

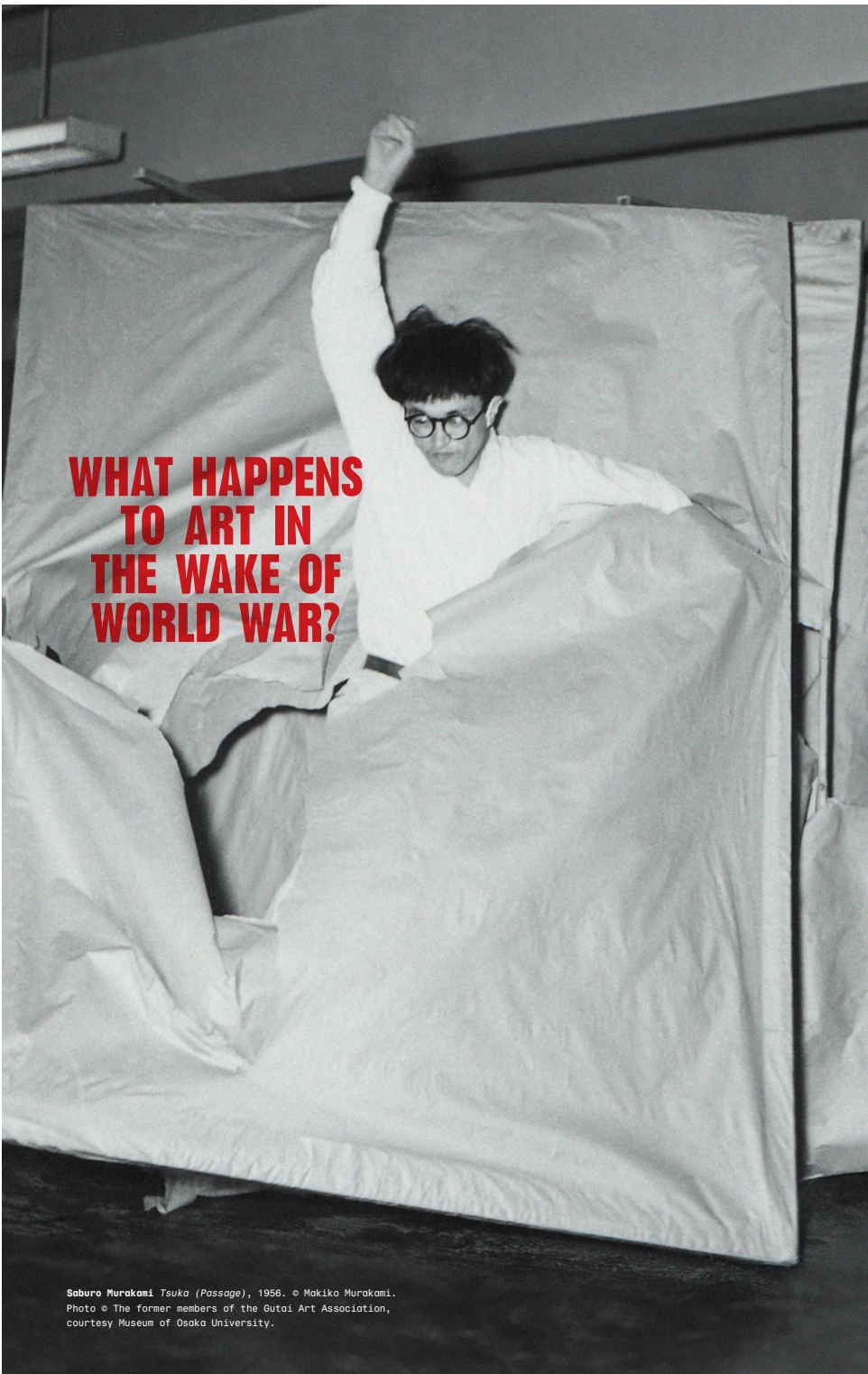
The School of the Art Institute of Chicago

fnewsmagazine

APRIL 2013

*A student journal of arts,
culture and politics*





**WHAT HAPPENS
TO ART IN
THE WAKE OF
WORLD WAR?**

Saburo Murakami Tsuka (Passage), 1956. © Makiko Murakami.
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DESTROY THE PICTURE:

PAINTING THE VOID,

1949– 1962

**Museum of
Contemporary Art
Chicago**

**February 16–
June 2**

mcachicago.org

Destroy the Picture: Painting the Void, 1949–1962 has been organized by Paul Schimmel, former Chief Curator of The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, in association with the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago.

Lead support for the Chicago presentation of the exhibition is provided by Kenneth and Anne Griffin, Donna and Howard Stone, and Helen and Sam Zell.

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WEB EXCLUSIVES fnewsmagazine.com



“Rigid Bodies” — Fnewsmagazine.com is excited to announce our new online gallery. Each month we will be offering the space to students and faculty to curate a virtual exhibition. Our first guest curator is Alfredo Salazar-Caro. Featuring artists Nick Kegeyan, LaTurbo Avedon, Kevin Carey, Sara Ludy, TMVRTX, Sua Yoo, and Kim Asendorf.

“In Case You Missed It: The Spring 2013 Undergraduate Exhibition Opening” — Comics Editor Nicole Rhoden shares notable pieces from the BFA show. Check out her blog post to see if you or someone you know is mentioned.

More BFA 2013 exhibition coverage! F Newsmagazine has asked the SAIC community to weigh in on their top BFA art. Go to facebook.com/fnewsmagazine to see what your peers have chosen and to upload your own images.

“Chicago Zine Fest” — Check out images and highlights from the Chicago Zine Fest by contributing photographer and writer Mayra Rodriguez

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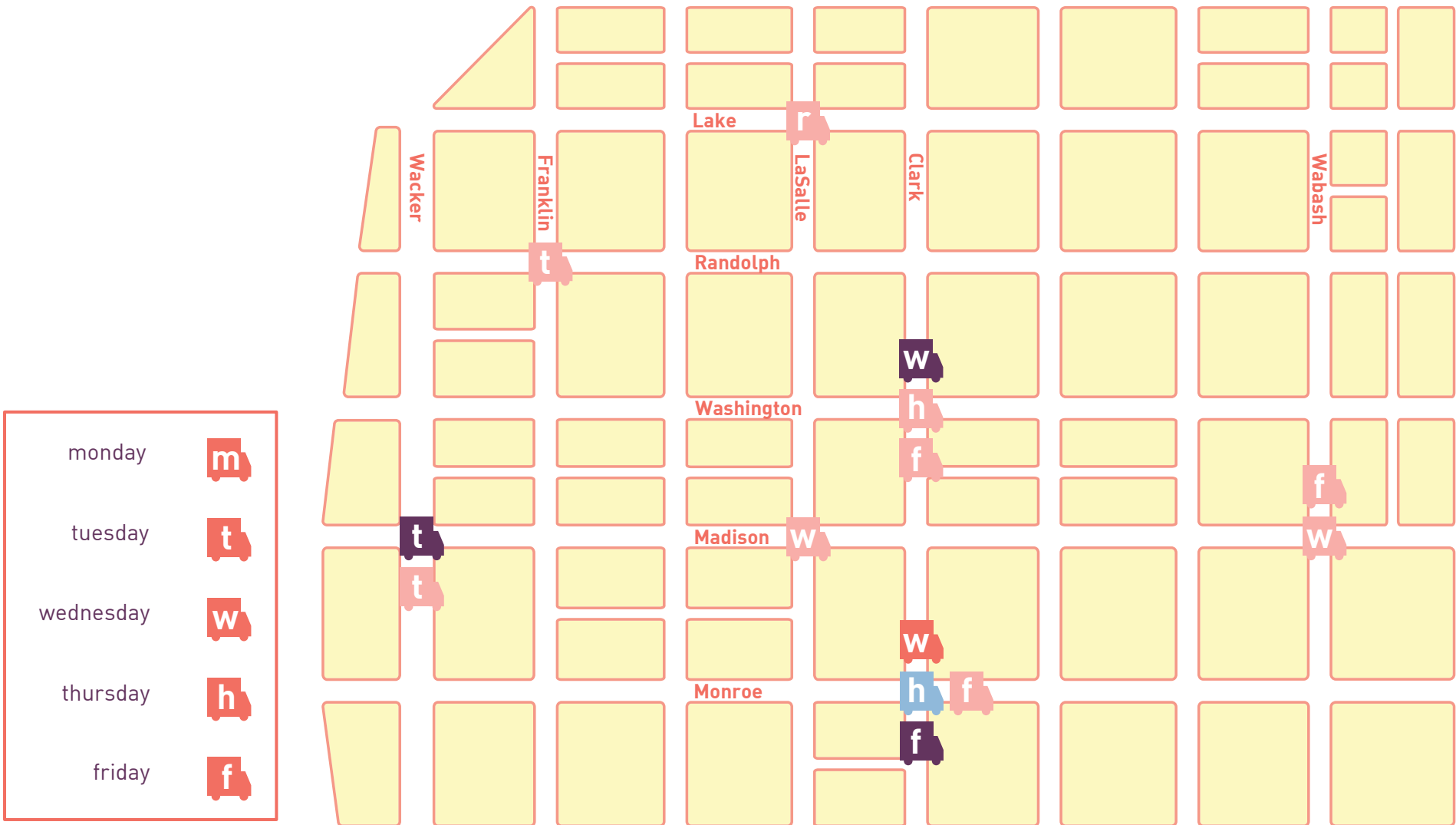
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COVER: “Acid Rain”
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FOOD



Trucking Delicious

A Selection of Food Trucks with Affordable Meal Options that Park Around the Loop

BY LINDSEY AUTEN

A severe hankering for street food is a common symptom of Spring Fever. In Chicago, there’s a cause to celebrate the season: after two years of lobbying, the Chicago City Council finally legalized on-board cooking last July, which means quality restaurants, bakeries and other ambitious food truck owners have been able to extend their diverse cuisine to hungry pedestrians.

Though the city’s strict codes on gas lines and parking hours still make food-trucking a challenge, many mobile food hubs are providing some of the most delicious lunch items in the Loop. A solid mid-day meal is important — as is that pocket change you’re saving — so here are a few affordable, charming and delectable lunch options, all in the open spring air.

THE ROOST

@TheRoostTruck
\$7.50 for a hearty meal

11:00am - 1:00pm
Monday
Tuesday
Wednesday
Thursday
Friday

UofC
600 W Chicago
Madison/Wacker
UofC
600 W Chicago

Chicago’s “fried chicken food truck,” The Roost, might be bona fide southern comfort food at its best because of the time owner Joe Scroggs and his staff put into the staple dish: fried chicken. To get a bolder, more authentic North Carolina-inspired flavor, the meat is marinated for 20 hours before it’s thrown into the fryer, and preparation for each day’s homemade menu starts at 5 a.m. Scroggs suggests the popular chicken filet sandwich for lunch. New menu items this spring will include grilled chicken salad wraps and kabobs.

CURRIED MOBILE

@getcurriedaway
\$7.50 for a curry plate

11:00am - 2:00pm
Thursday

NBC building

“Curry up or get outta our way!” reads the front bumper of the Curried Mobile. It’s probably good advice because the gluten-free Indian food is fresh, fast and healthy. After converting an old Chevy ice cream truck into Chicago’s first Indian food truck, the Curried crew now serve vegan and vegetarian plates as well as deliciously meaty curried meals straight from the kitchens of their restaurants. The chicken tikka masala and saag paneer are among the most popular dishes, but look for a tangy chicken achari this spring.

TAMALE SPACESHIP

@tamalespace101
\$8 for Two Tamales

11:00am - 1:30pm
Monday
Tuesday
Wednesday
Friday

check Twitter
Madison & Wacker
Clark & Washington
Clark & Monroe

Co-founder and manager Manny Hernandez has decided to bring Mexican superheroes to downtown Chicago, and their most heroic feat has been a smackdown of some of the best tamales in town. Servers don Luchadores masks as they dish out seven to nine different kinds of homemade tamales on any given day of the week. Look forward to the Tamales en Nogada, with ground pork and veal, dried fruit, a walnut cream sauce and a kick of pomegranate, making a landing in time for Cinco de Mayo.

CHICAGO CUPCAKE

@Chicago_Cupcake
~ \$3.50 per cupcake

Tuesdays
11:30am-1:15pm
1:15-2:15pm
Wednesday
1:20-2:30pm
3:40-4:15pm
Thursday
1:15-2:40pm
2:45-3:30pm
Friday
11:00am-1:00pm
1:35-2:30pm
3:30-4:15pm

Madison/Wacker
Franklin/Randolph
LaSalle/Madison
Madison/Wabash
Clark/Washington
Lake/LaSalle
Clark/Monroe
Clark/Washington
Madison/Wabash

Not all cupcakes are served on a crust, which makes Chicago Cupcake desserts unique. Atop a crunchy shortbread, chocolate wafer or pretzel crust, the cupcakes are baked with ingredients like mousse and cheesecake for a creamy, ultra moist treat. Owner Brendan Bolger says menus vary monthly with about 30 different cupcakes on rotation. The Mother-load is always a favorite: chocolate cake with peanut butter filling on a pretzel sea salt crust, topped with caramel Italian buttercream frosting, caramel drizzle and pretzels.

CAPONIE’S EXPRESS

@CaponiesExp
\$8 for a mini slice of deep dish

11:30am - 1:30pm
Tuesday
Wednesdays
Thursday

UofC
check twitter
UofC

As part of the 17-year-old Caponie’s Trattoria — “consistently delicious Italian” as owner and chef Dan Lamberti urges — Caponie’s Express carries on the tradition of Italian zest and sustenance. Everything is made from scratch at the restaurant just before departure, so it’s still fresh when the red, green and white truck parks at lunchtime. Lunch items include deep-fried panzarotti and arancini, but the best-sellers are the deep dish pizza and calzones. This season, the Express will introduce lighter menu items like wraps and more health-conscious foods.

SOUPS IN THE LOOP

@soupsintheloop
\$6 for soup and freshly baked bread

11:00am - 1:00pm
Monday
Thursday

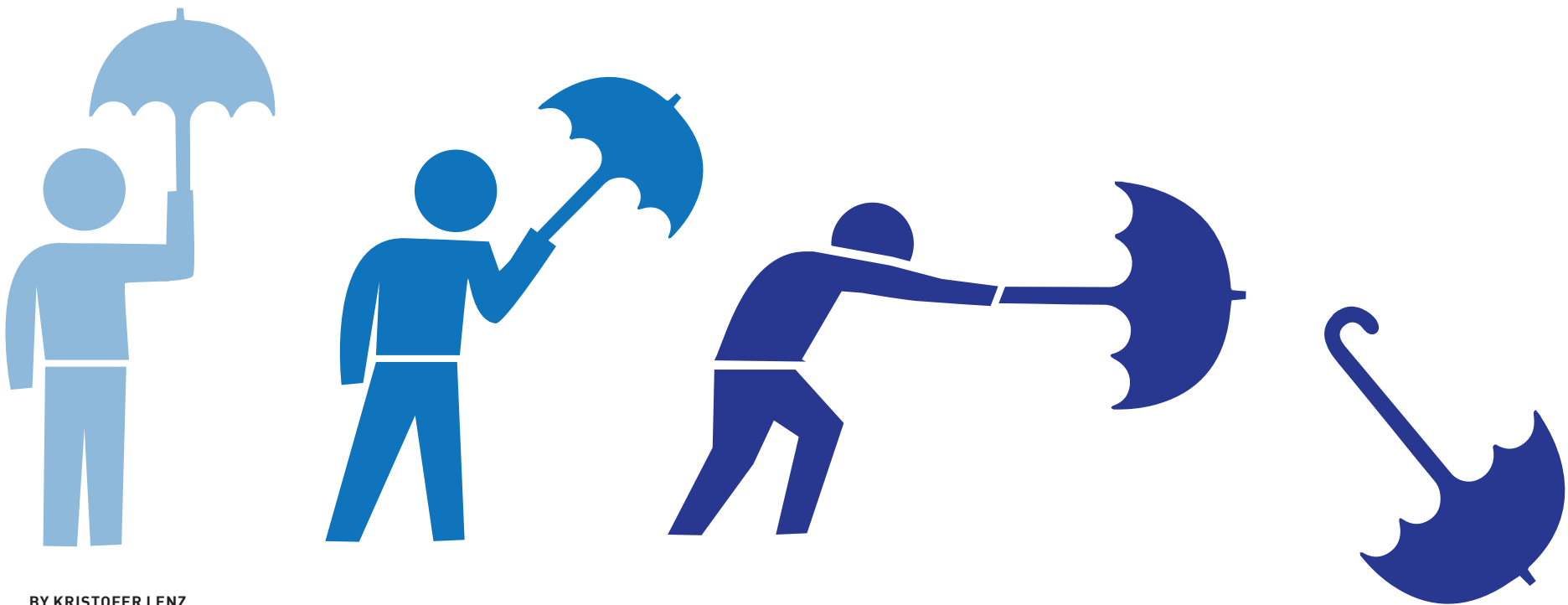
UofC
Clark/Monroe

Owner Chugger Lupo is a momma’s boy, but he should be proud and so should his mom, because the handmade soup from his food truck provides some deliciously heartfelt meals on four wheels. Soups in the Loop was inspired by Lupo’s time in the kitchen with his mom and her cooking, and it has partnered up with Cafe la Cave to bring some of her best home cooking to Chicago. Besides steamy favorite chicken wild rice, try the cucumber and avocado soup. They’re also adding a second truck that lets you build your own salad. Each cup of soup comes with bread from Il Mulino Di Valenzano Bakery.

TIP SHEET

April is the Wettest Month

Certification Course to Limit Umbrella-related Assholery



BY KRISTOFER LENZ

According to no statistic whatsoever, April is the rainiest month in Chicago. As our thirsty trees and gardens drink, we learn that what is good for nature is not good for the commuter. Like a bed of blossoming tulips, when storm clouds gather, the Chicago streets explode with color from the swaying and bobbing heads of springtime umbrellas.

The umbrella, like any tool, takes on the character of its bearer. The same device that can shelter a toddler can be used with vicious carelessness on a busy street. Misused umbrellas dominate unnecessarily large amounts of space and threaten to pluck out the eyes of innocent bystanders.

In a downpour, Chicago’s sidewalks, bus stations and train stops become a brutal landscape for poor umbrella behavior. Commutes already made miserable become a journey through an unnavigable abattoir populated by spinning, sharp-pointed wheels of death, throwing off rain and malice in equal turns.

In an effort to limit, and perhaps someday eliminate, umbrella-related misuse, F Newsmagazine has compiled a test of one’s umbrella-related savvy. Rate yourself and then make the decision whether you are umbrella-ready or a threat to public safety.

TAKE THE TEST:

- 1

An umbrella is?

A. A tool that can be used to protect oneself and valuables in a rainstorm

B. A fashion accessory for 19th century ladies-in-waiting

C. A weapon optimized for sociopaths to use in tense crowd-control situations
- 2

When walking with an umbrella in a crowd, the best rules for movement are?

A. Slowdown carefully and look both ways before turning so you don’t strike any one with your umbrella

B. Wander restlessly, bathe your feet in nature’s tears and erase your sins

C. Stop violently and randomly — umbrellas are a shield protecting you from traditional walking etiquette
- 3

When is it appropriate to speak on the phone while also operating an umbrella?

A. Never. Staying dry and walking requires enough effort. Move to a safe, dry place and then use your phone

B. Sometimes, but only when negotiating with a terrorist or rushing to rescue a loved one pinned under a car

C. Always. Umbrellas are portable “bubbles of silence”

- 4

Sometimes your umbrella will be lost or left at home. Scientists (okay, “Myth busters”) have proven that running in the rain does what?

