated by some of Dada's lesser-known women artists, such as Sophie Tauber.

SAIC Assistant Professor Daniel Quiles, who studied under Foster at the Whitney's Independent Studies Program, was in attendance. "Hal Foster's framing of Dada," he explained, "follows on his proposals in 'Prosthetic Gods,' in which he explores the psychoanalytic

For Hal Foster there is no real break between the "historical" and "neo" avant-gardes — there is a continuous line of avant-garde production throughout the mid-century.

implications of the fragmented, displaced and/or traumatized self that was represented, if not embraced, by artists such as Hugo Ball and Max Ernst."

"At this point, Foster's line is that of the canon itself, but at least it is an updated canon that accounts for the devastating effects of technological change and violence in the 20th century," Quiles continued. He did enjoy the lecture, but added that he would have liked "more information on Sophie Tauber and Emmy Hennings, two female artists whose contributions sound like

they could be further fleshed out by scholars to come."

The morning after his lecture, Foster met with F Newsmagazine at Cusi, the perennial meeting-place for SAIC affiliates, to talk a little bit more about his new project and its relevance for today. "It's something I've thought about for a long time," he confided over a cup of coffee. "It's an account of the avant-garde that's not out there. It's my version, and it has to do with the contemporary moment — these are moments when art and society are in crisis ... I want to trace a line, though not a direct line, that runs from deep in the 19th century and into the present moment."

The relevance for the contemporary moment has to do, of course, with the current state of war. However, during his lecture, Foster made the questionable assertion that the Iraq war hadn't provoked the same enraged responses in artistic production that World War I did. When pressed further about this claim during the interview, Foster said, "I wanted to ask why [there was] this intense activity around World War One, but belated activity around the Iraq War."

"But, there are echoes of Dada's attack on what it means to be an object, or what it means to be a subject, in contemporary art," he explained further. "These forms of destruction are at work in art today — in the work of artists like Isa Genzken. There's an object-making, an installation-making, now that's aggressive and formal, resembling the earlier work."

While a deeper understanding of the historical avant-garde may help us better understand our current moment, Foster said that what really interests him in this project is the second,

"brutal" period: "The mid-century moment is particularly neglected [in scholarship]."

"I'm interested in why these artists and makers became interested in things that are raw, brutal, brut-like and anti-cultural," he continued. "This is coming at a time after the war, when means are limited. Their art is full of brutal creatures; in these moments of crisis, why does the animal reappear? It's to do with the limits of the human, the limits of culture. It's an aesthetic that's to do with what's left over — how do you live among the ruins?"

Unfortunately, academia will have to wait some time before the full expression of Foster's ideas on the story of avant-garde hit the bookshelves. First, he'll be releasing a new manuscript on Pop (focusing on the work of Hamilton, Lichtenstein, Warhol, Richter and Ruscha), which will be followed by a sequel to "Design and Crime."

Foster will be returning to Chicago for a week this July as a guest faculty member for the 2010 Stone Summer Theory Institute. The critic says he's excited at the prospect of returning to Chicago, a city that he knows little about beyond the Art Institute itself, "which is extraordinary."

The Art Institute of Chicago
111 S Michigan
www.artic.edu

Upcoming Lectures:

Derek Walcott: April 1
Michael Fried, April 29
Luis Pérez -Oramas, May 20
Yve Alain-Bois, May 27



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847-425-9100

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Kris Schenkel at Arts of Life Photographs by Ya-Chi Hsu

Art that Empowers

A look at The Arts of Life not-for-profit studio

The Arts of Life

2010 West Carroll Avenue
Chicago, IL 60612
(312) 829-2787
www.artsoflife.org

Mission Statement:

We are an artistic community that provides adults with developmental disabilities an environment to experience personal growth.

Volunteer Opportunities:

Volunteers play a critical role in our success by assisting the artists with their projects, working on active committees, teaching new art skills, designing databases, planning special events, assisting in grant applications, and much more. For more information please email info@artsoflife.org.

Upcoming Events:

Arts of Life is Panache boutique's "Charity of the Month" for the month of April.

A cocktail reception will be held April 14, 6-9 p.m. Mention Arts of Life and 15% of sales will benefit the organization.

Panache Chicago
2252 N. Clark Street
Chicago, IL 60614
(773) 477-4537
www.panachechicago.com

BY BRANDON KOSTERS

"It's not all kung-fu fighting," Kris Schenkel said while discussing his role model, Superman. "It's not all about being able to see through certain things people aren't supposed to see through. [Superman] teaches you what it means. He teaches you what kids are looking for in the world. He has great respect towards everyone."

