a student journal of arts, culture and politics

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The School of the Art Institute of Chicago

in this issue

CONFLICT *Syria: Facts, Figures & Opinions*

pages 13–17

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Hot Air

As a student run paper, we want to provide a platform for the dissemination of a panoply of voices and personalities. In this issue of F Newsmagazine we review virtual and international worlds; we consider the possibility of informative porn sites (The Sexy Sensation page, 7), take a tour of a surrealist castle in a Mexican jungle with artist Melanie Smith (Xilitla, page 20) and confront the ethical grey area surrounding art requiring contributors from exploited populations (Participatory Hells, page 11).

As members of a community of artists we are also particularly vocal contributors to the possibility of a broader political dialogue. The possibility of the US entering another war in Syria is an issue that inevitably involves us as residents of the USA. We hear from members of the SAIC community, both protestors and supporters of military invention and offer an introductory account of this complex conflict.

—Alyssa Moxley, Managing Editor

cover: **"Rock, Paper, Scissors, Diplomacy?"**
by Ben Macri and Christopher Givens

This month, in looking at the conflict in Syria, the design staff thought a lot about the decision making process, arguments, escalation and the black and white nature of choosing sides. In thinking of ways to represent these ideas we decided to look at human hands as a metonym for decision-making and human action. The game of "rock paper scissors" serves as a metaphor for the genesis of many a childish argument over unfair rule breaking. The red and black color palette is passionate, powerful and dichotomous and is a strong backbone for the rest of the issue's content.

—Christopher Givens, Art Director

in brief

Al Franken Questions Apple's Fingerprint Tech

Democratic Senator Al Franken of Minnesota, chairman of the Senate Judiciary Subcommittee on Privacy, Technology and Law, recently sent a letter to Apple CEO Tim Cook questioning its new technology that uses iPhone owners' fingerprints as security badges to gain access to their phones. According to the BBC, Franken's questions in the letter address his concern that a hacker lifting a person's fingerprint could "impersonate you for the rest of your life." Apple has not responded to the letter.

Famed Korean Artists Collaborate on Show, Programming at SAIC

The first exhibition in the U.S. of work by Moon Kyungwon and Jeon Joonho opened Sept. 20 in the School of the Art Institute of Chicago's Sullivan Galleries. In collaborations with the likes of Toyo Ito and others, the artists explore "the world as it is today by imagining a postapocalyptic future," according to a release. The massive multimedia exhibition will be the centerpiece for months of associated programming, including forums and other art projects that will include SAIC faculty and students.

Sotheby's and U.S. Attorney's Office in Stand-off Over Statue

An ancient sandstone statue of the mythic Hindu warrior known as Duryodhana has been the subject for several years of a battle between Sotheby's and the U.S. Attorney's Office, which is acting on Cambodia's behalf. Both sides recently filed papers in the United States District Court in a bitter turn of each accusing the other of acting unethically. The Attorney's office accused the auction house of trying to sell the Khmer empire relic, "despite what the government views as evidence that it was looted," reported the New York Times. Sotheby's accused the attorney's office of blocking a $1 million dollar private sale that would have brought the statue back to Cambodia, because the government wanted sole credit for the statue's return.

Kickstarter Founder Says He Wants Museums to Use The Site

The Art Newspaper reported recently that Yancey Strickler, the founder of Kickstarter, a crowd-funding website, announced that he wants museums to explore the potential of social media for fundraising. "If Tate or MoMA wanted to talk to us, we'd love that. That would be breaking new ground," Strickler said. Kickstarter has raised nearly $770 million for creative projects since its inception in 2009. So far the only institution that has used it as a fundraising platform is the Museum of Contemporary African Diasporan Arts in Brooklyn. It raised $50,000 to develop its website.