A. Makes you wetter because you are literally running at the rain like an insane person

B. Makes no difference because the coefficient of wind resistance to the hydroproxable levels of saturated rainwater are not affected by principle velocity

C. Makes you dry because fewer raindrops will strike your lithe, athletic frame in flight
- 5

What levels of rainfall are appropriate for umbrella use?

A. Lusty downpour

B. Desperate drizzle

C. It rained an hour ago, puddles are scary

- 6

When is it appropriate to open an umbrella?

A. In a clear and open space before stepping out into a rainstorm

B. Never, umbrellas are for the weak

C. On a crowded staircase packed with other commuters because you don’t care about anyone besides yourself
- 7

If you are below average height, how should you operate your umbrella?

A. As cautiously and carefully as everyone else, but particularly aware of your umbrella moving as it moves at the eye-level of others

B. No umbrella required, just move quickly between the tall fools carrying their own

C. With impunity. Life is hard for the elfin and it is your right to carry an umbrella at eye-height, it’s their punishment for being tall
- 8


Lucky you, you’ve made it inside after a downpour. What do you do with your wet umbrella?

A. Carefully shake it out away from other people and set it on floor to air dry

B. Leave it in a pile with other damp umbrellas where it will sit untouched and slowly mold until the next downpour

C. Leave it on the subway or bus seat next to you, what do you care, your butt is dry





RATE YOURSELF:

For every A answer, give yourself 2 points; B answer, 1 point; C answer, you are awarded no points and may God have mercy on your soul

12-10 POINTS =


Congratulations, you are a mannered Lord among uncouth paupers. You have earned the right to bear the ultimate umbrella... one with a sword in the handle. Please handle your newfound power with all due responsibility.

9-5 POINTS =

You have a basic understanding of human etiquette. As such, you are allowed to continue roaming free but be wary, we are watching.

5-0 POINTS =

You are a danger to yourself and everyone around you. The proper authorities have been notified of your sociopathic tendencies. Please wait patiently until you can be taken into custody and remanded to the proper mental health organization.



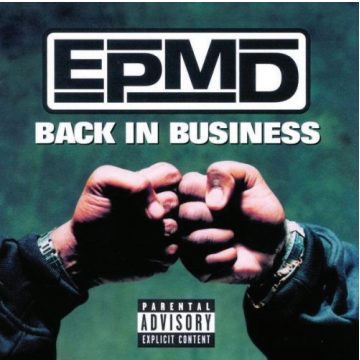
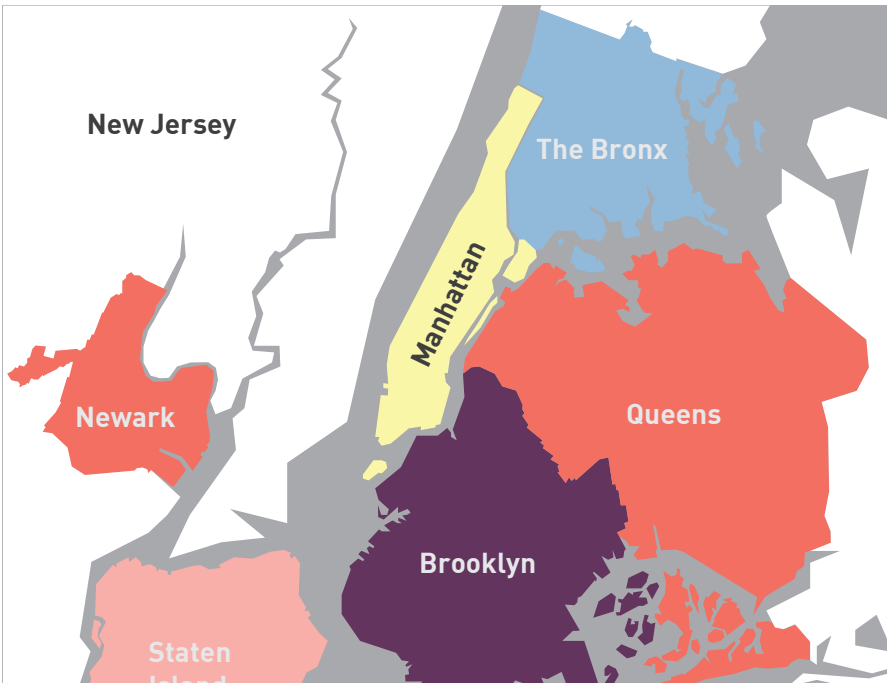
AUDIOPHILES

THE BIRTH OF BOOM-BAP

Underappreciated ‘90s New York Hip-Hop

BY GEOFF MAYER AND CHRIS GIVENs

Look out, cause the ‘90s are coming back, not just in fashion but in hip-hop too. With groups like OFWGKTA (Odd Future Wolf Gang Kill Them All) drawing comparisons to The Wu-Tang Clan and Kendrick Lamar’s hit album “Good Kid, m.A.A.d. City” taking inspiration from ‘90s Southern Dungeon Family beats (and of course paying homage to the West Coast rappers of Compton). You’ve also got rappers like Action Bronson, Joey Bada\$\$ and the Pro-Era crew bringing back the ‘90s New York “boom-bap” style. What better way to frame the present than by looking at the past? We all know Biggie, we all know Nas, we all bump Wu-Tang, and even your mother listens to A Tribe Called Quest, so let’s take a look at some of the lesser known rap stars of the ‘90s tri-state.



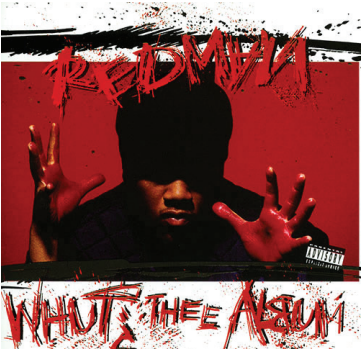
EPMD
“Da Joint”
Back in Business
(1997)

Long Island’s EPMD is a classic duo of Erick Sermon and Parrish J Smith. With a long running career and seven albums, EPMD has undeniable staying power. EPMD has put the word “Business” in every album title, and their name stands for “Erick and Parrish Making Dol-lars.” EMPD’s “Da Joint” was their big hit off “Back In Business,” and Erick and Parrish killed it on the Sermon and Rockwilder produced track. Their hip-hop collective Hit Squad helped artists like Redman, Das EFX, K-Solo, Hurricane-G and Knucklehedz as they came up, ensuring EPMD’s lasting effect on New York’s hip-hop scene.



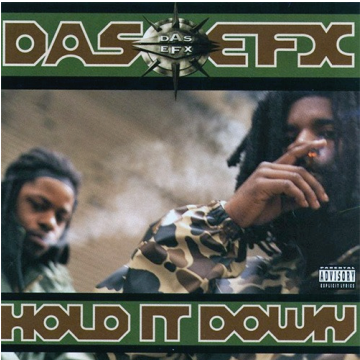
Lords of the Underground
“Chief Rocka”
Here Come the Lords
(1993)

MCs Mr. Funke, Dolt All Dupré of Newark New Jersey met DJ Lord Jazz at Shaw University and they put out their first album “Here Come the Lords” in 1993. “Chief Rocka” was the album’s third single and the closing lines: “I live for the funk, I’ll die for the funk,” are famously sam-pled in Biggie Smalls’s “Machine Gun Funk” from his debut “Ready to Die” (1994). Lords tend to avoid the clichés of gangster rap, and are oft criticisizd for being “soft.” Their lyrics don’t always tell a narrative, but they’re masters of percussive lyrics, even if it makes for some nonsensical rhymes.



Redman
“Tonight’s Da Night”
Whut? Thee Album
(1992)

The less-discussed half of Meth-odman and Redman, Redman is often called the 11th member of the Wu-Tang Clan. Hailing from across the Hudson in Newark, New Jersey, “Whut? Thee Album” was Redman’s solo debut. A Tribe Called Quest’s Q-Tip and EPMD’s Erick Sermon were instrumental in getting Redman his record deal. “Tonight’s Da Night” has been quoted and referenced by rappers like Common, Dilated Peoples, Lords of the Underground, and Party Arty on Big L’s track Da Graveyard. The beat is absolutely insane and primarily samples a sped-up string and trumpet section from Isaac Hayes’ recording of “A Few More Kisses to Go,” with a classic boom-bap bass and snare drum beat.



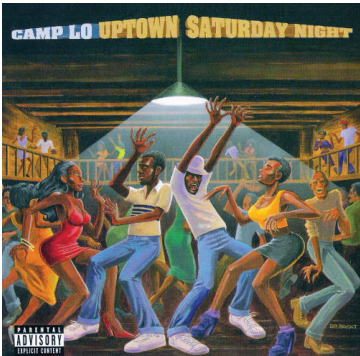
Das EFX
“Ready to Rock Rough Rhymes”
Hold It Down
(1995)

Das EFX came from Brooklyn and were prominent members of EPMD’s Hit Squad. “Ready to Rock Rough Rhymes” is toward the end of their album, and PMD (of EPMD) and C-Dogg kill it on the first two verses only to be outshined by Dray and Skoob (of Das EFX) on the closing verse. “Ready to Rock Rough Rhymes” samples Redman from an EPMD track. Das EFX is famous for their stream of conscious-ness style and adding suffixes to words like “-iggity,” (“No Diggity”) a stylistic choice frequently parodied in pop culture by the likes of Dave Chappelle.



Big L and Jay-Z
“7 Minute Freestyle”
live on the Stretch and Bobbito Radio Show
(1995)

Not an officially released track (though easily found on the internet), the “7 Minute Freestyle” features Big L (from Harlem) the year his first album dropped and a young Jay-Z (Brooklyn) before anyone knew his name (read: before he sold out). Big L is on the short list for greatest lyricist of all time, but was killed in 1999 before his second album could drop. On this recording from Stretch and Bob’s radio show, we hear Big L and Jay-Z free styl-ing over Milkbone’s “Keep it Real.” Although many will argue who beat who in this “rap battle,” the real winners are the listeners, who get to hear two masters of the art doing what few else can, improvis-ing better verses than most can premeditatively write.



Camp Lo
“Luchini AKA This is It”
Uptown Saturday Night
(1997)

Camp Lo were a duo from The Bronx consisting of Geechi Suede and Sonny Cheeba who were heavily inspired by ‘70s blaxploitation films and culture rather than the more timely ‘90s mafioso gangster style. This inspiration can be seen in the way they dress, the samples they use, and the obscure references they drop in all of their songs. The name “Uptown Saturday Night” is a reference to a ‘70s black comedy film, and the album cover itself references the album cover for Marvin Gaye’s “I Want You”; the painting “Sugar Shack” by Ernie Barnes.



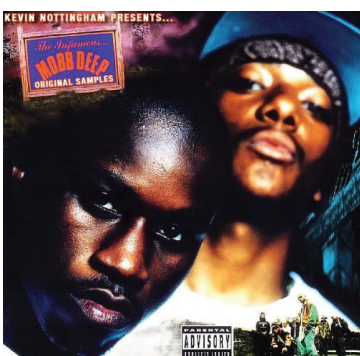
Onyx
“Throw Ya Guns”
Bacadafucup
(1993)

Coming out of Queens, New York with shaved heads and Army fatigues, Onyx’s first song to hit the radio was “Throw Ya Guns.” Sticky Fingaz, Fredro Starr, Sonsee, and Big DS lay down verses on this track filled with shouted “Buck bucks!” The “Bald Heads” rocked boots and baggy black hoodies while yelling into mics and cameras, leading the way for acts like 50 Cent, DMX, and others. Onyx’s rough-and-ready-to-rumble attitude makes for an exciting library full of songs to get rowdy to.



Black Moon
“Buck Em Down”
Enta Da Stage
(1993)

Lyrically, Brooklyn’s Black Moon (Brothers who Lyrically Act and Combine Kickin Music Out On Na-tions) rarely rise above braggadocio and street violence. Their verses are delivered with potent lyricism over dark, simple, bumping beats. Main rapper of the group Buckshot (Shorty) was 18 and 5’6” at the time, and you can hear him trying to prove himself in these songs.



Mobb Deep
“The Start of Your Ending (41st Side)”
The Infamous
(1995)

Mobb Deep emerged in ‘92 out of Queensbridge housing projects in Queens, New York, the same housing projects that spawned Nas. The “Infamous” was their second album, solidifying their place in the hardcore gangster rap community. Mobb Deep were part of a resur-gence for east coast gangster rap and are known for their gritty often violent imagery.



Big Pun feat. Fat Joe
“Twinz (Deep Cover 98)”
Capital Punishment
(1998)

Big Pun came out of the Bronx’s underground hip-hop scene. At the time of his death in 2000 at the age of 28, Big Pun weighed nearly 700 pounds. He is known for super tech-nically lyrical verses, with multi-syllabic rhyming schemes, little room for breath pauses and heavy alliteration. He was tight with rap-per Fat Joe, and some even suspect that Big Pun wrote most of Fat Joe’s lyrics, which took a steep dive in quality after Big Pun’s death. Capital Punishment was the first Latino solo hip-hop album to go platinum.

MUSIC

Lack of Innovation Parading as Nostalgia

Revival of 90s Music Signifies a Dearth of Creative Originality



BY CHRISTOPHER KARESKA

On February 13, 2013, the New Museum in New York City opened the exhibition “NYC 1993: Experimental Jet Set, Trash and No Star.” “The exhibition,” Newmuseum.org states, “is conceived as a time capsule, an experiment in collective memory that attempts to capture a specific moment at the intersection of art, pop culture, and politics.” Borrowing its title from a Sonic Youth album of the same name, the show is a prime example of the 1990s revival in which music is playing a central role.

Music has always been a hotbed for nostalgia. Sonically replicating a particular moment in history with instrumentation and technique is one way to transport a listener; dressing in time-stamped clothing and decorating your album sleeves toward a past trend is another. Revivals aren’t a new phenomenon, and neither is nostalgia. Popular revivals have included the garage rock revival of the early 2000s with bands like the Vines, the Hives and the White Stripes, the lo-fi 1980s aesthetic revival of “chillwave” with groups like Washed Out and Neon Indian at the end of the 2000s and the 1930s-1940s swing revival of the 1990s with the Royal Crown Revue and Squirrel Nut Zippers. Some of the current festishization of the 1990s is attributable to the fact that the kids raised on its material are now in their twenties. But, also of importance may be a nostalgia for the ways certain material was encountered at that time — memories of the primitive Internet, buying CDs, TV on television and a newly outdated model of alternative celebrity.

In “Hip: The History,” author John Leland states that “nostalgia is comforting because it revisits a past in which we know we did not die. We are invulnerable within its amber; in our pasts we

are immortal.” By not taking progressive risks, the best that revival bands can hope for is a stylish vegetative state, a deferment of time and artistic progress. Like any past era viewed through rose-colored glasses, the ‘90s are a goldmine for inspiration and theft. However, territory explored by ‘90s alternative rock groups is being re-imagined by new bands with diminishing returns. Bands like Cloud Nothings, Yuck and DIIV exist as redundant, referential hyperlinks that will hopefully only redirect listeners back to Sunny Day Real Estate, Pavement and My Bloody Valentine. MBV’s 2013 album “m b v” proves that they’re still the masters of the genre they invented in 1988, and that even in their absent decades (their last release was in 1991), imitators haven’t moved the shoegaze genre forward. Cycling through decade-referencing trends, there is an increasingly apparent tendency in contemporary indie-rock to forego originality, to instead go for carefully cultivated imitation.

In hip-hop, hyped new artists like Compton, California’s Kendrick Lamar are praised for bringing back classic West Coast hip hop, characterized by the melodic G-funk synths and laid back delivery on Dr. Dre’s “The Chronic” (1992) and other gangsta rap Death Row Records releases. Lamar cites being present at Tupac and Dr. Dre’s video shoot for “California Love” (1995), as an influential moment in his life, and his own 2012 album “good kid, m.A.A.d city,” a critical and popular favorite of the year, was produced by Dr. Dre. Last year at Coachella, promoters went to the extremes of mining the ‘90s — resurrecting Tupac Shakur, who was murdered in 1996, in the form of a “hologram” (2-D video projection) to perform alongside Snoop Dogg and Dr. Dre.

*Territory explored by ‘90s
alternative musicians
is being re-imagined by
new groups with dimin-
ishing returns.*

The 1990s in music marked the beginning of the end for many long-standing musical institutions such as major record labels, television appearances, radio hits, magazine covers and CD sales. Alternative music, championed by the new and then-hip MTV, became mainstream culture with bands like Nirvana and Smashing Pumpkins, who were given exposure by dominant institutions of the type which their original scenes worked outside of or in direct opposition to. By 2013, the Internet has obliterated any common denominator in alternative music by opening the doors to an infinite number of casual, one-off bedroom recordings and exposure for any musician with an Internet connection. Record label deals are no longer necessary means of distribution or appeal. With this change, local scenes and DIY movements have to work harder to resist homogenization (if that’s the goal), but it also means infinite possibility for any aspiring musician, and an unfathomable amount of noise to sift through for listeners seeking out new artists.

2013 Festival lineups this year are evidence of the death of the “alternative rock star” model, as the crutch of

‘90s nostalgia is implemented here too. Coachella this year will host Blur, a ‘90s Brit-pop band (Brit-pop itself referencing the 1960s as a reaction against Grunge), Stone Roses, major players in the “Madchester” movement of the early ‘90s (a reaction against shoegaze), and Red Hot Chili Peppers, a reliable festival headliner band whose greatest hits album covers 1991 through 2002. The Pitchfork Music Festival, typically closer to the cutting-edge, booked R. Kelly [see “Born Into the 90s” (1992)], Björk, whose greatest hits album was released in 2002, and Belle & Sebastian, whose Wikipedia “Critical Acclaim” section covers 1998 through 2000. Bonnaroo, which is also hosting Björk and R. Kelly, will also feature the Wu Tang Clan.

Though it’s difficult to know if the sheer number of musical acts was actually less in the 1990s, by virtue of the modes of distribution, people were, in all likelihood, less aware of as much music as they are today, and had less access to today’s variety. At the risk of oversimplifying the past — a major signifier and problematic trait of nostalgia — it can truly be said that the improvements and progress in Internet culture have made the last ten years more culturally diverse and complex as more information is available to more people. That’s a fact of progress. Major labels, radio hits, physical music stores and MTV all served to create a culture of stardom that exists less and less today as those modes become anachronistic, especially in the “alternative” sphere. At a time when our attention is exponentially fractured and continually divided, icons from the recent, yet vastly different past — Björk, R. Kelly, Dr. Dre and the 1990s by extension — serve as a fondly remembered common denominator.

COMMENTARY

Does SAIC Invest Responsibly?

SAIC Student Groups Rally to Expose SAIC Divestment

BY MEGAN TASHA ISAACS

On February 17, approximately 50,000 people, including two busloads of avid Chicago activists, descended upon the White House to take part in “Forward on Climate,” the biggest climate protest in U.S. history. At noon, SAIC undergraduate Liana Li, a number of other Chicago students and I joined the crowd outside the Washington Memorial to call on President Obama to stop current and future construction of the TransCanada Keystone XL Pipeline extension. This extension is a massive \$5.3 billion project that will create a direct route for the transport of crude oil from the Alberta tar sands in Canada to massive oil refineries in Houston, Texas, effectively bisecting the United States.