Schenkel is an artist at The Arts of Life studio on the Near-West side. He does drawings with pencil and marker, and also paints. The Arts of Life focuses on facilitating art-making for developmentally disabled adults, providing participants with a monthly stipend.

Artists come in during the day Monday through Friday to work on paintings, music and performances with the assistance of volunteers from the community, many of whom are students.

Standing over his drawings of Superman, Schenkel spoke about his previous job changing pillowcases for the airlines.

"They'd bring a shipment of pillows. We'd take 25 pillows and put them in a bag. Take the old cases off, put the new ones on ..."

"[Being here] is not about getting paid," Schenkel said. "It's about looking at how you feel with yourself and the picture. It doesn't have to be precise in the picture. It's something you can look at and feel good about."

Arts of Life is celebrating its 10th year while mourning the loss of its founding artist Veronica Cuculich. Affectionately known to

many as "Grandma," she passed away on January 1 and would have been 80 years old in April.

Cuculich started the program in 2000 with current Executive Director Denise Fisher. The goal of the organization is to honor the beauty and wisdom of a group who are all too frequently denied their forum for personal expression through fostering creativity.

Ryan Shuquem, Art and Music Director of the program, works in the studio as both a visual artist and musician. For him, a reward has been "seeing the changes in each person individually after four or five months, and seeing how they transform once they realize they call the shots," he said in an interview with F Newsmagazine.

Shuquem said that the program does a service to the community in helping to "dispel misconceptions of what these individuals have to offer."

Outreach Coordinator Tim Sarrantonio has been with the organization since May of 2009. Within that time, four artists have been added to the program, and the center moved from 2110 West Grand to its new location at 2010 West Carroll Avenue.

A studio has also recently been started in Glenview, with five artists producing work. These five artists are all also represented in group shows and benefits that The Arts of Life organizes.

Sarrantonio said that The Arts of Life is invaluable to Chicago, for three reasons:

"Number one, it represents a clear and uplifting alternative for adults with developmental disabilities who do piece work in



Bobby Verran celebrates his birthday at Arts of Life.

"It's not about getting paid – it's about looking at how you feel with yourself and the picture."

—Kris Schenkel, artist at The Arts of Life

factories where they are actually valued at a lesser rate than others."

"Number two, from an art standpoint it's a valuable part of the outsider art community in terms of the purity and non-bullshit that our artists represent."

"And, number three, it represents an excitement for other people coming in here. It may remind other artists why they do what they do."

Art as Dinner Party

“Artists and Residents”
Infiltrates Chicago
Area Homes



REVIEW BY ARIEL LAUREN PITTMAN

Chicago is famous for its apartment galleries. Young students, curators and art lovers alike shove their couches to the side at least one Friday night per month, and allow strangers into their homes to drink alcohol and look at art.

But, what happens when both the art and the audience start to infiltrate private homes that aren't designated as galleries — homes that still maintain the intimacy of the owners' furniture and family photos on opening night?

SAIC grad student Tang Zehui intends to find out. “Artists and Residents” is a series of site-specific exhibitions in the homes of private individuals curated by Tang (MA in Arts Administration and Policy 2010) as a response to Chicago's prolific DIY apartment gallery scene.

In an interview with F News magazine, Tang (who recently moved to Chicago from Beijing, where she worked for the Chinese National Art Museum in 2008), mentioned that what she finds most striking about Chicago's apartment galleries is the way these spaces imitate the formal white-cube environments

of traditional exhibition spaces.

“Artists and Residents,” on the other hand, proposes to do something completely different. The series relishes the opportunity to inject lived-in spaces with art, leaving the furniture and wallpaper in its place.

At times the pleasure of exploring someone else's house competes with the pleasure of looking at the work. But ultimately, this experience of wandering through a dense environment, looking *for* the work, looking *at* the work, and beginning to look at everything as though it might *be* the work, is exciting.

A prime example is Madeleine Bailey's “Hiding Spaces,” (the fourth of five events in the series, the fifth of which is forthcoming), which was installed in a Hyde Park mansion owned by Jay Dandy and Melissa Weber. The home was packed with Wesselmanns and Warhols, the cutest cat this reviewer has ever seen, a collection of fabulous vintage clocks, at least five kids under the age of ten, and a taxidermied dancing polar bear.

Bailey's three-part installation is staged on three floors of the expansive mansion, and responds to the site-specific architecture and art collection in its form and its

simple red, black and white palette.