Reclaiming the Young Black Man

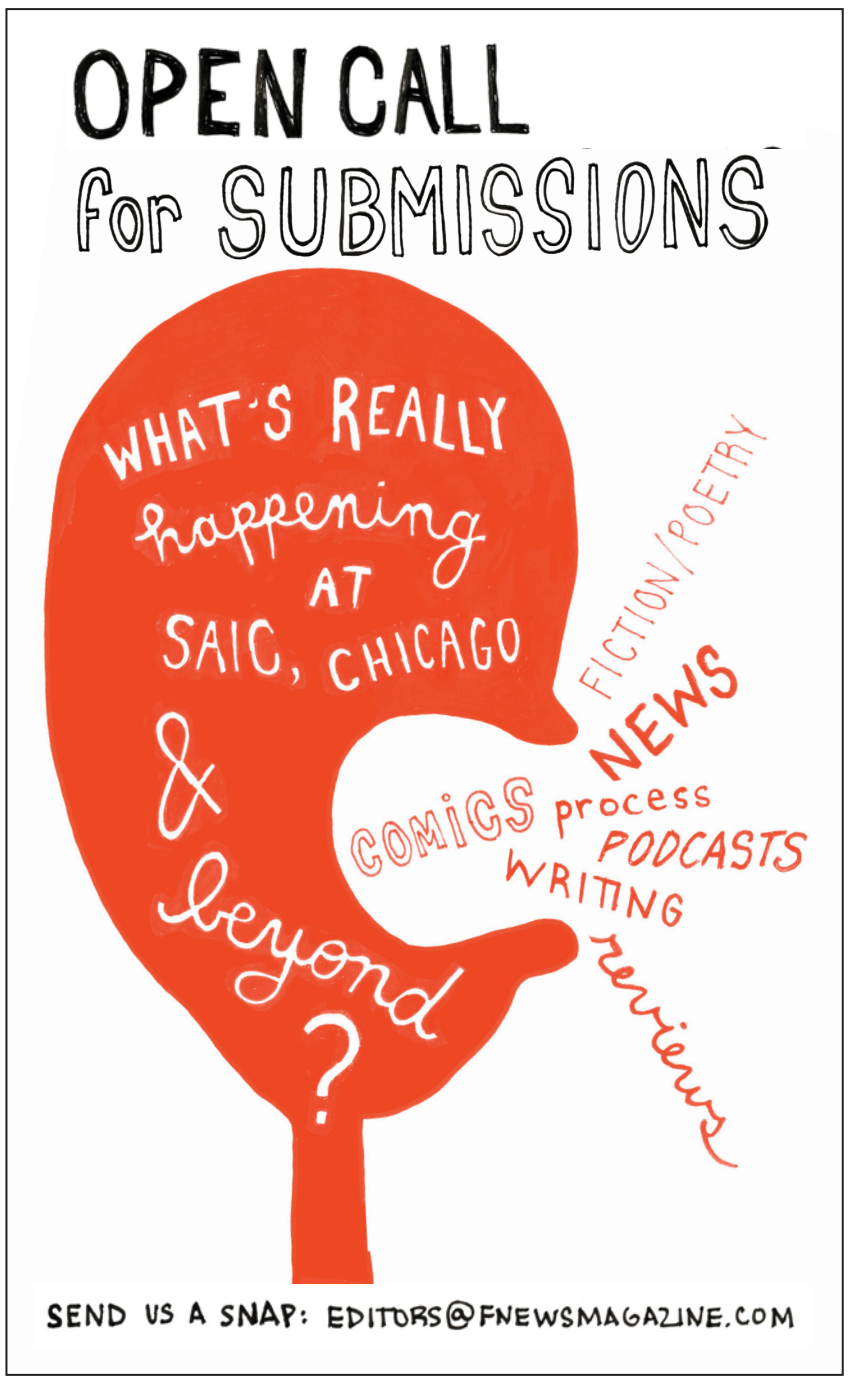
The often-overlooked South Side Community Arts Center recently mounted an exhibition in response to the heavy street violence plaguing the South Side of Chicago in recent years. "Maleness to Manhood: Reclamation of the Young Black Man" is an exhibition of the work of 44 black male artists, each contributing a single piece. The center had been planning a retrospective, "but as the… crisis in the neighborhoods got to be overwhelming, the call changed," said Executive Director Heather Robinson in the Chicago Reader. "That's when we got this tremendous response." The show closes Oct. 5.

Former SAIC Instructor Publishes "Mayor 1%" About Rahm Emanuel

Kari Lydersen, who taught an Intro to Journalism course at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, published a book reviewed recently by the Chicago Reader. "Mayor 1%: Rahm Emanuel and the Rise of Chicago's 99%" documents the mayor's actions during his tenure while maintaining journalistic objectivity. According to the Reader's Ben Joravsky, she "remains remarkably dispassionate as she chronicles the mayor's efforts to close schools, fire teachers, bring NATO to town, shutter mental health clinics, and privatize city operations, to name but a few highlights of his first two years in office."

Chicago Area-based Redbox Scammed

Users of the Redbox movie and video game rental kiosks have found a way to keep the rented discs without being charged. The Chicago Sun Times reported that some renters are opening up video game cases to find a slip of paper with a bar code instead of a disc. Users found a way to duplicate the barcode sticker that each Redbox disc has to track credit card information and date of rental. The bar code is placed back into the case fooling the kiosk into thinking the game was returned. "If the problem was widespread it wouldn't be a profitable business for us," said Redbox Vice President Joel Resnik.



health insurance, anyone?

affordable care act to cover low-income, single adults

by alexander wolff

Low-income residents living in Cook County like recent graduates and artists can now receive free, state assisted medical insurance through the Medicaid program CountyCare. Though in 2014 the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (PPACA), or "Obamacare," will begin providing Medicaid services to uninsured adults (under age 65) who apply in participating states. Cook County was granted a federal waiver to allow an early start for these services. This program began accepting applicants in January 2013 and is an expansion of Medicaid that will cover thousands of uninsured Cook County residents who were previously ineligible for Medicaid or Medicare services.

According to the federal government, Medicaid was formerly only available to people who are parents, pregnant or disabled while possessing an income at or below 133% of the poverty line, the minimum required for daily survival, which is $15,281 for singles and $20,628 for couples; Medicare covered people over 65 or with disabilities. In contrast, CountyCare currently services Cook County residents (ages 16-64) who are either U.S. citizens or "legal immigrants" and have an income at or below 133% of the Federal Poverty Level. CountyCare provides a wide array of medical services, but only at medical centers in the Cook County Health & Hospital System (CCHHS) or at a limited number of participating Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHC). These services cover emergency services, over-the-counter drugs, medical supplies and substance abuse treatment in addition to physician, social work and mental health services.

Critics have pointed out that CountyCare is unavailable to undocumented residents, and it does not cover routine dental or vision services, except emergency care. Both of these crucial medical services were once available through Medicaid but were cut to reduce spending costs in 2012.

In 2014, as a part of the PPACA, adults under 65 in participating states with an income level meeting or below 133% of the federal poverty level will also be eligible for Medicaid services through the state of Illinois, instead of through Cook County and CountyCare. Illinois was one of these states, with Gov. Pat Quinn (D) signing legislation this July, which would enact these changes this coming January. Illinois residents enrolled in CountyCare will be able to leave the program for this more general Medicaid service offered through the State of Illinois. Doing so will provide services at any medical center that accepts Medicaid, rather than only those in the CCHHS. But Illinois' PPACA Medicaid program does not cover mental health and substance abuse services, so that patients leaving CountyCare will lose these benefits.