Enduring the 12-hour overnight bus ride from Chicago to D.C. wasn’t such a big deal for us, especially considering how relevant this pipeline and other climate-related problems are to our generation. In his most recent Rolling Stone article, “The Case For Fossil-Fuel Divestment,” Bill McKibben, a long-time environmental activist and author, warns, “It’s not just people at a distance who are in trouble here, though so far they’ve borne the brunt – young people, the kind of people you mostly find on campuses, are the next chief victims of climate change.” Frankly, this is what scares me the most. The fact is that it is US — our generation — who will experience the worst effects of climate change. Not our parents, not Obama, not our congressmen — but us.

Exactly how will this pipeline affect SAIC students? And what did this protest really mean? As students, we have barely enough time to eat and sleep, let alone worry about global levels of atmospheric carbon dioxide. Between our classwork, working two jobs and freaking out about student

loans, how can we worry about the land and water rights of farmers in Nebraska? But the reality is that climate change already impacts our daily lives, and this impact will only intensify if we wait to take action. While it may feel nice, a 60-degree day in the middle of January is not normal. And the USDA just reported that food prices are currently rising and expected to rise even more due to 2012’s record-breaking drought in the Midwest.

For some of us, these issues hit home even harder. SAIC design student Jacob Goble grew up 10 miles from the Phillips 66 Wood River oil refinery in Wood River, IL. Since 2010, Wood River has received Canadian crude oil through the Midwest section of the existing Keystone Pipeline, and pending Obama’s approval, will be directly connected to the same Keystone extension that 50,000 people protested against in Washington, D.C., last week. “Knowing that the people I grew up with are breathing the chemicals being emitted from this refinery, which include sulfur dioxide and benzene, is unnerving,” Goble explained. “I care about stopping this pipeline expansion because I have experienced its effects first hand. The smell is enough to concern you, and since the expansion in 2010, it has only gotten stronger. We shouldn’t have to breathe air and live on land laden with harsh chemicals and nauseating fumes. Students at SAIC should care about this issue because this isn’t just about the present in Wood River Illinois — it is about the future of our generation.”

This isn’t something we should ignore or be too busy to think about. It is our responsibility — to ourselves, our peers and future generations — to start paying attention. We need to make an effort not only to inform ourselves about these issues, but also to speak up about them and do something. While the Keystone Pipeline is President

Obama’s battle in our fight against climate change, a new nationwide college divestment movement is now ours. Yes, “Forward on Climate’s” primary goal was to convince the President to stop this pipeline, but it was also very much about building a climate movement, one that we can now use to tackle an even larger problem: the fossil fuel industry itself.

Based on the fact that burning fossil fuels is a primary cause of climate change, our new student

movements, but the fact is that by investing in the companies who feed, push, advertise, and lobby for fossil fuel consumption, colleges and universities are quite literally profiting from worldwide climate disaster and public confusion around climate change. The Responsible Endowments Coalition recently reported “Collectively, colleges and universities have approximately \$10 billion worth of stock in companies that extract and mine fossil fuels and another \$5+ billion in other related

“SAIC for the Future” is asking the SAIC administration to publicly disclose any endowment funds currently invested in fossil fuel companies

group “SAIC for the Future” is asking the SAIC administration to publicly disclose any endowment funds currently invested in fossil fuel companies and to work with us to withdraw any investments we have in the top 200 most powerful fossil fuel companies. This campaign is called “SAIC Go Fossil Free” and is part of a nationwide push from over 250 student-led campaigns asking for universities to divest from the fossil fuel industry. The administrations of Unity College (ME), College of the Atlantic (ME), Sterling College (NH), and Hampshire College (MA) are committed to fossil fuel divestment and students from community colleges to ivy league universities have launched campaigns to ask their own administrations for the same.

Make no mistake, we acknowledge the complexities of fossil fuel consumption and college endow-

companies: those that help burn, extract and transport them.” Taking our money away from fossil fuel companies publicly makes a moral, political and economic statement that, as an institution, we refuse to associate with the companies that fuel climate catastrophe.

To learn more about how to get involved with SAIC Go Fossil Free check out our facebook at facebook.com/SAICfortheFuture or read about the divestment campaigns of other schools across the country at 350.org.

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NEWS

NT

CPS Officials Announce 54 Public Schools Could be Shut Down

In what is shaping up to be one of the largest mass school shutdowns in U.S. history, Chicago school officials made public on March 21 a list of the 53 elementary schools, or 11 percent of the total number of elementary schools in the district, they intend to shut down. Chicago Public Schools has cited under enrollment at half of all its schools as the reasons for the closings. It has been reported that nearly all of the 30,000 students impacted are African American on the South or West Sides, or near former public housing developments.

S

SAIC Partners With Northwestern University for Summer Course

BY TIM GROVER

With registration for summer courses at SAIC in full swing, one offering stands out: “Data Viz Collaborative.” The course, focusing on finding visual solutions for interpreting data and information, will be taught by a group of interdisciplinary SAIC faculty and various science faculty at Northwestern University (NU).

The structure of “Data Viz Collaborative” is realized through two main outlets: short lectures from science and studio faculty, and hands-on collaborative research and design in teams composed of students from both institutions.

Interim Dean of Undergraduate Students Tiffany Holmes has been spearheading the project. She said she is hoping to expose students of both science and art to a new way of working and is excited about the opportunities the course provides. “NU was able to pick any art school in Chicago to work with,” Holmes said. “And they chose us.”

Holmes will be running the course with participating SAIC faculty in Art History, Art & Tech, AIADO and Contemporary Practices as well as NU faculty in Engineering, Applied Mathematics and Psychology. The course allows scientists to see fresh and original ways of presenting complex information and allows artists to hone their visualization and analytic skills while ultimately building toward presenting their work in a gallery setting.

E

Arizona Law Banning Mexican American Studies Curriculum is Upheld

An Arizona court upheld a law that bans a Mexican American Studies curriculum, calling it constitutional. The law, House Bill 2281, was passed in 2010 and bans courses that “promote the overthrow of the U.S. government, foster racial resentment, are designed for students of a particular ethnic group or that advocate ethnic solidarity.” The law is said to specifically target the elementary, middle and high schools in Tucson that were offering an experimental Mexican American Studies curriculum to students. The judge did rule that that the section of the law prohibiting courses for students of a particular ethnicity was unconstitutional, but he did not believe students were being targeted in the ban of the Mexican American studies curriculum.

H U

Interns Walk Out in Protest at Minneapolis’s Walker Art Center

Three interns at the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis resigned in protest of the recent staff layoffs in the institution’s film department. They accused the museum’s management of “general disrespect towards a longstanding, talented, and loyal staff.” Recently, the Walker laid off Kathie Smith, the Film and Video Program manager, and has been making other cuts in staff. It has been reported that the Walker Art Center is reducing its overall programming because of rising admission prices and a decline in revenue.

K

Student Group Launches Compost Project in Columbus Building

BY KYUNGMIN KO

SAIC student group, Student Environmental Action (SEA) has started a composting pilot project to address the issue of food waste collection on campus. The project kicked off during the first week of March, with food scrap bins next to the trash and recycling bins in the Columbus Cafe. Hired student workers are responsible for collecting and maintaining the bins.

“Collective Resources, Inc., one of the few commercial food scrap pick-up companies currently operating in Chicago, will then pick up the waste from SAIC and transport it to NIU-Earth Organics or the Waste Management Site at 122nd and Stony Island, where it will be composted into soil,” Megan Isaacs, a senior and member of SEA explained.

The composting bins are currently only available in the Columbus Cafe because it is still a pilot project. SEA’s goal is to spread this service to the other cafes and cafeterias throughout campus and is working to achieve this by gaining positive community feedback and support.

For expanded versions of the school news stories, visit the news section on our website FNewsMagazine.com

W

Los Angeles MOCA rejects proposed LAC-MA merger

The financially troubled Los Angeles Museum of Contemporary Art released a statement saying that it was best for them to remain an independent institution, formally rejecting the offer made in early March by the Los Angeles County Museum of Art to take over the ailing museum. MOCA remains in conversations with other institutions — mainly the University of Southern California and the National Gallery of Art in Washington D.C. — but future plans on how they will build up their crippled endowment remain unclear.

T

SAIC Alum Angel Otero Exceeds Expectations in First Sale with Auction Giant Christie’s

BY PERCY BAKER

Angel Otero’s painting *Acis and Galatea* sold for \$52,500, nearly \$20,000 over the estimated \$20,000-\$30,000, in Christie’s First Open Sale that took place Friday, March 8. The sale marked the first time Otero’s work was sold at a top-tier auction house — a career milestone for the 32-year-old artist represented by Kavi Gupta Gallery and Lehmann Maupin Gallery.

Christie’s First Open Sale is held twice yearly and includes works by both emerging artists and lesser-known works by established artists. The First Open Sale is at a lower price point than Christie’s other record-breaking Post-War Contemporary sales.

Otero’s painting is Lot 8 of the 300-lot sale. It was offered along with 22 other lots to benefit the Brooklyn Museum in what is an auction debut for many of the artists, all of whom donated their works.

Otero, normally known not to be concerned with the market significance of auctions, made a particular exception in this case because the Brooklyn Museum is a “wonderful institution and one that Angel feels particularly close to,” said Caity Swanson, the artist’s assistant.

S

Art History Department Launches New Art History Major

BY DIANA BUENDÍA

Starting in the fall of 2013, SAIC will add a new undergraduate degree option for students: the Bachelor of Arts in art history (BAAH). In a school-wide email last month, Interim Dean of Undergraduate Studies Tiffany Holmes announced the phasing out of the BFA with an Emphasis in Art History (BFAAH) to make room for the new BAAH. She called the degree “among the first of its kind in this nation — a degree focused on the study of art history in its most varied practices and buttressed by substantial studio and Liberal Arts components.”

Current BFAAH students won’t be affected by the degree — they can finish their degree without making any changes to their academic schedule. David Getsy, Professor and Director of Undergraduate Programs in Art History, explained that the BFAAH was put in place by the undergraduate department for students who had plans to go to graduate school in art history but because the current option is a BFA with just an “emphasis” on art history, “students fought an uphill battle with graduate schools,” he said.

Getsy says the new degree is for students who “are committed to art but who want to be its scholars, interpreters, curators, and writers rather than its makers.” The degree will require students to take at least 18 courses in art history as well as a significant number of studio classes. BAAH students would have to go through the Contemporary Practices program during their first year and take a series of required studio electives after. “We strongly believe that the best art historians have a thorough understanding of art practice,” Getsy explained.

STUDENT PROFILE

Punishing the Victims

BY SURABHI KANGA

On December 19, 2012, Iranian artist Sanaz Sohrabi gave a silent performance outside the United Nations Headquarters (UNHQ) in New York City. She worked in collaboration with Sanctioned Life, an initiative calling to attention the repercussions of economic sanctions on civilians in Iran, and havaar.org, a grassroots initiative to oppose military action.

Troubled by the effects of sanctions on those with chronic illnesses, Sohrabi released a video asking people in Iran to send stories to her about how the sanctions have affected their ability to procure the medicines necessary for their survival. She then printed these stories on small pieces of paper, which were rolled up and put into clear capsules. She placed about 3,500 such capsules on the ground outside the UNHQ, and handed flyers and pamphlets to passers-by.

I spoke with her about the reactions to the performance and about being an Iranian in America. Sohrabi is currently pursuing her MFA in Performance and Photography at SAIC.

Surabhi Kanga: In a National Iranian American Council (NIAC) panel discussion about the effect of sanctions, panelist Bijan Khajepour, an Iranian national, said that the United Nations (UN) and the United States (US) should leave Iran alone, and that Iran would solve its problems by itself. Do you agree?

Sanaz Sohrabi: I'm not good at talking politics, and part of the reason why I did this piece is to not talk about it myself, but to get the right people to start talking about this. It's a very multi-faceted issue with a lot of layers and complexity involving several other countries. But I will say that history has taught us that sanctions have only affected the people, not the government. The dictatorial regime doesn't think about civilians. The sanctions make it stronger by sucking the blood of the people. This is exactly what happened in Iraq. About 500,000 children died because they didn't have access to enough food or medicine. Sanctions are not the answer. There must be a way to ensure there the people do not get affected.

SK: You specifically did this performance in front of the UN Headquarters, and there must have been a reason behind that. Do you think that the solution lies within the United Nations?

SS: The UN is the symbol of the conscience of this and many other nations. I just wanted to bring this conscience out and lay it front of them. The UN could do something, whether it's sending medicine into the country or pushing other nations to act. The drugs are not actually under the sanctions, but the economic exchanges affect them directly. During times of war, the law of distinction applies, and civilians should be treated differently from the armed forces. That could be something they could push for. The UN could act as a catalyst for change. It's difficult, but not impossible.

SK: Did you have any troubles getting the necessary permissions for the performance?

SS: Well, the original idea was very different. I had intended to circle the UN with a thin line made entirely of the capsules, but that area is considered a Red Zone so I was not able to do that. There are some places there where you're not even allowed to stand. But with this performance, we weren't using any city resources and we weren't making any sound, so we just went ahead

Sanaz Sohrabi Highlights the Human Costs of U.S. Sanctions Against Iran



The dictatorial regime doesn't think about civilians. The sanctions make it stronger by sucking the blood of the people.

with it. Thankfully, we didn't get arrested!

SK: What was the general reaction of the passers by and the spectators?

SS: Well, to an extent, we had to realize that we were in New York. People just have a different attitude; I could say that close to 90 percent of them did not even care to stop and see what was happening. The ones that did thought I wanted money in exchange for the capsules. They could not understand that all they have to do is simply open the capsule and read the story.

But after the performances, we went to Grand Central Station and handed out capsules to the people there. Interestingly enough, the only person who spent time on the capsule was an Indian girl. She opened it and carefully read it. She was very touched by the story she read. I still remember her face, this girl. She was genuinely interested in what I was doing. It felt great.

SK: When you were translating and printing these stories, was there any story or few stories that stood out or touched a chord with you?

SS: Every time my friends and I read these stories (we're still getting them and my friends help me translate them), we just don't know what to do with them. The range of people affected is huge. It could be a 6-month old baby who is lactose intolerant and whose mother cannot find special milk powder to feed it, and who is begging us saying that she just wants to find food for her baby. Or it could be a twenty-year old girl who plays the clarinet but has Multiple Sclerosis. Her parents don't even see her as a musician; all they want is to

get her treatment. Or it could be the sixty-year old grandmother whose grandchildren are worried because she cannot move from the bed. All of them are very sad, and very dark.

SK: Have you ever felt the repercussions of the sanctions in your personal life?

SS: I can't say it's easy. Even talking about it right now is giving me goose bumps. I came here six months ago carrying a huge responsibility of becoming the voice of my people. For my parents, it's always difficult to send me money here. So I am constantly surrounded by the fear of not being able to pay for my education, my cost of living and my art itself. For all the people back home, the fear is having to constantly cut down on everything they need to survive.

SK: Do you feel the difference here? Is that what made you choose this particular piece?

SS: I feel that the media doesn't do a very good job of informing people here, or in all other countries, of the actual situation in Iran. So when I was thinking about it I decided that I must do this job myself and tell everyone about the problems that people in Iran are facing in their everyday lives.

SK: I've heard of incidents where Iranian Americans or Iranian nationals were refused service or were discriminated against. Has that happened to you or anyone you know?

SS: Thankfully, no. But I do know of this girl, Sarah, who was an Iranian student here. She went to an Apple store and they refused to sell her anything because they heard her talking in Persian over the phone. They had a problem with the fact that she was buying this as a present for her cousin. It generated a huge buzz, and she even made a video about it addressing President Obama. The back of Apple products mentions that they can't be sold in Iran, Syria, and North Korea.

SK: So have you considered staying here in America after your graduate studies are complete?

SS: I think America has a fantastic academic structure, but I haven't thought about staying here after my studies are over. I would love to go back. My grandmother used to say that a person is like a tree — you could transfer a growing tree to another place but it would never blossom the same way or bear the same fruit. I cannot bear fruit here. I think I should go back to the place where I can truly blossom.

SK: How did your parents and people back home react to this project?

SS: Well, my mother was very afraid for me. She still is, actually. The performance has been covered up. One of the groups I was working with is considered by the government to be opposed to them. So my mother is afraid that the regime is going to have me arrested when I go home, for working with groups which oppose dictatorships. I am afraid too, but like I said, these are the constraints my art will have to live in. I hope I don't have to go jail, but if I do, I will.

 PROFILE

Desire Indulgence Fantasy and a Giant Grilled Cheese

The Sculptural work of Cara Krebs



BY WILLIAM RUGGIERO

My discussion with Cara Krebs (MFA candidate in Fiber and Material Studies 2013) began with a touch of American kitsch: we talked about cheeseburgers. Their form. Their allure. Their status as objects of shame. I reminisced about being a young kid and seeing the gummy candies shaped like cheeseburgers, and how I never brought myself to bite into one. Coincidentally, cheeseburgers were a common denominator between Cara and me. Cara reached into her bag and pulled out a cloth wallet she bought that is shaped like a cheeseburger. It was a soft, round, trompe l'oeil object that folds open like two buns, one side with lettuce and tomato, and the other with a realistically rendered meat patty. Both the cheeseburger gummy and wallet fall under what Cara calls “novelty,” a category that is part of a larger system that structures her practice. Held by magnets on her studio cabinet, there is a Venn diagram she created that graphically organizes her interests in food into categories such as: fudge-like, translucence, novelty and color. For her, the wallet presents a desire to make a food-shaped “completely functioning and necessary object that can be really cute, uncanny and weird.” These material forms that generate a purely indulgent desire are what interests Cara Krebs — channeling the materially luscious, attractive yet edible.

I had the opportunity to sit down with Cara and gain insight into her latest homage to an American classic: a giant, out of this world, grilled cheese sandwich. One can imagine that this piece will garner a lot of attention in the upcoming MFA show. In reference to her subject matter and overwhelming scale, I heard a visitor on Open Studios Night last fall pass around the name Claes Oldenburg. But this sandwich and her practice is not part of that conversation. There is no kitsch, or overt irony. Cara experiments with material, plays

with different modes of rendering artificiality and fantasy and assures that a viewer is humbled by an intimate experience.

As the artist describes it, an “otherworldly” space exists in between two eight-foot-long slices of Styrofoam bread she has built. The top slice of bread has a type of oculus at its center, a hole over which she has placed a green sheet of Plexiglas. It filters the light into the piece. A curved concave canvas structure supports the slices, painted with rich green tones, textures and shapes that give a pleasantly alluring sense of depth as it comes into contact with the green light from above. This dimensionality is questioned when sculptural elements are hung from the top slices of bread: stuffed yellow fabric oozing down and gesturing toward stalactites of dripping cheese. On the floor of the interior are organic constructions — barnacle-like mountainous structures of sphagnum moss, and buttery clumps dripping out of the artwork. It is a fantastical world that cannot be fully contained within the bread.

Krebs creates “a new kind of permanence” for the grilled cheese sandwich, part of her interest in using the material qualities of foods to create immersive environments. The lowbrow, yet celebrated cultural status of the grilled cheese sandwich provides a platform for Krebs to visually abstract it as a comfort food. “Eating a grilled cheese is a simple, humble, but completely indulgent experience,” she told me. Her material construction’s portability and relation to children’s food allows it to become a type of toy, where the food has “grown so large that it becomes weird.” While this tremendous scale is a first for Cara, she says: “I’ve always been interested in other worlds. Things that I just found intriguing, joyful, or important. Creating worlds for them to exist in and to be notable. Maybe it comes from a compulsion for collecting things. I’m interested when [worlds] come together in the context of art, which is made for viewing and



experience.”