In the first floor foyer Bailey has created several black and white sewn vinyl tiles, mimicking the ceiling tiles, which are scattered across the floor; long strings extend from the ceiling, marking the paths that the tiles would have taken had they fallen. Some floor tiles are red and misshapen, asking the viewer to take notice of the difference.

On the second and third floors, semi-transparent red vinyl circles are laid on the wooden floor, subtle markers that the viewer has entered a different realm. On the second floor, a large-scale, tactile, white painting composed of zippers and layered paint mimics the dated white wallpaper.

Finally, on the third floor landing is “Hiding Place for Two” — two black eye-masks lined in red fabric, connected to grounded cement blocks with wire extensions. The piece had every guest giddy with excitement, as visitors who put on the masks repeatedly realized that when hiding here the only person who can't see you is, in fact, yourself — and whoever else is hiding with you.

When she initially conceived the format for “Artists and Residents,” Tang planned to seek sites and hosts for the exhibitions via Craigslist to ensure that the locations would be absolutely random.

However, after receiving advice from SAIC Instructor Kate Dumbleton and fellow classmates in her Fall 2009 Project Lab course, Tang decided that reaching out through her own connections to find appropriate sites would be a more manageable plan.

The result is a series of five homes and sets of hosts that the curator knows only tangentially. These sites paint a diverse picture of Chicago's art community — wealthy collectors; members of the Art Institute's Board of Directors; a pair of young artists; a group of 20-something restaurant servers; and several members of the same church living in a co-op on Chicago's South Side. Tang said, “This group of people really reflects the people that I know in Chicago. Because I'm here for art school, all of them are predisposed

Ultimately, this experience of wandering through a dense environment is exciting — looking for the work, looking at the work, and beginning to look at everything as though it might be the work.

to a certain interest in art.”

Each host was paired with an artist or group of artists chosen by Tang. Following the initial match and meeting, the artists and the hosts were left on their own to develop and determine the nature of the installation. The outcome was an intimate collaboration between artists and art lovers, cleverly facilitated by Tang. This process lead to a series of inventive and deeply personal installations, such as Mike and Alan Fleming's performance and installation, “Feng Shui,” in a Garfield Park loft (February 28 - March 28).

The Fleming twins generally perform in public or institutional spaces. Their work relies on the contrast between the highly controlled architecture of city streets and public buildings, and their unique connection and ability to communicate with one another, as well as with their audience. Brittany and Eli, the hosts of “Feng Shui,” described their interaction with the Flemings as a productive one.

Both Brittany and Eli are artists themselves, and while the exhibition was not a collaboration between the roommates and the Flemings, both residents were excited about the project. They described with pleasure the intimate experience of going about their lives and inhabiting their space as usual, but at the same time witnessing a body of work being created, and the private knowledge of all the possible iterations of the project that were not presented as part of the exhibition.

All of the hosts engaged in the project reported a similar experience — the real reward for opening their homes was having a unique opportunity to witness the creative process and feel like participants in the creation of new work.

This sense of intimacy — of being included in a private process — is ultimately the experience of those who have attended the openings of these exhibitions as well. Gathering together, drinking wine on some stranger's couch with a group of people from a familiar social circle and a group of unknown participants, is a cozy experience.

Tang's careful pairing of artists and residents has resulted in a series of strong exhibitions. Were these pairings not so well organized, it would be easy for the work to get lost in the excitement of exploring other people's homes.

Instead, at the events this reviewer has attended, the conversations center on the work, and the art facilitates an enjoyable and unique social event. “Artist and Residents” is an evolving, conversational, series of meetings between space and work, artist and host, guest and guest.