Illinois state officials expect around 200,000 eligible Illinois residents to sign up for Medicaid under the PPACA in the first year and for the rest to sign up by 2017. Regardless, thousands of US citizens and Illinoisans who need these services do not understand how the policy changes in the PPACA will affect them. A March Kaiser Family Foundation poll found that only 62% of U.S. citizens are aware of the government subsidies offered by the PPACA through services like CountyCare. Another March Kaiser Family Foundation poll found that 78% of the U.S. population is unaware of their governor's decision to either expand or reduce Medicaid coverage.

CountyCare has set up an information line for applicants to describe their situation and personal information to a staff member. A transcribed copy of the application will then be sent to the applicant's home for a signature and any additional information needed. Alternatively, individuals can apply in person at Stroger Hospital, Provident Hospital and the Oak Forest Health Center.

CountyCare has set up an information line for applicants, who can call (312) 864-8200 to apply by phone between the hours of 8:00 a.m. and 8:00 p.m. Monday through Friday and 9:00AM and 2:00PM on Saturdays.

Who is eligible for County Care?

In order to qualify for a CountyCare Medical Card individuals must:

Live in Cook County
Be 19-64 years old
Have income at or below 133% of the Federal Poverty Level ($15,281 individual, $20,628 couple – annually)
Not be eligible for "state Plan" Medicaid (parent, pregnant, blind or receiving disability income)
Not be eligible for Medicare
Be a legal immigrant for five years or more or a US citizen
Have (or have applied for) a Social Security number

illustration by meghan ryan morris

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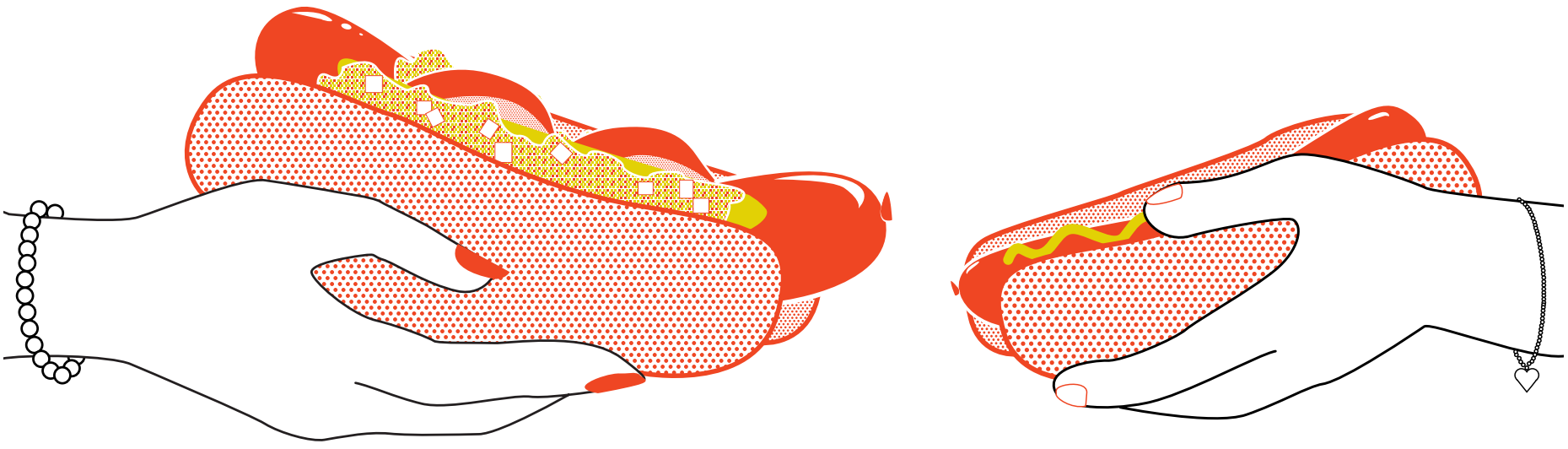
SAIC

THE SEXY SENSATION
that's sweeping the nation

breaking the myths of hardcore pornography



by bonnie coyle

Started in 2009 by Cindy Gallop, Makelovenotporn.com has been growing in popularity ever since. Seeking to educate porn viewers about what actually happens in the bedroom, it has had over one hundred thousand users since January, 2013 and is one of the most visited alternative sex websites.

Gallop, an English advertising consultant, was prompted to create the site when she started to recognize the impact the porn industry's manufactured sexual situations had on her own experiences with young men.

"In an era where hardcore porn is more freely and widely available on the Internet than ever before," said Gallop at the 2009 TEDtalks conferences in Long Beach, California, "there is an entire generation growing up that believes that what you see in hardcore pornography is the way that you have sex."

According to Gallop, porn is pervasive among youth because "we live in a puritanical, double-standards culture, where people believe that teen abstinence will actually work, where parents are too embarrassed to have conversations about sex with their children. … So it's not surprising that hardcore pornography, de facto, has become sex education."

Makelovenotporn.com is dedicated to educating porn viewers about the reality of sex, which is not necessarily reflected in harcore porn.

As Gallop herself puts it, the site is intended to "inspire and stimulate open, healthy conversations about sex and pornography in order to inspire and stimulate more open, healthy and thoroughly enjoyable sexual relationships."