Hanging on the wall next to the sandwich is a red, smooth and amorphous sculptural object with a blue center. Light bounces inside of its rounded surface. Almost like jello, it has a seductive yet subtle, playful quality. Krebs informs me that it’s made of the same material as gummy worms. Its squishy and fluid shape translates with a type of organic plasticity that beckons the viewer to touch it, or act on it. This is the suspension Krebs aims to provoke, a desire to pass through the object.

Her interest in “translucence,” also part of her diagram, derives from the visual access that this squishy solid gives the viewer. “You can pass through it,” she says. The liminal

Dimensionality is questioned when sculptural elements are hung from the top slices of bread: stuffed yellow fabric oozing down and gesturing toward stalactites of dripping cheese.

space blurs the boundaries between desire, indulgence and fantasy. Similar to the grilled cheese, the piece creates an intimate space of an imagined tactility, of inhabiting the material landscape.

In one of her previous works, Krebs took shortening and petroleum jelly and mixed the two. She spread a large quantity of the mixture on her studio floor, paying close attention to creating a whipped texture with delicate peaks. She aptly titled it “Frosting.” The desire for these foods is channeled into a desire to exist with them in the same space. Moving from a work like “Frosting,” which acted more like ornament to the ever-growing grilled cheese, Cara Krebs exhibits a desire to create a space that is inviting, bizarre and safe. Foods that represent simple pleasure are also sites for transformation, doors to other realities and complex material explorations. But viewers of art are never given access into this world, but are rather asked to remain on the threshold imagining what it would be like to pass through it.

SCHOOL NEWS

The End Is Here

What About Those Post-graduation Paychecks?

BY MICHELLE WEIDMAN

Graduation is quickly approaching and the only thing on graduating students' minds, besides completing their thesis or studio work, is what's next?

In February, the U.S. Labor Department issued an encouraging jobs report. It highlighted that 236,000 new jobs had been created in the U.S., far more than many economists' predictions. Also, the unemployment rate fell from January's 7.9 percent to 7.7 percent, the lowest level since December 2008.

Yet, especially in art-related fields, there is still tough competition for scarce work. "There aren't jobs everywhere, and you're competing with people who lost their middle income salaries and are now bagging groceries at Trader Joe's," Kate Schutta, Assistant Dean of Student Affairs and Co-director of the Career + Co-op Center (The Center), explained. F News magazine met with Schutta and Vicki Engonopoulos, Co-director, Career + Co-op Center, to talk about the job market in this unstable economy and what The Center can do for students, even if they haven't taken advantage of available services before this point.

"The job market is changing so quickly and it is so dynamic," Schutta said. "ten to 15 years ago there was always some way to hustle and make money and get by to make your own work; it is a very different situation now. You have to be much more strategic to be competitive."

"Artists are harbingers of the new, contingent economy," according to the 2011 article "Let's Get Serious About Cultivating Creativity," published in the Chronicle for Higher Education. "Piecing together multiple jobs, working across sectors, starting new enterprises, and embedding themselves in dense creative networks." While, on one hand, this may sound liberating, insecurity and hazard are the bedfellows of contingency.

A survey conducted by Strategic National Arts Alumni Project (SNAAP), called "Painting with Broader Strokes," found that 57% of professional artists hold two jobs, and 18% have three or more jobs. The site notes, "There is no strong current to carry [graduates] down the river of employment; rather, they must hop from stone-to-stone as they create a non-linear career path." Hopping from stone to stone may involve slipping, and if high amounts of student debt are a factor, that can be a deep river to wade through.

Alumni survey results for the SAIC graduating class of 2011, conducted in February of 2012, offer a picture of how recent SAIC graduates are navigating these issues. According to the results released by The Center, 75% of SAIC undergraduate alumni reported that they

were employed, 70% in arts-related jobs. The graduate alumni reported higher numbers with 82% employment and 74% in arts-related jobs. The participation numbers for the surveys were at 22% for undergrads and 33% for graduate students.

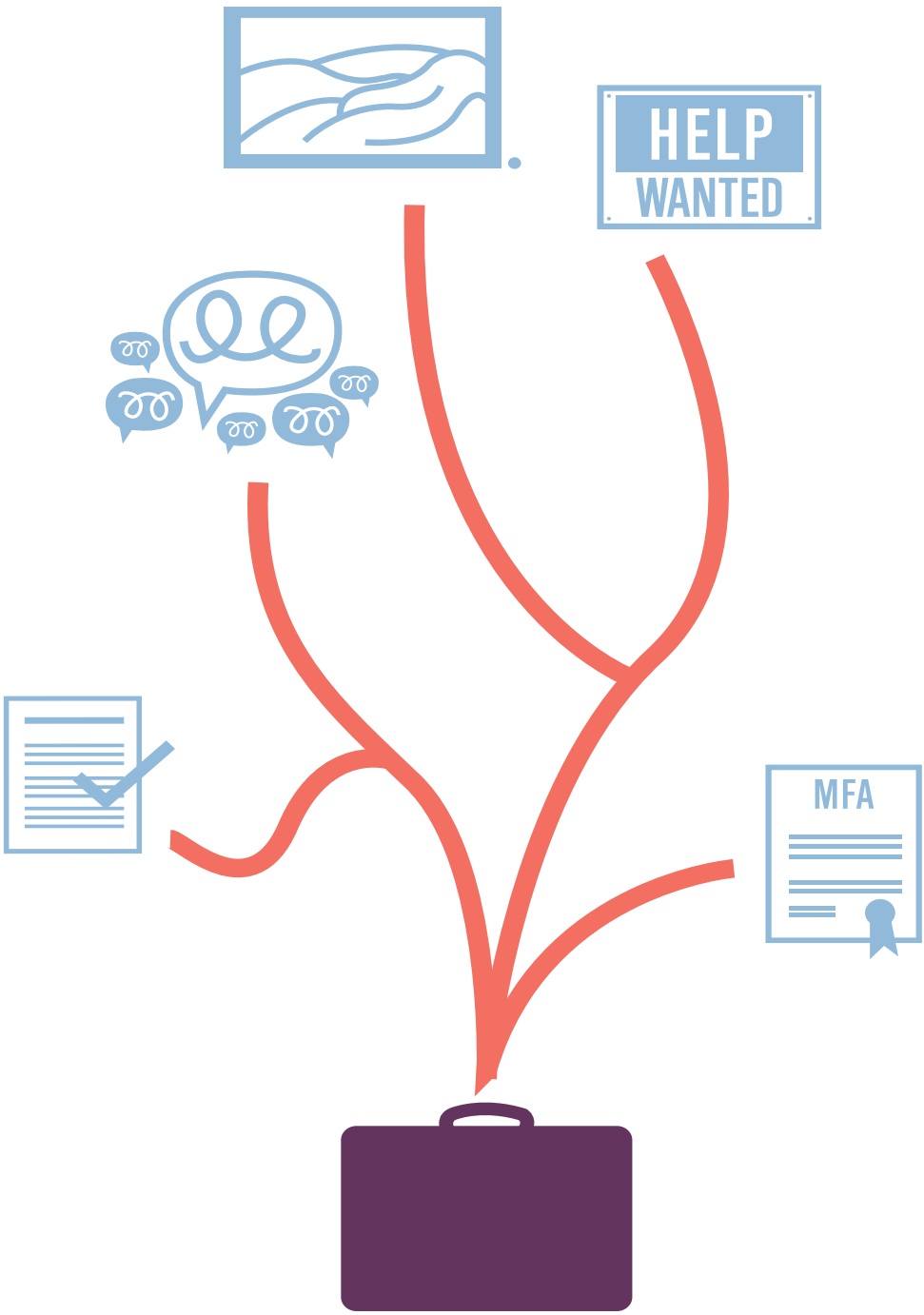
SAIC also participated in a 2011 national survey of arts-related graduates by SNAAP. The school's results were not provided to F News magazine, but comprehensive national survey results are available online. Out of the 33,801 respondents from across the U.S., 67% responded that they hold jobs within the arts, while 46% say that their jobs are not art related. The average institutional response rate for SNAAP was reported at more than 20%. The seemingly good news is that only between four and five percent of respondents reported being unemployed and looking for work. However, the survey wasn't limited to recent grads. In fact, only 21% of selected respondents graduated after 2006.

Findings highlight the importance of exploring long-term employment strategies rather than expecting the perfect profession to fall into place immediately after graduation. This is where The Co-op and Career Center aims to assist students and alumni. "The market isn't as reliable as it is in sciences and technologies, it is much more dynamic," Schutta emphasized. "That's why it requires making relationships and becoming involved in professional organizations or professional networks while one is a student here."

For those students who are still at the beginning stages of their academic careers at SAIC, The Center emphasized the importance of developing a relationship with them early on. "The one-on-one advising is key," Schutta noted. "There is not one strategy that is going to work for every student."

The Center also offers frequent workshops that are open to all students and alumni. Once their new website is complete, videos of the workshops will be available online to accommodate alumni and students' busy schedules. It is currently possible to schedule one-on-one appointments through the website at any time, and walk-in times are also available. The Center sends out emails every two weeks about news and upcoming events. They also have an active twitter account on which they post new job opportunities. Additionally, a schedule of their workshops is available on their website.

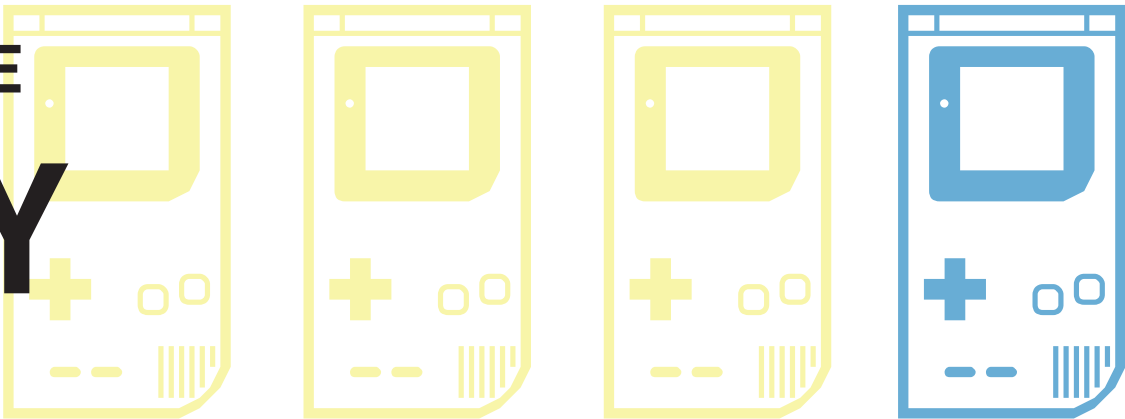
The Center will gladly work with students who are graduating but still haven't been in to see them. "It's never too late," said Schutta. "We're here all summer and through next year and even if you are back home we'll work with you. Just make a phone appointment and connect with us... you're not out there on your own."



The Center will gladly work with students who are graduating but still haven't been in to see them.

COMMENTARY

BEYOND THE GAME BOY



Examining a Lack of Diversity in the Gaming Industry

BY IAN OSTROWSKI

When the cover art for the blockbuster hit video game “BioShock Infinite” was released, gamers around the world were in an uproar. They were shocked not only by the lackluster art, but also by the fact that it was just another entry into the “Man with Gun Walks Toward Screen” school of video game covers. The box art features a middle aged, scruffy, white male protagonist akin to Indiana Jones carrying a gun. This character, Booker DeWitt, with his downcast, serious facial expression, is positioned in front a burning American Flag with the crisp sky as a backdrop. Not only is this image generic and forgettable, but the corset-defying, most important character of the game, Lady Elizabeth, is relegated to the back cover. Now, “BioShock Infinite’s” cover art will join the ranks of innumerable other video game covers that depict a man with a gun. This box art epitomizes the lack of understanding of diversity that the gaming industry is perpetually grappling with.

In a recent article in WIRED magazine, Ken Levine, the creative director behind the critically acclaimed BioShock franchise, justified the decision for the unimaginative, unoriginal, unsatisfying cover. This first-person shooter is set in 1912 during the growth of American Exceptionalism. The primary setting is a city suspended in the air by giant blimps and balloons, called “Columbia,” named in homage to the female personification of the United States. Ken Levine was inspired by two historical events at the turn of the 19th century, with the floating city of Columbia echoing the aesthetic and culture of the 1893 Worlds Fair. Therefore the generic box art comes as a shock, considering all this interesting material that the game derives from. “We went and did a tour ... around to a bunch of, like, frat houses and places like that. People who were gamers. Not people who read [the gaming news website] IGN,” Ken Levine told Chris Kohler, founder and editor of WIRED’s GameLife. “And [we] said, ‘So, have you guys heard of BioShock?’ Not a single one of them had heard of it. I wanted the uninformed, the person who doesn’t read IGN ... to pick up the box and say, ‘Okay, this looks kind of cool.’”

This trend of masculine characters branding the cover of most video games is far from new. Today’s hot-selling video game covers feature military men (“Call of Duty: Black Ops II”), sci-fi men (“Halo 4”), stealthy historical men (“Assassin’s Creed III”) and a gun-toting Angeleño (“Far Cry 3”). As the popularization of big screen heroines pushes to the forefront in Hollywood, with strong female leads like Merida and Katniss, video game publishers continue to largely leave the action to the boys.

Ken Levine is reaching out to “gamers,” clearly an already tapped market in this technological era. More importantly, he pigeonholes the gaming market as consisting solely of white frat boys. Yes, the gaming industry, and gaming culture as a whole, is still

abundant with white frat boys, but the demographic is slowly changing.

The gender representation debate is a trending topic in gaming culture. Statistics show that the demographic in gaming culture is shifting ... slightly, but it is shifting. According to the Entertainment Software Association (ESA), as of 2012, 47 percent of all gamers in the United States were women. That



is a 7 percent increase from 2010, putting women at the halfway mark with male gamers. Additionally, women over the age of 18 represent 30 percent more of the gaming population than males who are 17 or younger.

As far as the game design industry is concerned, there is more of a gender gap. For example, the ESA states that women account for only 11 percent of game designers and 3 percent of programmers. Women programmers make \$10,000 less a year on average than their male counterparts, and women designers make \$12,000 less a year.

So, this begs the question, why should we care about gender representation in games? Especially women? If women make up nearly half of the demographic, more than likely a few of them want to play as a “bad ass” female character rather than the typical white male, right? Posing these questions leads to others — why aren’t we talking about racial depictions then, as well? Or how many people of color work in game design? What is their pay?

These are important questions to consider, as issues of race and racism still exist in the industry and largely as gameplay mechanics (input methods, character actions, rules affecting the game world and so on). Take for example EA’s “Mass Effect,” presumably a progressive, smart video game, which has only one possible black romance option. If one travels down this road of romance, the non-playable partner cheats on you and gets another woman pregnant. The biggest race controversy in videogame history deals with Capcom’s 2009 release of “Resident Evil 5,” which revolved around a well-muscled white American shooting hordes of mindless diseased Africans. What is more alarming, though, is that “racism” as a gameplay mechanic has been a fundamental aspect of game design since video games’ inception. “Level Up!: The Guide to Great Video Game Design” discusses this mechanic: “Within your game, you can create groups of enemies based on shape, color, and physical attributes. They need to look different at a glance. Stereotypes are stereotypes

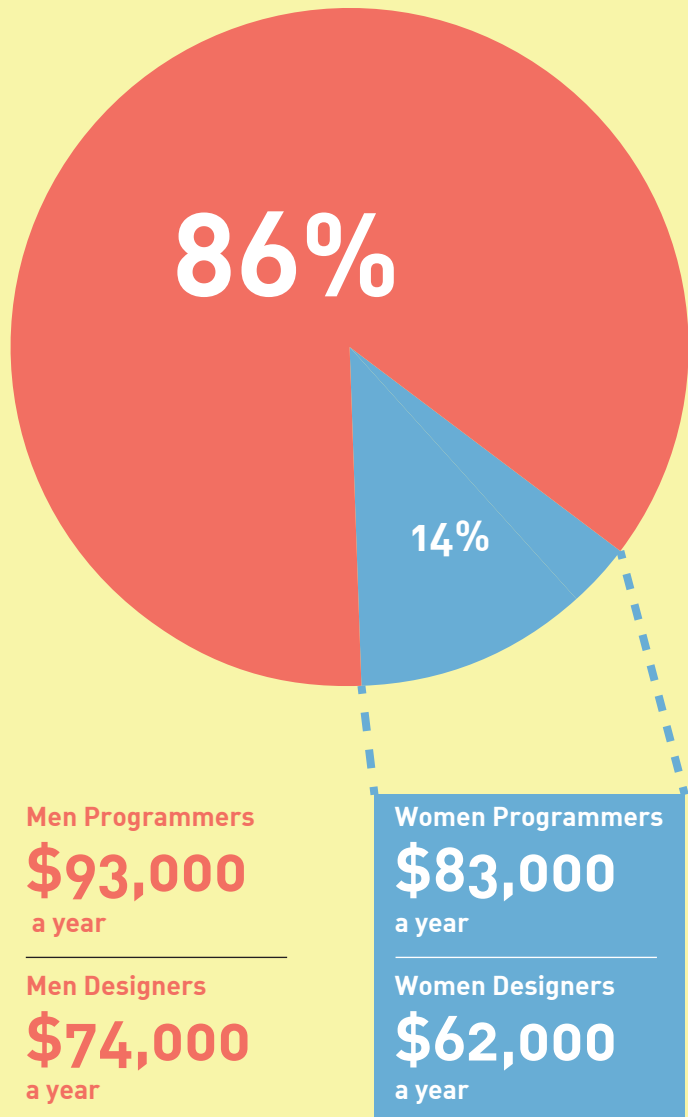
and are made for a reason.” To problematize this matter further, in the actual design industry, a racial demographic study has not been fully developed since 2005. In 2005, less than 20 percent of the game design industry was composed of non-white individuals.

As media continues to shape the way our culture views issues of diversity, game developers are generally still incapable of making a female video game character that is not submissive, emotionally vulnerable and entirely dependent on men, or a character of color that does not fit into perpetuated racial tropes of histories past. As we begin to step into another wave of “next-generation” game consoles with high definition graphics, the ways in which race and gender are fetishized will most likely only get worse with hyper-realistic graphic representations.

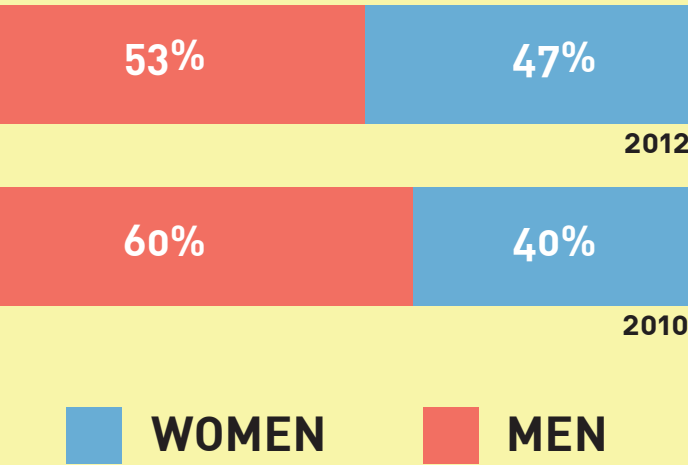
In order for these problems to change, there needs to be more diversity in the gaming industry and in actual game development. But minorities aren’t always welcome with open arms. Luke Crane, a tabletop role-playing game designer and Kickstarter employee, asked on Twitter with the hashtag #1reasonwhy, “Why are there so few lady game creators?” Filamena Young, a game designer at Machine Age Productions in Orange County, California, responded, “because conventions, where designers are celebrated, are unsafe places for me.” Young is referring to the numerous annual gaming conventions such as E3 (Electronics Entertainment Expo) in Los Angeles; DragonCon in Atlanta; and the Penny Arcade Expo (PAX) in Seattle, to name a few. These gatherings still cater to the male gamer, while women are often referred to as a “developer’s girlfriend.” Another game designer, Romana Ramzan, tweeted that she was told conventions are “a good place for a woman to pick up a husband.” Caryn Vainio, a user interface designer in Seattle, replied to Crane’s question with an anecdote: “Because I got blank stares when I asked why a female soldier in a game I worked on looked like a pornstar.”