(top) **Feng Shui, Installation view**
Photograph by Alan and Michael Fleming

“Hiding Space” Installation view
Photograph by Tang Zehui

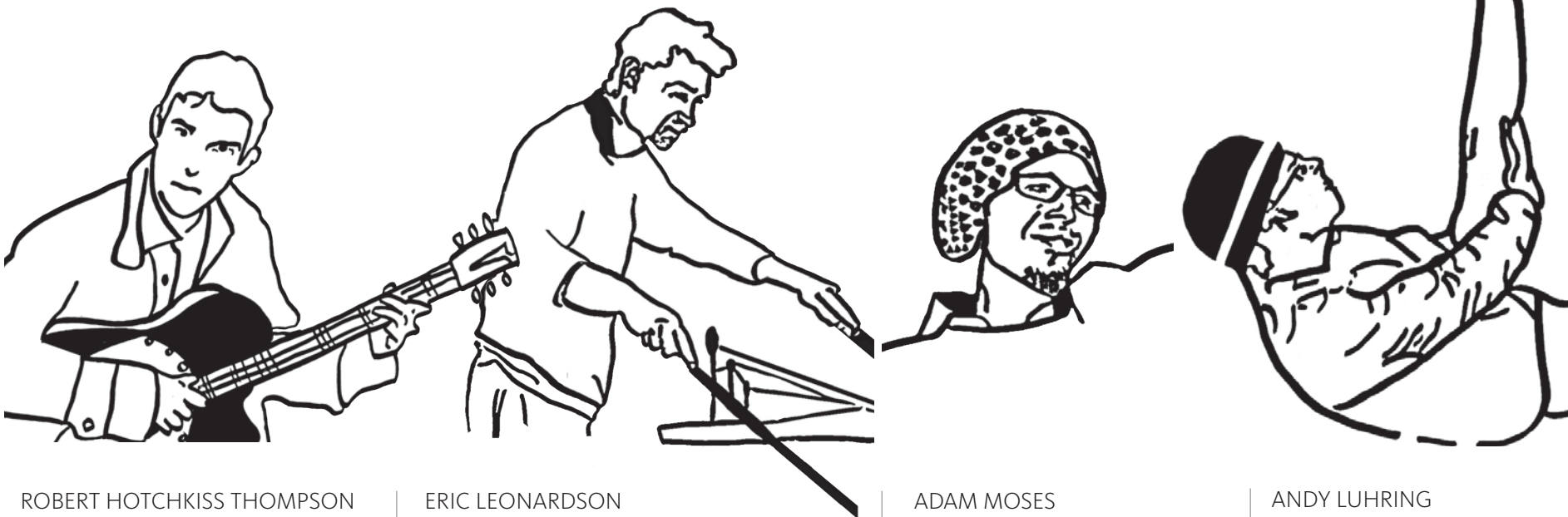
Audiophiles

BY BRANDON KOSTERS

The Art of Sound at SAIC

It's time once again, boys and girls, to pay tribute to folks at SAIC who divide their time between making visual and sonic art. Some produce music that accompanies their own visual work, in videos or in performances; some create music simply to evoke imagery; and, for some, what links the two practices is much less apparent.

Here is a look at four members of the SAIC community whose creative impulses propel them towards producing sound and imagery. If you or someone you care about is an audiophile, write to BrandonKosters@gmail.com to tell us about it.



ROBERT HOTCHKISS THOMPSON

WHO
SAIC undergrad in the Painting Department — currently has work on display in the BFA show, “Goes by Blockee or Little Bogger.” In describing his practice he says, “First there’s an enchanted little baby, then a sadistic and hornmad tyrant comes to brood for a hell of a (long) time, and then it’s done. It is the commemoration of wimp’s wimpdom.”

ASPIRATIONS
“I’ve always thought it’d be really nice if I recorded things, then released them, and then maybe other people would listen to them. That’d be nice, but a Grammy would be nicer.”

AURAL DEVELOPMENT
“I got started as a kid making weird skits with a tape recorder, playing with the record player like every other chump. In high school I made beats, wanting to be Gravediggaz, Cage, Necro. At some point following high school and before coming here I decided I wanted to become a recorded phantom in my own right, whatever that means. Now it’s just a matter of making the music something somebody would want to listen to.”

TOOLS
Accordion, keyboard, drums, electric bass, a “steel-bodied tricone resonator guitar”(pictured) that he built with his father, and a “Chair Zither” that he built in Eric Leonardson’s “Instrument Construction” class.

CHECK OUT
Rob’s Myspace (www.myspace.com/maison-tropicale)

ERIC LEONARDSON

WHO
SAIC instructor and alum (MFA Time Arts, 1983). Works as an audio-media artist, organizer and musician with a background and education in visual arts. In the 80s he helped start the Experimental Sound Studio with Lou Mallozzi and a handful of like-minded artists from SAIC.

CONNECTIONS
Plasticene, a physical theater company directed by Dexter Bullard; WUMMIN, who describe themselves as “a horse-hair metal power trio”; Auris, featuring Chris Pressing (founder of Chicago Composers Forum) and Julia Miller, guitarist and SAIC Adjunct Associate Professor in Sound and Liberal Arts.

