
f*newsmagazine*

The School of the Art Institute of Chicago

FEBRUARY 2013

A student journal of arts,
culture and politics

MAKE

ART

NOT

LOVE

Explore New Music

Toy instruments,
new technology,
and the power
of nostalgia

**MCA Stage
at the
Edlis Neeson
Theater
2012/13**



Photo: Kimono Photography

**ICE (International
Contemporary Ensemble)
ICElab: Carla Kihlstedt
and Phyllis Chen**

Saturday, February 16



Photo: Nathan Keay

**Baroque Band
21st Century
Brandenburg Project**

**Thursday–Sunday,
February 21–24**



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**Fifth House Ensemble
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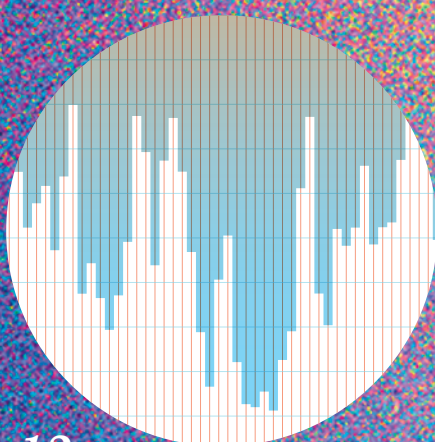
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"Through the Eye of an Auteur — Visions of Race, Sex and Social Justice from Steve McQueen." F Staff Writer Alexander Wolff reviews the Steve McQueen retrospective at the Art Institute of Chicago engaging with themes of race and gender.

"Karen Irvine: Curator, Photographer, Artist." New Arts Journalism grad student Maya Devasssy talks to Museum of Contemporary Photography curator Karen Irvine about her rise to curatorial success.

"Book Review — 'This is How You Lose Her' by Junot Diaz" Lucia Anaya, also a New Arts Journalism grad student, reviews Junot Diaz's latest book.

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End-of-Day Tour + Discussion
 (5:15–7:15 p.m.)
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Information and tickets: saic.edu/frc

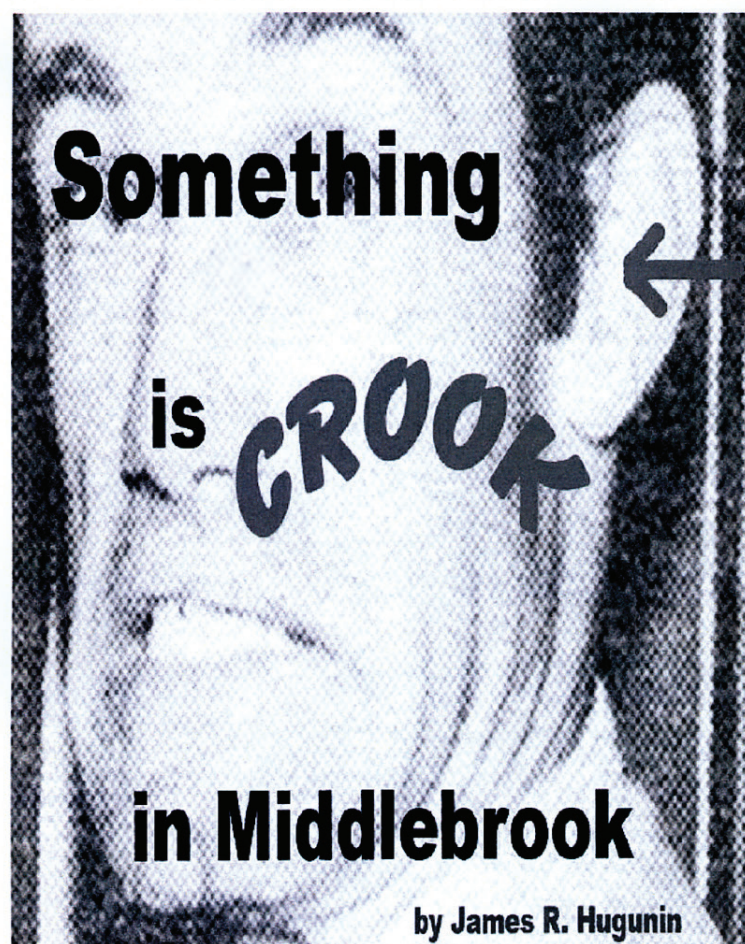
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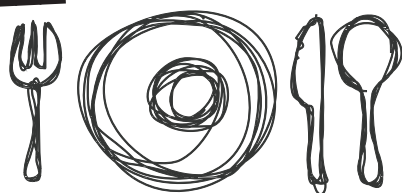
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LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Against Racial Fetishism

Black Student Group Criticizes Climate of Insensitivity at SAIC

BY MEMBERS OF BLACK AT SAIC

Last December, F Newsmagazine published “The Most Embarrassing Thing I Could Do,” a profile highlighting one SAIC student’s controversial work. In the profile the student artist describes a photograph in which he, a fully clothed, affluent, Asian male, sits grinning on the shoulders of a black man, whom he found on Craigslist, with the black man’s penis exposed. The piece was awarded a space and panel in Sullivan Galleries’ show “New Work,” which ran concurrently with Black at SAIC’s “Mythologies” show and at a moment when overdue diversity efforts at the school were finally breaking ground.

This scenario is indicative of a larger cultural issue at SAIC and the art world in general. What concerns us are not the artist’s reasons for making this work but the conditions that allow his work to be celebrated, especially at the same time that more progressive gestures are being made. Why was an image of a black man appearing docile and objectified accepted into this show? Why can students get away with making work that ignores the painful history of slavery and the objectification of black bodies, when they would never get away with making work that makes light of the painful history of other oppressed minority groups? When the same artist

proposed another photograph with a gun inserted into a white woman’s vagina, the “New Work” curators rejected it on the technical grounds of “hygiene.”

Instead of attacking one particular artist, we would like to use this as an opportunity to draw more attention to the climate of this school, where students have no accountability to critically defend their racially insensitive work. This tactic of racial fetishism is accepted at the institutional level even if it invokes very real race and class privilege issues at the expense of others. This creates an environment of hostility that undermines the efforts of students who make work about identity without reifying stereotypes, whether they are Black, Asian, Latino, White or anything else.

We question what we are being taught at SAIC, if a student can run amuck with the school’s media, school-sponsored galleries, and faculty approval despite making awkward, stereotypical, and underdeveloped work. An administration that addresses inclusion and diversity but promotes undefended work that exploits a painful history runs the risk of being hypocritical and ineffective.

Money is often the unspoken mediator in these situations, and any conversation about race and class privilege would be incomplete without it. Students with ac-

There is a fine line between controversial work about identity and work that simply exploits racial fetishism for one person’s benefit at the expense of others.

cess to more resources will often be able to make bigger work with a high production value highly regarded in the commercially driven sector of the art world. For an education as expensive as SAIC’s, it is not lost on students — especially those crippled by debt — that such work often goes through the channels unscathed, even if it is racist, sexist, or poor in concept.

If faculty and administrators are wowed by one student’s ability to produce highly polished work because they have access to financial resources, imagine if all students were on the same playing field financially. Well-considered work would be easier to recognize, and craftsmanship would be equalized to a greater extent. It is a problem that we would blindly accept work

that is aesthetically, commercially, and structurally sound, but not conceptually, especially at this institution. This is what happens when students are pushed to be generators of income — they are no longer thinking anymore, they are just doing.

There is a fine line between controversial work about identity (see BaSAIC’s “Mythologies” show for examples) and work that simply exploits racial fetishism for one person’s benefit at the expense of others. For a school that claims that meaning is as important as making, it is imperative that we challenge our classmates and our professors to recognize when such exploitation is happening, and to have just as refined a sense of what works formally as what works ideologically. Sloppy reinforcement of stereotypes and uninteresting lack of conceptual depth have to be worked out, in the classroom and in the studio, not continuously rewarded with shows, grants, and other opportunities any more than a preschool coloring book would be.

Many more questions are being raised here than answers given, because we simply want our fellow artists and instructors to start asking questions and thinking through these things. Until it becomes a priority for everyone to start asking questions of themselves and others, all the talk about diversity in the world won’t change the community here or anywhere.

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TIP SHEET

Piano Ties Trump Chocolate Hearts

Unorthodox Ways to Spend Valentine’s Day



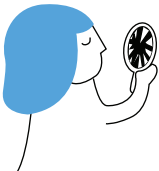
Why are we celebrating a holiday propagated by Hallmark, the card company that makes bank for Father’s Day, Mother’s Day and Boss’s Day? Valentine’s Day exists for stores to sell more flowery crap and make us feel awful for not having a date. Don’t spend the evening of February 14th standing in a long line at a posh new restaurant with hopes of ordering the locally grown octopus infused with organic, pickled beets. Instead, pick a different holiday to celebrate. You’ll feel much better about yourself.

BY JEN MOSIER



Unisexual Wax Your Upper Lip Day

This applies to everyone because frankly, that second unibrow is unbecoming. It’s time to say goodbye to the dirty caterpillar who’s been hanging around on your face since last November. Visit your local drugstore for the proper equipment.



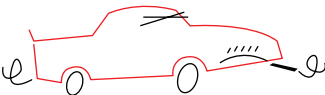
Compliment Yourself In A Mirror Day

Take a tip from Stuart Smalley — the fictional SNL character who gave himself self-help advice via a mirror. If Smalley isn’t worried about sitting at home alone on Valentine’s Day, then you shouldn’t either. Put on a periwinkle cardigan, snuggle up to your favorite mirror and tell yourself that you’re good enough, smart enough, and doggone it people like you.



National Piano Tie Day

There’s no practical reason to wear them... until now. Nevermind how or why you own one of these, but by all means, dress it up with your favorite keyboard suspenders and neon tuba socks.



Be A NASCAR Fan Day

Celebrate Nascar’s first modified stock car race — originally held on February 14, 1948. Put on acid wash cut-offs, the sunglasses and hat combo, and tape a beer to your hand. Pretend to soak up the Daytona Beach sun, while yelling “What?!...Hell Yeah!” at everyone, because it’s impossible to hear anything over the revving engines.



Calculator Watch Day

This is for all those nerds who were shunned for being ahead of their peers through technology. The time is now to unbury that ancient artifact. Even though the batteries were discontinued nine years ago, wear it proud, without fear of public humiliation. Wrist calculation = cool!



Dress Like An Elf Day

You really only need tights, a stocking hat and fluffy bangs. If you don’t have tights, skinny jeans are acceptable. Make sure your bangs are sticking out and the hat is barely on the crown of your head. Elves derive their strength from the extra sagging fabric. It’s where they keep their Magic Power Pouch.



Paul Bunyan Day*

While ’90s Seattle bands only admired Mr. Bunyan for his lumberjack flannel fashion, let’s choose to celebrate him as the tallest man in American folklore history. Once known as a tree logger and stump smasher, it’s rumored these days he lives in a quiet Alaskan cabin, where he’s a modest potter. Right on, Bunyan. Your lifestyle reminds us to be content with our artistic solitude.



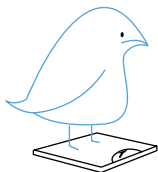
Cheer, Cheer Campari Day

That classic bitter liqueur from 1860 hasn’t changed a bit since the day it was born — it still tastes like stale train-car carpet. Nonetheless, your great-great grandmother enjoyed consuming it straight. As 2013 continues to blossom, hark back to the old days, and send a jolly nod to the Italians for keeping with tradition.



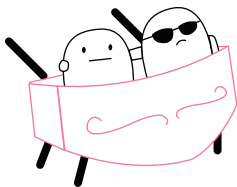
Swipe An Elf’s Hat Day

For all of you who are not celebrating Dress Like an Elf Day, you can participate by retrieving an elf’s hat. Since most of the hat is reserved for the Power Pouch, it takes a mere puff of air to send that hat flying into your own hands. Now you possess the magical Elf Force.



Tweet Your Weight Day

Probably the least popular holiday on the planet. This day calls for everyone to only tweet the numbers and the facts. As the saying goes: “It’s not polite to ask a lady her age, but you can read her tweeted poundage.”



Ride The Ferris Wheel With A Mannequin Day

Trying to look less hopeless, you bring your mannequin along as your seatmate. Approaching the top of the ride, you both quarrel, and she jumps (but it looks like you pushed her). Luckily, when the mannequin shattered on the ground, it made all bystanders realize they were also with the shell of a person on Valentines Day.



Butter Statue Day

If you’re still wondering why your dairy-farmer aunt gifted you 100 pounds of butter this Christmas, this holiday gives you a reason to use it. Make a butter bust of yourself or your friends. Invite them over to share your recent sculpting talents, and spread the love.

*actual holiday

AUDIOPHILES

Songs in the Key of Love
and Existential Terror

Exploring the Emotional Spectrum this Valentine’s Day

BY PATRICK KLACZA

Love



JONATHAN RICHMAN - “MY BABY LOVE LOVE LOVES ME”
NOT SO MUCH TO BE LOVED AS TO LOVE (2004)

I adore Richman’s work with the Modern Lovers, but it’s his solo music that I abuse. He is supremely powerful on an acoustic guitar, and on this track drummer Tommy Larkins swings the 2s and 4s giving Richman’s rhythm that extra swag-ger. With this cut, he gleefully sings the praises of a special woman, that woman who loves him. If he wrote it for me, I’d Love Love Love him extra hard on Valentine’s Day.



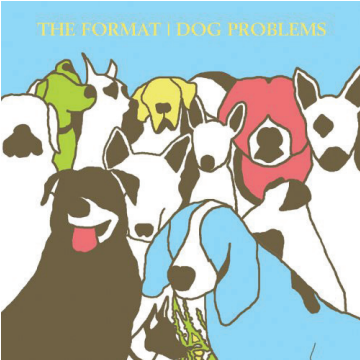
THE RONETTES - “BABY, I LOVE YOU”
PRESENTING THE FABULOUS RONETTES FEATURING VERONICA (1964)

How to feel about Phil Spector, the mad genius cum convicted murderer? Let us set aside cur-vent so that we might fully appreciate Spector’s trademark Wall of Sound, a sonic phenomenon in full effect here. Backed by sleigh bells, tambourines, handclaps, and strings, head Ronette (and Spec-tor’s ex-wife) Ronnie Bennett belts lasciviously and with the nuance of a truck. This is a love song at full volume, a proclamation and a clas-sic. Spector reproduced it with the Ramones in 1980, but their version pales in comparison. It seems that he lost that lovin’ feelin’ in the early sixties.



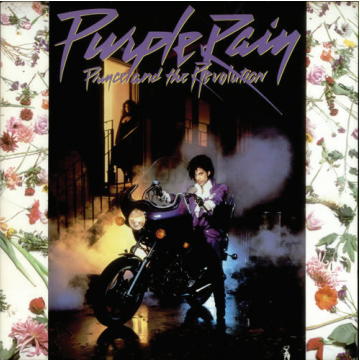
STEVIE WONDER - “KNOCKS ME OFF MY FEET”
SONGS IN THE KEY OF LIFE (1976)

Between 1972 and 1976 Wonder hit a streak of such staggering brilliance it’s hard to believe it was real. He could’ve written a song about pretty much anything — shoes, turtles, bananas — and it would’ve been great. So when he turned his atten-tion to love, of course he triumphed. “I don’t want to bore you with it,” he sings, “but I love you, I love you, I love you.” Oh Stevie, of course she loves you, man! Now go record “Sir Duke.”



THE FORMAT - “INCHES AND FALLING”
DOG PROBLEMS (2006)

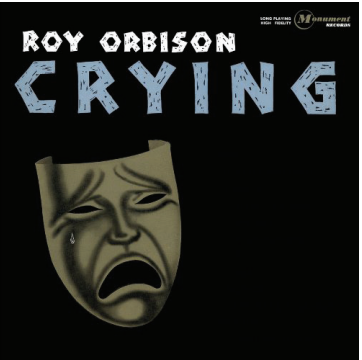
Before fun.’s hit “We Are Young,” Nate Ruess sang for the Format, a vastly superior indie -pop band. “Inches and Falling” is the pen-ultimate track from their swan song, Dog Problems (2006). It’s got trumpets, a carnival atmosphere, and is that a tuba I hear? Plus the lyric, “I love love. I love being in love.” It’s certainly about love — and yes, it’s fun (hyuk-hyuk) — but that’s not necessarily a good thing. This song’s like the couple who won’t stop kissing and whispering to each other. Roll your eyes, but don’t you dare dismiss the Format. At least not before you give “Oceans” a chance!



PRINCE - “TAKE ME WITH U”
PURPLE RAIN (1984)

The Artist may be best known for funky carnal workouts, but he’s got a tender side too. In “Purple Rain,” he takes Apollonia for a ride on his purple motorcycle, they picnic beside a lake, smooch a little ... and guess what song’s playing? That’s right. On the night I met my girl-friend, I hijacked the deejay’s iPod and put this on. Our first dance! But be warned: if you come to my party and hijack the iPod, I’ll bounce you.

Existential Terror



ROY ORBISON - “CRYING”
CRYING (1962)

I’m sure there were sad men before Roy Orbison, but he was the first to commit his sadness to tape and look cool doing it. On “Crying,” he ex-plores his three-octave vocal range to maximum effect. The song starts innocently enough. “I was alright for awhile,” he sings. “I could smile for awhile.” But then the violins start up and Orbison hits some unthinkable high notes — notes that sound a lot like, well, crying — and only then can we begin to comprehend the depth of his sadness.