Let’s face it; the game design industry is still the “frat house” to which Ken Levine referred. Indeed, the very notion of gaming still conjures up images of young men glued to flickering screens for hours on end, fueled by energy drinks and waging online battles unto death. The industry has made some progress over the past couple of years. The recent 2013 reboot release of “Tomb Raider,” for example, shined a new light on protagonist Lara Croft — she defies video game mythologies about women by trading her scanty clothing for a larger range of emotions and personality. But this is a rare gem that comes too few and too far in between other titles. Courtney Stanton, a game designer and founder of the networking group Women in Games Boston said it best in a recent article in The Boston Globe: “It’s true, the industry is not as actively bad as it used to be, but not actively bad is an embarrassingly low bar.”

DESIGNERS & PROGRAMMERS



GAMERS IN THE UNITED STATES



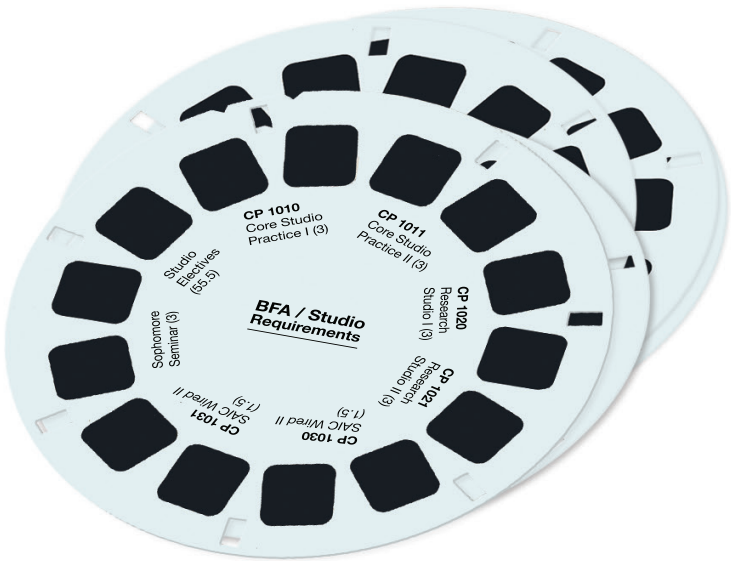
WOMEN MEN

Data taken from the Entertainment Software Association

COMMENTARY



THE WEST AND THE REST



Rethinking SAIC’s BFA in Studio Curriculum

BY ALEXANDER WOLFF

As evident from numerous meetings of the Diversity Action Group (DAG) and the Faculty Senate Diversity Committee, SAIC students and educators alike have been seeking intensive school-wide attention to issues of social diversity. The Art Education faculty’s response to the organization “Black at SAIC’s” Letter to the Editor, in the March edition of F Newsmagazine, has continued this discussion of reexamining social difference and “diversity,” accurately illustrating that the school community needs to work toward creating “open dialogue and a renewed attention to curriculum and pedagogy at SAIC.” What is crucial about their statement is the idea that SAIC needs to address negotiations of social difference at a structural level, which could then facilitate dialogues among students and faculty. A sustained discussion on pedagogy and curriculum, though it may entail many different possible courses of action, is entirely necessary if the school wants to include a more holistic discussion of social difference.

The goal of many non-Western and global/comparative classes is to create dialogues so that complex issues surrounding concepts like culture can be grasped and further explored. Students need to be able to articulately address issues of social difference in daily life, discourse and practice. The importance of these courses is that they have the power to open eyes, and to help students realize that issues of social difference contained in non-Western classes truly do affect them and their larger environment. Considering the importance and possible effect that a course outside the Western tradition can have on a student, why is it that SAIC’s BFA in Studio curriculum does not require a non-Western or global/comparative credit?

The unpacking of contested, constructed and always-complex concepts like diversity, race, gender and culture often occur through participation in classes which fall under the academic category of “non-Western” or “global/comparative” (which can include Asia, Africa, Latin America, the Middle East, and Oceania). The problem is that many students, likely those who would need them the most, might not enroll in these classes, as they could believe that culturally and historically divergent issues do not apply to their practice or field of study.

The BFA in Studio program is the only undergraduate discipline at SAIC to not require a non-Western or global/compara-

Considering the importance and possible effect that a course outside the Western tradition can have on a student, why is it that SAIC’s BFA in Studio curriculum does not require a non-Western or global/comparative credit?

tive credit requirement. For BFA in Studio students, the only remotely non-Western or global/comparative class they need to take is “ARTHI 1001 World Cultures/Civilizations: Pre-History—19th Century Art and Architecture.” This class focuses on the pre-historic art of non-western civilizations and then moves into European 19th century art and architecture. Not requiring a global/comparative or non-Western credit makes it seem as if non-Western history, culture and art are secondary and nonessential in comparison to Western discourse, and that BFA students don’t need to explore it beyond pre-history. In excluding this requirement, the university reifies the idea that these courses don’t relate to BFA students’ fields. It denies the fact that social difference and learning about fields outside the Western canon intimately matter to being an artist in the 21st century.

This deficiency within the curriculum would come as less of a surprise if SAIC did not hold itself to be so specifically commit-

ted to giving students both a liberal arts and art education.

The school’s mission statement declares: “Foremost, SAIC is about students. We are dedicated to providing a complete liberal arts as well as the arts and design education that will serve our alumni throughout their multifaceted careers.” It is curious that many other well-respected liberal arts and art colleges are offering BFA degrees that integrate either a non-Western, global/comparative or “cultural diversity” class requirement into their curriculums. For example, the California College of the Arts requires both a “Diversity Studies Studio” class and a “Diversity Studies Seminar,” Davidson College requires a “Cultural Diversity” credit, and Bard College specifies that students must take a “Rethinking Difference” class and a course focused on a foreign language, culture, or literature. In comparison with other valid art and liberal arts institutions’ stances in making sure their BFA students gain exposure to non-Western “diversity” or global/comparative courses, shouldn’t SAIC’s lack of concern seem entirely misguided? The “Core Values” section of SAIC’s website ironically declares: “Through interdisciplinary practices ... faculty and students conceive and accomplish exchanges in cultural study, production, and research with artists and scholars around the world. We are a community that challenges the notion that any field is ever beyond rediscovery.” It can be inferred then that the prolonged study and interpretation of non-Western histories, cultures and art is a field that is only “beyond rediscovery” for BFA in Studio students.

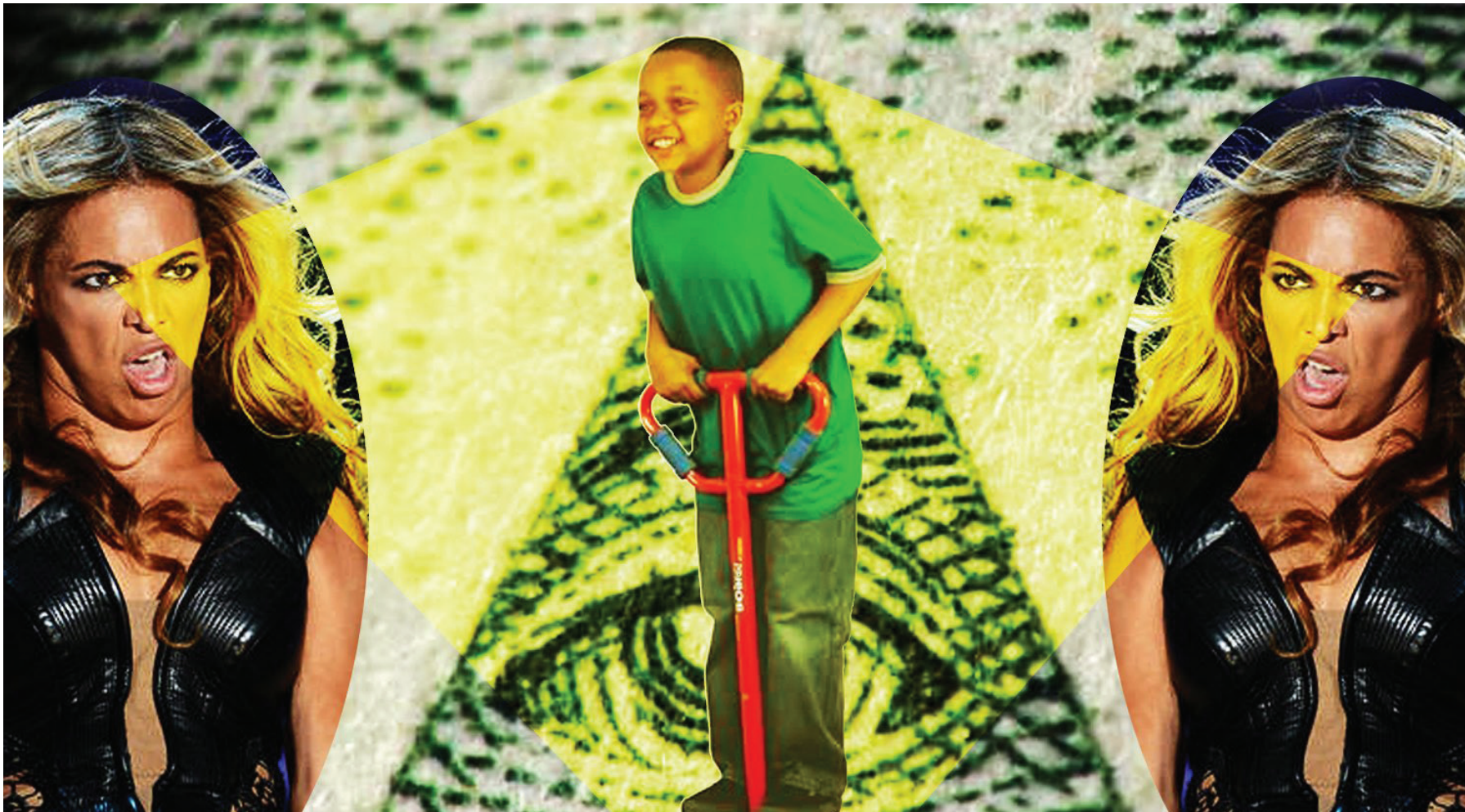
The objection can be made that adding further credit requirements might impinge on students’ freedoms, or scare away prospective students that would otherwise look for a more open-box approach to a BFA curriculum. An argument such as this would be fundamentally flawed in that many specifications have already been made on degree curricula, as long as they are viewed as important. For instance, it is required in every undergraduate degree program at SAIC that students to take classes in both English literature and natural science. For students that want to build careers in the

arts, the benefits of these skills might not seem immediately accessible. It could be argued: why does someone need to learn about a natural science or English literature when it might not directly affect his or her career path? SAIC and many other institutions would most likely argue that these areas of study are viable as general skills, and as crucial for intellectual advancement in any type of liberal arts or art education. If taking a non-Western or global/comparative course is essential to any other discipline at SAIC, why isn’t it essential to being an artist? If the school doesn’t want to add more specific requirements, it should look to allocate at least one art history, liberal arts, humanity or social science requirement as non-Western or global/comparative. It could be suggested that a global/comparative, non-Western or “diversity” initiative be integrated into the freshman, sophomore or upcoming junior and senior year seminars, and this would be a positive step forward for the university.

There are many things the school could do to be more productive in discussing negotiations of culture, race, and gender, among other topics. Fixing the BFA studio requirements is not the end-all solution. One of the most important corollaries to having these discussions about cultural, racial, gender, and any other kind of difference is that students and faculty have to be brave enough to talk about them. Bringing up these types of discussions during critiques, or class debates may be challenging and often times uncomfortable, yet this is exactly as it should be. These issues continue to exist in the real world, and they are rarely easy or comforting. SAIC states that it is devoted to giving students tools to help them transition into the world as thinkers, artists and practitioners. Understanding social difference should be considered one of the most crucial skills in this equation. Requiring a global/comparative or non-Western credit for the BFA Studio program is essential, because it will allow students to take informed stances, realize that these issues do affect them and their practices and allow them to use these new understandings in both their classes and the world.

ART COMMENTARY

IT'S HER WORLD,



WE JUST LIVE IN IT

The Art (and Icon) of Beyoncé

BY RASHAYLA MARIE BROWN

Beyoncé-mania has reached unknown heights in the past couple of months. On top of lip synching at the Presidential inauguration, the pop star appeared on the cover of GQ and Vogue magazines, aired a self-directed documentary on HBO, sat down for an interview with Oprah and gave a powerhouse Super Bowl halftime show performance. Her message is that, through hard work, one can rub elbows with Oprah and Obama and dominate the most macho of events, all while wearing stilettos with a loving family cheering on the sidelines. She represents what happens when a black entertainer successfully balances tropes of gender, Eurocentric beauty standards and capitalism, without the nasty suffering that often befalls celebrities who reach her level of fame (see: MJ, Whitney, Mariah). Girls, rather Beyoncé, run the world.

Several SAIC students have taken on the challenge to use pop culture to understand our society, often incorporating Beyoncé

into their work. In the Warholian mode, there is a pervasive desire for young artists at SAIC to fully understand the nature of our icons and make work about them. Sometimes Bey is used as a stand-in for beauty and confidence, such as in junior SAIC student J.J. King's screenprints of glitched images that comment on the desire for perfection. Both Beyoncé's corporate model of success (not the self-owned, avant-garde kind of, say, Prince) and the force of her fame are subjects of interest to artists. Her massive, ubiquitous commercial exposure makes her seem supernatural. "I find it funny," said Vincent Martin, a multimedia artist in the class of 2014 who composes satirical digital collages with Beyoncé's image. "It" being the internet conspiracy that has cast Beyoncé as part of the Illuminati, the secret society of politicians, pop stars and corporations scheming to take over the world. Working with a similar topic, recent BFA Photography graduate Joshua Emmanuel Slater performed in drag and lip-synched her songs in reverse, which he explains "ad-

dressed the idea of fame coming to a black female through mystical forces, i.e. the Illuminati rumors."

Beyoncé's documentary "Life is But a Dream," which aired in February, fails to provide much insight into such rumors over her mysterious and private life. However, in the midst of the vignettes about how much of a businesswoman and artist she is, the patriarchal mechanisms that made her growth possible are also revealed — a tough father who withheld affection, a husband who "taught [her] to be a woman" and a team of neurotic managers and corporate affiliates, all eager to please. Moments like these suggest she is just as affected by these paradigms of power, despite the fact that she has considerable financial power herself.

It seems that the mystical forces that allow Beyoncé to succeed are real gender and race paradigms that promise financial reward to the entertainers who express them beautifully and precisely. This effect of identity politics on Bey surfaces in other artworks about her as well. Gabriella Brown, a BFA Painting and Art History student, makes life-size graphite drawings of women of color to address the glammed-up, hyper-constructed images that inform how we view them. "I identify with the images, celebrate them, am seduced by them, feel constrained and sometimes objectified by them," Brown explains.

This interest in identity performance is also explored in the work of Alexandria Eregbu, a BFA senior specializing in fibers and performance. Eregbu layers images of Beyoncé in a kente-like pattern to explore the visual representation of blacks in and outside of the contemporary art community. In her performance "Gilding the Kitty Kat," Eregbu also dresses in an outfit similar to one worn in Bey's video for her song "Kitty Kat" to prowling around a gallery with feline gestures as an alpha female archetype.

The works of these artists thoughtfully



engage the multiple meanings of Beyoncé as an icon, since we are all a part of making her, or any celebrity for that matter, who they are. At one point in "Life is But a Dream," Beyoncé states, "I can't do it by myself," in response to the difficulties of managing different expectations. Maybe not a secret society, but thousands of people are responsible for the Beyoncé we know. The effect of a celebrity on young artists suggests how intimately popular culture and capitalism go hand in hand, as do pop culture and art.



SAIC VOICES

BY KRISTOFER LENZ AND SANG LIM HAN

One of the most difficult challenges facing the School of the Art Institute of Chicago (SAIC) is how a private art school can engender an environment where a multiplicity of voices is represented in the student body, curriculum and conversation. *F* News magazine has published a series of articles and letters addressing these concerns. Despite our efforts, it seemed that every attempt to illuminate one issue uncovered countless others. In an effort to once and for all open up a dialogue about the all the issues surrounding diversity at, we invited a wide sample of students, faculty and staff to have frank and honest conversations about what is happening and (hopefully) how it can be fixed.

The response was overwhelming. Representatives from across the school were enthusiastic about the opportunity to express their views. In the interviews we gained personal perspective on how a lack of diversity affects discussion in the classroom, the self-esteem of students and the processes of art-making. We also learned that awareness of these concerns has

spurred a variety of personal and communal efforts into action. Multiple groups are operating at the institutional level while student groups continue to organize, using the school and the city of Chicago itself as a laboratory for expanding and addressing issues of diversity. What became clear was that the agents of change are already in motion but there remains a fundamental lack of visibility for their efforts.

A troubling and consistent pattern we observed was a general sense of fear around discussing these issues. There is a pervasive feeling that “alternative” viewpoints are underrepresented and those who would represent them feel at best outnumbered, or at worst intimidated. It is *F* News magazine’s sincere hope that giving voice to the variety of opinions and efforts about these issues will help soften barriers and show that the people who want to work toward achieving greater diversity at SAIC are not alone. Students, faculty and administration are listening, many are already in action, and many more are waiting for the call to act.