AURAL DEVELOPMENT
“Drawing pictures while listening to recorded music was how I developed my interest in art at a very early age — humming melodies and making vocal sound effects while drawing ... I was some sort of savant then. The attention was embarrassing.” Discovered Marcel Duchamp in high school. Also inspired by Robert Rauschenberg and John Cage. The punk movement of the 1970s was highly influential, which he considers “the logical application of the Dadaist mission ... the walls between pop music and high art were disintegrating.”

TOOLS
A self-built instrument called the Springboard that comes from “city life,” made from coils, wood board, inexpensive hardware-store items and a walker, all amplified with a piezo disc contact microphone. The result: an exploration of “microtones and timbres you won’t find with conventional instruments.”

CHECK OUT
Eric’s personal website (ericleonardson.org); the Midwest chapter of the American Society for Acoustic Ecology (mwsae.org); the World Listening Project (www.worldlisteningproject.org); Experimental Sound Studio (www.experimentalsoundstudio.org)

ADAM MOSES

WHO
SAIC undergrad focusing in sculpture — creates what he calls “craft-oriented utilitarian wares.” Spends a lot of time in the studio singing, writing lyrics and drumming. Has a background playing dub, funk and reggae and is currently learning West African drumming.

CONNECTIONS
The Roots Rockers Club, alongside fellow SAIC students Bruno Smith and Kevin Suzuki. The group is actually a real club which meets every Friday at about 6:30 p.m. in the Columbia College music building at 1014 S. Michigan Ave., room 411: “Everybody is welcome! Feel free to come play with us or just sit and enjoy the vibration.”

INSPIRATIONS
Re-appropriation. Ray Johnson, underground artist of the tail end of the Fluxus era and the “Father of Mail Art,” is especially influential: “His ground up methods are evidence that Americans still have the potential to look in the right direction.” The Rasta movement and the rise of reggae music in the Caribbean: “During the 1970s and ’80s, Jamaica was filled to the brim with artists that were appropriating songs from each other often within a month of a song’s release. We could all learn from this ‘open source’ method of developing an artist’s community.”

CHECK OUT
The Roots Rockers Club’s Myspace (www.myspace.com/therootsrockersclub)

ANDY LUHRING

WHO
SAIC underground focusing on interior architecture. Goes by DJ EQ (aka Equation or And-Eq). Got his start playing at the Crack House, an art student-run makeshift art venue in Columbus, Ohio. Currently performs frequently in Chicago at the Myour House parties, and for the Praxis organization.

ASPIRATIONS
Continuing to produce, tour and throw parties (“crazier than the ones I’ve already been working on”). Also working out collaborations with The Freaakeasy events on the westside.

WHY MUSIC?
“ I play other people’s music to make other people dance, and I play the music I make for me ... I try to involve music in everything I do; I’m always listening to it, I’m always looking for it, I’m constantly bouncing to it, and it pretty much always reflects what I’m feeling ... I have mixtapes on top of mixtapes that I make for myself to listen to while I’m working on stuff at school. Just stuff that helps me concentrate.”

CHECK OUT
Andy’s music blog (www.bisforbounce.com); Gramophone Records Store (www.gramophonerecords.com).

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Oddballs

by Brandon Kusters



"They're both babes, but whose hotter? I don't know, Berry. That's like comparing...oh, what the fuck is that expression?"



Noteworthy in April

BY ANIA SZREMSKI

Performance

They Tried at No Coast

April 2, 7-9 p.m.
1500 W 17th Street
nocoast.org

Gretchen Holmes is curating a night of performances which, according to No Coast, “complicate the theme of failure.” A vague enough curatorial statement, but one which strikes a strong chord with this struggling student. Holmes is a young feminist performance artist/writer about town who notably recreated Carolee Schneeman’s notorious “Interior Scroll” piece, so “They Tried” should be interesting and risky, if nothing else. The performance is also a chance to catch the closing reception for Hexenhaus, a solo show of objects, installations and performances by Tessa Siddle that explores “the private lives of humans, animals and houseplants.” The closing reception is from 5-7, with a Hexenhaus performance at 6.

Exhibition

Liminality at Antena

April 2 - May 1
Opening reception Friday, April 2, 6 - 10 p.m.
1765 S Laflin (hours by appointment)
antenapilsen.com

All things Internet seem to be on Chicagoans’ minds this spring. March brought us “Fair Use” at the Glass Curtain, which explored Internet piracy (amongst other things), and “Friends in Common” at SUGS, which drew imagery from a public Facebook profile — both reviewed in this issue of F. Now, in April, curator Patrick Lichty (Columbia College professor and Yes Men member) brings Second Life to Antena Gallery. The curator purports to explore the in between-ness of life on the Internet by exhibiting images created in or inspired by Second Life, from videos to prints, performances, objects and “virtual installations” (which may exist “in either physical, virtual or mixed-reality forms”). I, for one, don’t really know what “mixed-reality” might mean, but I’m excited to find out. The exhibition will be in dialogue with a parallel show in Second Life itself, on I Am Columbia Island.