DUSTY SPRINGFIELD - “YOU DON’T HAVE TO SAY YOU LOVE ME”
YOU DON’T HAVE TO SAY YOU LOVE ME (1966)

Dear Dusty,

On behalf of good men around the world, I’m sorry. Some jerk did you wrong and walked out on you. You had every right to sing about it, but now you want him back?! I don’t get that. You deserve better! The way you modulate during the chorus: so effortless, so powerful. I guess what I’m asking is, will you go out with me? You don’t even have to say you love me.



RYAN ADAMS - “LA CIENEGA JUST SMILED”
GOLD (2001)

Adams has made a career on the strength of his forlorn songs. And none is more forlorn than “La Cienega,” a quiet, shuffling number — and the best on his album Gold (2001). His loneliness is two-headed. “Feels so good,” he sings, “but damn it makes me hurt.” We’ve all been there, alone and just wallow-ing in it, comforted by the pit we’ve dug ourselves. Most of us, however, don’t write such beautiful songs in said pit. Fun fact: Adams married Mandy Moore in 2009. Would he agree that missing someone is like a craving, a craving for “Candy?”



CAMERA OBSCURA - “JAMES”
MY MAUDLIN CAREER (2009)

I want to give Tracyanne Campbell a hug. Four albums with Camera Obscura and she still hasn’t found much to smile about. This time around, some punk named James is to blame. “He hopes that we can still be friends.” What a line!... and what a lie. “James” is the tale of lovers moving apart and of the pain that comes with it. Tracyanne asserts, “I’ll be fine by June,” but do you believe her? Do we ever fully get over our lost loves? And what to make of guitars fading to silence?



ANTONY AND THE JOHNSONS - “HOPE THERE’S SOMEONE”
I AM A BIRD NOW (2005)

There’s loneliness brought on by a bad break up, and then there’s a more desperate form of loneli-ness — existential loneliness, the interminable want for human connection. Antony’s “Hope There’s Someone” is the saddest and loneli-est song on this mix. Amidst frail piano chords, Antony wields his otherworldly voice to meditate on death and elusive love. The final two minutes are cacophonous, glorious, bleak, and uplifting — an all-en-compassing musical expression.

INTERVIEW



The Commercial Non-Profit

Alderman Exhibitions Puts Artists and Viewers First

BY HOLLY BRESNAHAN

Alderman Exhibitions is at full capacity. With no more space on the gallery floor, a spillover of guests trails down the gallery's white wooden steps. The space is dark and silent, save a single candle used to illuminate a book being read aloud to the room.

"After I am finished, I dig out the eyes, cut off the nose, the tongue, I break the fingers, legs, arms, and lastly, the gut. I set the body aside to cool down," reads a voice, rendered anonymous in the dark. The text circulates the room, passed from one person to the next. "Did he want me to forgive him or ease his well-deserved punishment? I imagine him in various stages of life and in ordinary situations. Then I cover him in salt, wrap him in rags, drain the fat and press him, gradually and carefully, to avoid breaking any bones, extracting all blood left in the meat."

This reading presages the exhibition "Night of the World" by artist Irena Knezevic. Her work is born from a translation of "Jedenje Bogova," the diary of an officer at the Jasenovac concentration camp in Croatia, where the artist's grandmother was held. Unfathomable cruelties — cannibalism, the murdering of children for sport — are recounted with a hypnotic eloquence both petrifying and eerily alluring.

The reading lasts nearly an hour. Afterward the lights are turned on and Knezevic's minimal works are illuminated with a new significance. A curious crowd forms around the central installation "Table." The work consists of a sleek glass and metal enclosure, its base is lined with a translation of the text read aloud moments ago. The words are concealed beneath a layer of silver scratch-off paint, slowly rubbed away by a massive yellow boa constrictor as it slithers back and forth inside the case.

Inventive programming events like this have distinguished Alderman Exhibitions,

recently established by 32-year-old Ellen Alderman, from other galleries in Chicago's West Loop. Program Director at the Graham Foundation, the Chicago-based non-profit specializing in architecture and the fine arts, Alderman has integrated principles acquired through her non-profit role into the structure of her for-profit gallery, proving that traditional art world boundaries are anything but fixed.

Alderman discusses the dichotomy between her two positions with a fervid inquisitiveness. Citing equivalencies and disparities discernable only through hands-on exposure, it's clear that Alderman is both curious and cognizant of her unique position.

Alderman has integrated principles acquired through her non-profit role into the structure of her for-profit gallery, proving that traditional art world boundaries are anything but fixed

But despite their innumerable differences, the operational congruities between the Graham Foundation and her gallery seem to interest Alderman the most.

In a recent interview with F News magazine Alderman explained, "When I started the gallery I honestly didn't think much about the business side. I never wanted to

'sell' art," she explains. "But really, I talk to people in exactly the same way that I do at the Graham. In both cases, you're selling, in a way, all the time. Your goal is to help the audience understand the work, to make it interesting. In that way there's always a level of performance. The outcome is different, but the process is astoundingly similar."

In many ways, Alderman characterizes her two roles as symbiotic. The Graham Foundation, with its cultivated cultural programming and global reach, requires that Alderman maintain an awareness of broader international trends in art and design. She draws on this knowledge in preparation of her own events and exhibitions.

The obvious division between for-profit and non-profit arts organizations rests on the treatment of capital, but Alderman's decision to open her own gallery had little to do with making money (for herself at least). Since devoting herself to a career in the arts, she made it her goal to start a project of her own — envisioning herself as head of a non-profit organization focused on local and emerging artists. When she eventually set out on her independent venture, she slowly realized that the non-profit route wasn't the most advantageous.

"Speaking to other artists, I learned that the best way to help emerging talent is to support the artists directly," she explains. "Artists, especially younger ones, need money to keep working. In a gallery setting, I could help further an understanding of the artists work and still write them a check. I felt this model allowed me to play a more supportive role. I always joke that the gallery is commercial but non-profit-y," she says. In reality, her assertion offers a fairly precise definition of the gallery and its operations. The emphasis placed on inclusive, educational events sets the gallery apart from its for-profit counterparts."

Alderman's insistence on public pro-

gramming reiterates the parallels between her two careers. The Graham Foundation is renowned for its theoretical and often experimental public programming. The Institution's consistent schedule of lectures and rotating roster of exhibitions often overshadow its fundamental but less public mission as a grant writing institution.

Although incredibly time consuming, Alderman is committed to the gallery's programming and finds the impact of the events most rewarding. "Artist Readings" like Knezevic's are Alderman's favorite events. She argues that the readings are not only beneficial to the viewer, but serve as a form of critique for the artist as well.

"Often when people describe a work of art they say, 'This looks like this,' or 'This reminds me of this.' When people have text to discuss in relation to the work, they are able to move beyond simple visual references," she explains. This broadened dialogue allows the artist to gain new perspectives on their work and theories. "For the artists, the discussion is like an oblique angle, allowing them to indirectly bounce around new ideas about their work."

Such multi-sensory programming at Alderman Exhibitions has reaped unforeseen benefits. In this time when the most savvy of entrepreneurs have tossed out their playbooks, Ellen has embraced a winning marketing strategy — a method to focus and perhaps assuage today's information-bombarded, often harried patron. Piquing multiple modalities to connect and then reconnect the artist and viewer in a single experience leads to deeper appreciation and better yet sales. A practice of tacitly leveraging the correlation between time spent with an artist's work and purchase distinguishes Alderman's vocation. Both commercial and "non-profit-y," Alderman Exhibitions exercises a model where everyone wins — artist, patron and gallery alike.

GUIDE

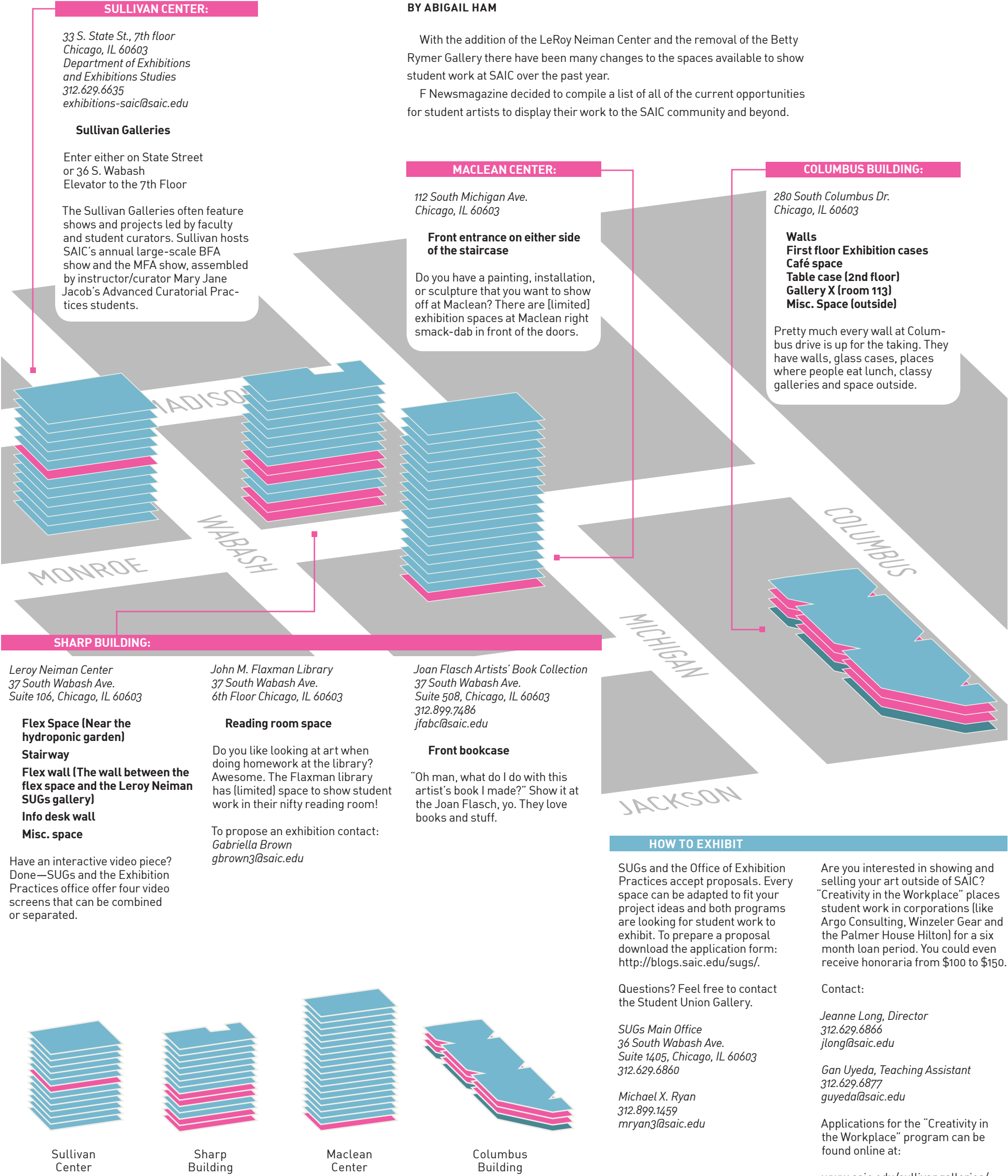
Where to Show Your Work

Hallways, Galleries, Stairwells and More at SAIC

BY ABIGAIL HAM

With the addition of the LeRoy Neiman Center and the removal of the Betty Rymer Gallery there have been many changes to the spaces available to show student work at SAIC over the past year.

F Newsmagazine decided to compile a list of all of the current opportunities for student artists to display their work to the SAIC community and beyond.



REVIEW



“Nature Parkway,” Leslie Jackson

When Curatorial Concept and Art Collide

“New Work” at the Sullivan Galleries Fails to Cohere

Viewing “Nature Parkway” on the concrete floor of Sullivan creates a new logic for the piece, where the trees become part of the ecosystem of the gallery, rather than an alien presence in the natural landscape.

BY KIM HARTY

What is “New Work?” The curators for the show currently on display at Sullivan Galleries seem to wrangle the vaguest language possible to describe the show: “... a series of conversations about recent work through the integration of art and academics.” Uh, you mean recent and upcoming SAIC grads show some work together? The curators are cognizant that “newness” isn’t exactly a concept for a show, but rather a condition of work that is constantly churned out in art school. In trying to address this conundrum, they speculate what newness might be (a myth? a threshold?), and they ask each artist to do the same, posting their thoughts about newness by the title cards of their work. Unfortunately, their best effort to have a critical dialogue about newness falls short of being revelatory or even engaging. Though the curatorial concept is diluted, the work itself is ambitious and provocative, and as we are painfully aware, made by artists in close proximity to their graduation at SAIC. So what does that mean? “New Work” is a milestone of artwork at SAIC, but takes a hands-off approach in addressing the critical issues that permeate dialogue within the school.

“New Work” features a diverse roster with all manner of media represented and arranged in vignettes meant to conceptually reinforce one another. It is particularly satisfying to see Leslie Jackson’s installation “Nature Parkway” in the Sullivan Galleries, after months in its outdoor location in front of the Columbus building. “Nature Parkway,” consists of 12 fake trees, each of their “roots” cast into a concrete block. Viewing “Nature Parkway” on the concrete floor of Sullivan creates a new logic for the piece, where the trees become part of the ecosystem of the gallery, rather than an alien presence in the natural landscape.

A walk down “Nature Parkway” leads to Moe



“A Lab for Apologies and Forgiveness,” Moe Betkis

Betkis’s video installation, “A Lab for Apologies and Forgiveness.” The piece is a makeshift laboratory where viewers can examine soil samples, read and write notes of apology in a black binder, and watch the artist confront a congressional hearing about the environment via video. The juxtaposition of Jackson and Betkis’s work offers an interesting contrast of approaches in addressing ideas of nature. Jackson’s sculptures have a stoic physicality, while Betkis’s piece invites

interaction, and even action on the part of the viewer. The tension between the two highlights a difference in new work coming out of SAIC between engaging in a formal practice versus a social practice.

In a neighboring space, Marla Sanvick’s “She Stretches. She Works At It” includes a series of handmade garment sculptures and accompanying video and poetry. Each garment is a kind of emotional prosthetic that Sanvick performs

REVIEW



“Dismembered Bodies Memorial (Memorial de Cuerpos Desmembrados),” Rodrigo Lara Zendeja

The scene recalls the Shelley poem “Ozymandias,” but the titles point to something even darker, a memorial to bodies that were mutilated, and never recovered — transformed back into earth.



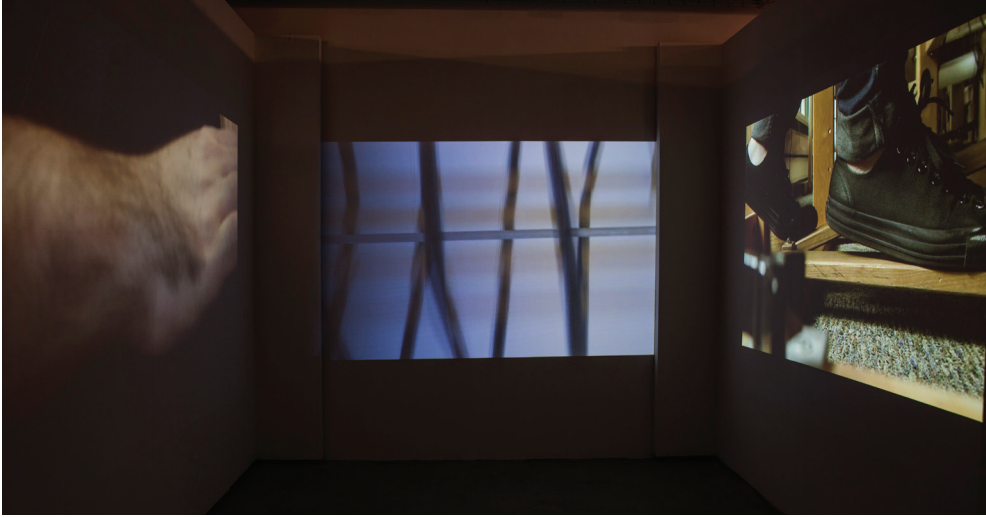
“She Stretches. She Works At It,” Marla Sanvick

cacophony that speaks to issues of repetition, endurance and skill embedded in the craft process.

One of the more stunning works on view is Hai Shin Chunh’s installation consisting of three pieces, each titled “Sacrifice” (2012). A series of saw horses, with objects such as birds, lanterns and houses perched on top and underneath them, stand in line along the wall of the gallery. The sculptures appear to be covered in a frosty jewel-toned substance. Only from reading the title card can you find out that the substance is actually hot glue, which is so thoroughly transformed it is unrecognizable as such. Chung’s pieces have the futuristic feel of a Mathew Barney sculpture without having the coldness that gives Barney’s work the air of scientific authority. The sculptures are uncanny, and the juxtaposition of symbols and textures create a surreal and mysterious effect. “Sacrifice” might have been a more welcome companion to Sanvick’s work, with overlapping interest in touch and poetry.