SAIC AND CHICAGO

“SAIC is a school situated in a city center but it does not reflect that in its population. Virtually all of the student body comes from out of town or from the suburbs of Chicago. This is not a coincidence. The school should have scholarships and other programs available to make it possible for high school students to attend the art school in their own city instead of only recruiting from wealthy high schools that can send students to the dorms.” ¹³

“The school, in my opinion, has a central challenge and that is to attract more students of color from the city of Chicago itself. We have an enormous city and wonderful capacity for creativity in our young people but currently we give approximately eight Governors Scholarships per year, often to students of color who are limited economically. It is so important that we continue to work with our Office of Institutional

Advancement to locate more scholarship monies to attract more of those students. If you think about our freshman class, for example, we had approximately 740 students this year and five of them were Governors Scholars. What would it look like if our student body had 50 Governors Scholars?” ⁵

“I have identified a rather large group of students who are excited to use their skills to help mentor students in local underserved high schools like Crane. I don’t think SAIC realizes how interested our students are in volunteering and service learning. It’s something they want to do, they’re committed to it ... I think we’ve missed opportunities to be involved in conversations about the quality of education in Chicago Public Schools.” ³

OPENING THE CLASSROOM

“Diversity, or difference, creates a discourse of many different voices. It allows individuals to discuss and appreciate what is heterogenous and unique about your community. When a student body is not diverse we enter into a dogma that espouses one perspective rather than a plethora of perspectives or ways to look at issues.” ¹

“Sometimes it seems that conversations about diversity are seen as paradoxical to studying ‘pure’ contemporary art. I don’t think it is such an overt thing, but it is a thread that runs through. The inclusion of other texts, counter-narratives and personal stories can help. For example, we will be discussing issues of race or sex in a class and we’ll have read texts, so texts are this privileged thing. But then someone will raise their opinion or experience with these subjects, which is a very personal story and in a way a primary source. I think that it could be installed in students that personal stories can be a way to bridge the paradigm of these texts in order to make new kinds of knowledge. I’ve had experiences where a personal story was told and it was seen as an interruption before getting back to the text. ... I do think that it is something professors need to buy into because it does disrupt what they have been so fiercely taught. But it also enlivens a classroom, engages students and it becomes a closer community.” ⁹

“I’ve talked to quite a few students of color who are frustrated because faculty and other students won’t talk about certain kinds of work. Or if the student brings in work that is not about their identity or race, they’re questioned as to why they are not doing identity-based work.” ³

“What is missing is that perspective, way of life, reality, then it feels like the students who represent those realities are hitting a wall of always being the educators and outspoken ones in class ... I think when students come here, we expect to learn. But when we become the educators for these types of issues we burn out. Especially since when I leave this place thousands of dollars in debt, I don’t think it should be my place to do that [educate].” ⁷

“As a student of color at the school it has been important that I raise certain issues that I felt weren’t being discussed, whether it be pointing out the omission of certain topics or artists and bringing in a wider range of theorists or just

ON PROVOCATION

each other’s opinions and being able to agree to disagree on certain things.” ⁶

“We’ve had some debates on campus recently about provocative artwork and the potential for this work to offend or upset people or make people feel like particular histories of marginalization are not being taken seriously or recognized at all. These are really serious and impor-

“I think that the school could make incredible strides by reaching out a wider population and really engaging different types of communities. We have great relations with the AIC and MCA but what about our relationship with the Hyde Park Art Center, the DuSable Museum or the Museum of Mexican Art? Those are not institutions that SAIC engages with as often. I think that would be a very easy and natural way to have conversations about diversity ... These multicultural institutions in the city would be able to not only bring different perspectives to the school, but also they would greatly benefit from having some of the students from SAIC working with them. There seems to be such a great opportunity to have an exchange and mutually beneficial relationship. Especially in this challenging economy, finding win-win situations for arts organizations and for emerging artists and students would be really great.” ⁶

asking difficult questions that sometimes just weren’t on the table.” ⁶

“Recently in my Sophomore Seminar class we were talking about work that was racially charged. One of the students said, ‘I’d like to talk about it but I’m really afraid I’m going to offend somebody.’ That’s a typical response that comes from faculty as well as students. I think we need to open up that conversation — even more than the issue of numbers in regard to diversity within the school. For as important as political correctness has been in exposing many problematic issues, its done significant damage to our ability to have conversations pertinent to the work being made here ... Too many conversations shut down because of the fear of not using correct language or saying the wrong thing. That’s stifling in an art school where we should be open to all kinds of discussion no matter how uncomfortable.” ³

“There are moments in the classroom where you don’t want things to be censored but you wonder ‘where and why is this thing okay?’ It becomes a challenge. I feel like race and class are not well-considered in the school.” ⁸

tant challenges and I think as an art school we would do well to think deeply about provocation. It is not necessarily a bad thing. It is something that helps move us to different places within our thinking and helps us learn. When provocation is really working at its best it is creating conditions for thoughtfulness. Provocation can give people an opportunity to grapple with uncertainty and conflict and come up with a new question.” ¹⁰

OPENING A DIALOGUE



1 Hiba Ali BA / BFA



2 Rashayla Brown BFA



3 Barbara DeGenevieve PROFESSOR



4 Rebecca Duclos DEAN



5 Tiffany Holmes DEAN



6 Mia Lopez MA



7 Jeannette Martin MA



8 Felicia Mings MA



9 William Ruggiero MA



10 Karyn Sandlos PROFESSOR



11 Kekeli Kodzo Sumah BA



12 Simone Denise Thompkins MA

“There are really deep and wonderful micro-pockets of practice, belief and posture in the world. When SAIC welcomes a diverse community within the school, what we are tapping into is those micro-moments that various students and faculty bring to us. It’s one of those dynamic situations where we not only need to support and respect the diversities of practice that come from geographic, economic, ethnic locales but we also need to find ways for students and faculty to bring that diversity of practice out into the world.” ⁴

“I think there is going to be change at SAIC, whether SAIC likes it or not. Diversity, on whatever kind of scale you want to place it, is changing and may at times look like it doesn’t fit into SAIC’s model. There are a lot of social projects being done now, there are a lot of partnerships with the city and other groups that students don’t really advertise that diversify the practices here. But I feel like the interface of SAIC is not really reading that. Eventually those partnerships and “informal practices” that students engage in will have to be included.” ⁹

“I feel like a lot of positive things are happening pedagogically on campus and off campus but nobody knows about it. When you are at such a large school as this, that’s sort of normal, but

“SAIC must foster communication between students and the administration to figure out ways to adjust the SAIC curriculum so that it includes a more diverse student body, faculty and courses.” ¹⁵

“There has been a good offering of non-Western classes available for students to pick, which has been great because the conversations within those classes have been quite fruitful. I have learned a lot. I think if more students took such classes, the sometimes monotonous re-hashes

“There is more to diversity than just thinking about numbers. You want to think about the kind of culture you want to build in an institution. For me, a culture that is really taking diversity seriously is one where difference is at the forefront of everything we do. That we are constantly challenging ourselves through the arts to really think about our positions in the world ... We should be grappling with big questions about difference and asking ourselves how we can address them through institutional structures.” ¹⁰

“Every institution should be concerned with increasing diversity but I think that art schools have fallen behind in issues of representation, inclusion and community-building. ... Art schools seem to be the last of the group [of secondary education institutions] to really take diversity seriously and make it a part of their institutional structure.” ²

“I think diversity, or difference, is the product of a climate at the school and that is something that can be created over time. A change of the

ON ART MAKING

“We don’t want everyone to be the same. We don’t want an entire school full of figurative painters, we don’t want a school full of art historians interested in only early 20th century European art. Different stories and backgrounds contribute to a really interesting and dynamic place to work and to learn.” ⁶

“I think SAIC is good for being a place that is full of people who are ... crazy, in the best possible sense. Whenever you get a lot of creative people together most of us have experienced what it is like to be on the outskirts and to feel like we are

not normal or that we don’t fit in. I think SAIC has been really good about encouraging alternative points of view and encouraging people to question why they do the things they do and why we feel the way we feel, not just in our own working but in looking at other people’s work as well.” ¹²

“In the context of an art and design school, a diverse student body expands the dialogue around what it means to be a creative practitioner in the 21st century. You need a diverse student body to encourage students to explore their work from a multiplicity of perspectives.” ⁵

COMMUNICATION & PROCESS

what we need to do is harness the wonderful vehicle of web technology. I’m working with DAG and the Office of Communications to set up web pages that profile events, conversations and courses which highlight the various diversity initiatives at SAIC. It is a way we can actually group together all of these initiatives going on. The other thing we need to see on the site is a perspective from faculty, staff and students (and) let people who are thinking about coming to the school understand that this issue is under discussion and that they would fit in.” ⁵

“We have a lot of talks and events, which are great, but they are always within the sphere of the arts. What other institutions have that we don’t is other departments that aren’t connected

to the arts who have speakers who have to do with sociology or economics. I think it makes sense to bring those perspectives into the school more.” ⁸

“I feel digitally fatigued a lot and I crave human contact. I think that SAIC is actually a place in the analog world where we can talk about what are often very delicate and difficult issues. ... I think the ‘face-to-face’ is the space where we need to have real conversations together. The dynamics of diversity are very subtle and subtlety is not something the digital realm necessarily does very well.” ⁴

CURRICULAR DIVERSITY

of concerns particular to tired Western traditions would ease into wider and more inclusive global interests that can foster greater awareness and healthier collaborative efforts.” ¹¹

“I believe that diversity is not only about the student body, but also about curriculum; a shift has to take place in the curriculum in order for students of color to feel like they belong. It is imperative to examine art practice within a social and political climate, and for everyone to understand how marginalization [race, class, gender

and sexuality] has impacted issues of representation. We need to engage with issues of power and privilege so that students reflect on the works they are making and what they express. It is our responsibility to educate students to be critical and responsible citizens.” ¹⁴

“I think SAIC does a really good job of including LGBT and gender issues into the curriculum. It is something I have felt come up in a few classes and an experience I have not felt anywhere else.” ⁸

A CULTURE OF DIVERSITY

climate first and foremost would require a re-tooling of requirements, specifically of the Bachelor of Fine Art degree. A new version of the degree would consist of more global and comparative classes and secondly forums and journals from each department that would be released online. This would show how the students are actively engaged in a dialogue.” ¹

“The school, regardless of whether students are individually pushing the conversation, should always consider diversity a part of the institutional structure. If we waited for all the people who integrated schools in the beginning to get on board we would still be living in a segregated society.” ²

“There is a big taboo around talking about differences, especially in 2013 America where people are pushing this image of being post-racial, post-sexual and it is absolutely untrue. It would be impossible to say we are place where these things do not matter. We really need to talk about it together and think about how our atti-

NOT PICTURED

13 Gabriella Brown BA

14 Savneet Talwar PROFESSOR

15 Oli Watt PROFESSOR

COMMENTARY

Sex, Love & Discrimination

Dating in a “Post Racial” America

BY SIMONE THOMPKINS

When it comes to choosing a partner, we can be damn picky about qualifiers. Maybe you’ve been to the Owl around last call and you’d beg to differ. But when you get it in writing, when lists are drawn and profiles composed, even the guy on his fourth g&t hanging out near the women’s bathroom has a scrutinized list of requirements and a yes-no-maybe pile of hypothetical applicants.

In 2012, studies by the Washington Post concluded the Internet doesn’t make dating easier or safer, it just increases the size of the pool. Another 2012 study by the Association of Psychological Science theorized that the Internet reduces love connections to a cost-benefit analysis. Though courtship in the animal kingdom has always been a “show me your wares” ordeal, it has never been done to this scale. Online dating looks more like college applications, with percentages, admission essays and test scores. A few clicks can weed out everyone except non-smoking, cat-loving Geminis with “TARDIS” mentioned in their profile (what do you mean “no matches”?). You can filter users by height, age, education, and yes, you can specifically narrow your search to specially select, or eliminate, users by ethnicity.

I’m guessing you aren’t surprised. It’s not uncommon — Chemistry and eHarmony require users to identify their race for the sake of other member’s preferences. Other dating sites like Match and OKCupid allow filtering users by ethnicity.

There’s nothing hush-hush about it, even though it’s racial discrimination.

Yes, I’m dropping the R word here. Because it is racial discrimination. But unlike its other incarnations in academics or the workforce, discrimination by ethnicity is socially acceptable, to a degree, when it pertains to sex.

Maybe you’ve heard it before: “I’m really into Xs.” “I can’t see myself with an X.” “I probably wouldn’t date an X, but I’m not racist or anything.”

A close guy friend once told me, “Don’t take this personally, because I think you’re gorgeous, but I would never date you. I’m just not sexually attracted to black women.”

The funny thing about racism is it just keeps on being racism, even when the speaker isn’t slinging slurs. Racism has a lot of definitions, and none of them endow the speaker with a pass if his or her intention means well. But is it a crime to have a type? Should someone who doesn’t go for Latinos, Blacks, Whites, Asians, be saddled with the stigma of being racist?

The racial component makes the subject of discrimination in dating tricky. Although we live in a country beset by marital inequality, no one can stop you from liking who you like, or make you like someone you don’t. We also live in a country of conflicting ideology. Everything from fables of the American Dream, to the Constitution, to the “Equal Opportunity” disclaimer at the bottom of a job application want you to believe in a post-racial, post-gender world where

everyone can pick themselves up by their bootstraps and make their dreams reality.

But that, friends, is hogwash. In reality, America in 2013 operates within a deeply institutionalized, color-coded social hierarchy that vastly predates the country’s inception in 1776. Statistics by the U.S. Census Bureau from 2011 show women are still paid only 77 cents to every man’s dollar. Further reports from the National Women’s Law Center reveal in 2010, black women in the state of Illinois were paid 64 cents to every White, non-Hispanic male’s dollar, while Latinas earned even less, just 48 cents to every dollar compared to white men. In 2010, the median household net worth of White Americans was \$110,729, \$69,590 for Asians, \$7,424 for Hispanics, and \$4,955 for Blacks. Studies by the Bureau of Justice in 2011 concluded one in every three black men can expect to be incarcerated during his lifetime.

But it doesn’t make sense, right? Because there can’t be that many racists in the world, right? Active discrimination accounts for some of this, but more is just embedded in how our world works. Cultural capital — the largely invisible understanding of how things operate, knowing the right people, speaking the language of success — is just as, if not more influential than a paycheck in our network driven society. There’s also the effect of “passive racism,” a term discussed by critical race theorist Sherry Marx in her book “Revealing the Invisible.” Unlike its active counterpart, passive

racism functions in beliefs and attitudes that reinforce systems of racism, without openly advocating oppression and violence. The results of passive racism are often viewed as cultural oversights; school curricula that fails to include the contributions of other ethnicities, banks that deny loans based on certain “neighborhood risks.”

Passive racism is deeply imbedded in the politics of attractiveness. The interplay between race and beauty has a convoluted history largely ignored by mass media. Though as children we are taught to accept the idea of pluralistic beauty, global media is saturated with a Euro-centric image of desirability — in particular, young men and women with fair-colored hair, eyes and skin. It is effective through sheer redundancy. Bus stop advertisements, films, commercials, magazine covers, stock photos, text books, wherever there is media, there is the subliminal proliferation of an ideal and exclusive beauty.

It is exhausting, especially for women of color, who, in addition to combating the same unrealistic expectations about body image as their European counterparts, must find alternative paths to affirm their beauty where darker pigmentation is a barrier to social acceptance. This is why chemical relaxers exist. Why skin lightening treatments, cosmetic rhinoplasties and eyelid surgeries exist. That we allow people to be candid in their racial discrimination, that it’s socially acceptable, both affirms and reinforces millennia of systemic denigration of non-

COMMENTARY



The funny thing about racism is it just keeps on being racism, even when the speaker isn't slinging slurs

European beauty.

I've brought all this up not simply as a platform for social justice, but to illustrate the sort of place we live in, a place that is easy to forget we live in when we have the privilege, yes, privilege, to pay \$50,000 a year to attend an illustrious art school. It is very easy to sweep racism under the rug, to awkwardly laugh it off, turn away, ignore it. It is easy to be color-blind when you are not confronted by the color of your skin every day.

Race matters. Don't get it twisted. It can't determine how gifted or smart you are, but it does affect how you are perceived, whether you like it or not; it is how you perceive others, whether you want to or not, and it is deeply invested in how you see yourself, whether you're aware of it or not. It is connected to your identity and an inextricable part of your experience — a part of you most everyone can see, or thinks they see, before you turn your head.

But back to the topic at hand: Are you perpetuating racial bias if you don't find a particular race attractive? Short answer — yes. Physical attraction is very important. It matters more than

some girls would have you believe, and less than some guys. But it is only one chemical in the weird science of love and sex. A healthy, functional relationship is also about goal similarities, workable differences, how you solve problems together, what you bring out in each other. These tenets apply to all relationships. Race enters the picture only insofar as it is part, but not all, of who we are as individuals, and generalizations about one race compared to another, especially where attractiveness is concerned, are first off, dumb, and second, irresponsible. There is no mold, no pattern, no hard and fast rule of racial characteristics. There are only shaky generalities, assumptions, stereotypes, and oversights. There is only Juan Valdez and Barbie, Jafar and Aunt Jemima.

Cards on the table, I've only dated white guys. That means something. I didn't date them because they're white, but type is a reflection of cultural interaction, social hierarchies, and societal hardwiring. Does it mean I should be less selective about who I date, or that looks don't matter? No. Does it mean I should superficially diversify my dating lineup?

No. Does it mean I should think — really and deeply — about why certain looks matter more than others? Yes. Should I practice ownership of my attitudes and beliefs, the uncomfortable, the prejudiced, the good, bad, and ugly? Absolutely yes.

When you don't ask yourself these questions you are protecting racism, sexism, classism and heteronormativity. For inequality, silence is golden. The battle for social justice starts by acknowledging that social constructs affect our thoughts, actions and desires. We have to hold ourselves and others to impossible standards, especially when our privileges, whether we're White or straight or educated or thin or cis gender, tell us we don't have to. Because, real social justice isn't something that happens somewhere else where bad people are held accountable for their bad actions. It happens right here in the actions, thoughts, and feelings that we, in our various forms of privilege, are allowed to ignore because their biases increase our individual cultural capital.

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ARTS



A Performance Soliloquy

Miguel Gutierrez and the Powerful People in “And lose the name of action” at the MCA

BY PATRICK G. PUTZE

As the lights dim, six performers take up chairs amongst the spectators seated in the front row at the Museum of Contemporary Art (MCA). The audience, waiting for one of only four performances by Brooklyn-based artist Miguel Gutierrez and the Powerful People, immediately becomes part of the show. Cast member Ishmael Houston-Jones welcomes us with a little heartfelt laughter and a bit of instructional tantric-breathing to get everyone calm and centered. Shortly thereafter, the entire audience is holding hands with strangers and the mood is set as half-séance, half-performance. Spirits are conjured through voice-over audio and a huge parachute is suspended over center stage, glowing a deep blue.

Each show by Gutierrez and the Powerful People was an intimate and inclusive experience in which some 125 attendees were sitting extremely close to, or on the stage. F Newsmagazine had the opportunity to attend one of the performances, and also to sit down with Gutierrez to discuss his inspirations for the performance, the nature of improvisation and how he works with his group to create dynamic, immersive environments. “And lose the name of action” combines dance, sound and cinematic elements to explore notions of the body, life, death and how familial situations develop throughout these themes.

“It’s funny, in as much as I’m making visual art in a way, I’m more interested in creating situations that obviously have a very specific visual read,” Gutierrez says. “What I’m doing is tuning into the particular energy of a situation and the energy of the

space — what’s happening in it.”

Working with lighting designer Leonore Doxsee and sound technician Neal Medlyn, the artist has shaped an environment for dancers to physically espouse ideas about semantics, the mind/body connection and what happens when it breaks down. Much of the inspiration for the choreography for “And lose the name of action” is drawn from Gutierrez’s personal experiences with his father’s recent neurological problems and the complex state of affairs these created for their family.

“The whole point of improvisation is not just that the actions themselves are unknown, but that the consciousness of that movement is a very different kind of engagement,” Gutierrez says.

“My father had a series of blood clots. It’s a long story, but they weren’t properly diagnosed for many years,” Gutierrez explains. “He had a couple of these in his brain and they were causing all kinds of problems. He had to get them operated on and everything’s just kind of rewired up there now. He’s maintained most of his motor skills and language skills, but he struggles somewhat.”

During the performance, the choreography features improvisational movements where dancers shift between graceful and erratic dance. The effect conveys a sense of mesmerizing melancholy, stimulating empathy in the audience as we endeavor to follow the shifting human forms. One performer writhes across the center of the

stage while several flutter about the periphery, light on their feet one second, and stomping vigorously the next — their bodies ostensibly at war with themselves. Basic gestures give the impression of either elegance or laborious task. Often performers interact, offering assistance to each other during moments fraught with challenging movements.

Gutierrez generates circumstances where failed individual movements exist adjacent to deliberate actions. The visual effect is

arbitrarily erratic and beautifully chaotic through the juxtaposition of these opposing body languages. “I work in time, so I’m interested in things changing or the way in which they change and then how one change leads to another change,” Gutierrez says. “This piece has improvisational sections in terms of the movement, but the movement itself hasn’t been constructed to be repeated per se. I think overall, the gestalt of the show stays pretty much the same because it’s not defined exclusively by the actions but more by the overall container of the feeling.”