The site is interactive and informative. The homepage features a series of slides called "porn myths" that make clear that hardcore porn activities are not always the norm in an actual sexual encounter. However, Makelovenotporn.com is not an anti-porn website; Gallop even states she likes porn and watches it regularly. Rather, the website intends to educate its users in a sex positive way and allow them to realize that the activities seen in hardcore porn may not be the activities his or her sexual partner would want to engage in.

The website is very user-based and user-friendly. Anyone can create a free account to comment, submit suggestions, and upload their own videos. Its sister website, Makelovenotporn.tv, has a selection of different real-life, real-world lovemaking videos uploaded by users. These reflect a variety of styles and tastes and include both LGBTQ and straight sex. The members form a very diverse group; some are porn stars or retired porn stars who love the site and its mission, others are simply couples who film themselves for other users to see and enjoy. Gallop hopes these videos that depict real sexual situations will gain popularity on the Internet and come to replace the fictional images produced by the porn industry.

Makelovenotporn.com is an important sex positive, education source that will hopefully continue to gain popularity and promote healthy and enjoyable sexual relationships.

illustration by jordan whitney martin

ARTIST / AS WRITER / AS CRITIC

an interview with jason lazarus and sofia leiby of chicago artist writers

by annette lepique

Chicago's diverse and active art community ensures that a substantial number of projects and shows come to fruition, but a great number of such events are lost on the public simply because of the sheer volume of the scene. Unfortunately, the Darwinian fight for cultural recognition and critical legitimacy consistently tends to marginalize independent, alternative and artist-run spaces due to the lack of systemic support for such venues to flourish within their limited means and with their distinct ideals. Any assertion regarding the gap of criticism in relation to the sheer number of independent art happenings occurring within the city is further complicated by the quantity and quality of the various platforms that support opportunities for criticism of such shows. There are few stages that provide the means from which accessible and creative critical writing can be disseminated to the broader public.

Fortunately, two artists have taken this problem to task. Jason Lazarus and Sofia Leiby are the co-founders of Chicago Artist Writers (CAW), an online platform that facilitates the creation of experimental and traditional written criticism to serve under-recognized arts venues in the city. F Newsmagazine spoke with Jason and Sofia concerning the particularities of their project and its broader implications for arts communities everywhere.

Annette LePique: Could you describe the structure of CAW?

Jason Lazarus and Sofia Leiby: CAW is an online platform for critical writing about exhibitions at alternative and independent art spaces in Chicago that typically do not often receive published feedback on their cultural output. We solicit individual writers and maintain an open submission policy with rolling deadlines. Reviews are then submitted to us, or to guest editors that we ask to donate two weeks or so of their time to editing reviews. Editors assess the review based on their subjective criteria and go through rounds of editing with the writer, and then we post the final draft on the site. Four times a year we invite cultural producers working in the field of criticism to host hands-on workshops that are open to the public by RSVP.

AL: Who can contribute to the website?

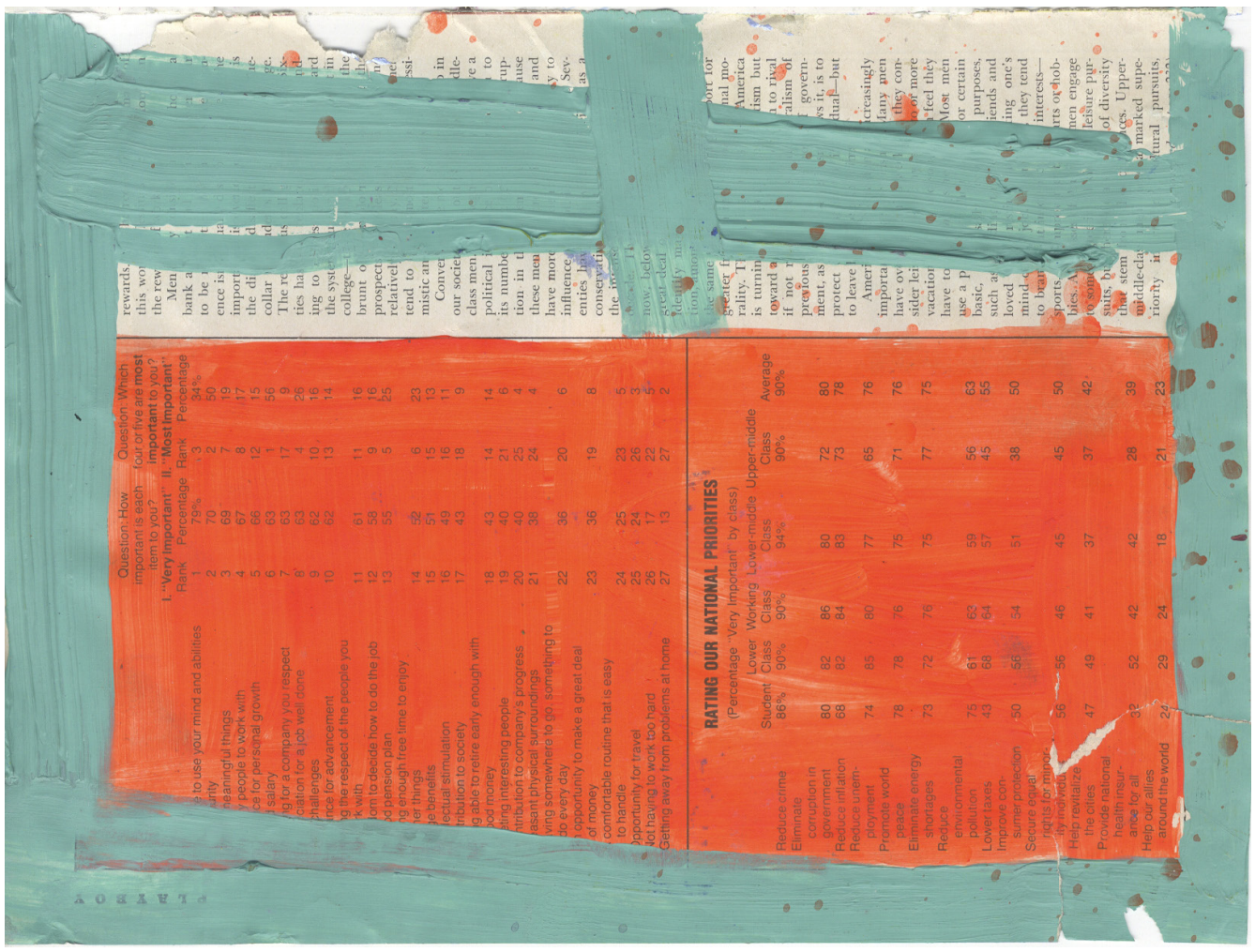
JL & SL: CAW is open submission, but we encourage studio art students in BFA and MFA programs, people who may not have formal experience in writing criticism, or people who may not consider themselves primarily as writers to submit. Any submissions that don't meet these general requirements are assessed on a case-by-case basis.