Another stand-out piece is Rodrigo Lara Zendeja’s large floor installation “Dismembered Bodies Memorial (Memorial de Cuerpos Desmembrados).” Stoneware body parts are scattered across the floor, as if an epic sculpture had crumbled and cracked into pieces. But inside the severed joints one can see that there is actually (clay) flesh and bone and that it is not simply a crumbled sculpture. Additionally, greenery grows from the ends of the severed limbs. The scene recalls the Shelley poem “Ozymandias,” but the titles point to something even darker, a memorial to bodies that were mutilated, and never recovered — transformed back into earth.

The framing of “New Work” as a conversation is undoubtedly an extension of the progressive SAIC philosophy, whose semesters are bookmarked not with grades or any evaluative processes, but generous critiques that tend toward encouraging conversations, and offerings of advice and input. But, at what point do we try to make sense of the dialogue at hand? Since all the work in “New Work” was synthesized from the same academic soup, there are bound to be competing theories, issues and approaches that breed a tension in the art school atmosphere. Addressing the contrasting ideologies at SAIC would be a welcome break from the opened-ended conversation that is fruitful in the halls of art school, but creates a weak broth inside the walls of the gallery.



“Oh Production Forever More Production,” Paul Marabito

with on video. In “She Stretches. She Works At It,” a flesh-colored sleeve sits on a chair next to Sanvick, and lightly caresses her leg. As she turns away a piece of shiny fabric gingerly falls off her leg, echoing a familiar moment one might have with a tenuous date, tolerating an unwelcome advance, or noticing the loss of connection. In the adjacent gallery, Jean Paul Marabito presents a booming three-channel video projection titled “Oh Production Forever More Production.” Each of the

large-scale projections features a cropped view of the denim weaving process, with hands, feet and yarn, each winding, striking and shuttling across the frames. While these two pieces share common ground (both use textiles and performance), their proximity didn’t seem to breed a connection. Sanvick’s poetic and self-conscious videos have a delicate sensibility that beg for an equally sensitive neighbor. Marabito’s installation operates on a different wavelength, creating a labor-intensive

“New Work”
Sullivan Galleries
Until February 1st
Tuesday–Saturday, 11:00 a.m.–6:00 p.m.
saic.edu/sullivangalleries

COMMENTARY

The Rights of Spring

Lament for Winter in Three Parts

BY ALLI BERRY

There is a time each year when the temperatures begin to wax and the death of the winter enfolds us. Different places deal differently with the approach of spring. In Chicago, a sigh of relief resonates across the lakefront, and layers are shed with bold resolve. In the Rocky Mountains, the winter fades and the affair between the skier and the snows begins to disintegrate. The rising temperatures initiate a mourning process — an annual “auf wiedersehen” to the chill and the winter storms. To go on about the seasonal shift would be to beat a beast long dead, but many are starting to speak to the loss of winter on a general, more macro level. This notion of ‘world warming’ (to throw a wrench in an overused phrase) is getting realer. If these balmy winters keep up, we may have to find new uses for our merino wool.

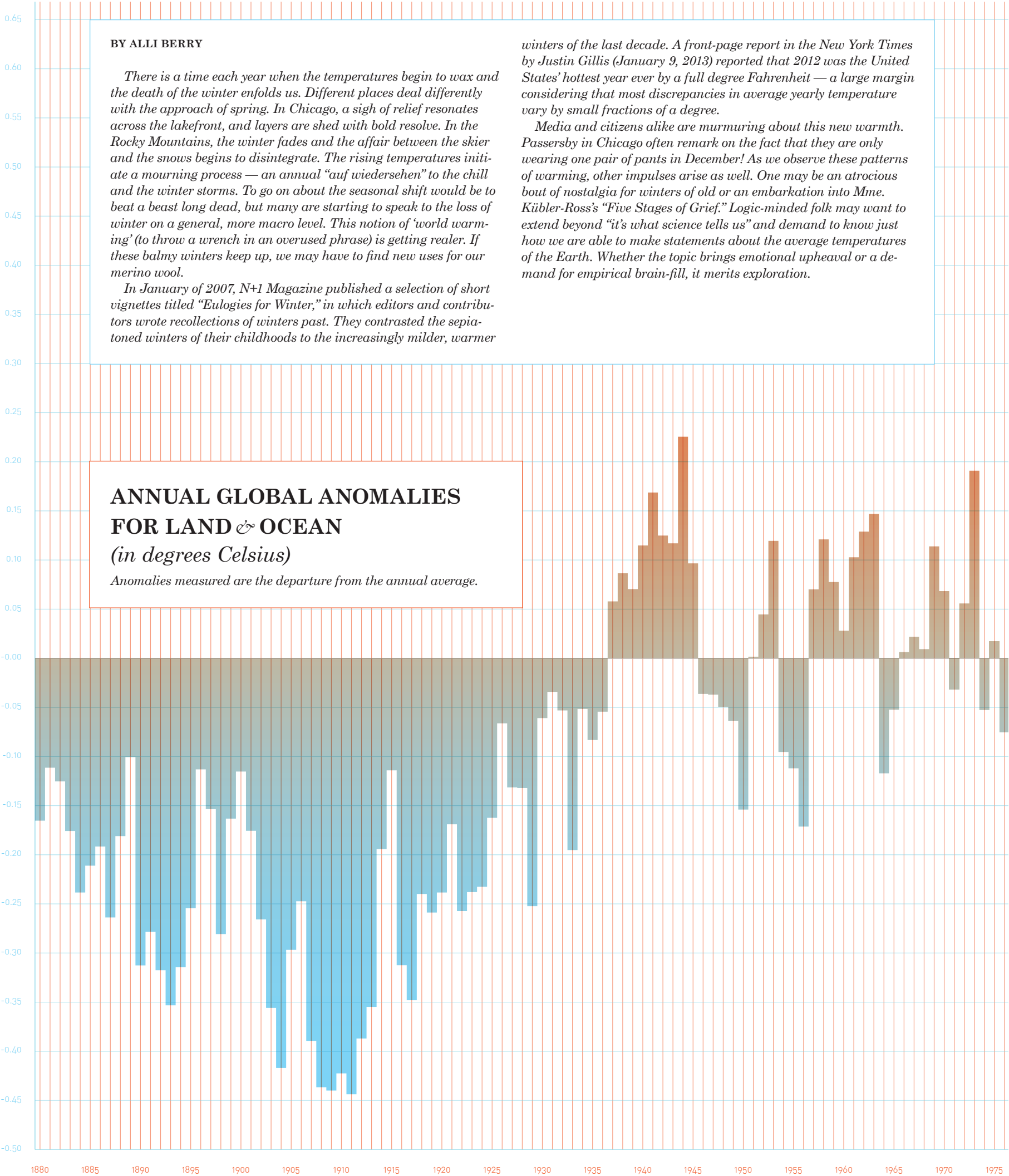
In January of 2007, N+1 Magazine published a selection of short vignettes titled “Eulogies for Winter,” in which editors and contributors wrote recollections of winters past. They contrasted the sepia-toned winters of their childhoods to the increasingly milder, warmer

winters of the last decade. A front-page report in the New York Times by Justin Gillis (January 9, 2013) reported that 2012 was the United States’ hottest year ever by a full degree Fahrenheit — a large margin considering that most discrepancies in average yearly temperature vary by small fractions of a degree.

Media and citizens alike are murmuring about this new warmth. Passersby in Chicago often remark on the fact that they are only wearing one pair of pants in December! As we observe these patterns of warming, other impulses arise as well. One may be an atrocious bout of nostalgia for winters of old or an embarkation into Mme. Kübler-Ross’s “Five Stages of Grief.” Logic-minded folk may want to extend beyond “it’s what science tells us” and demand to know just how we are able to make statements about the average temperatures of the Earth. Whether the topic brings emotional upheaval or a demand for empirical brain-fill, it merits exploration.

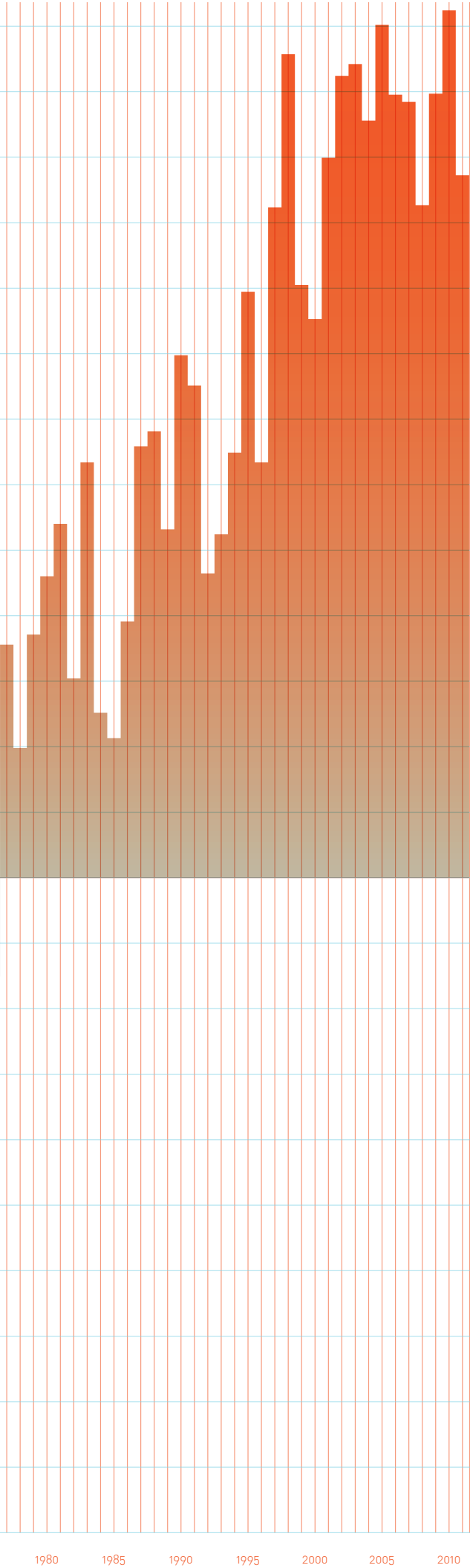
ANNUAL GLOBAL ANOMALIES FOR LAND & OCEAN (in degrees Celsius)

Anomalies measured are the departure from the annual average.



COMMENTARY

Their heads tilt back, eyes closed, goggles on, reveling in the beautifully contrarian feeling that is springtime in the mountains—the chill of the snow around your boots, the breeze at 9,000 feet, and the heat of a newer, more gallant sun.



The Data

According to the Environmental Defense Fund, the World’s annual temperatures are amassed and disseminated by four scientific fixtures including NASA, NOAA (National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration), CRU (Climactic Research Unit), and JMA (Japan Meteorological Agency). NASA and NOAA, based in the US, mutually gather land surface temperatures from the Global Historical Climate Network-Monthly (or to adorn this paragraph with yet another acronym — the GHCN-M).

The GHCN-M gathers temperature data from rural and urban stations worldwide. The data gathered from the GHCN-M (and made formally available as graphs, pdfs, and tabular sets by both NOAA and NASA) does not precede 1880 due to “poor spatial coverage of stations and decreasing data quality prior to that time” (NASA). Finally, these graphs and tabular sets do not record absolute data — they record anomalies. Rather than reporting a temperature of, say, 30 degrees Celsius in January of 1967, this data give us a small increment like ‘-2’ or ‘1’ (also in degrees Celsius) to represent the departure from the average.

This notion of anomaly opens up yet another drawer in the endless statistical apothecary of who’s-gathering-what-number-when, and what-crevasse-is-it-coming-from. But, it turns out the use of anomaly is a more logical and less erratic form of measure, especially in bleak and vertiginous places like the Dolomites or the Sahara. So, to go along with the Italian mountain analogy, the Dolomites may be enjoying a cooler summer than usual, but the average temperature in the town of Falcade (3,822 ft) would wildly differ from the read atop Marmolada (10,968 ft), a nearby peak. These cooler summer temperatures are thus compared to their respective baselines — a collection of more frequently recorded, localized, reference temperatures — resulting in the anomaly value.

So in the end, what we look at when we Google this stuff (“stuff” being the average temperature of the Earth over time) on the Internet is typically a box plot / bar graph hybrid constructed by dear NASA or NOAA from data recorded by the GHCN-M. This box plot / bar graph hybrid entitled Jan-Dec Global Mean Temperature Over Land & Ocean has a very obvious visual trend. It’s reminiscent of seeing a world-population-over-eternity graph, but not quite as terrifying.

The trend is, well, up.

The Last Day
(L’Adoration de la Terre)

The town of Alta, Utah sits 10 miles up Little Cottonwood Canyon. It receives about 500 inches of snowfall annually and it’s an ideal place for all manner of ‘sliding’ sports — skiing being the most predominate.

As spring nears, the creeks begin to roar, and the early morning snow takes on an entirely new texture. After a full season of powder and sugar and crud, the spring turns ski slopes into corn — a fleeting consistency that starts in the lower southeast elevations and moves vertically west, leaving lower pitches mushy and wet. Skiers follow a phototropic path, an invisible band of perfectly temperate snow that finally dissipates altogether.

When it is too warm for corn, the roads fill with slushy muddy water. In the stead of hot chocolate, skiers drink beer and lemonade in lawn chairs at the base of the lift, wearing only T-shirts. Their heads tilt back, eyes closed, goggles on, reveling in the beautifully contrarian feeling that is springtime in the mountains — the chill of the snow around your boots, the breeze at 9,000 feet, and the heat of a newer, more gallant sun.

Finally, spring arrives and the lifts at Alta come to a halt. In a final, apocalyptic gesture of camaraderie and farewell, droves of beer-blushed, costumed skiers traverse to the top of Alf’s High Rustler, one of Alta’s higher, steeper classics. From atop the peak, booze is flung into the air, music chortles from a variety of bring-your-own sources, and most (wearing only bikinis and ski boots) pounce around like lunatics as the sun goes down. Winter has finally ended.

The Departure
From Average
(Le Sacrifice)

If all this discussion of data and Mean Temperature Over Land & Ocean does one thing, it hopefully leads to consideration of winter-time’s significance. With any luck, it’s a reminder that the hot chocolate tasted so good because the snow-fort construction / ensuing snow battle rendered your fingers so useless, you had no choice but to let the snot freeze to your face. And even if frozen snot wasn’t a part of your childhood, there were always cooler temperatures, or larger swells, or migratory birds.

It may not grace any of our lifetimes, but “winter” may gradually change in definition. Though Alta’s Rite of Spring occurs yearly, one can only hope that if winter is to disappear indefinitely, we can all laud its memory in a similarly jubilant fashion. It’s not what Stravinsky intended — no virgins will be sacrificed (though they could be) — but it would make an appropriate theme for a future winter, one day, as it dances itself to death.

“Global Surface Temperature Anomalies.” *National Climatic Data Center: National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.*

“How We Know The Earth Is Warming.” *Environmental Defense Fund.*

“GISS Surface Temperature Analysis (GISTEMP).” *National Aeronautics and Space Administration: Goddard Institute for Space Studies.*

REVIEW

More Than a Horse Dance

More Than a Horse Dance

The Meaning of Gangnam Style

BY SOOJIN LEE

Much has been said about PSY's "Gangnam Style," the viral sensation that has garnered more than a billion views on YouTube alone since its release in July 2012. The South Korean musician himself announced during the recent Dick Clark's New Year's Rockin' Eve event that he was now getting ready for his own "ending of 'Gangnam Style'" because it had become "too popular." But some things need to be clarified before we say goodbye to the catchy tune: What is the song really about, who is PSY, and what impact is the song having?

The Korean lyrics may sound "unintelligible" to some people like Bill O'Reilly of Fox News and his guest psychiatrist Keith Ablow, whose much-ridiculed analysis of the song's popularity last November concluded: "The meaning is that it means nothing" (among other ignorant remarks that have been accused of being racist). Other news media have more properly informed us that the song is more than a funny horse-riding dance — that it satirizes the wealthy district in Seoul called Gangnam. But it seems to me that few of them have really delved into its ironic twists.

Let me first tell you that "Gangnam" itself is too vague a term to locate a place in Seoul. It literally translates as the "south (nam) of river (gang)," that is, the Han River that penetrates the capital city of Korea. The other "half" of the city is Gangbuk, the "north of the river," which used to be the economic and political center of Korea before the south side was developed in the 1970s. As the renowned Korean-culture blogger Jea Kim explains in a post about "Gangnam Style," Gangnam was Korean cabbage and pear fields before it was "designated for commercial and residential development on an unprecedented scale as old Seoul was growing at the speed of light in the '60s." However, when you say "Gangnam" in Korea, it more specifically refers to Gangnam-gu and the adjacent Seocho-gu districts that presently make up the most bustling and commercial area on the south side. Gangnam Station, for example, stands on the meeting border of the two districts and is reported to be the country's busiest subway stop, hosting more than 100,000 travelers every day. Yet still more specifically, the "Gangnam" lifestyle that PSY refers to in his mega-hit

song is associated particularly with Apgujeong-dong and Cheongdam-dong, the most affluent and expensive residential and shopping neighborhoods within Gangnam-gu. Lined with upscale shops, high-end department stores, and fancy restaurants, the latter zone has been compared to Beverly Hills.