The title of the performances was drawn from Shakespeare’s “to be or not to be” soliloquy in Hamlet. Gutierrez explains that coupled with his father’s medical condition, this work derived from

his internal philosophical debate about life’s complications. Like the great poet, Gutierrez strives to inspire contemplation a propos of the internal conversations one has, what the bigger picture really is and mental vacillations between faith and doubt. The improvisational aspects of the work really hammer this home.

“The whole point of improvisation is not just that the actions themselves are unknown, but that the consciousness of that movement is a very different kind of engagement,” Gutierrez says. “When you’re dealing with real-time engagement and with what’s actually going on, that gives off a very different energetic read than someone just doing something that they already know. It’s not better or worse, it’s just different. I’m heavily invested in that consciousness.”

He clarifies his belief that individuals encounter his work differently than in interactions with traditional visual art forms such as painting and sculpture. “It’s very different from making a piece someone will stand in front of for maybe fifteen seconds. Which as a result makes what I’m doing very challenging, because I’m hijacking the audience for a much longer period of time.”

The performance moves along resourcefully and is over before we know it. The residual effect is one of quiet philosophical contemplation, if not recollection. Perhaps some fashioned reflections on “What if?” develop individually. And really, isn’t that what we are after in the experience of other’s experiences by way of performance art?

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ART NEWS

UNA SCUOLA ITALIANA DI COMICS A CHICAGO!

The Scuola Internazionale di Comics Opens its First U.S. Location in Chicago

BY SIERRA NICOLE RHODEN

Just near the corner of Ashland and Hubbard, with a foggy Chicago skyline to the east and brick industrial structures in all directions, sits a friendly red schoolhouse. Through a window of its late 19th century façade, pristine drafting desks patiently wait to be smudged with the graphite and eraser dust of a new student body. A yellow, ringed planet adorns the front doors — a futuristic twist to the building’s vintage charm. This will be the new Scuola Internazionale di Comics, an Italian school of comics and graphic arts opening its first U.S. location in Chicago’s Kinzie Industrial Corridor.

Headquartered in Rome, the Scuola Internazionale di Comics has locations in nine Italian cities. The school was originally founded 34 years ago by artist Dino Caterini as what he calls an experimental “creative factory,” during his time working as a designer and illustrator for Italian publishing houses. “When I was young, all the artists wanted to work in the U.S.,” explains Caterini in an interview with F Newsmagazine. “Now, I want to give American artists the opportunity to work under European instructors.” More than 30 Scuola alumni currently work for U.S. comic publishers DC Comics, Marvel and IDW. A particularly prominent alumnus is Sara Pichelli, of Marvel’s “Ultimate Spider-Man” fame.

The school’s U.S. introduction is well-timed. In December 2012, Italy’s foreign minister, Giulio Terzi di Sant’Agata collaborated with Hillary Rodham Clinton to announce 2013 as “The Year of Italian Culture” in the U.S. The announcement spearheaded a series of Italian cultural events to take place in the U.S. this year, including Italy lending key works by Caravaggio, Leonardo da Vinci and Michelangelo, and numerous tributes and festivals for renowned Italian scientists, designers and artists.

With an emphasis on a “master-apprentice” dynamic inspired by 15th century Italian art guilds, the Scuola Internazionale di Comics’ curriculum recalls Caterini’s experiences working as a young artist in Italy. Originally trained as an architect, Caterini’s drawing ability led him to assist comics creator Alberto Giolitti, then later Guido Buzzelli, Vittorio Cossio, and Renato Polese, who he considers “a few of the greatest comics artists of all time.” Caterini’s workflow increased until he was driven to start a new studio with his own team of assistants. In 1979, the artist noticed that despite the

comics industry’s flourishing popularity, there was nowhere to learn the craft. The Scuola Internazionale di Comics was born. “The school started out as a combination training facility and small production studio,” he explains. “Kids could get hands-on experience working on real projects. That is the model that laid the groundwork for the school as it exists today.” The school’s three-year program excludes general education courses in favor of an intensive all-arts curriculum.

Comics in Italy are called “fumetti,” which literally translates to “little puffs of smoke”— the term refers to the cloudlike speech bubbles which accompany the images. Caterini pinpoints the characteristics that he feels make fumetti — and in turn his school’s methods — distinctly Italian. The first is highly rigorous anatomy training with live models. Also key, he says, are ample material experimentation and aspiration toward “a highly individualized, mature artistic style,” or what the director lovingly calls the “artistic soul.” “The U.S. is known for specialization, concentrating on getting great in one area. In Europe, we do the opposite. We force artists to experiment with a wide range of styles and materials like ink, tempera, wash and oil. You have to know the materials to understand which one is best for your personal expression.”

Responding to the demands of a changing industry, the Scuola Internazionale di Comics will also offers courses in graphic design, animation and 3D-Maya software. But embracing technology has not loosened the school’s stronghold on tradition. Caterini stresses, “Even with these new course offerings, we emphasize the art of storytelling, storyboarding and most of all, the need to develop what are called basic hand-skills. These require an appreciation for anatomy and working with pencil and paper, like the good old days.”

“American West through Italian Eyes,” the comic art exhibit which debuted at the school’s public opening on March 22, showcases another characteristic of Italian comics’ “good old days” — a deep-seeded fascination with the American West. Caterini lends this public interest to the theme’s popularity in cinema. “The West was totally dominant in the comics scene when I grew up, because it was like ‘pocket-size’ cinema,” he remembers. “Sam Peckinpah’s ‘The Wild Bunch’ and [Arthur Penn’s] ‘Little Big Man’ influenced us all. You had to have violence, tragedy,

humor and romance. Comics creators were the best directors, screenwriters, costumers and actors all in one.” “American West through Italian Eyes” displays original pen and ink drawings from Scuola Internazionale di Comics Artistic Director Paolo Eleuteri Serpieri. Serpieri’s attraction to the region led him to co-create “L’Histoire du Far-West” (“The Story of the West”), a series on the history of the old West. Serpieri is perhaps best known, however, for his erotic science fiction series “Druuna.”

Chicago was not the only contender when choosing a site for the new school, but Scuola Internazionale di Comics International Marketing Director Lesley Pritikin, a Chicago native who has lived in Rome for the last 25 years, still felt strong ties to the Windy City. She ultimately persuaded Caterini of the same. “Her pride in Chicago’s amazing and vital artistic community was very convincing, and after my first visit, I cancelled visits to San Francisco and Miami,” recalls Caterini. “I knew that our first school outside of Italy was destined to be in Chicago.”

Pritikin and Caterini wanted a location near the West Loop gallery district and away from the already college-dense South Loop area. The Kinzie Industrial Corridor neighborhood they selected, once considered an area of high crime, is a burgeoning arts hub. The nearby Arts of Life studio, founded in 2000, is an alternative day program and creative space for artists with and without disabilities. Meanwhile the 1821 Hubbard Street Lofts, on the same street as the new Scuola Internazionale di Comics, house numerous artist studios and exhibition facilities, including the collaborative project space Johalla Projects. It will be interesting to see how Scuola Internazionale di Comics fits in among this varied selection of local arts organizations. “Like the art our students produce,” Caterini notes approvingly of the new site, “we wanted something, unique, distinctive and, as [Lesley Pritikin] puts it, ‘very Chicago.’”

Scuola Internazionale di Comics will offer workshops and special programs this spring and summer, and three-year programs will begin in October. Enrollment details and deadlines will be announced at a later date. For more information about the Scuola Internazionale di Comics, visit www.schoolofcomics.us, call (312) 265-0982 or stop by booth 1000 at C2E2 on April 26-28.



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A Sacred Space ~~Violated~~

How the Tumblr Art Festival Ruined Tumblr Art

BY ANJULIE RAO

I'll be the first to admit that I know very little about art on the web. And, with all of my Facebook friends constantly Instagramming their breakfasts, I will also admit that I don't really care. Why is everyone talking about web art? Can social media be a social medium for a social practice? I go online and see fuzzy, artificially discolored images of someone's latte, and all that curiosity shuts down.

That is why when Hyperallergic announced that they would be holding "The World's First Tumblr Art Symposium," I bought the cheapest ticket possible to Brooklyn, smashed myself into the tiny Spirit Airlines seat, and headed off to New York City to get a taste of what editor-in-chief of Hyperallergic, Hrag Vartanian, says is, "a discussion about the art community on Tumblr and how they are impacting art making today."

This discussion involved a one-night event in which various panelists, who were invited to contribute scholarly essays on various subjects relating to Tumblr art and social media, shared these papers and their expertise on the subject.

I went. I saw. I ate pizza. I drank beer. And I left, still wondering: what the hell are they talking about?

Artists have been using the Internet since before I was born, offering credence to the very convoluted platform of the web. Social media, however, is something relatively new, and does warrant some discussion, which the panelists indulged in as we, the audience, indulged in the free pizzas.

Christiane Paul, author and professor at the School of Visual Arts in N.Y., spent her panel time trying to divert the moderator, played by Vartanian himself, from making sweeping generalizations about social media as a medium, not a platform.

Lindsay Howard, the Curatorial Director of 319 Scholes (which also happened to be the venue), spent her time trying to divert the moderator from making sweeping generalizations about social media

artists, differentiating them from artists who are, as she says, "clever enough to use social media."

Perhaps I had one beer-too-many, but I couldn't help but feel that the discussion was not being moved in any particular direction. Vartanian was attempting to contextualize the concepts of social media art into a distinct history and social context. The Q&A at the end touched on just about every topic possible relating to the web from pictures of cats to the Arab Spring.

I left highly disturbed. My questions were still unanswered: is Internet art innately more democratic than, well, "regular" art? Are we moving in a direction where art becomes an entity for all, rather than a luxury for some?

And then, it hit me: We sat in a gallery space in newly gentrified Bushwick. I was surrounded by white people, in the midst of an intellectualized circle-jerk of experts and curators who were desperately attempting to slap labels on works of art by artists who were doing their best to leave that world behind.

Dizzying as it was, after the symposium I discovered something new: the realm of sacred space.

Don't be confused: I'm not talking about sacred spaces in the traditional sense; a church, temples, caves in France or even your childhood bedroom. All of these place are sacred, but they carry with them a heaviness that links to your identity. They are reminders of who you are.

The Internet — Tumblr, specifically — is a new kind of sacred. It is a place in which you (or your art) can represent yourself, whichever "self" that may be.

In her essay published for the symposium, web artist An Xiao wrote beautifully about how Tumblr, as a platform, allowed more flexibility than Facebook or other social media sites for its users to fabricate an identity. Tumblr allows users to have elastic identities online, to form new personas for each project.

"Unlike Facebook, one's Tumblr identity can simply be a screen

name," she wrote. "And one can create a seemingly infinite variety of tumblelogs, none of which are necessarily tied to the original screen name. They exist separately and develop independently, and the ties that develop tend to be with strangers rather than old friends."

What could be more poetic than a forum in which a person does not merely assimilate into, but constructs a whole new range of identity interests and politics?

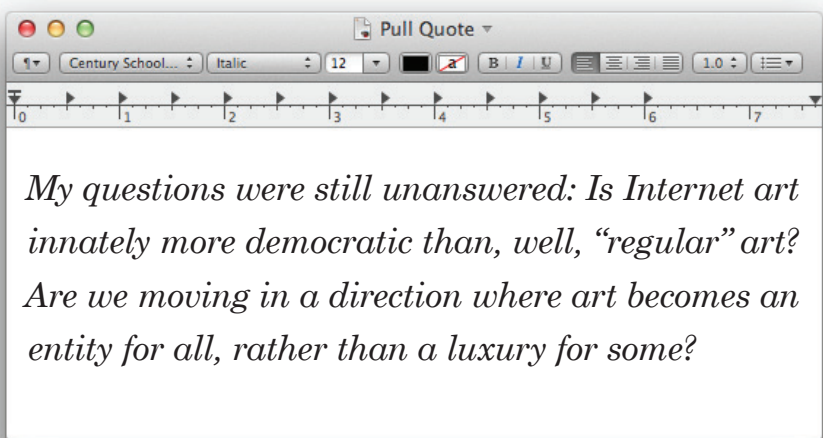
Instead, Hyperallergic has corrupted this necessary sacred space, a space which attracts more young people as users because of this freedom to temporarily leave behind the skin they were born in. At the symposium, the sacred space of flexible identities was processed, labeled and packaged.

It became everything I hoped that web art was not.

In the physical space at 319

tangible institutions could clarify something that is intrinsic to all of us: a sense of self, and a new, sacredness — a jungle gym in which we can playfully skew that burdensome notion of identity.

There was, however, one shining moment of this cluster. Artists Cary Peppermint and Leila Nadir, of Eco Art Tech, were asked about their work on the web and their thoughts on public versus private space. Leila responded with a profound statement: "We look at nature as anything we take for granted. It is what we 'get used to'; it becomes a routine. ... As media evolves, it creates new natures, new landscapes ... new environments that we will get used to, and that need to be explored. Regardless of whether it is public or private, it needs to be questioned. And in the land of a highly-structured web 2.0, we are finding new places for wildness."



Scholes, we found ourselves submitting to what the experts (a panel delightfully white and privileged ones, at that) have to say regarding something so nebulous — yet so powerful — as a venue in which artists can produce new, non-commodifiable, non-policeable identities.

I'm still somewhat shocked and confused by the event. When I tell people that I went to this festival, I get looks of bewilderment while my mouth twists trying to find the words to express my utter disappointment; how foolish of me to think that academia and other

Here's my plea to Hyperallergic: Let's let this one entity go untouched. Let's rejoice in whatever is left to us to frolic in, be it your ability to change whomever you are via Tumblr, or to become a whole new potential mate on OKCupid. Allow us, the users, to explore the possibilities of wilderness between the margins of a corporatized platform and amongst the already commoditized art histories present in web-based art. Thanks for trying, Hyperallergic. But we, the users, got this.

REVIEW



Just Say “No”

Chilean Film About Pinochet-Era Referendum Captures Past as Present

BY DIANA BUENDÍA

As Oscar predictions were being made early this year, there were two undisputed winners — Daniel Day Lewis for best actor in Steven Spielberg’s “Lincoln” and Michael Haneke’s “Amour” for best foreign film. Although Haneke had been snubbed before (in 2010 he was the favorite to win for “The White Ribbon” but didn’t), the stars seemed to be aligning for the Austrian director. And they did — the demure Haneke walked away triumphantly with a statuette last month.

Relegated to live in the shadow of Haneke was Pablo Larraín’s “No,” Chile’s first best foreign film contender in Academy Award history. Starring the well-known and beloved Mexican actor Gael García Bernal, “No” is the third film in what the 36-year-old Larraín has called an “unintentional trilogy” of films set during the years of the Pinochet dictatorship in Chile.

Larraín is one of the most recognized directors in the international film circuit. He first gained international recognition with Tony Manero (2008), a compelling film about a serial killer obsessed with the character of John Travolta in “Saturday Night Fever.” Next came “Post Mortem” (2010), about a man working at a morgue when Salvador Allende dies and a violent dictatorship begins. Both films focus on highly troubled male characters at a time when human lives were disposable and atrocities were commonplace in Chile.

“No” tells a completely different story — it focuses on the 1988 plebiscite in which Chileans had to vote whether or not they wanted Pinochet to remain in power. The film premiered at Cannes’ Directors Fortnight section in 2012 and won the Art Cinema Award. It is being distributed in the U.S. by Sony Pictures Classic, which means it’s probably going to make it to more screens in the U.S. than the average South American film.

“No” acts as a closer for Larraín’s exploration of the Pinochet years, look-

ing directly to the future and how the bloodstained right-wing dictatorship has formed modern-day Chile. García Bernal plays René Saavedra, an ad man in Santiago working on spots for products such as a soda called “Free,” a micro-wave, and an outrageous campaign for a soap opera that includes an actor offering women some flowers from a helicopter. We understand Saavedra has been in exile — he’s the son of a leftist Chilean whose name everyone recognizes. He has a young son and we see his on-and-off again girlfriend take several beatings from military officers because of her involvement in anti-government demonstrations.

The leader of the group running the “No” campaign, José Tomás Urrutia (Luis Gnecco), taps Saavedra to craft the television spots for the allotted fifteen minutes a night the government has granted to both political groups. Saavedra has made good money as an ad man and nobody in the left-leaning group seems particularly fond of him. Although he’s been personally affected by the Pinochet regime, Saavedra is comfortable working in the prototypical capitalist industry. Nevertheless, he takes on the challenge and becomes the creative director of the anti-Pinochet campaign.

Larraín loosely based his film on Antonio Skármeta’s play “El Plebiscito” (The Referendum), but he does follow the “No” campaign that was crafted in Chile to a tee, including the catchy jingle. He’s constantly moving between archival footage and his own, so much so that he shot the whole film in an obsolete U-matic video camera so the shift between the footage was as seamless as possible. The film is grainy and saturated by light at times — it’s as if you’re watching the whole thing on a BETA tape. Like the assortment of American directors this year who came under attack for playing with historical material to make it fit a narrative, so has Larraín come under fire in Chile for making a movie that places so much emphasis on an advertising cam-

paign and not on the people who actually made it a success.

Nevertheless, Larraín makes it a point to depict the production of the campaign on both sides of the plebiscite. The “Sí” campaign is run by an older cohort that includes generals looking out for the best interests of Pinochet. They rationalize very clearly how they should sell a longer Pinochet administration to the Chilean public. “My Argentine friends have told me they wish they had a Pinochet,” says one of the “Sí” campaign members. The country has moved forward, it has modernized. “This doesn’t seem like Latin America,” he points out. They agree they are going for the votes of the elegant, blue-eyed women wearing pearls.

Also in the “Sí” campaign is Saavedra’s boss at the ad agency Lucho Guzmán (Alfredo Castro). He starts as a casual member of the group, but as Saavedra’s campaign starts to gain traction, Guzmán gets competitive and eventually prefers to direct the “Sí” campaign himself. He’s a stern character who knows Saavedra very well. He tries to keep politics and work aside, but there’s a jealousy that becomes evident when he realizes Saavedra is crafting the smarter campaign. He casually threatens Saavedra with coming after his son.

Unlike his two previous, darker films, there’s more room for humor in “No,” and García Bernal is successful at bringing both intensity and lightheartedness to his role. Saavedra crafts a colorful and bubbly campaign; the initial drafts of the logo include apples and smiley faces, but he ultimately settles for a rainbow foregrounded by the word “NO.” His more radical teammates — older Chileans with family members who have disappeared and younger idealists — initially mock his approach. As Saavedra conducts the women singing the jingle for the campaign, he suggests they think of the “We are the World” video. The idea gets immediately shut down.

But what grounds the film and ultimately makes it so compelling is how tied to the present the historical events depicted are. The result of the plebiscite is not a surprise — the “No” campaign wins. But the Chile of 1988 is already comfortably capitalist, with no desire to shift direction. In the fictional character of Saavedra, Larraín posits how intricately tied together both sides of the political spectrum are. When his girlfriend is thrown in jail, he seeks the help of his boss, who is essentially working for Pinochet. Once the plebiscite is over, he will go right back to working for him on his flashy ad campaigns.

Ultimately, Saavedra sees no joy in celebrating the triumph of the “No” campaign. He walks through the festive crowds unmoved, looking bereft, as if he can see into the future.