AL: How are guest editors chosen and paired with contributors?

JL & SL: For guest editorships, we approach more established artists and writers who we think would be responsive to our mission, those who have undertaken roles that are community-driven and pedagogical in nature. During a guest editorship, reviews come in sometimes with or without warning — we ask writers to pitch reviews at their own discretion.

One of the great benefits of this model is that writers are sometimes paired with editors that they don't have a pre-existing relationship with, which hopefully may lead to conversations beyond the scope of our project.

excerpts from the "Max-n-Mini" series Eunjin April Son 2012



Last year, Josh Reames submitted a review during Brandon Alvendia's term as guest editor. The review, which was of an exhibition at LVL3 Gallery in Wicker Park, consisted of a "recipe for contemporary sculpture." As guest editor, Brandon converted the review into a downloadable ebook and appended "editor's notes" to many portions of the review that alternately agreed with or combated against Josh's views. In the future, we are considering a supplementary program where we intermittently ask guest artists/thinkers to curate a critical framework for a few weeks and reach out to younger artists in their network to write reviews that, when published together, build up a larger discourse with a rotating focus. This program would run parallel to our default open call for submissions.

"It is our experience that taking on formal writing about the practice of others is invaluable; it creates a reflexivity that, as an artist, is comparable to cash in your pocket."

AL: How does CAW's platform allow for writers to contextualize their thoughts within the broad schema of Chicago art criticism while remaining a unique model within the Chicago arts community?

JL & SL: Often, the average submission already elaborates on a handful of questionable or successful aspects of a show, and from there, the editor undertakes the role of finding gaps or unsubstantiated claims in the writing. We are the last check in this process if a guest editor is involved in a particular review. CAW is also unique in that it provides a platform for experimental criticism, which is surprisingly underutilized. Chicago's outlets for criticism, such as F Newsmagazine, The Chicago Tribune, Newcity, and Bad at Sports to name a few, each have specific audiences, contributors and limitations; we aim to act as a corollary to and collaboration with these institutions in an effort to expand the field. Self-publishing allows for a certain amount of recognition, but we hope that as CAW grows it becomes a destination alongside established outlets for reliable and thoughtful criticism.

Our quarterly workshops, which feature a practicing professional capable of unpacking criticism as a form, practice and philosophical conceit, each aim to enable aspirational writers to dimensionalize their notions and practice of writing. The varying points of view represented by the workshop series provide an opportunity for participation in a significant ongoing conversation on what critical coverage is and can be, both now and in the future.

AL: In CAW's first guest post on Bad At Sports, you both discussed Lori Waxman's early 2013 workshop at Gallery 400. You stated that "Technology has changed and art has changed, and that should be radically impacting the kind of art criticism that we write, how it gets published, how it gets received and who we write it for, and how it gets commented on." How is that belief contextualized within CAW's framework?

JL & SL: By urging artists to undertake the role of the critic, we hope to open up the determined, confident voices and muscular feedback often heard in bars after openings and class critiques to a more public forum. During her lecture, Lori mentioned the dwindling number of platforms for experimental criticism; she said she thought no one would publish a review she wrote of her husband's work, "except maybe you guys " (a strategy she proposed as embedded criticism). CAW's acceptance and encouragement of alternative formats for reviews, like Josh Reames' recipe or James Pepper Kelly's recent acrostic, with the explicit stated goal of providing feedback to Chicago's alternative arts activity is where CAW most closely resembles Lori's thesis.

AL: What challenges has the program faced since that inaugural December 2012 Bad at Sports interview?

JL & SL: There is a pedagogic aspect to CAW that is difficult to make visible. Often, reviews go through a half dozen rounds of editing. Many of our writers are approaching formal or experimental criticism written for the public for the first time. Just like any artist, our writers are going through their own personal arcs of progress and complexity, and we feel that the big reward is when a given artist/writer, as a returning contributor, incrementally writes reviews with greater and greater depth and complexity — pieces that contextualize the work not just in Chicago or nationally, but in the flux of contemporary global art discourse.

Second, writing is time intensive and, for the time being in our project, uncompensated. Finding willing writers is occasionally hard because critical writing can feel like a distraction from your individual practice or sometimes a conflict of interest in an arts ecology such as Chicago's. It is our experience that taking on formal writing about the practice of others is invaluable; it creates a reflexivity that, as an artist, is comparable to cash in your pocket. Writing is, as Lori Waxman pointed out in her workshop, a process that turns a lot of half-formed ideas about what's happening around you to fully fledged, substantiated thoughts that are a form of deep learning and development.