In brief, "Gangnam" is too indistinct of a term for cosmopolitan Seoulians to use to refer to the hip Apgujeong-dong/Cheongdam-dong area. That's why my Gangnamese friend chuckled when I referred to a "Gangnam café," when I was supposed to say "a Cheongdam-dong café" during my visit to Seoul last summer. It was just uncool. PSY did not invent the Korean phrase gangnam seutail ("Gangnam style"), and when I typed that phrase on a Korean web search engine to see its usage before the song's release, the results showed that it had been used in advertisements for businesses located outside of Gangnam and Seoul. In advertising texts such as "Gangnam-style wedding dress shop," "Gangnam-style online shopping mall," "Gangnam-style hairstyle," etc., the word "Gangnam" is meant to evoke luxury, beauty, high class and high quality. In Cheongdam-dong, however, many advertising jingles proudly employ "Cheongdam" as their catchword.

Contrary to many journalists' interpretations and assumptions, PSY did not intend to satirize the Gangnamese (or "Korea's 1%," as Huffington Post put it). His intention was rather to poke fun at non-Gangnamese who admire and try to mimic what they deem as the Gangnam lifestyle. "People who are actually from Gangnam never proclaim that they are," PSY told CNN. "It's only the posers and wannabes that put on these airs and say that they are 'Gangnam Style' — so this song is actually poking fun at those kinds of people who are trying so hard to be something that they're not."

This is why in the video he so purposefully but ridiculously dressed in an ostentatious sky-blue tuxedo, boasting all different kinds of swag in the non-luxurious places like a playground, a toilet, and a subway car, instead of a Bentley or a hip nightclub. In both the lyrics and the video, PSY plays a non-Gangnam douchebag hitting on a girl ("hey, sexy lady") by bragging he's "Gangnam-style." If you haven't noticed this from the omnipres-

ent music video (I'm talking to both Korean and non-Korean audiences), it probably has to do with one of the following possible reasons: you only see a funny, fat, self-mocking Asian guy doing the horse dance; you see a bunch of Koreans/Asians doing the horse dance; you don't get PSY's inside joke about "Gangnam"; you don't take pop culture seriously; or the video was just too brilliantly entertaining to take you beyond itself.

Although PSY didn't intend to satirize Gangnam directly, we may still say that the song is satirical in that it indirectly comments on the increasing inequality of wealth in Korean society. And the real irony is in the fact that PSY himself (whose real name is Park Jae-sang) was born and grew up in a well-off family in Gangnam and that his image is far removed from the beauty or nobility associated with "Gangnam" in Korean popular culture.

Before "Gangnam Style" became a worldwide hit (for which PSY won an award from Korea's Ministry of Culture & Tourism), the 35-year-old rapper/songwriter/producer/entertainer was once ousted by Korean media for trying to avoid the country's mandatory military duty and for a marijuana bust. He is also known for writing naughty lyrics, many of which have been banned in Korea, and for performing outrageous acts on stage, such as drinking soju in between songs, parodying female pop stars' sexy performances, and smashing a model of a U.S. tank. One of the characteristics of his stage persona is the tacky, flashy style of outfits, which shows that he is not afraid to make fun of himself as well as others. While he has staged far more subversive performances and written far more provocative songs for the Korean public, in the same interview with CNN he said that with "Gangnam Style," he "just wanted to make something that was purely comedic — something that could make

people laugh like crazy, even in the midst of all this global economic slowdown."

The seemingly uncool, slightly obese, but stylish and sarcastic Gangnam star could have been a perfect person to not only dilute the hyperreal illusions about "Gangnam" but also to humorize (if not criticize) the idolization of the rich and famous that is pervasive in pop culture in capitalist societies. Ironically enough, though, the global popularity of PSY's song has been bringing more money (non-Gangnamers' money) to the Gangnam district. According to an online reservation company in Korea, restaurant reservation rates in Gangnam have double compared to those of Gangbuk's in the past few months. And one of Gangnam's department stores reported an increase of 80% in sales to tourists, an increase credited to PSY's overseas success. Last October, in the midst of the "Gangnam Style" sensation, the Gangnam-gu borough inaugurated the "Tourism Promotion Department," designated to establish Gangnam as the center of the already increasing "Korean Wave"-related tourism. Sooner or later we will see what the popularization of "Gangnam" will do to the upscale neighborhoods.

Neither PSY's joke in the song nor the song's impact has been insignificant. The whole "Gangnam Style" sensation has instead been a serious and loud reminder that we live in such a deeply class-conscious and image-conscious world, where looking silly and "different" can actually bring you global recognition, fame and money.

Soojin Lee teaches art history at SAIC. She is coauthoring a book with Maud Lavin and Fang-tze Hsu titled "Lipstick Dreams: Images of Femininities Circulating Among China, South Korea, and the U.S."



1 MOMENT OF EXTENDED BROKENNESS

GLITCH + DIRTY NEW MEDIA — Medium \ Moment / Movement



BY KRISTOFER LENZ

<P3RF
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At first the artists are only four pairs of eyes floating in the darkness. Framed by black hoods and white masks, glowing with a sick and unearthly green. They sit at a long table covered by criss-crossing cables and wires that plug into an array of laptops, mixers, amps

and other devices that defy easy categorization. The room thrums with sound reverberating from a stack of speakers. Crackling static and waves of neon green light projected against a wall-sized screen mark the start of the performance. The artists bend over their controls, their bodies swaying to an esoteric rhythm, a flurry of twisted knobs and keystrokes. As they frenetically adjust and re-adjust, the imagery grows more complex, waves of color crash into each other, rebound and cascade down before rising again. Suddenly everything goes monochrome then becomes a vibrating pulse of tessellating images.

What follows is part Dirty New Media treatise, part apocalyptic auguring and part transmission from distant or future selves. The

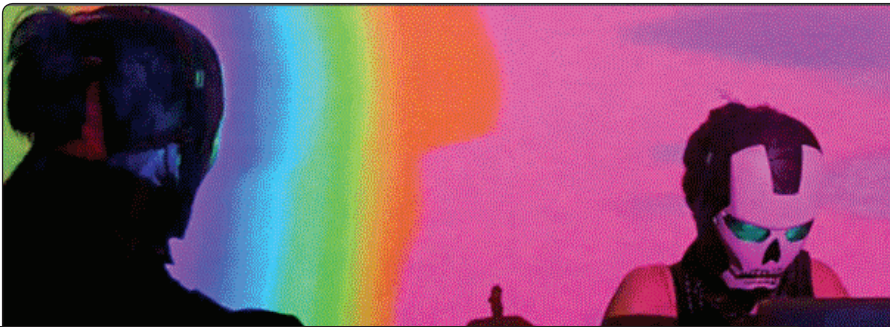
crackling static is interrupted by long, wailing drones and messages distorted into a robotic voice: "Dither Doom is a social tumor," "Is it possible to see a ripple without defining its shape?," "Dither Doom is the frozen leftovers of nineties youth culture." The green pallor remains but is overlaid by cryptic, flashing images: inverted cross, pentagram and waves of loading data. Distorted .gifs appear: a woman performing fellatio, a nude woman bound and crawling on the floor, a person sliding on a "gimp" mask. The sound is a mechanical hum, the music of a car factory two decibels too loud. As the imagery gets more complex the sound follows suit. Squealing high-pitched notes stab at the eardrum and interrupt the mechanical grinding.

The chaos builds as the artists

work furiously, shaping, twisting and amplifying the distorted imagery and sound. The result is a gut-twisting sonic and visual canonade. At times the confluence of text and image is beautiful and thought provoking. At other times it is a graphic and sonic assault that pierces the threshold of perceptual endurance. When it seems like the speakers can't possibly hold, the volume rises again, and again. As abruptly as it all began, the performance comes to a halt. A cry rises from the audience. Part celebration, part exhalation of relief.

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ART



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The term glitch refers to a fault within an electronic system that causes an unexpected result. Computer glitches occur when a program is given a set of instructions outside the parameters it is designed to accommodate. The computer then either shuts down, refuses to operate, or outputs something unusual or unexpected. It is this last outcome that forms the basis of glitch art.

In her work "Glitch Studies Manifesto," the artist and writer Rosa Menkman describes glitch as the subversion of expectations within a system. "The computer is a closed assemblage based on a genealogy of conventions," she writes, "while at the same time the computer is actually a machine that can be bent or used in many different ways." Yet, Glitch art isn't enthusiastically destructive in nature. Instead, glitch artists tend to work alongside or just outside the flow of expected outcomes. As Menkman writes, "The perfect glitch shows how destruction can change into the creation of something original."

Glitch art gained momentum in the 1990s as the proliferation of digital technology in daily life became widespread and those with curiosity and skill in electrical wiring and programming began to tinker with their devices. Slowly the "accidental" output of these altered systems

gained aesthetic cache — the errors could be sometimes beautiful, sometimes profound. Putting a file type into a program that isn't meant to handle it can create the simplest forms of glitch art. For example, with a few simple tweaks to "Preferences" you can upload a photo file into the audio program Audacity, apply audio effects and then export the file. The resulting image will retain many of the elements of the original file but the structure or color will be accentuated or distorted.

Glitches of this type abound for the clever and curious, but for those who devote themselves to the theory and practice of glitch art, it goes much deeper. For some, tweaking and distorting programs is an act of anti-capitalist protest or an anarchic attempt to upset assumptions about systems of thought and expression. Others find a pseudo-spiritual satisfaction in communicating with the "Ghost in the Machine."

Ryan T. Dunn and William Robertson are two Chicago-based glitch artists who operate Tritriangle, a performative media space and one of the hosts of the international glitch festival GLI.TC/H 2112. Robertson has a background studying the systems that define our lives and our universe: psychology and physics. He was drawn to glitch art as a way to systematically interrogate the relationships between people and machines. For him, the manipulation of electronic devices is a way to invoke the "schizophrenic nature" of the device. And since a human is curating the glitch event, a conversation ensues between the impulses of both sub-

jects. One of his video installations, titled "A time and place" involves a TV hung on a wall with a small camera above it. As you step in front you see yourself from the perspective of the camera, but just as quickly the screen flickers and your image is replaced with that of someone who came before (or so you assume). The faster you move, the faster the subject changes, and you get the sense you're trapped in a distorted time warp. Your sense of time and place and even existence is suddenly up for debate.

Ryan T. Dunn considers himself a born tinkerer. For as long as he can remember, he has taken apart and reassembled mechanical objects. One of his recurring pieces, "Instinct Control," consists of live improvisational performance where he manipulates an unmodified reel-to-reel tape player. "[I try to] actively anthropomorphize a machine and access panpsychism," he told me, "The machine itself has an identity, a represented voice. It's me in conversation with the device." When Dunn performs the piece his eyes tend to close and his mind appears transported. He bends and twists in tune with the amplified sound emanating from the reel-to-reel slung over his shoulder. His fingers complete the analog circuitry as if he were playing an inside-out piano. The product of this conversation between man and machine can be alternately soothing or hysterical, while touching on the spectrum of emotion in between.

When asked to define glitch art, Dunn and Robertson were difficult to pin down. "The community of glitch is so broad and inclusive that you can't really single out any one thing," said Robertson. "Glitch is an existing living structure. It has no definable state. It has to do with some kind of system that is experiencing a moment of brokenness. There is something about breaking a system," offered Dunn.

Glitch art is caught in a difficult moment for an art movement. It remains on the boundaries of traditional art practice and theory, but as it gains prominence and practitioners there is an impulse from within and without to begin codifying the principles that define the art. Glitch art comes from a perversely anti-authoritative DIY (Do-It-Yourself) aesthetic that spurs easy categorization. As such, individuals within the scene are often averse to applying any rules to what is or is not glitch art.

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The rise in prominence for glitch and Dirty New Media can be partially attributed to a phenomenon termed "The New Aesthetic" by British technology writer James Bridle. At the 2012 SXSW conference Bridle published a paper and organized a panel that discussed his contention that the products of technological devices have become so popular as to alter the principles of contemporary aesthetics and create a new "way of seeing." For example, a decade ago it was nearly impossible to find photographs of the earth from above. Today, thanks to Google Earth, users can zoom around and get detailed views of nearly every corner of our once foreign and isolated home planet. Aesthetics attributed to some glitch art, like pixelated imagery and distorted photographs, also fall under the umbrella of Bridle's "The New Aesthetic."

When Bridle introduced these concepts he ignited a firestorm of controversy that caught the attention of Nick Briz, SAIC alum, current teacher and GLI.TC/H organizer. In the ideas of "The New Aesthetic" Briz found a current of thought that underlined his own artistic practices. Briz had watched the principles of glitch art slowly gain popularity, mostly online, over the last decade. For Briz, this proliferation of glitch-themed work still carried the cachet of newness. The work was not always insightful or original and most were what he calls "new media one-liners," interesting only because of the illusion of "newness."

In response, Briz created "thenewawesthetic.js." On his website he describes the project as: "an executable-essay, open-source javascript artware-library for quick reproduction of new aesthetic compositions and related new media art tropes." In layman's terms, Briz has created a set of digital tools that makes it easy for anyone with basic programming knowledge to create "glitch" artwork. Some of the executable effects include the ability to pixelize a gif, use out-of-date icons (like the spinning hourglass) and "glitch" a photograph by disrupting its component parts. Essentially, Briz pulled back the curtain of his own art practice, exposing its inner-workings for all to see.

For Briz, demystifying glitch practices wasn't a profoundly political statement. He acknowledges that there are elements of political awareness in his work, but it is not his sole purpose. He is more attuned to the open-source community that touts the freedom of information as its highest dictum. But most importantly he is fighting to stem the flash flood of art from what he calls "unconsidered practices." "If you make something stupid, you can no longer be stupid about it, it shaves off some of the aura," he told the panel at GLI.TC/H 2112. By revealing the techniques behind much of the glitch aesthetic he knew he could be "killing his art," but was something so precious and vulnerable worth saving? Instead he is pushing his community to make something bigger, better.

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ART

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The terms glitch and Dirty New Media are often paired but are not interchangeable. "Dirty New Media is the bastard stepchild of glitch," says SAIC student Shawne Holloway. "The stepchild who smokes pot with the Mayor's daughter before prom." Dirty New Media incorporates many elements of glitch theory and function but also finds precedents in punk culture, DIY aesthetics, pornography and digital piracy.

The idea of "new media art" has existed since the invention of photography. Traces of the artistic experimentation that informed Eadweard Muybridge's zoopraxiscope, Surrealist film experiments, and the video art of the 1980s, all appear in the practices of today's digital new media artists. The term "Dirty New Media" was coined by artist, musician, and Chair of the Film, Video and New Media and Animation (FVNMA) program at SAIC, Jon Cates to describe a specific thrust of new media art focused on the intentional aestheticizing of disjointed images that have been all but eradicated by technological advances. The average prime time television com-

mercial being the perfect counter-example: everything is lit brightly, the scenes cut seamlessly into one another, the music and dialogue is engineered into a flawless and cohesive whole.

Dirty New Media works toward subverting expectations and creating tension between the subject and the aural and visual elements we take for granted. Audio may be disrupted and not synched to imagery. The image itself may be blurry or pixelated. These are not flaws, but intentional disruptions. Pixelated images and distorted sounds can reveal internal structures of meaning that are otherwise invisible. Content-wise Dirty New Media tends to be aggressive, if not overtly pornographic at times.

While the products of glitch art practices are diverse, there is an

expectation that for something to be properly termed "glitch" it must be the result of a subverted, bent or otherwise manipulated technology. While Dirty New Media artists may utilize glitch methods in their practices, this is just one of the tools at their disposal. The formal achievements of Dirty New Media may be equal to those achieved in glitch art, but that isn't the primary focus. The emphasis is instead on emotive content over form. Dirty New Media work tends to aim for something immediate in the emotional register, foregrounding the gut-punch over technical acuity.

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Chicago has a long history of being an international center for new media experimentation and, more recently, glitch art. In the early 1970s the artists Phil Morton, who founded SAIC's Video Data Bank, and UIC's Dan Sandin, inventor of the Sandin Image Processor, an early machine founded on glitch principles, began a close history of collaboration. According to an article on the history of Dirty New Media, written by Joel Kuennamen for ArtSlant, Morton and Sandin wrote a treatise called "Distribution Religion" wherein they laid out their principles for open-source sharing of technology, innovation and theory. This ethos of an open-source community remains an organizing principle around the glitch and Dirty New Media scene in Chicago today. In her writing, Rosa Menkman has referred to Chicago as "[the] 'pivotal axis' of the international glitchscene(s)." She has also coined the term "Chicago School of Glitch."

What the "School" in "Chicago School of Glitch" refers to is open to debate. Yet it is impossible to dismiss the recurring presence of current and former SAIC students and faculty at the forefront of the glitch art and Dirty New Media scenes, both

in Chicago and globally.

This recent groundswell of innovation centered around SAIC can be traced to the programming and institutional support of Jon Cates. Cates has been organizing glitch art and Dirty New Media-related festivals and exhibitions in and around Chicago since the late 1990s. Prominent glitch artists Jon Satrom and Nick Briz were students of Cates' and now both teach in the FVNMA program at SAIC. Satrom and Briz, along with Rosa Menkman are also the organizers of GLI.TC/H one of the premier Glitch "conferences," the third iteration of which occurred in various locations around Chicago from December 6 through 9, 2012.

Under the direction of Cates, SAIC has become a community-based training ground for a diverse roster of new media artists. The strong sense of open-source sharing and collaboration attracts artists from a diverse range of backgrounds — painters, sound artists, designers and more. The low-level of entry, one need only rudimentary programming or design skills to execute simple glitches, belies the furiously expanding ceiling for innovation. The technological tools used in glitch art in a constant state flux, creating an environment where students instructors are always innovating in exciting new ways.