Up until 2010, Chile would be governed by politicians from the left who had come together for the “No” campaign, but the allure of neoliberal policies put in place by Pinochet trumped desires for any significant social reforms. Maybe Saavedra can even see that in 2010, one of the wealthiest men in Chile would be taking office, and that money and modernity would continue to be valued above everything else. Pinochet will be gone, yes, but his bloodstained, capitalist foundation would remain triumphant.

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TRAVEL

Island in Waiting

Reflections on the SAIC Winter Study Trip to Cuba

BY WILLIAM RUGGIERO
AND GIANA GAMBINO

Our trip to Cuba began as soon as we got off the chartered plane from Miami and met Nadia, our tour guide, and Chiqui, our driver. From the bus windows the nationalist billboards, the broken down Soviet-style buildings, the ubiquitous white busts of national hero José Martí and the faded pinks and blues of the colonial buildings were all a blur. But throughout our trip we made frequent stops to observe frozen times, patchworks of dreams that showed us new ways of being in the world, and new modes of being dazed and confused.

We experienced Old Havana through a walking tour, as any other tourist would. We asked our guide to give us insight into administration and policies. Old Havana's spaces were being preserved and restored, but to questionable ends. While the cobblestone streets and the balconies make walks through Old Havana poetic, once we learned of urban planning strategies from the cultural offices, the politics of this walk became more complex. Cuban families who used to reside in historic building in Old Havana were being evicted, the houses repossessed by the city, and the spaces hollowed out to make way for potential new

This visit provided us with a look at how — in a country where tensions exists between what is private and what is public — artists navigate dealing with an oppressive government.

ways to generate capital. Foreign influences could be felt inside of Old Havana, contradicting Cuba's founding revolutionary ideals.

Other "forgotten" spaces, however, were interruptions to this process. Walking down one of the alleyways, we looked up at a striking building with several levels of scaffolding, but no signs of construction in sight. We saw the sun was peeking through the inside of every window on every floor of the structure — it was just a decaying shell of walls overlooking a cobblestone plaza. Nadia informed us the renovation has been on hold for over twenty years, leaving a building perpetually under construction. We continued to come in contact with sites that were yet to be restored, which we thought was signaling something: an acceptance of being an isle in waiting.

A privileged meeting with Fernando Rojas, the Vice Minister of Culture, revealed the role the government has in supporting cultural production. After an hour of propagandist speech ended, he began to speak candidly about arts funding, censorship and the impending sense of change that permeates the country. One plan is to offer artists contracts to protect them and give them rights, because they currently live off earnings from the art market. This change will be a new source of work, income and investment, that moves away from a conservative socialist agenda. Rojas raised important questions: What will happen to civil society when they no longer work for the state? How will the ministry and

government preserve all of these collectivist values?

After climbing an endless stairwell, we piled into the living room of Cuban artist and curator Toirac. He spoke to us about his life and career as an artist living both inside and outside of Cuba, and of working closely with the Ministry of Culture to earn the trust needed to be an intellectual creating and exhibiting his work. He explained the importance of earning the government's trust, so he created an association to help others exhibit problematic art. He shared with us a series of censored paintings depicting name brands alongside photographs of Fidel Castro, complicating the rhetoric the Revolution has preached. This visit provided us with a look at how — in a country where tensions exist between what is private and what is public — artists navigate dealing with an oppressive government.

Our visit to the Instituto Superior de Arte (ISA) left our group emotional. The five schools of ISA are part of a developmentalist project from the '60s, when the government had strong faith in education, and the arts and cultural production were political weapons against imperialism. But soon after, construction was halted, leaving breathtaking organic structures in a state of perpetual waiting. Artist Luis Gomez, from the generation of artists working in the late eighties, gave us a tour of the campus. He relayed critical points about the production of art in contemporary Cuba. Unlike the past, there is no continuity in the teaching of art at ISA for current students — professors come and go without ever planting solid models and students come with an interest in international recognition. We saw modern dance students practicing in the walkways underneath brick domes, next to classrooms with wood floors that had caved in. Inside the structures, the silence was deafening, architectural remnants and debris piled up.

The disjointed teaching models at ISA were also discussed by a group of artists currently working in Cuba, with whom we met for six intense hours. These artists offered us a refreshing look at work being produced in Cuba now, both commercial and independent. Their work questioned Cuban political and cultural systems, from the public sphere, to what was being taught on kid's shows on TV. The ways in which artists worked around certain systems was inspiring. Some, who were able to come across certain books, take pictures with their camera phones to make PDFs they pass around via flash drive, essentially building entire alternative libraries inside cell phones. It was not only the improvisation presented in these processes that were astounding to us, but also the clear solidarity and effective network within in the group.

The frozen decay. The waiting. The imminent sense of change. The complacency. All of these form several paradoxes. And though we left Cuba inspired, many of us remain confused. At times, there was a sense that anything is possible, and that you can make something out of nothing. But that was accompanied with feelings of hopelessness or sorrow. Through hearing all of these different stories and perspectives, we witnessed something special, yet temporary. Cuba will not be like this for very long. We, like the locals, felt the change in that air, and if we should visit again and encounter change, we may think back to the questions posed by Fernando Rojas — what will happen to Cuban society when they no longer work for the state? What about their collectivist values? But for now, we can only take in what we experienced.



Old Havana Building Scaffolding Detail J. Gibran Villalobos



Jose Toirac William Ruggiero



FICTION BY DEEPAK UNNIKRISHNAN

Body

An international student, X, died this morning, between the borders of International Affairs and Financial Aid in the United States of Academia. This was at university, where I pay to be enlightened. I was there when he fell. One minute, he was yelling at the receptionist, demanding to see an international student advisor, the next minute, dead. It was as though an important apparatchik in the land of Jesus tired of him, getting sick of his proclivity to exaggerate and his need to feed his scholarship greed. So this important apparatchik assigned a hitman with a penchant for Cupid garb to infiltrate Student X's heart with a bomb-tipped arrow and blow it to bits, in front of four other students who had never seen a man die in mid-sentence before. Brutal, efficient, and so fucking Tarantino.

No one would touch him. Security balked. "We don't have the authority to touch students, only order them to flash IDs, or ask them why they like hovering

around the lobby but go no place else," explained John, a man who worked for them. John wore a hat. John had a badge. John's uniform was starched. "Removing a dead student required special permission," John continued. Security would therefore need to wait until they received a letter from the dean authorizing such a move, but the dean, being the dean, was always busy or ending or having or configuring meetings at this hour.

Financial Aid wanted nothing to do with Student X, mentioning the kid still owed the school half his tuition and that it was written into their charter that by no means was an employee of theirs picking up the remains of a student still in arrears.

An International Affairs counselor requested measuring tape, discovered over half of the student's body lying in Financial Aid territory, emailed a memo to Health Services, cc'd the provost, bcc'd a secret immigration watchdog, bit into some Twix and continued looking for cheap

tickets to Prague on Kayak. Because the student had decided to die around 4:27pm on a Friday, three minutes before closing time, his body lay between the borders of International Affairs and Financial Aid until Monday morning.

Monday.

When Security, permission granted, came to take Student X and keep him under lock and key in the cafeteria freezer, they found him still there, but a thoughtful soul had fished out Student X's passport and placed it on his chest; almost wedged into his rib cage so you couldn't miss it. In close proximity this same thoughtful soul left behind the biggest cardboard box anyone had ever seen, a customs form, an address on a post-it, and a pen.

xxx

...his body lay between the borders of International Affairs and Financial Aid until Monday morning.





Camera Manning

In Journalism 101, first-day-first-class, after the prerequisite hello-my-name-is, I-am-here-because, Teacher began to teach. Only to be interrupted an hour into her lecture by a stern gentlemen from Public Safety, under direct orders from the President's office to apprehend a "violinist of rules, a student in this very class." "We are here for him," they pointed, and walked towards a boy who looked like any other boy in Academia. Public Safety searched his backpack and found a Nikon camera with film still in it, an anticipated discovery, because they started roughing him up immediately.

The boy had mentioned his name during introductions, but I hadn't paid attention; neither had anyone else, including Teacher, so when the men dragged him to the front of the class, he remained a John Doe. Yet, towards the end of the afternoon, as we collectively prepared to assist in his termination, I named him.

Teacher needed convincing whether such treatment was necessary, that the boy was entitled to rights. "Wait! What did he do?" she quizzed Public Safety. "Do?!" they scoffed. "Madam," they said, "this boy was seen taking unauthorized pictures the minute he got here, at orientation, during classes, at lunchtime, in the dorms, everywhere! A concerned staff lady, troubled by such flagrant camera manning, took the matter to the appropriate authorities after certain pictures began turning up a good year later. 'Have you seen these pictures, what they do?' she pressed our boss, producing photographs she had found circulating in the dorms. Our boss didn't waste any time."

"The President's office insisted on evidence since the pictures weren't signed, before matters could be made public," the Public Safety men shared, as the boy rocked back and forth where he stood, defiant yet scared. "We set a honey trap," our class was told. On cue, the men played a recording. We heard boys having sex, laughing, talking. And then we heard what we were supposed to hear. "I give them away," the boy was saying, "to anyone who would want them." Then we heard the boy's voice drop to a whisper. "If you stare long enough, pictures leak secrets."

Again, on cue, a Public Safety man produced a photograph he unrolled like a poster. Its scale, I noticed, as it got pinned to the wall, was on par with Picasso's Portrait of Daniel-Henry Kahnweiler. In the photograph we could see Academia students tucking into dinner in the main dining hall. "Keep looking," the man said. In a few minutes the scene changed. The

ceiling exploded. Rubble. Dust. Not a sound. Then the scene disappeared; in its place, text: 'At 1:30pm.,' it said, 'in the city of Sthalam, as Academia students supped, bad intel meant a bomb meant for Important Militant destroyed a school.' The text then listed the names and addresses of the bomb makers, the bomb droppers, and trusted fixers. Then the text disappeared; in its place, the original photograph.

"Traitor!" spat a classmate who always wore a beret. "Unethical! Emotions dictating intent," mumbled an Academia news-intern who needed the class to fulfill course requirements.

"One more," said the same Public Safety man, unrolling a second print, which he hung next to the first one. In this picture, a still from Prof. B's much-respected Performance Class, sixteen hooded Academia students in jumpsuits and their arms tied behind their backs faced the camera. On their jumpsuits were written their

began to blink. "Ready?" the men signaled. Teacher sat among us. All of us nodded, including the boy. But then Teacher posed a question, "May he tell us his name? Before what is done is done."

"No," we got told.

"Let us then give him a name," I said, "after his crime. Camera Manning."

And thus a compromise was reached to name our John Doe.

Public Safety then scrubbed Camera Manning's shoes, buttoned his shirt, straightened his posture, put a cigarette in his mouth, which they didn't light because no smoking is allowed indoors. Then a Public Safety man took an eraser from his pocket, and they began to rub Camera Manning's ears. Gently at first, then harder, until his ears disappeared. Then they left the eraser on the table. Teacher went next, choosing to rub away an eyebrow. A good friend removed a nail. Other peers grew bolder, rubbing off entire

limbs, each limb taking half an hour, or chose getting rid of hair, which was easier to do. Many were shy, only erasing a finger or toe. When it was my turn, I took away his eyes, rubbed away his tongue. We were

done in under three hours. Then because it felt appropriate, we rubbed away his backpack, his desk, his chair, his scent. Teacher then told us we were free to go and there were to be no assignments for next class. As books were put back in bags, as bottoms left chairs, a voice rang out. "Excuse me, Teacher, my parents took out a loan for me to come here. This is a university, and in university, we learn things. May we please be told what we learned today?"

"If I may, Madam," a Public Safety man stepped forward. "Today, young man, we learned unauthorized camera manning is a punishable offense. Camera Manning is crime. We condemned Camera Manning. Camera Manning is gone."

xxx

*Then because it felt appropriate, we rubbed away
his backpack, his desk, his chair, his scent.*

respective countries of origin. We waited expecting something to happen. One of my classmates then rushed towards the photograph, jumped inside it, became part of the still, and began pummeling the pretend-terrorists with her fists. "Killer! Killers!" she screamed. The only non-tattooed boy I know in Academia followed her, but began removing the hoods, untying shackled arms. "Run, Run!" he screamed. Other students in my classroom, I noticed, readied themselves to assist the boy or the girl best representing their beliefs. Me, too. The neutral preferred to abstain. Public Safety put a stop to the tempest, the burliest man among them walking into the photograph himself, grabbing my two classmates, and then bringing them back to Journalism 101. Reality.

"Wizard!" my Teacher said, as she poured herself a drink of water. "Okay, What's to be done now?"

"Tackle this issue as a unit, as per orders, Madam," responded Public Safety. "The boy, I believe we agree, is seditious. Anyone choosing to leave may do so now."

Three students hurried out; one Public Safety man followed close behind. The rest stayed. Public Safety produced waivers, made us sign them, and as we signed them, they took down the pictures. I tried to comprehend the waiver but the only word which made sense was responsibility. When I raised my head, a tripod had been planted in the room, and a video camera





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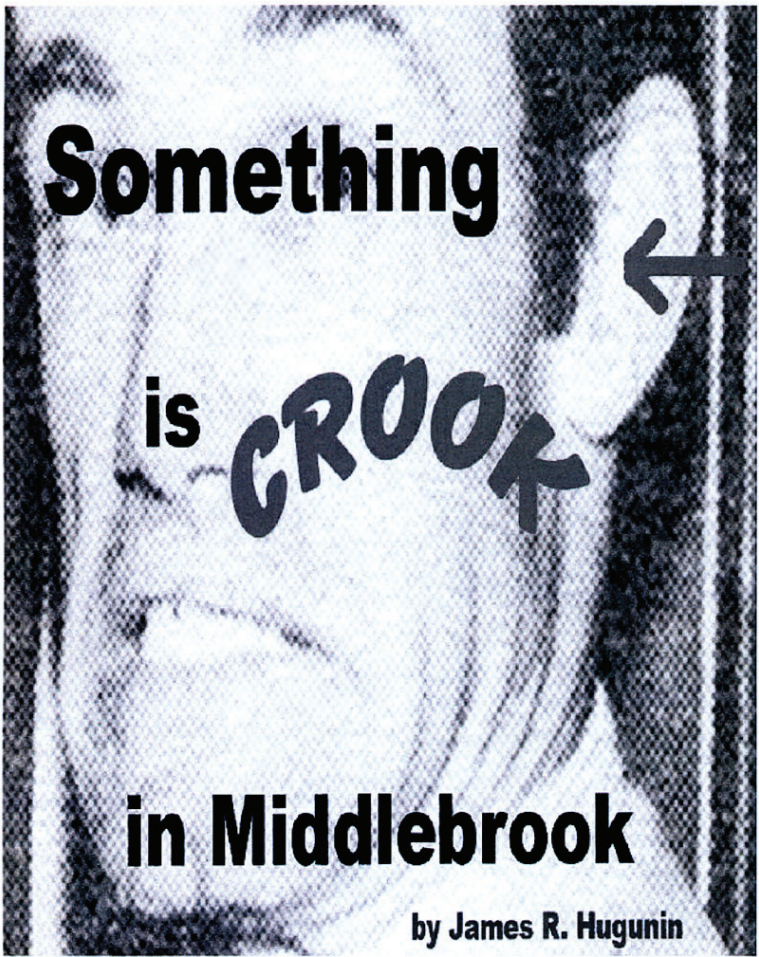


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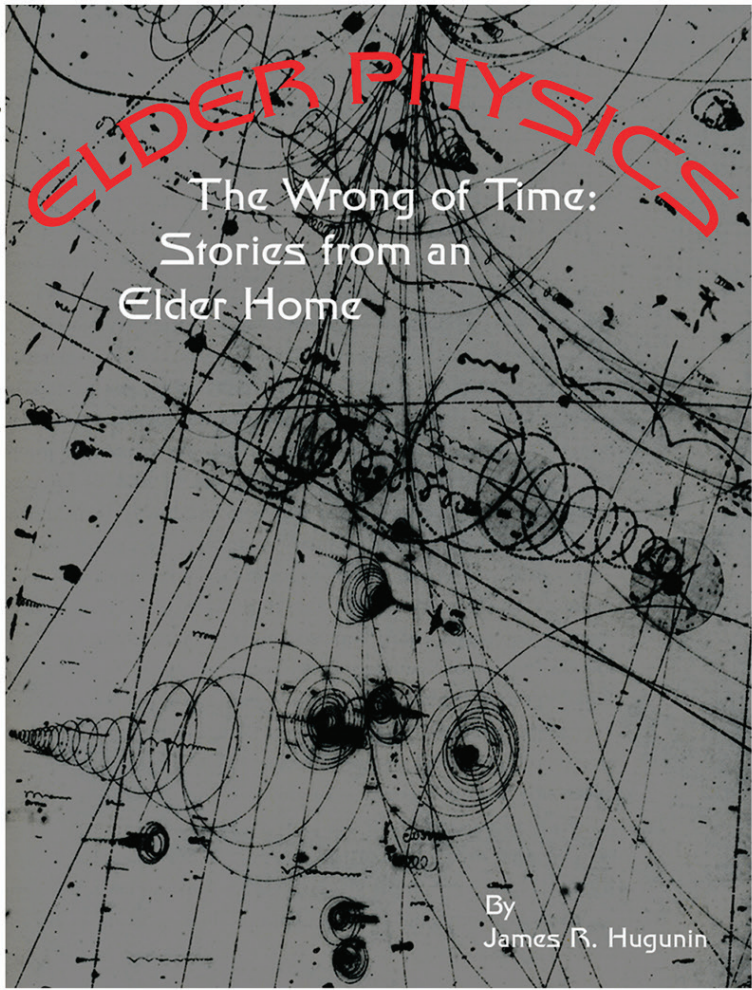
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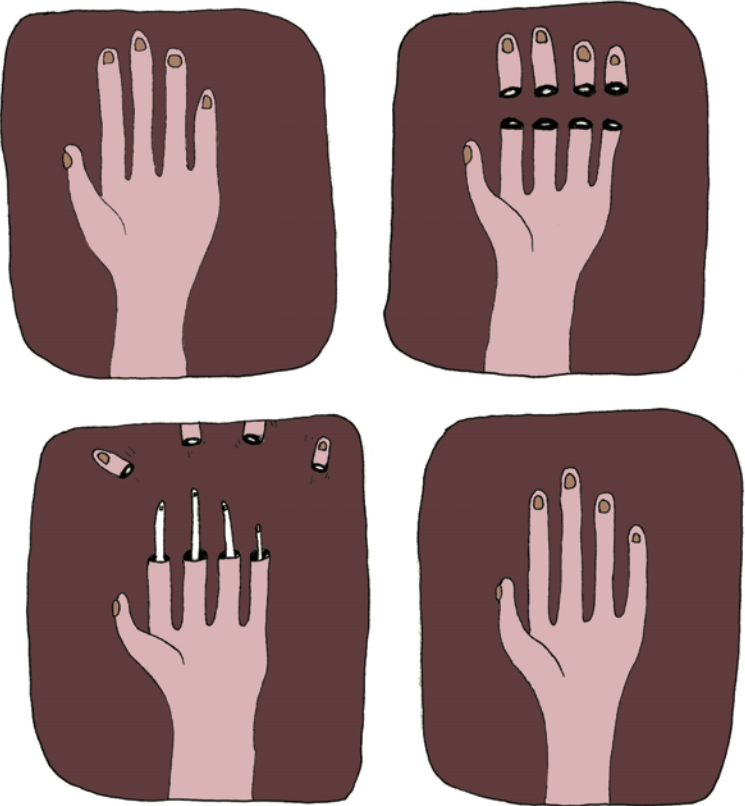
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