More information about Chicago Artist Writers, as well as their submission procedures, can be found on their website: www.chicagoartistwriters.blogspot.com


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Photo: Armen Elliott
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participatory hells

considering ethics in collaborative art

by alex wolff

What became of the ethical concerns in participatory and collaborative art of the past decade? For the past twenty years, critics and scholars engaged in this discussion have debated the role of ethics and aesthetics in these practices. Some have used the ambiguities of these terms to justify work that further exacerbates oppressive imbalances of power in societies. As such, it is often argued that "aesthetic" artistic practices should not be subject to ethical judgments. This notion is especially evident in the writings of art critic and CUNY art history professor Claire Bishop in her recent text "Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship" (2012) and in "Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics" (2003). In these texts she creates false binary distinctions between ethical concerns in the creation and evaluation of art and what she describes as the "aesthetic" and "antagonistic" potentials for participatory, collaborative and "socially engaged art." Though the terms ethics and aesthetics are never explicitly defined in any of her writings, Bishop claims that ethics, which seems to mean concern for the well-being of other human beings, "are nugatory, because art is understood continually to throw established systems of value into question, including questions of morality." Bishop's disavowal of ethics myopically denies the possibility of an ethical participant-based artistic practice that can reveal these oppressive relationships in societies and critique them, without actually harming marginalized and disadvantaged social groups.

These one-sided judgments are most evident in Bishop's evaluation of the Spanish artist Santiago Sierra whose work has constantly been at the center of debate between ethics and aesthetics. Equally reviled and lauded for his specific brand of "shock art," Sierra's work enacts dehumanization, objectification and sometimes-physical harm on participants that various societies have constructed as social or cultural others. The problem with his work is not that it shocks or offends but that it entails the denigration and essentialization of historically marginalized social groups. Bishop views these displays as merely aesthetic events and as interesting and shocking "lessons." But the fact remains that Sierra's work aestheticizes destitution and denies the agency of already marginalized individuals.

Sierra's practice employs people Sierra denotes as "refugees," "immigrants" and "addicts" in descriptions of pieces like "10 Inch Line Shaved on the Heads of Two Junkies who Received a Shot of Heroin as Payment" (2000). In many of his earlier pieces participants were enlisted to complete absurd and sometimes humiliating tasks, but documentation of Sierra's pieces is often sold for large sums of money in the contemporary art market. This practice has drawn sharp criticism, as he pays his subjects very little.

Sierra then documents these events through the (now aestheticized) idiom of 1960s conceptual art, emulating its visual language of unpolished black and white photo and video work. While Sierra's photos and videos of pieces are reminiscent of the "deskilled" photographic work of Ed Ruscha and John Baldessari or the grainy, body-centric video work of Vito Acconci and Bruce Naumann, what was once considered anti-aesthetic in these artists' works has now become highly aestheticized cruelty. Sierra has, he says, "succeeded in making misery itself an object of pleasure, by treating it stylishly and with technical perfection." Sierra believes this is acceptable, because it literalizes the harsh realities of global capitalism. In a 2004 interview he stated, "A person without money has no dignity. ...By saying these few things in my work, I think that, as an artist, I've achieved enough."

Bishop attempts to validate his work by claiming, "It is worth bearing in mind that, since the 1970s, older avant-garde rhetorics of opposition and transformation have been frequently replaced by strategies of complicity; what matters is not the complicity, but how we receive it." In an almost complete disavowal of the ethical quandaries created by Sierra's work, her reductive analysis relies on redeeming exploitative work though the ability of an interpreter and critic.

As art critic and University of California professor Grant Kester points out, Sierra's pieces participate in an essentialization of individual identity and subjectivity, enacting a "reduction ... of his participants to categories of abjection or social marginality," where they "aren't singular individuals but representative types ('the junkie,' the 'illegal street vendor,' the 'prostitute,' the 'homeless')." His work not only refuses to subvert, critique or resist the dehumanization of marginalized individuals, it aestheticizes their plight into distinct events that viewers can easily digest. In pieces like "Workers Who Cannot be Paid, Remunerated to Remain Inside Cardboard Boxes," Sierra pays "political refugees" to complete an absurd and possibly traumatic task — standing in cardboard boxes in a gallery for four hours a day for six weeks, thus perpetuating the "othering" that society enacts upon them. In addition to this, he put the participants at the significant risk of being deported and persecuted by German state authorities. The ethical quandary is not so much that he puts just anyone at risk, but that he put actual human beings who are subject to legacies of prejudice, persecution and state power in harm's way while denying their subjectivities.

> **"It is imperative that artists and critics alike refuse to create a binary between ethics and aesthetics, as this distinction is frequently used to validate work that enacts coercive imbalances of power."**

A more impressive feat would be if Sierra had found a way to ethically expose these forms of socio-economic oppression without literally perpetuating them. In the piece "Flames Maquiladora" (2001-3), Mexican artist Carlos Amorales set up a mock maquiladora (sweat-shops set up by multinational corporations with very low wages and poor working conditions) in a London gallery. The artist invited viewers to participate in the creation of wrestling shoes similar to those used by Luchadores, the pretense given as incentive for visitors to create the shoes. Poignantly enough, not one pair of shoes was ever created in the three years the project was installed. In Amorales' piece, the relationship between producer and consumer is reversed by asking the viewers to labor for the sake of art, instead of for economic necessity. The incompleteness of the project also reveals telling imbalances in socio-economic agency for anyone who wishes to interpret it, without ethically harming those who are already 'othered' by society. The intentionality of an author, and the status of an author's project being considered 'art,' does not render all ethical considerations "nugatory."