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Upon inception, dither_doom was something like a joke. A finger in the eye of online artists, like those involved in "seapunk" or "Greek New Media," who become involved in micro art movements that go "viral" and are a topic of discussion for a month, a week or a day, then disappear just as quickly.

Ditherdoom was created by a cabal of SAIC undergraduates who prefer a veil of anonymity. Not to protect their identities but instead to reinforce the idea of community-driven innovation. The members felt repelled by the superficial quality of digital art in the aforementioned "seapunk" vein. They decided to create a self-aware movement embracing the paranoia surrounding the "Mayan Apocalypse" that was to occur on December 21, 2012. They began creating work within aesthetic boundaries evoked by the nihilistic mindset of a decadent culture perched on the brink of sudden and irrevocable destruction. They re-appropriated apocalyptic symbols from diverse cultures and combined that with imagery that invoked contemporary overconsumption. They also embraced the idea of an accelerated "internet lifetime" and

made it their raison d'être. If the world was set to end in fiery hailstorm on December 21, 2012, so would their "movement." (Whether the hailstorm manifested itself or not.)

As powerful ideas tend to do, dither doom quickly expanded outside its humble origins. Their work rasped against the exposed nerve of something both primal and contemporary, something intrinsically digital but also timeless. The creators built a tumblr page and put out calls for work from their diverse community of collaborators. Responses came in growing waves and before long digital artists completely removed from the original circle (and located around the world) began contributing. Sub-movements like "glitter doom" and "dither fetish" arose in response. By embracing the evanescent nature of Internet culture, the "joke" began to resemble something authentic. All the while the clock ticked on.

"When was the last time a glitch work made you sad, has it moved anyone to tears, has it elated them beyond belief into a manic state of excitement?" wrote Imam Muradi in his essay, "Glitchbreak." Critics of glitch art and Dirty New Media contend that too much of the art produced is little more than ironic or technological play and experimentation. Muradi was one of the first academics to engage glitch art, so it may be helpful to recast his statement as not a critique, but a call-to-action — an attempt to motivate artists away from "unconsidered practices" and embrace cultural, political and aesthetic interrogation.

The members of dither_doom are among the first

generation of adults raised in a world where technological devices are everywhere and the New Aesthetic represents not a shift, but the status quo. As such they are armed with preternatural skill and willingness to manipulate both electronic systems and complicated media forms. Dither doom may have begun as farce, but as the artists continued pushing their self-ascribed boundaries they found themselves engaged in a portentous critique of consumer culture, digital art practices and even the tenets of glitch art. Their works can disturb, but can also push the viewer toward moments of isolated reflection: What is shocking? What is appealing? Is feeling nothing worse than feeling everything? They've scraped the errata from the bottom of our shared digital world, amplified and twisted its sickness and shoved it back into our faces, crying out: "Look what you've become."

Like all provocateurs, dither_doom must balance questions of whether the heuristic value of their work justifies the use of profane and degrading imagery. But what is incontrovertible is the realization that the new generation of glitch and Dirty New Media artists possess the tools, if not always the willingness, to create art that can move an audience, if not to wonderment then at least to tears.

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COMMENTARY

A
CALL
TO
DIGITAL
ARMS

Suicide of Aaron Swartz Necessitates Civil Disobedience via “Hacktivism”

BY DIANA BUENDÍA

“Information is power,” wrote the late Aaron Swartz in 2008. “But like all power, there are those who want to keep it for themselves.” The precocious and beloved Internet activist was keenly aware of this reality throughout his life, but he did not take it lightly. The statement was a preface to the Guerilla Open Access Manifesto he penned in 2008, an urgent call for the liberation of information that was being “locked up by publishers” behind paywalls and copyright restrictions. “It’s time to come into the light,” he urged, “and, in the grand tradition of civil disobedience, declare our opposition to this private theft of public culture.”

Swartz had closely studied the restrictions placed on the networks of information that were intended by the Internet’s designers to be free and democratizing. In the weeks following his suicide he has been rightfully eulogized as a vital actor in the fight for digital rights and open access. Although it is difficult to claim one specific cause for what brought Swartz to end his own life, friends and family confirm that he was having a hard time dealing with the prospect of spending time in jail — a real possibility considering the 13 felonies he was being accused of after downloading millions of JSTOR documents from MIT’s network. His valiant act of civil disobedience was aggressively countered by the federal government that sought to do more than just reprimand.

Consider the term used in the media to discuss Swartz and the community he belonged to: hacktivists. It is a threatening, sinister word, as Northwestern University philosophy professor Peter Ludlow wrote in the New York Times. But currently, Ludlow went on to explain, there is an effort to redefine hacking as “fundamentally about refusing to be intimidated or cowed into submission by any technology, about understanding the technology and acquiring the power to repurpose it to our individual needs, and for the good of the many.”

So in keeping with this reframing of ‘hacktivist,’ Swartz was truly committed to the mission of protecting user rights in the digital age. His run-in with the law proved that a violation of a website’s terms of service can result in harsh penalties. It’s easy to forget and not pay attention to how our day-to-day activities on the Internet are being regulated — we give away so much when we blindly agree

**“The defiance of
established authority,
religious and secular,
social and political,
as a world-wide
phenomenon may well
one day be accounted
the outstanding event
of the last decade.”**

**— On Civil Disobedience,
Hannah Arendt (1969)**

to websites’ terms of service; terms that change quickly and at the host’s behest. It has been widely reported that prosecutors in the state of Massachusetts were clinging to the 1986 Computer Fraud and Abuse Act (CFAA) to prosecute Swartz — specifically to the section that covers anyone who “knowingly causes the transmission of a program, information, code, or command, and as a result of such conduct, intentionally causes damage without authorization, to a protected compute.” Because Swartz violated JSTOR’s terms of service, that law gave prosecutors the power to garner 13 felony counts against him.

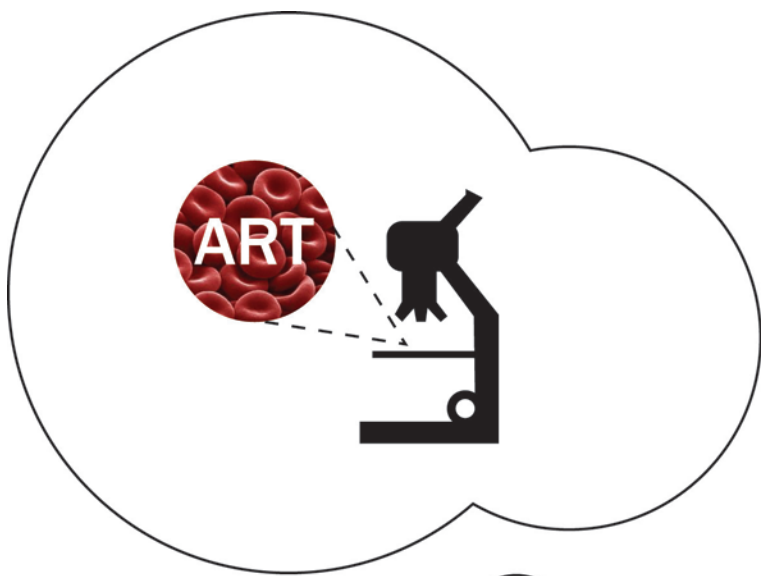
The term an “unauthorized” user is dangerously vague, inviting prosecutors to overreach, and the death of Swartz has injected a sense of urgency to those invested in clarifying murky legalities. The growing community of “hacktivists” that Swartz belonged to have come together to make a revision of the CFAA happen. For example, the Electronic Frontier Foundation (EFF), a San Francisco-based organization founded in 1990 that focuses on fighting bad legisla-

tion that would infringe on user digital rights. Activists at EFF have proposed two specific changes to the CFAA. First, they posted on their website, there needs to be a clarification on what is considered unauthorized access or “without authorization.” The common practice employed by savvy Internet users of changing IP addresses to protect privacy when accessing certain websites can lead them to be charged with a felony — meaning under the current terms of the CFAA it’s easy to send infringers to jail for a non-violent act like changing your IP address. The EFF is also calling for the reduction of penalties that have made it easier for prosecutors to pressure defendants. Representative Zoe Lofgren of California has also advocated for change. Just days after Swartz’s suicide she posted on social media site Reddit a draft of “Aaron’s Law,” essentially a revised version of the CFAA.

Aaron Swartz’s manifesto, his actions and now the reaction to his death are proof that there is a growing concern and awareness about the need for a more open circulation of knowledge and the need to break down paywalls and unnecessary restrictions to documents that were ultimately funded by taxpayer dollars. But the U.S. government has reacted most aggressively when it comes to their own information, as made evident in the very public cases of “hacktivists” Bradley Manning and Chicagoan Jeremy Hammond who, in their own acts of civil disobedience, allegedly provided documents to international whistleblowers at WikiLeaks. Hammond is currently in a metropolitan detention center in Manhattan with no option for bail, Manning is in prison with his attorneys claiming his past conditions of detention amount to torture, and WikiLeaks mastermind Julian Assange is unable to leave the Ecuadorian embassy in London (where he was granted political asylum).

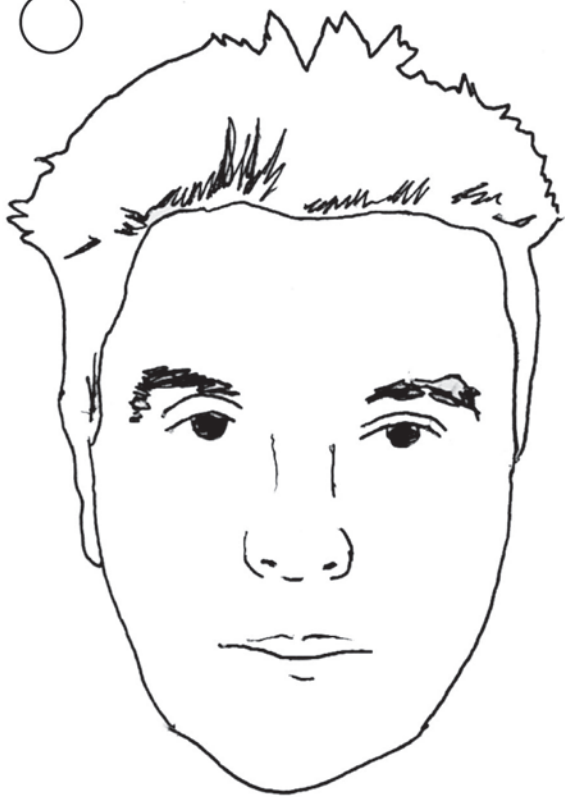
That the government rejects calls for transparency and severely punishes whistleblowers is worrisome, to say the least. The actions of these hacktivists, are punishable by law, yes, in keeping with what defines acts of civil disobedience. But why are they being treated like terrorists? What makes this information so dangerous? Ultimately, it comes down to the circulation of knowledge — of power — that the government is forcefully trying to prevent. Are we all supposed to just sit and watch?

BOOK REVIEW



This Must Be the Book

An Ambitious Guide to the Creative Process from David Byrne



BY CHRISTOPHER KARESKA

David Byrne's 2012 book "How Music Works" could have just as appropriately been titled "How a Lifetime of Art Making Works." David Byrne is best known as the creative force behind the post-punk, new wave group Talking Heads, but has also made a career for himself as a solo musician, visual artist and producer. In "How Music Works," his second book (the first being "Bicycle Diaries"), Byrne draws from experiences in all of his creative outlets — anthropological research, philosophy, and sociology — to present revelatory ways to think about art making.

When discussing early Talking Heads performances, Byrne describes his lyrical point of view as that of an "anthropologist from Mars." The same can be said of his prose style here — somewhere between professorial and conversational, he writes observantly, with an awareness of the cultural modes that largely define art making. The central idea he outlines in the first chapter, is that context predetermines what is made by creative people; that outlets, existing forms, financial and technological opportunities and social structures have more to do with what is made by artists than untethered vision or creative impulse. "The accepted narrative suggests that a classical composer gets a strange look in his or her eye and furiously starts scribbling a fully realized composition that couldn't exist in any other form. ... I believe the path of creation is almost 180° from this model. I believe that we unconsciously and instinctively make work to fit pre-existing formats."

For readers in the SAIC community, Byrne's style of writing will feel familiar. His highly quotable prose is the sort of text a liberal arts course would (and should) have students reading — the insights and creative questions Byrne asks himself and his readers are the real pleasure of "How Music Works." An example being his description of solo work as a sort of self-collaboration. "Don't we always work by editing and structuring the outpouring of our many selves?" asks Byrne. "I suspect that the outside entity — the god, the alien, the source — is part of oneself, and that this kind of creation is about learning how to listen to and collaborate with it."

"How Music Works" will not appeal only to fans of Byrne's music. His autobiographical storytelling is deliberately written in service of larger ideas, and the glamour and romanticized nostalgia for the mythologized post-punk scene built around the iconic NYC venue, CBGB is intentionally downplayed. "[CBGB's] didn't seem in any way special ... it wasn't like a movie, where everyone's constantly hopping from one inspirational moment or exciting place to the next. ... CBGB was a dump in a part of a town that was pretty much ignored."

In Chapter Two, "My Life in Performance," Byrne reveals himself

as a performance art aficionado, detailing the impact that Japanese theater, fashion, and contemporary dance choreography has had on his music. Visually, there haven't been many accidents or coincidences in his career — when Byrne wasn't performing in an oversized Noh-inspired business suit, his seemingly aloof everyman look was calculated towards an artistic goal. During the heyday of punk rock fashion, Byrne decided that his "look would be, like our musical dogma, stripped down, in the sense that I would attempt to have no look at all. I still thought the most subversive thing was to look totally normal." This value of presentation is also true of the book as an object — its beautiful white hardcover and minimalist cover design is the work of writer and publisher Dave Eggers.

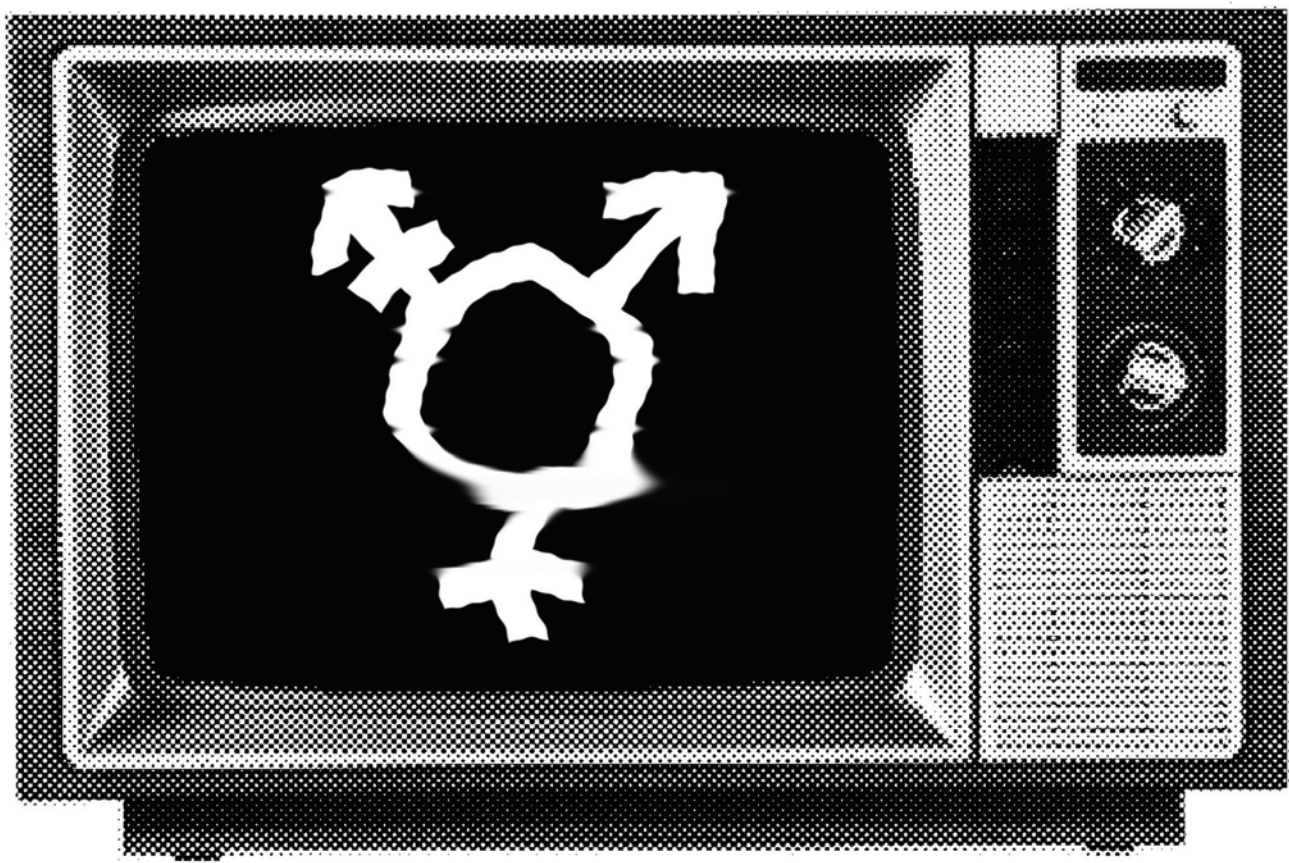
Parts of the book become tedious in their focus on industry information and technicalities. Byrne spends chapters going in depth on the historical progress of recording technology, financing the music making process and studio time, all of which become lessons lacking the personality that drives "How Music Works" at its best. Byrne shows how thorough of a scholar he can be, but the unique perspectives of the book are found elsewhere. Reading about what Byrne thinks drives an artist, how to collaborate, what motivates a performer, or what mobilizes a community to create a "scene" is much more fascinating than the history of analog tape recording or profit-share deals — a more esoteric pursuit that the casual reader will likely gloss over.