Film

Palestine Film Festival at the Gene Siskel

April 16 - 29
164 N State St
siskelfilmcenter.org

It is officially spring, and festival season is already in full-swing. As usual, it feels a bit unfair to choose just one item from the Gene Siskel’s monthly offerings to feature, but the annual Chicago Palestine Film Festival is particularly worthy of note. Featuring films, shorts and documentaries by established and emerging filmmakers (including SAIC alum Edward Salem), the lineup represents the expected political issues, but also reveals aspects of Palestinian culture that are usually impossible to access from this country. “Checkpoint Rock” focus on contemporary music in Palestine (a hot topic after the success of “Slingshot Hiphop”); “Intifada NYC” explores Jerusalem’s only gay bar; and “Voices Beyond Walls” features shorts about life in Jerusalem filmed by children aged 10 to 16.



Festival

Version Festival

April 22 - May 2
Various locations around Chicago
versionfest.org

Instead of paying 15 bucks to wander around the Merchandise Mart’s version of a fine arts car show (and listen to curators talk about, of all things, the state of collecting in Texas — the mind boggles!), I heartily recommend devoting your time to exploring the 10th edition of Version Festival. This 11-day affair brings approximately 500 artists, musicians, performers, curators and other creative-types to create exhibitions, interventions, workshops and more in Chicago’s alternative spaces. Based on the theme of “infrastructures and territories,” this year’s fest promises to be unabashedly political and utopian — and apparently there’s going to be a Korean/Polish BBQ.



Version Festival

Image courtesy of Version Festival

Lecture

Michael Fried at AIC

April 29, 6 - 7:30 p.m.
111 S Michigan, Fullerton Hall
artic.edu/aic/

Art history students, prepare yourselves: Michael Fried is coming to the Art Institute. Yes, the Michael Fried of “Art and Objecthood,” the fierce critic of “theatricality,” and the author of three volumes of poetry (who knew?). In keeping with his recent work on contemporary photography, the legendary critic will be discussing Paris-based video artist Anri Sala, and will also be leading a private seminar the day after his lecture. Based on past experiences with these AIC lectures, I would guess that an hour and a half won’t be enough time to witness anything profoundly life-changing; but the lecture is a not-to-be-missed opportunity to see one of art history’s most venerated heavyweights in action.

NEWS TICKER

art

Chicago’s art world should breathe a belated sigh of relief for not getting the 2016 Olympics. Artforum claims that **Vancouver** is planning to cut back on arts-related spending by up to 90 percent as the city tightens its belt in the aftermath of the games. ... Now you, too, can finally own, caress and lick images by artists like **Jackson Pollock** and **Adolph Gottlieb**. The New York Times reports that on March 11, the U.S. Postal Service released a series of stamps featuring the work of 10 Abstract Expressionist painters. ... Having trouble selling your art work in this dismal economy? Philadelphia-based artist and paragon of philanthropic virtue **Jeffrey Wright** has launched a new endeavor to improve his sales: for one low yearly fee, subscribers to his collective will receive a minimum of 12 screen prints throughout the calendar year. “I still want poor people to be able to buy my art,” Wright explained to The Philadelphia Inquirer. “I love poor people, and not just because I am one.” ... At the beginning of March, the **Detroit Institute of Arts** opened a new gallery devoted to Islamic arts, reports USA Today. From the Met to the Louvre, museums around the world are trying to highlight their Islamic arts collections as they cater to a new interest in Islamic culture, but the move is particularly significant in Detroit, as the home to one of the largest Arab American and Muslim populations in the U.S. ... Visitors to contemporary Viennese arts organization **The Succession** will be in for a surprise when they visit the venue’s prized piece, Gustav Klimt’s “Beethoven Frieze.” Thanks to an intervention by artist **Christoph Büchel**, in order to access the work an adult-only crowd will have to pass through a genuine swingers club — complete with mattresses and swings. The artist claims he wants to help contemporary Austrians get over their sexual inhibitions (who knew they had any, given the likes of Elfriede Jelinek?), and to recreate some of the original outcry inspired by the eroticism of Klimt’s works when they were first shown.

**What do you mean
she's deductible?**