But herein lies the disturbing bankruptcy of some of Bishop's judgments. In her view, there is not much difference between how viewers receive a work and what actually occurs within the work to the participants. We can revel in the fact that Sierra's work reveals the depressing social realities of neoliberal capitalism and the instrumental "othering" of ethnic and social groups by societies, but at the end of the day each of his projects involves extending the denigration of socially marginalized individuals. For Bishop, the fact that Sierra is creating "antagonism" alone is enough to validate his enterprises. Though ethics become harmful when instrumentalized by the state or when they come to take the place of political concerns, this fact alone does not mean that they should be ruled out in the discussion around participatory art. It is imperative that artists and critics alike refuse to create a binary between ethics and aesthetics, as this distinction is frequently used to validate work that enacts coercive imbalances of power. A modality of artistic practice that engages both ethics and aesthetics at once needs to be considered in a renewed dialogue between art, human subjectivity and the actual relations enacted in "socially engaged" projects.

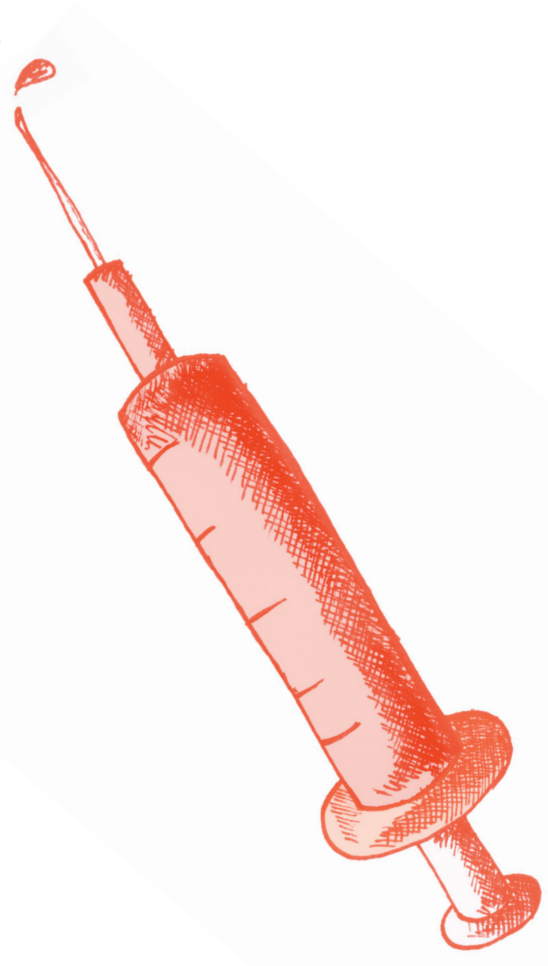


illustration by magdalena wistuba

Gay Rights in the French Museum

the gender bazaar takes the expression of identity to a new level

by alexia casanova

"Au Bazar du Genre" (The Gender Bazaar) is one of two inaugural exhibitions taking place at the newly opened Museum of European and Mediterranean Civilizations (MuCem) in Marseille. The exhibition considers an evolution of masculinity and femininity in Mediterranean societies and also addresses another subject which has recently polarized France — homosexual rights.

During the Cannes Festival in May, no fewer than eight films in the competition dealt with same-sex relationships. The Palme D'Or was awarded to "La Vie D'Adèle" by Abdelatif Kechiche, an adaptation of the comic book "Blue is the Warmest Colour," following the loving relationship between two young French women. At the same time in Paris, the Constitutional Council validated a law promulgating same-sex marriage. This apparent visibility of all themes homosexual cannot be mere coincidence. Is there a wider reflection in the arts of this pivotal political moment?

In the past, gay life in French cinema had been depicted almost exclusively via comedies and farcical scenarios. The most popular actors of the country have, one after the other, starred in a series of films with repeated scenes of ludicrous misunderstandings and cascading stereotypes: "Gazon Maudit" (1994), "Pédale Douce" (1996), "Le Derrière" (1998), "Le Placard" (2001), "Do Not Disturb" (2012), to name just a few.

Unlike the world of cinema, over the last 10 years it has been almost impossible to find an exhibition dedicated to the theme of homosexuality in French museums. The scarce exceptions have tended to focus exclusively on male relationships. Even more frequently, representations of homosexuality have been equated with transgender identities and drag culture. However, the MuCem exhibition addresses homosexuality within the context of a struggle for equal rights and for the freedom of both women and men to define their own gender, sexuality and role in the social space of France.

Divided in honeycomb-shaped sections, the exhibition space is organized around five main reflections on sexuality, gender and freedom of choice. The first one is dedicated to motherhood, displaying an eclectic mix of ancient Mediterranean fertility statues, posters from abortion rights campaigns and an overview of rituals and traditions related to female virginity in Mediterranean societies. Homosexual rights are dealt with in the second section of the exhibition, in another improbable collection of media ranging from humorous art by Pierre et Gilles, to video archives of gay pride in Marseille, Istanbul, Tel-Aviv and Beirut. The other three reflections — transgender, dating conventions and gender equality — are addressed in a similar bazaar of visual and auditory media.