Byrne digs deep into neurological and evolutionary explanations for why humans respond to and instinctively create music, but in the final chapter he lands on the idea of music as a way to experience re-enchantment with our world. "Urban myths, goth-inspired fashion shoots, folk tales, horror movies, Japanese anime monsters, experimental music, or the power of pop songs ... We're fascinated and drawn to stuff that science can't explain — the transcendent, the uncanny, things that affect us without words — and music both touches and emanates from those mysteries."

Byrne may be one of the few artists capable of successfully writing a book of such scope. He has more than sufficient art-cred (RISD alum, exhibiting visual artist). He has garnered both critical and popular acclaim for his solo career and with Talking Heads. He has diverse taste in music and first-hand experience with much of the technology that has advanced music between the 1970s and today. Byrne inhabits a sort of goldilocks zone of relevance, experience, and credibility that his readers are fortunate to have the opportunity to learn from. In "How Music Works" this opportunity is not missed.

"How Music Works" by David Byrne is available from McSweeney's, 2012

COMMENTARY



The Media in Transition

Being Trans* In The Public Eye

BY JOSHUA MICHAEL DEMAREE

In October of 2012, Vice President Joe Biden was overheard saying that the fight against trans discrimination would be “the civil rights issue of our time.” Shortly after this, directors Tom Tykwer, Andy and Lana Wachowski released their cinematic adaptation of David Mitchell’s novel, “Cloud Atlas.” The most noted addition by the filmmakers was the movie’s fluid treatment of gender and race by its limited cast. Numerous actors appeared as several characters within the film’s meandering, time-jumping narrative. Actor Hugo Weaving appears as both male and female, white and Asian, in several storylines.

Critics were quick to connect the movie’s fluid treatment of gender as a direct correlation to director Lana Wachowski’s recent “outing” as trans during the movie’s publicity campaign. Lana, along with her brother Andy, had maintained a nearly unprecedented avoidance of public appearances since their phenomenal success with “The Matrix” trilogy. When the time came to promote “Cloud Atlas,” lead actor Tom Hanks was unavailable, and due to the movie’s convoluted narrative structure, the three-person director team decided to release a five-minute trailer with an introduction that also marked the first public appearance of Lana after her transition.

There was no “Yep, I’m Trans!” cover of Time, no tear-infused talk show confessional, just Lana, with her “Run Lola Run”-like pink dreadlocks, promoting her work and not feeling any need to justify her identity or existence. A public outing of one’s sexual identity usually focuses on how long they have known, how difficult it was to keep secret, and what brought about the decision to go public. While most gay and lesbian public figures either out themselves or are (sadly) outed by the gossip mill, Lana’s outing reveals how trans figures do not fit so nicely into this paradigm of “public outing.”

Lana noted in her acceptance speech for the Human Rights Campaign’s 2012 Visibility Award: “[Andy and I] became acutely aware of the preciousness of anonymity — understanding it as a form of virginity, something you only lose once.” Unlike sexual identity, gender identity is not something that can easily be kept private and revealed on a magazine cover. Being trans is about just that: being in a transition, one that does not always have a neat and tidy end.

Gender is as much about inward intuition as it is about outward appearance. This is why public outing as trans usually involves the before-and-after photo segment. Christine Jorgensen, the first American to publically undergo sexual reassignment surgery in Denmark in the 1950s, spent the rest of her life as a public figure fighting the media’s disrespectful questioning regarding her genitalia and the constant comparison to her previous life as a man.

In 2009, Chaz Bono, son of Cher and Sonny Bono, received a similar treatment. A headline from the UK-based Daily Mail read: “Cher’s new ‘son’ Chaz Bono steps out for first time after announcing sex change.” The reality of the situation is that Chaz is Cher’s son, not her “son.” But as a public figure and having had a public outing, the media was inclined to dictate the terms of Chaz’s identity, in ways that it cannot in regards to sexual identity.

Very little had changed in the media’s inability to respectfully handle trans people in the fifty years between Jorgensen and Bono. Moving beyond her previous life was the reason Jorgensen underwent surgery. Her unwilling push into the public eye and her subsequent treatment by the media counteracted this process. However, in part due to figures like Lana and productions like “Cloud Atlas,” the media is itself in transition. One look at the TV Guide reveals an attempt by the media to better handle trans identities.

Television has long been the final refuge for social acceptance by mainstream culture. In the 1970s, writer and producer Norman Lear created a series of television shows, beginning with “All in the Family,” which took a progressive stance towards civil rights as depicted on television. Spin-offs “The Jeffersons” and “Maude” both broke with many perceived social mores regarding the black middle class and feminism, respectively. The success of these series revealed a national comfort with socially progressive identity issues, enough to invite them into the home week after week.

The 1970s also saw the first introduction of recurring gay characters. Police procedural “Barney Miller” introduced Marty Morrison who would appear eight times through the series’ eight seasons. By 1982, the character of Lynn Carson on “All My Children” became the first openly gay character on an American soap opera, a traditionally conservative television

format. What followed was a long line of social normalization through inclusion — the most prevalent period starting with Bravo’s “Queer Eye for the Straight Guy” through Ryan Murphy’s Tyler Perry-ing of homosexuals on television with “Glee” and “The New Normal.”

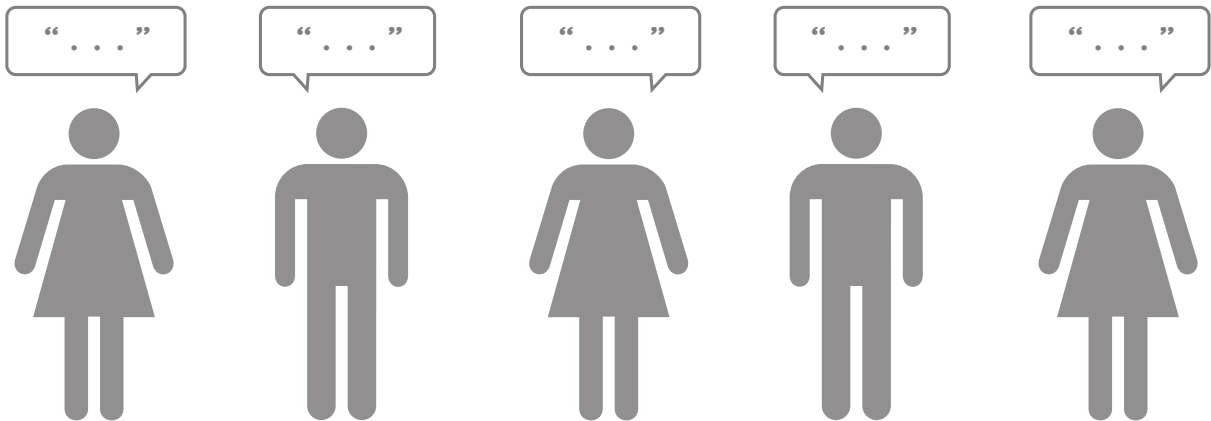
With bisexuality a trope of reality shows and a homosexual storyline almost mandatory on any sitcom, it cannot be denied that television, as part of the media, has previously had trouble incorporating trans characters through a similar normalization that was used for homosexual characters. It was not until 2007’s “Dirty Sexy Money” that the first recurring trans character hit American television. Even today, trans characters are still only used in narrative tropes that hinge on the reveal of their previous identity, or as the butt of jokes (“...it turns out he was a she!”).

The media is only at the very beginning of figuring out how to portray or talk about trans people. “Glee” and “The New Normal” are not afraid to make off-color jokes regarding gays and lesbians, but they do so from a position of satire. Only when normalized and understood can a topic be treated as such, especially within a mass medium like television. “Glee’s” one trans character, Unique (wonderfully played by Alex Newell), is treated more as a cross-dresser — only dressing and identifying as female when it is necessary to other storylines — than a youth undergoing body dysphoria, or the psychological belief that one’s body is inherently flawed. Ryan Murphy’s inability to treat Unique with the same humor and relative nonchalance as his homosexual characters reveals even gay culture’s current failure to normalize a representation of being trans.

Despite headlines that continue to scare-quote someone’s chosen gender or even gay activist Dan Savage’s blatant transphobia (seen in his insistence on using the derogatory term “tranny”), public figures like Lana Wachowski and examples of gender fluidity such as her film “Cloud Atlas” reveal the media’s own transition to better incorporating and handling trans identities. Perhaps, as Vice President Biden suggests, being trans can be the new normal.

**“Trans” is used throughout to include all of the various identities found within the trans community.*

COMMENTARY



The Bathroom Blind Spot

Addressing Gender Inequality in the Unisex Restrooms at SAIC

BY ALEXANDER M. WOLFF

On October 18, 2012, SAIC announced the designation of fourteen “gender-free” restrooms on campus via e-mail. While the announcement elicited a sigh of relief from many members of the SAIC community, the change seemed long overdue, especially considering the heightened attention to discourse on gender constructions at the school. Though the brief e-mail seemed to assure that the school was making a step in a more progressive direction, it failed to state that each of the bathrooms are single-person, meaning that what they are calling “gender-free” bathrooms are merely equivalent to “family” bathrooms throughout the United States. When compared to Canada and many other countries, the U.S. lags behind in its response to issues of gender and equality. Though same-sex unions are recognized in the United Kingdom, Ireland, Germany, France, and Australia, and same-sex marriage is fully recognized in places like Canada, Argentina, Iceland, and Sweden, the U.S. federal government has yet to recognize either. My research made it clear that barely any multi-person, unisex bathrooms exist in the US, while there are hundreds in Europe and a handful in Canada. This fact leads to the question: why are there almost no multi-person, public, unisex bathrooms in the U.S., and why don’t these exist on college campuses, especially at SAIC?

While I was using the unisex bathroom at the MacLean Center, I began thinking about what both single-person, unisex bathrooms and gendered, multi-person bathrooms represent for members of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender (LGBT) community, as well as heterosexual females and males at SAIC. Most unisex bathrooms in the U.S. are single-person, and these bathrooms are designed this way for a reason. This is not a simple oversight in planning and construction; it is a deliberate decision made by various institutions to reinforce the idea that if someone’s self-identified gender transgresses the set boundaries of male or female, it should be kept private, away from the public eye. It would seem that US schools and other institutions relegate transgender students and faculty to unisex bathrooms as a way to circumvent providing them equal rights and actual acknowledgement. It is in many ways similar to the US military policy of Don’t Ask Don’t Tell, in that single-person, unisex bathrooms force individuals to compromise their identities. In addition to this, gendered bathrooms designate that men and women should be kept separate, fueling problematic stereotypes about gender difference and the dangers that different genders pose to one another. This article is not condoning the destruction of single-person, unisex (or “family”) bathrooms, but instead examining the ideology that has denied the formation of multi-person, unisex bathrooms, understanding the problems associated

with having only single-person, unisex bathrooms and detailing the benefits of converting gendered bathrooms into multi-person, unisex bathrooms.

Diagnosing the reasoning behind the installation of only single-person, unisex bathrooms at various sites and college campuses requires an understanding of the institutions’ viewpoints and the desires of the student and faculty body. Supporters of unisex bathrooms often argue that members of the LGBT community, and specifically transgender people, should not be forced to use gendered bathrooms to prevent harassment, the denial of self-identification, and inequality. Having unisex bathrooms liberates transgender individuals to have access to safe, conflict-free bathrooms, instead of having to feel constant unease and the potential for harassment or assault in traditionally sexed bathrooms. Many detractors from the idea of unisex bathrooms, as detailed in Olga Gershenson’s “The Restroom Revolution,” cite structural problems with the architecture of older buildings, a corruption of conservative values about public displays of gender, and close-minded ideas that individuals with complicated gender identities should be forced to use either male or female bathrooms based on their genitals. Even more complicated are the objections to multi-person, unisex bathrooms, which often include imagined threats that different genders would pose to each other (i.e. men against women); the idea that gender should always be expressed privately if it strays from the norm of male or female; and the problematic designation that single-person, unisex bathrooms are truly “gender-free.”

It is not surprising that SAIC’s venture into unisex bathrooms only included single-person, “family” rooms, as this is standard with almost every institution that installs a unisex bathroom. According to the City of Chicago Building Code 18-11-1109.2.1.2, every unisex bathroom “shall include only one water closet and only one lavatory,” meaning that buildings are only allowed to create single-person unisex bathrooms. What is truly surprising and indicative of SAIC’s logic is that they designated them as “gender-free.” The e-mail presumptuously implies that gender doesn’t exist in these spaces, which would be very problematic considering the fact that outside these fourteen sanctuaries of ‘genderlessness,’ issues of gender are negotiated in virtually every other hallway, bathroom and classroom in the world. Single-person, unisex bathrooms are often seen as the fix-all cure to issues of gender among communities of people sharing spaces. However, making the only multi-person bathrooms male and female and creating “gender-free” bathrooms that are strictly single-person seems to send the wrong message. Instead of conveying that our school is willing to recognize differences among individuals and treat each person with equality, it states that those who are different should be placed in a single-person room where

it doesn’t matter who they are for the few minutes that they urinate.

Though popular media, family hierarchies and tradition construct many aspects of perceived gender differences (such as strength, emotionality, and preferences), gender is a very real issue that is negotiated constantly in everyday interactions. Considering single-person, unisex bathrooms to be a place of complete gender neutrality provides the university with a willful blind spot for gender, denying an engagement with already existing discussions of gender at the school and elsewhere. Ironically, it claims gender to be a non-issue for the university, since transgressing individuals are being placed in anonymous private bathrooms instead of being given the option to be seen as equals to those who are safely able to use male or female bathrooms. It

“Why are there almost no multi-person, public, unisex bathrooms in the U.S., and why don’t these exist on college campuses, especially at SAIC?”

seems that most of the opposition to these types of bathrooms stems from those who are afraid to view the “other” (whether it be the transgender, male, or female body) in a space that was previously gender-segregated. Throughout the history of civil rights in the US, desegregation has been used to provide people with equality and fairness. Multi-person, unisex bathrooms would slowly dismantle the walls of prejudice and inequality that are only reinforced by single-person, unisex bathrooms in conjunction with gender-segregated bathrooms.

SAIC Director of Multicultural Affairs James E. Britt informed me that the school had “been working on a number of initiatives regarding our trans community” and that “the announcement regarding the restrooms was just an initial step,” implying that the school is willing to consider alternatives to the current configuration in the future.

In addition to providing equal rights, for the LGBT community at the school, these multi-person, unisex bathrooms could greatly benefit the entire school community in multiple ways. One crucial point is the increased accessibility of bathrooms to those who need to access them. Currently, the groundbreaking website safe2pee.org, a site that lists safe, unisex bathrooms in any given city, only lists around seventeen single-person, gender-neutral bathrooms in the downtown loop, which is quite small considering the number of gendered bathrooms that exist in the area.

Even more scattered are the unisex bathrooms at SAIC. For example, there is only one “gender-free” bathroom on the

first floor of the MacLean Center, while each of the other 14 floors contain both a male and female bathroom. Though other school-owned buildings like the Sharp Building fare better (four unisex bathrooms on various floors), one can only imagine how much more convenient it would be for male, female and transgender students and faculty members to more readily access bathroom facilities. Another key issue is that having increased foot-traffic within each bathroom would cut down on the amount of incidences of harassment and violence. The bathrooms would deconstruct objections that people are using the “wrong” restroom, providing an opportunity to foster comfort and acceptance between differently gendered individuals. The conversion of gender-segregated bathrooms to multi-person, unisex bathrooms would not be a chal-

lenging task at all; it would merely consist of removing the already sparse urinals from the men’s restrooms and placing dividers with toilets in their places. This would economically cut down on the resources used to build new, single-person, unisex bathrooms, which have not existed in many buildings until recent times.

It would seem that though many institutional objections come from preconceived notions about how bathrooms should be gender-segregated and other problems with architectural codes. However, it can be theorized that many arguments about gender in relation to bathrooms could be resolved by simply reassigning gender-segregated bathrooms as multi-person, unisex. Not only would this solve existing problems, it would take a step towards a greater familiarity and acceptance of different genders and provide equality and a greater sense of public identity for often-marginalized members of the LGBT community. While multi-person, unisex bathrooms have worked very successfully in Europe, Canada, and elsewhere, the U.S. at large still seems too close-minded and prejudiced, as it is with other issues of gender and sexuality (such its response to gay marriage and the still-developing acknowledgement of transgender equality), to accept wide-scale changes such as multi-person, unisex bathrooms. Though the US needs to become more realistic about providing equality to all people, universities such as SAIC are the perfect testing grounds for ideas that could possibly bring about actual change and acceptance of others for their own identities.

SCHOOL NEWS



Guess That Plum Gettin’ Eaten

SAIC Alters Menu and Meal Plan Guidelines

BY NATASHA VEMULKONDA

The \$5 million dollar donation from SAIC alumnus Leroy Neiman gave the school an opportunity, beginning May 2012, to present students with a nutritional security net that never existed before: a meal plan. While the idea shaved off some parental uneasiness over sending kids to school without a lunch, the fact that the plan was mandatory and the limited variety of food offered had some SAIC students feeling limited rather than at an advantage.

“[The Meal Plan] has required an extra step of three-times-daily planning in order to eat around a schedule that is not my own,” wrote Spring 2013 BFAW candidate Clare O’Conner in a letter she sent to Residence Life requesting the additional \$1000 per semester fee to not be required. Instead, she suggested it be offered as an option available for those students who wished to opt in. Her main concern, and of other upperclassmen, was how unused funds would roll over from the fall semester into the Spring. And judging by the amount remaining in O’Conner’s ARTICash account, she realized there would be a substantial balance by the time she graduated.

Residence Life administrators opted for a mandatory meal plan because of research and conversations with students and parents, regarding students’ unhealthy eating habits. “What this information told us is that many students were struggling at SAIC because they were not eating well, were eating infrequently, and were eating food that was not going to keep them healthy,” explained Patrick Spence,

Assistant Dean of Student Affairs. “As a result, we felt the meal plan needed to be part of the residence hall experience.”

In order to address concerns over the leftover balance, and because the new meal plan is in test mode, Residence Life has announced that for this year only, at the end of the spring semester, the money leftover in a student’s meal plan account will first go toward paying any outstanding balances he or she may have within their school account. Any money left over after that will then be refunded to the student.

“We never intended to have students with unused money,” said Spence. “More than half of the students had no money or just a little amount left over after the past fall semester. But for half of the students who did have money left, I definitely understand their concern.”

Throughout the Fall semester and Winter interim, Residence Life also reached out to meet with students, like O’Conner and her roommate Christina Seo, in order to discuss ways to improve service at three of the dining halls. O’Conner and Seo have both lived in the residence halls for three and a half years and would never think to live anywhere else. They expressed their fondness for the “city campus,” especially because of the endless options for organic and vegetarian food surrounding the dorms. They and others involved brought up complaints about the lack of variety Food for Thought has provided the school with, especially in vegan and vegetarian options.

“There aren’t very many healthy choices for vegetarians like myself,” said freshman Duangchai Swani. “Last semester I was eating here

regularly, but I think \$1,000 is way too much for one semester.”

In order to figure out a budget, SAIC partnered with Food for Thought and mapped out a plan based on average weekly costs of meals and studies of how other art schools around the country were implementing a meal plan.

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“Starting this spring, we will be providing more variety. Students in the past have had trouble figuring out what their options are,” Spence said. “There will be signs clarifying new gluten-free, organic, vegetarian and vegan options available that day.”

Other than more robust diet variations, more additions to the Neiman Center’s menu include sushi options to be available not only on Mondays, but Tuesday and Thursday as well, and a vegan California roll option will be included. Rice will be available daily, and new seasonal menu items will be added to the Stack and Flame section of the café.

The Columbus café will also

be changing their menu. Items previously offered at Sonny’s café before it was replaced by Food for Thought — pork lo mein and thai red curry — will be brought back and be available throughout the week. Pad Thai will also be added to the menu.

Spence also added that beginning the first week of February, a Fresh

Bar will be offered at the dining halls. It will include yogurt, granola and fruit in addition to a range of fresh and prepared salads available during lunch and dinner. The heating trays where fries, pizza and prepared hamburgers were being kept in the Neiman Center cafe will be moved towards the back, allowing for the new and healthier options to be highlighted and made more readily available.

“Just as we have an exercise facility in the residence hall and Resident Advisors who plan programs for the community and do rounds of the building to ensure safety,” said Spence, “we view this meal plan as part of the residence hall experience.”

COMMENTARY

Majoring in Marriage

The MRS-degree is Alive and Well at U.S. Colleges

BY SARAH HAMILTON

In July 2012, Amber Estes, a sophomore at the University of Georgia, wrote an article for her school newspaper, Red and Black, titled “How to Find that Perfect Husband in College.” The article is filled with seemingly earnest advice for young women on how to use their time at UGA to net “Mr. Perfect.” She advised loitering around the law school on campus, Instagramming everything, and “staying classy on the first date.” Estes later printed an editorial note in response to the abundance of hate mail she received after the original printing of the article. After explaining that her article was satirical (though hardly worthy of the wit of Jonathan Swift or Voltaire), Estes adds, “this unexpected reaction proves this issue is that much more prevalent. If the subject weren’t a sensitive one, it never would have generated such attention.”

Estes’ original article earned the dubious distinction of being named one of the “50 Worst Columns of 2012” by the Atlantic Wire. Estes, however, is on to something. If her obtuse column was received in all seriousness by her audience and the broader, more unforgiving Internet, then her tag: “Remember girls, the time is now to guarantee your future. Keep your eye on the handsome prize, stay focused and go get that MRS degree,” must have really hit a hard note with readers. Indeed, the MRS degree (pronounced em-ar-ess) is still alive and well in the vernacular of universities and colleges everywhere.

A few months ago, I was mulling over post-graduation options with a friend of mine, and upon voicing my desire to be closer to my family and nurture a personal life that has been neglected during my studies (cooking, reading fiction, sleeping), he remarked, “Geez, I didn’t think you’d be getting a MRS degree.” I stuttered through my defense, but ultimately I left the encounter feeling like I had just failed Feminism 101.

Days later, when I was mulling over this concept of a MRS with some friends of mine, we were trying to define this term. Was it simply a degree in the arts? Poor Art History often takes the brunt of the ‘MRS’ comments, as does Home Economics. Or can it be any degree to which a woman applies herself with the intention of finding a suitable mate? What if you begin with the intention of developing a career for yourself and end up finding a partner? Does your hard earned “A” in English become a MRS degree?

The Oxford English dictionary defines the “MRS degree” as a humorous term “used to refer to the marriage or engagement of a woman pursuing a higher education at a college or university: many coeds get their MRS degree before graduation.” The term dates from the 1940s and is explicitly ascribed to heterosexual women. This might be a term one would expect to hear in, say, a Mad Men-esque period drama, but the term seems to have made a resurgence, and is employed today with a general awareness of its meaning. Moreover, it seems to have gained a new foothold in academic culture. In October of last year, a post on Jezebel.com announced that a reality TV company was casting for a show in which graduate students try to meet a potential spouse during their studies. Of course, a frantic conversation ensued. One commenter pointed out that dating/marrying another graduate student seemed financially reckless, while another pointed out that the sequel to the show would likely be about the same women competing for low-paying adjunct positions. Female students at Columbia University’s Business School made a parody of Beyoncé’s “Single Ladies” video, with lyrics like “Bring a good man home/ cause if you don’t you’re stuck with loans/and in two years they’ll be gone.”

sigh

The resurgence of this term may very well have to do with the tense economic conditions. In 2011, The Economist reported that women equal men in getting an undergraduate college degree, but are less likely

to find themselves in either high-paying jobs or more advanced education programs (particularly PhDs). This factor, combined with burdensome student loans, increased competition in the workplace, and increasing demands that come with either PhD work or tenure-track positions, makes the MRS look like a very attractive option for women. From one perspective, fewer women in the workplace, especially in higher paying positions, could correct the economic downturn. The reason for the resurgence of the MRS may be one that supports the frustrations of both sexes, and for it to take a hold on American culture, it has to have a certain amount of resonance. The Economist article concluded that these workplace and education disparities are not uniform across the world, and that “the choices [to be in the work place, or to pursue more competitive educations] have little to do with ability and may well be influenced by ingrained stereotypes.”

A study by Yale University of its own institutional gender gap revealed that, while completion of undergraduate degrees is equal among men and women, admission to, and completion of, PhD programs is lopsided in favor of men. More disconcerting is the revelation that only 29% of Yale’s tenured faculty are women, which supports the theory that the higher you move in academia, the more incredible the gender gap becomes. Overall in the US, the number of women achieving the status of PhD has increased, and yet there remains a huge gender gap amongst tenured faculty nationwide. An article in USA Today written by Jeanne Zaino, a professor of political science at Iona College, identifies the tenure system as being detrimental if not fatal to women’s academic careers. “Women who choose to be professors and want to lead our universities into the future should not have to choose between tenure and family,” says Zaino. With the average age of a graduating PhD student at 34, prime tenure years fall in one’s mid-to-late 30s — prime child-bearing years. For many women, they feel they have to choose between having an academic career and having a family, a decision that male academics are largely excluded from. While many universities and colleges are making minor adjustments to their tenure system, it will take decades, if not a century, to cause the sea change necessary to affect academic and social change.

For students at SAIC, these might all seem like issues far removed from the pressing concerns of term projects and overwhelming reading assignments, but the specter of the MRS degree looms large over art schools. A study, titled “What’s it Worth? The Economic Value of College Majors,” assembled by the Georgetown University Center on Education and the Work Force, re-established the tired cliché that Fine and Studio Arts majors are among the most chronically underpaid degree-holders in the U.S. — the median income for studio and fine arts majors hovers between \$40,000 and \$45,000 per year, with women forming a significant majority of the student population (between 63-77%, depending on the program). Female fine arts students then become the perfect butt of the MRS degree joke — how else does one pay off those significant student loans, and live an aesthetically pleasing life? It behooves the student body then to hold no student in contempt for his or her attendance, regardless of a stated (or presumed) motive for being there. Similarly, it behooves the administration of the school to continue to uphold its oath to equal employment opportunities, and ensure that a gender balance remains among full-time faculty. An explicitly stated parental leave policy wouldn’t kill anyone, either.

Back to the MRS degree — a term that so magnificently pulls the rug out from under any woman who chooses both education and domesticity, while hinting to others that it’s an “either/or” situation. It implies that female intellectuals aren’t entitled to certain personal fulfillments, and that women, as mothers or spouses, are not entitled to a (legitimate) education. Banish it from the lexicon, please.



STUDENT PROFILE



The Poet Eroticist

The Life and Work of SAIC's Bradshaw Stanley

STUDENT PROFILE

BY LINDSEY AUTEN

Bradshaw Stanley believes that movement should be a basic human right.

“It’s outrageous to me that we should even pay a bus fare,” he says via Skype as his motions blur across the screen. The flow of (body) language and the click of passing words stir a conversation about what he calls an “erotics” of writing.

By erotics, Stanley is referring to the poetic relationships between two things: two bodies, two words, bodies and words, a train and a body, a journey and a destination, movement and language, even medicine and writing, in both of which Stanley has been immersed as of late.

After earning a degree in mathematics and literature at the University of Houston, 23-year-old Stanley studied to become a physician at Baylor College of Medicine and the University of Chicago’s Pritzker School of Medicine. He began his residency at Rush University Medical Center, but soon after decided to attend SAIC, where he’s currently a second year MFA Writing candidate. What some people might see as polar opposite disciplines — medicine and art — have become affectionately intertwined in his work.

The city of Chicago has a lot to do with Stanley’s creative process, where his poetry and anatomical knowledge reticulate. He often gathers observations from, not always his destinations, but the moments encased in public transportation: on the train, the bus or walks around the city. Within these perceptions, he says that often inhuman relationships, with objects or the object of the body itself, create meaning in human relationships.

“We grow up, and as children, as infants even, we have these relationships but they’re not what we would think of as human,” says Stanley. “There’s the mother’s breast, hands, and things like that, all parts we relate to, which structure our human relationships later on.”

For Stanley, the shaping of these relationships, or eroticisms, often have to do with the ways people move from one place to another. The trajectories affect how people relate to one another and how people seek or project meaning into inhuman matter. This resulting meaning is a strategy one can use and create in a piece, but it isn’t the end goal, according to Stanley.

“People often mistake meaning for the destination rather than the journey,” he says. “It gives life to a weird political culture

in which everything that we find has to have returns, has to have dividends that are positive. I think it’s important to create work and experience work that doesn’t reward you in that way.”

Stanley often jots down thoughts and observations on his iPhone while riding the CTA, strolling around Chicago or even in his steam shower. In “Violator: An Idea of Art,” Stanley writes, “Now standing in/the steam shower I compose/this poem aloud. I sweat/it out.” He wrote his thoughts into the condensation, darted out of the shower and wrote it all down before it lifted away.

“There’s the notion of words connecting with bodies,” says Stanley. “Words don’t just come from outside the body and attack it, but there are words that stick inside of you that you have to furrow out somehow, sweat them out, maybe.”

The historically cliché phrase about sticks and stones breaking bones is turned in on itself in Stanley’s writing, most notably in the performance of his words.

For his MFA exhibition piece this spring, entitled “Bradshaw Stanley is leaving the writing program,” two dancers’ movements will trigger different audio and video clips, some with spoken word components from his writing. As the piece progresses, a relationship between movement and language will be revealed.

“Language has to be performed,” says Stanley. “Performance is the only way that we know it.”

Before different audio/visual narratives are danced into physicality during his forthcoming piece, Stanley emphasizes his interest in choreography—the Greek root “chorea” referring to movement and “graphia” referring to the writing of movement. In his analysis of the term, choreography is a technology of bodily movement that interfaces with bio politics, wherein bodies can be controlled in certain ways, and one of those ways might be writing.

Can writing be performed on its page? Gertrude Stein positively answered this question, and Stanley agrees that the

dark shapes on a sterile page can render the mechanics of writing as a visible, performative act of reading.

“Gertrude Stein is someone who really does that. She makes you aware that you are reading writing. You’re not reading something that’s been written,” says Stanley. “You’re reading the act of writing itself.”

With his interest in modern and experimental language poets, like Ron Silliman and Charles Bernstein, Stanley applies his and their knowledge to how we develop inscriptions of ourselves in writing. When we inscribe ourselves into a piece, we come to realize how little of it is actually ourselves. This reverts back to the relationship between the habits, attachments, phrases, and

realist about relationships. He has friends who say things like “I don’t know what love is. I’ve never been in love.” It’s not the case for him. He walks down the street, and his heart flings itself into others.

“I see a beautiful person and think ‘I love you’ and ‘come home with me.’ My work has a propensity towards romance,” says Stanley. “On the other hand, I feel like I constantly need to be in bad, unfulfilling relationships so I have something to write about.”

Likewise, one of Stanley’s future aspirations opposes the permanency of a relationship to his own writing. Besides applying to Northwestern’s Performance Studies PhD program, he would like to write a number of pieces, over the course of maybe five

For Stanley, the shaping of these relationships, or eroticisms, often have to do with the ways people move from one place to another. The trajectories affect how people relate to one another and how people seek or project meaning into inhuman matter”

colloquialisms we collect as we grow up, the objects and places of our lives milking the meaning out of us and onto things outside of us, and eventually into our relationships with others and with writing.

It all reads romantic, and Stanley’s upcoming performances seem to burden a certain nostalgia, inviting affectionate discovery. In one of his sound pieces, “What We Talk About When We Think About Love,” Stanley combines a droning sound composition with spoken word: “Once under my skin, I peel the flesh back/Standing against the window/We imagine we are framed as in a movie/We imagine we are framed as in a cry.” The words contort inside of us, escape in a tear, maybe in the shape of a heart or the memory of a long embrace.

However, Stanley seems more than a romantic. He’s more of an optimist of romance and, later, a

years, deliver them once and then burn them. He also wants to write poems on a bunch of loincloths and have people stand around in them, so readers have to read someone’s crotch in order to read the poetry.

Treading between sound, performance, and writing, the effects of Stanley’s work reveal a great deal about the way he and the receptors of his work can experience the “erotics” of art. Rather than a poetics of work, he says, there can also be an erotics of work.

“An erotics of your practice could detail how your work changes, how people relate to each other,” says Stanley. “My idea of art is maybe both a poetics, a way of knowing, and an erotics, a way of practicing or a way of that knowing being put into action.”

In other words, this action into movement—our basic human right.





FICTION BY CLARE O'CONNOR

Five Times You Feel Like He's Not That Into You, and Why You're Wrong, Because He Very Seriously Is



1. When he waits two weeks and four days and 17 hours to text you back.

This is a really, really good sign.

Obviously: he was drafting several hundred different replies to you. On his cell phone, his iPad, the whiteboard above his desk, on napkins at restaurants, in legal pad margins, with squeaky, wet fingers on steamy, hot mirrors. Every morning, all day, at night before his dreamy eyes touched tossy-turny-lovesick-sleep: you, you. What to say to you? He knew his reply had to be perfect, and perfection takes time. How could he have composed something as perfect as, “hey sry was busy that nite b,” followed 6 seconds later by, “ut thnx” in less than two weeks and four days and 17 hours? Fact: the longer he takes to get back to you, the more interested he is.

2. When he asks you out to coffee and begins by saying: “Hi, nice to see you again, what is the name of that one girl that was at the party with you, the one with the red hair and those boobs? I ask because I’m really attracted to her and I was wondering if you could give me her number.”

Don’t you dare take this at face value. The boy’s all kinds of into you. It’s likely he’s tattooed your name across his chest by now. He’s asking about your friend because he’s got no idea how to ask about you. He’s so overwhelmingly attracted to you that he’s trying, God love him, to make you J-E-A-L-O-U-S! Ha, the oldest trick in the book! Well, go ahead! Play his game! Give him your hot-booby friend’s number! Worried he’ll call her maybe? Don’t be! He’s obsessed with you. You just make him so nervous he can’t remember simple things like how to ask you about you, or what your name is.

3. When he tells you: “I’m gay.”

No he’s not. He’s so in love with you. The end.

4. When you kind of coincidentally end up at the same bar, and from across the room you text him, “I see you:)” and he texts back, “im asleep is it urgent.”

Okay, let’s unpack this. First, he’s a little bit drunk-confused—because he misses you so much!—and that’s why he thinks he’s asleep. Second, he’s consciously-or-subconsciously afraid of running into you right now, because he only wants you to see his Best Possible Self, and since he hadn’t planned to see you on this particular night, he’s sporting his Less Than Best Possible Self—the self that other people see. The self that the booby redhead sitting on his lap right now is seeing, for example. He likely feels vulnerable without his lucky white v-neck. He’s probably got razor burn, or beer breath, or nose hairs that haven’t been tweezed. The bottom line is that your text made his heart go like this: !!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!! because a) he’s crazy in love with you, and b) he really can’t let you see him right now. Text him something casual, something coy—“WELL NO IT’S NOT URGENT, EXCEPT I LOVE YOUR NOSE HAIRSSS AND DON’T EVER CHANGE!!!!!! <3 <3 <3”—and then slip out, unnoticed. “I like you,” he’ll text you tomorrow, “I think I more than like you.”

5. He deletes you on Facebook, and when you friend request him again—Silly boy! Must’ve clicked the wrong button!—he blocks you.

Forget everything that you’ve ever heard about anything. What this means is that he wants you to show up at his apartment as soon as possible. He can’t express his wants verbally the way you can, and so he’s forced to act out in this dramatic way. You’re familiar with this profound thing that somebody once said: Sometimes we build up walls -- not to keep people out, but to see who cares enough to knock them down. Well, knock down his walls. Knock the boy’s walls right down. Shatter windows, blow up doors, smash with your fists anything in your way. The boy wants to hold you in his arms, wants to stand-up spoon you, right now, tomorrow, forever, next week... if only he knew how to tell you.



EXCERPTS FROM H. MELT'S UPCOMING POETRY COLLECTION:
“SIRvival in the Second City: Transqueer Chicago Poems”
To be published by New School Poetics in early 2013

*Designated Nights:
Bear Den*

Zach is in town
one night only

we need a place to drink
and discuss our desires

I drag him to Big Chicks
a gayborhood joint
just off Argyle

Diane Arbus hangs out there
Flirting with Mapplethorpe
Flirting with Dawoud Bey
Flirting with President Obama
Flirting with Every Body

arriving early we take a seat
await bears behind the bar
to hear our eyes growl

pockets and glasses empty
room begins to fill

perfectly manicured beards
scrape our bare faces bare
heads reflect pulsating light

a bulging bicep wraps itself
around Zach's young neck

I am going to fuck you tonight

no body will look at me
my scent is too strong

I cannot relieve myself
on the fence out back
like the other men

we call it quits after five rounds
still feeling out of place
on this thirsty thursday

I apologize to my guest

it's usually not like this

a drunken lie

we usually only come
on our designated nights.



*How to Help yr Transgender Teen:
A Book on My Father's Bookshelf*



Do not screen boys don't
Cry in the living room

Swank is academy award
Brandon is dead

Cece imprisoned
Pete started T today

Davin built a wagon
Quinn flew to baltimore

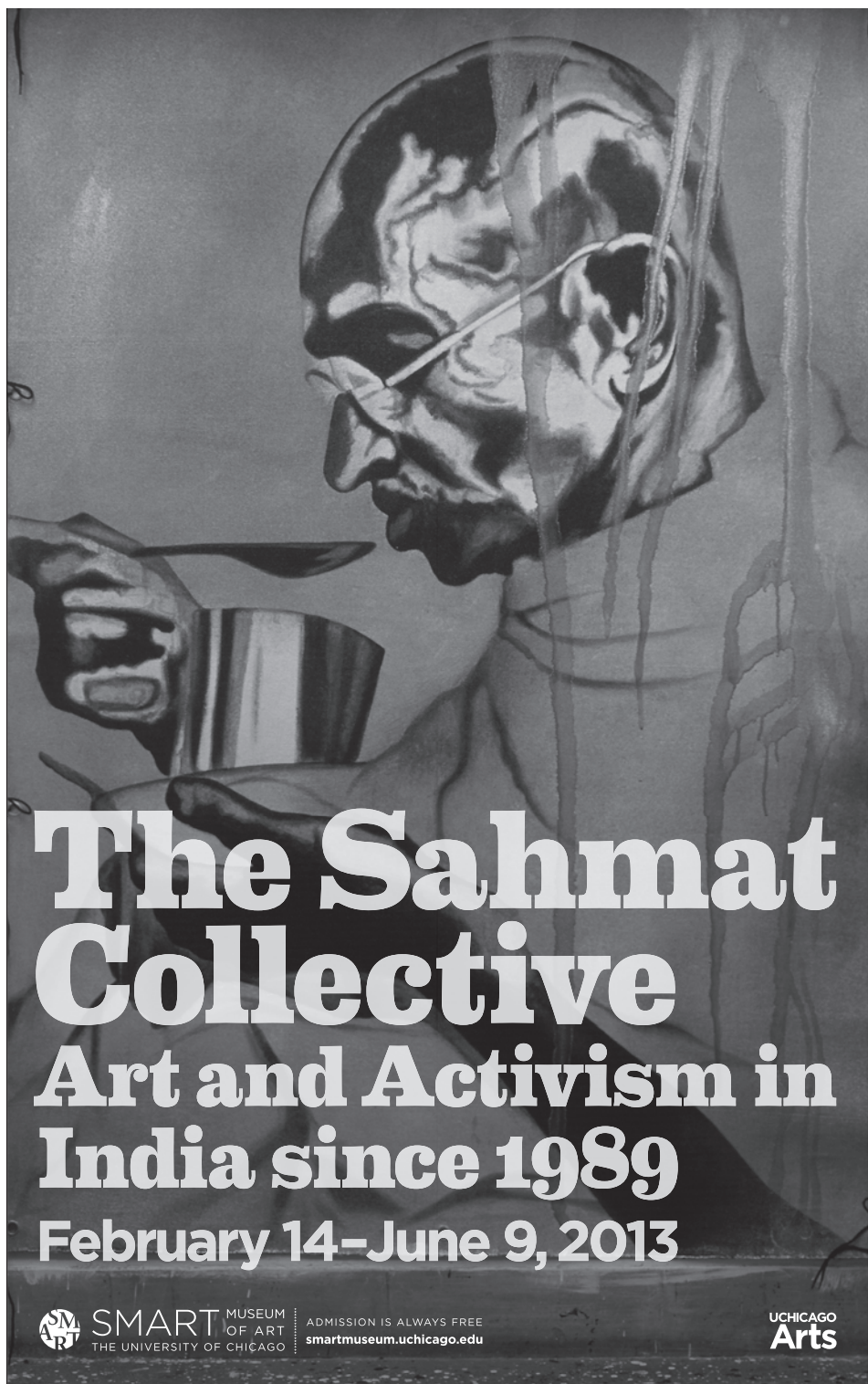
Jakob survived a fire
Mar is drunk onstage

Mark's exhibit is open
Rebecca's play is a hit

Auntie kate is on tour
Red is cracking jokes

Lark dyed her hair red
Greyson is leaving home


Reese is dr. kelly
Now i am too




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Heroes in Love

Seven Inspiring Comic Book Couples

BY NICOLE RHODEN

What better place to fall in love, than in a comic book where the possibilities (both dirty and otherwise) are endless? Then again, all of the planet-hopping and sorcery probably takes a lot of valuable time away from those wonderful take-out-eating, couch-snuggling nights that we real-life humanfolk enjoy. It's probably best to just keep our pjs on and let the heroes handle the heroism. Still, if you feel like living vicariously, here are some great comics couples who that prove love knows no bounds, whether you're a carnivorous beast or a sexy telepath.

Scott Pilgrim and Ramona Flowers

Scott Pilgrim
By Bryan Lee O'Malley

In what may be the funnest, most epic portrayal of 20-something slackerdom ever, Scott Pilgrim (who is dating a high schooler) crosses paths with the mysterious Ramona Flowers, an American with awesome hair and a lot of baggage. After Pilgrim meets a confrontational stranger and his gaggle of "demon hipster chicks," he learns he must fight Ramona's seven evil exes for the right to be her boyfriend. Video game-esque antics ensue as Scott punches, kicks and guitar-wails his way through Ramona's past and closer to her heart. The story will make you want to move to Toronto, which, judging by the characters' odd jobs and ample free time, I imagine to be Canada's version of Portland.



Sistah Spooky and Mindf*ck

Empowered
By Adam Warren

Traumatized by a high school career with a bunch of "shallow, preppy bitches," hardass superhero/sorceress Sistah Spooky revels in bullying cute, blonde protagonist Empowered. To be fair, Emp was originally conceptualized by Adam Warren as a damsel-in-distress fetish art commission, so the "bondage-prone" heroine is a bit of a laughingstock among her superhero team. Spooky reveals a softer side upon the return of her sweetheart Mindf*ck, a hot blonde telepath whose brother puppeted her into cutting out her own eyes and tongue to strengthen her psychic powers. Not only does Mindf*ck visit Sistah Spooky for afternoon delights in her consciousness, but she also sees and loves Spooky's former mousy self from her pre-hero days, before she'd sold her soul for eternal hotness and mystical power. While readers may spend most of "Empowered" loving to hate Sistah Spooky, when tragedy tears the duo apart, it's impossible to resist staring hard at the page attempting to send her a mind-hug.



Nibbil and Annie

Small Favors: A Girlie Porno Comic
By Colleen Coover

21-year-old Annie touches herself way too much, partially thanks to her window's proximity to her sexy neighbor's. As she has already used up her "entire lifetime allotment of masturbation," the angry, prudish queen of her conscience assigns Thumbelina-sized Nibbil to keep Annie's self-diddling in check. Nibbil, pigtailed and leather-clad, is a hilariously terrible candidate for the position though — their introduction is lust at first sight. The pair's graphic, giggly sex play emphasizes respect, mutual satisfaction and sex-positivity. Nibbil can magically shrink and grow on command, able to spend a little quality time in Annie's orifices or dominate her with a strap-on. The monogamish duet enjoys playing with others, like the innocent dirty-girl-at-heart Sage, but are ultimately devoted to each other. "Sex is fun. I really enjoy it," Annie tells Nibbil after they've had their share of a costumed orgy party, "but sometimes I just want to be alone with the girl I love."



Fone Bone and Thorn

Bone
By Jeff Smith

Infinitely lovable, species-ambiguous Fone Bone is the level-headed counterpart to his cousins, the conniving Phoney Bone and the lighthearted dunce Smiley Bone. But when getting lost in the wilderness leads the three to share a mystical, dangerous journey in this Disney-meets-Lord of the Rings adventure, Fone Bone soon falls head over heels with the sharp, beautiful village dweller Thorn Harvestar. Bone is taken aback by Thorn's courage and apparent prophetic abilities. Though poor Bone never manages to permeate the thick, steel walls of the friend zone, the two consistently prove their devotion in the face of vicious rat creatures, evil, resurrected spiritual entities, and even the deep, world-shattering secrets of Thorn's true identity.



Alana and Marko

Saga
By Brian K. Vaughan & Fiona Staples

This futuristic Romeo and Juliet are runaway soldiers of dueling planets — more accurately, an enormous planet called Landfall and its moon, Wreath — who bond over their abhorrence for the galaxy-spanning war. The Landfallian Alana's reckless nature balances "conscientious objector" Wreathian Marko's pacifist restraint, though Marko flashes his suppressed rage when Alana is in danger. The two must stay a step ahead of interplanetary bounty hunters and "freelancers" (hella scary professional assassins, like the nightmare-inducing, sexy spider-lady The Stalk). It's probably also worth mentioning that all of this is performed with their newborn in tow — a squee-worthy bundle named Hazel who's just starting to sprout Alana's wings and Marko's horns.



Snow and Bigby

Fables
By Bill Willingham & various artists

Snow White and the Big Bad Wolf (a.k.a. "Bigby," a.k.a. my imaginary boyfriend) are two of many "fables," or fairytale inhabitants, exiled to our world by the powerful and mysterious adversary. In fact, they've been living right under our "mundie", or mundane, noses in New York City's magic-protected neighborhood of Fabletown for centuries. Bigby is Fabletown's sheriff and Snow its deputy mayor. To keep cover, the animorphic Bigby must maintain his human form and smoke like a chimney to deaden his potentially maddening animal senses. But despite his self-restraint, since their first meeting, Bigby has never been able to shake the scent of Snow. He can tell when she's happy, sad or lonely just from nuanced changes in her fragrance. Bigby's rough brashness couldn't contrast more with Snow's poised prudence, but while the two are alone on a dangerous mission, he admits, "You're the woman I can't ignore."



Craig and Raina

Blankets
By Craig Thompson

In this powerfully honest autobiographical account of teenage love, Craig Thompson delves into his Christian upbringing and all of its accompanying internal conflicts. A devout Craig meets rebellious Raina at church camp and, after a long-distance flirtation (and the most poetic masturbation scene ever depicted), spends a week with her and her crumbling family. Whimsical winter snugglings ensue. Poignant childhood flashbacks and scriptural recitation are spliced with frantic rationalization as Craig struggles with his lust for Raina. He likens his love to worship, in one scene drawing Raina as a winged, haloed goddess, alive with paisley spirits from her hand-quilted blanket. "For as often as you drink this cup," Craig ponders during their love-making, "it is never enough." Take that, abstinence clubs.



Want to share your favorite comics couples? Tell us on the F Newsmagazine Facebook page!

COMICS

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BY BLAIR HAYDEN



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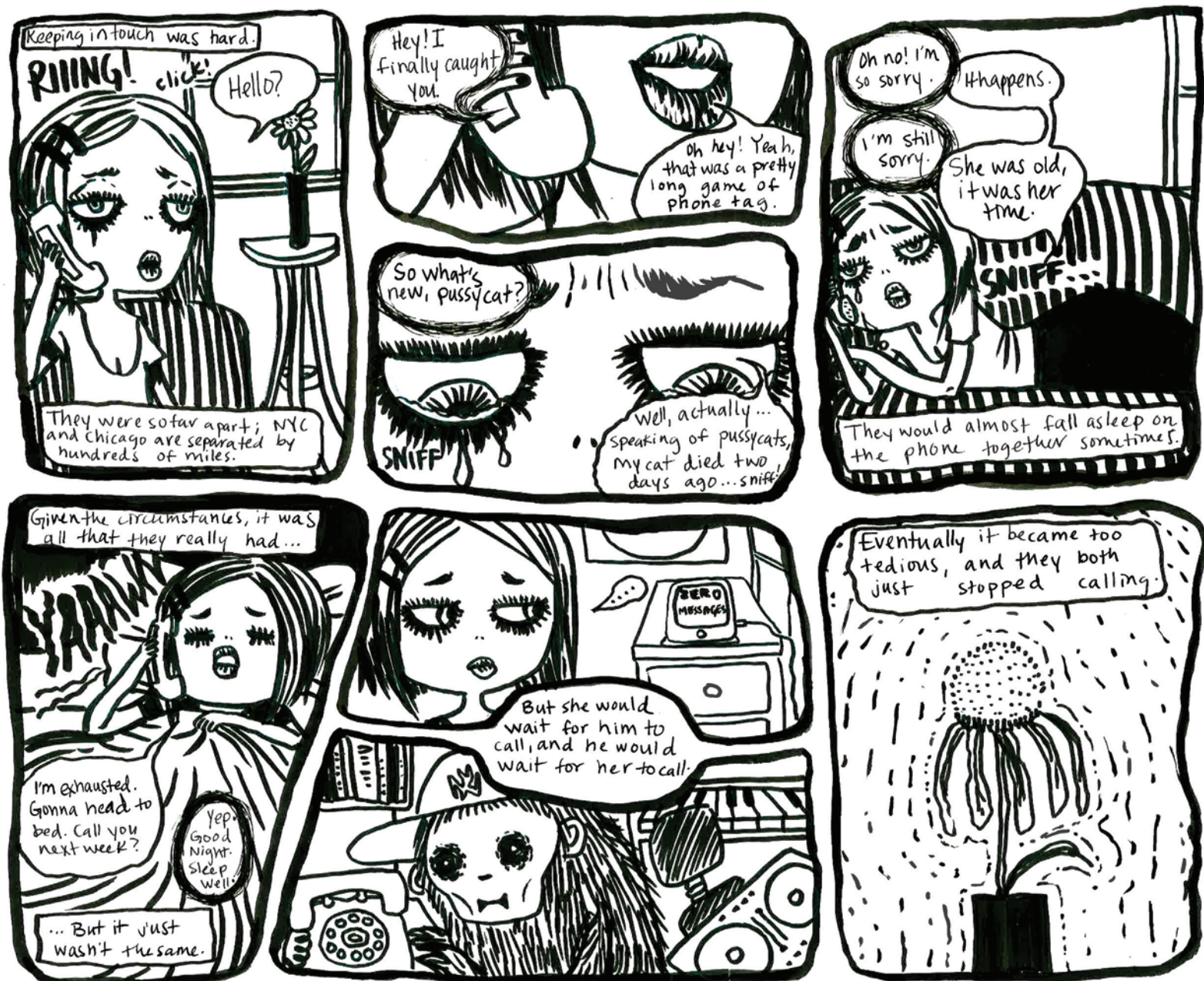
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