This exhibition opened two weeks after the law authorizing same-sex marriage was adopted in France following six months of heated debates and protest marches. Passed by the National Assembly on April 23, the bill legalizing gay marriage in France is said to have divided the French populace. It took more than 24 weeks of debates, protests and counter-protests for France to finally become the 14th country in the world to legalize same-sex marriage. Opponents to the bill marched in the streets, claiming that legalizing "marriage for all" would upset the foundations of the Civil Code and human identity itself. They also argued that it was a profound violation of a child's "sacred right" to have both a mother and a father at birth.

The opposition to the bill was much more virulent than most had expected. How is it that France, the supposed home of human rights, had such a hard time legalizing and accepting gay marriage? Was this a genuine reflection of the concerns of an outraged citizenship, or was something more political at work?

Many believe the divide between pro- and anti-gay marriage was little more than an extreme example of the usual right-left polarization inherent in French politics. When virtually all members of the UMP (Union for a Popular Movement, a center-right party) started attacking the bill, it was not same-sex marriage that they were contesting but purely and simply the first major societal reform from the new center-left government.

Representatives of the center-right party who had previously shown no opposition to same-sex marriage — some of whom had, in fact, previously defended it — suddenly changed sides when the Socialist Party brought in the draft bill. The game was ratcheted up; UMP representatives invited followers of the party to protest, some even going as far as marching alongside elected members of the National Front, generally considered a fascist party beyond the realm of political respectability.

A MuCem exhibition addresses homosexuality within the context of a struggle for equal rights and for the freedom of both women and men to define their own sexuality and role in the social space of France.

A bill that was supposed to improve homosexual people's condition and public acceptance of homosexuality ended up provoking an unexpected surge of homophobic comments and violence. In Nice, Paris, Lille and Montpellier there was a perception that homophobic attacks were increasing. Certainly, there was much more media coverage of these incidents. In reaction to these events, many French people marched in the streets to show their support for the gay community and to condemn homophobia. A part of the French media made a mockery of the anti-gay marriage movement, broadcasting short video clips that gathered together the most ludicrous arguments formulated by demonstrators during interviews.

Now that the law has been validated by the Constitutional Council, and the two main parties have found other topics to disagree on, tensions have considerably diminished. That being said, they have not completely disappeared. A few mayors have failed to apply the law, refusing to officiate at same-sex weddings. If the debate has left the political arena for art galleries and cultural institutions, some of the violence has too. A photographic exhibition by Olivier Ciappa in the third arrondissement in Paris was vandalized twice in less than a month. His show, "Les Couples Imaginaires," is a series of 34 black and white portraits presenting various French celebrities as imaginary gay couples.

Some spectators may have frowned, or let a stifled remark slip in front of a photograph at the MuCem's inaugural exhibition, but there has been no violent reactions whatsoever up to this date. It is certainly due to the way homosexual identities are addressed in this Gender Bazaar — as defined by one of many decisions individuals might make regarding their sexual, social and physical identities. Sandwiched between old advertising posters defending the legalization of abortion and fashion photographs of women wearing hijabs, homosexuality at the MuCem is not shown as a revolutionary way to love, or a profound disruption of the social order, but as what it truly is: a way of being among a thousand others.

illustration by berke yazicioglu

SYRIA: FACTS, FIGURES & OPINIONS

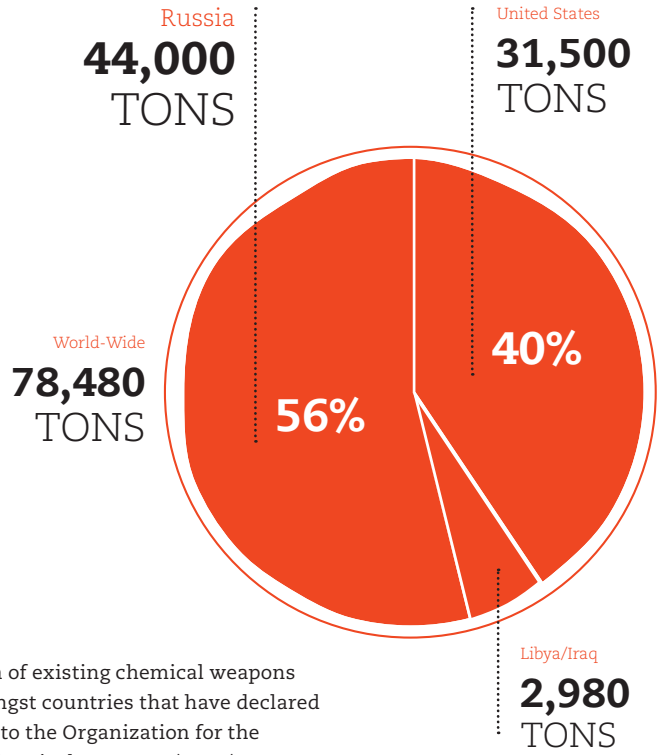
PAGES 13-17

illustration by frederick eschrich

Syria At A Glance

with reporting from f newsmagazine staff and emily margosian

The Syrian conflict began in 2011 with non-violent protests during the Arab Spring, a wave of demonstrations and protests that has swept more than a dozen countries, forcing rulers from power. In Syria these civilian protests were met with violent repression from the government leading to the defection of Syrian soldiers and the formation of armed rebel groups. The conflict is complicated by religious rivalries, as the members of Assad's regime are Alawite, Shiite Muslims, whereas most of the rebels are Sunni Muslims.



The distribution of existing chemical weapons worldwide amongst countries that have declared their stockpiles to the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW).

Numbers

100,000 Estimated Death Toll
More than 2 Million Refugees, about 10% of the population.
Between 500 and 1,300 killed with Sarin nerve gas.

Supporting Assad's Regime

Russia
China
Iran
Hezbollah

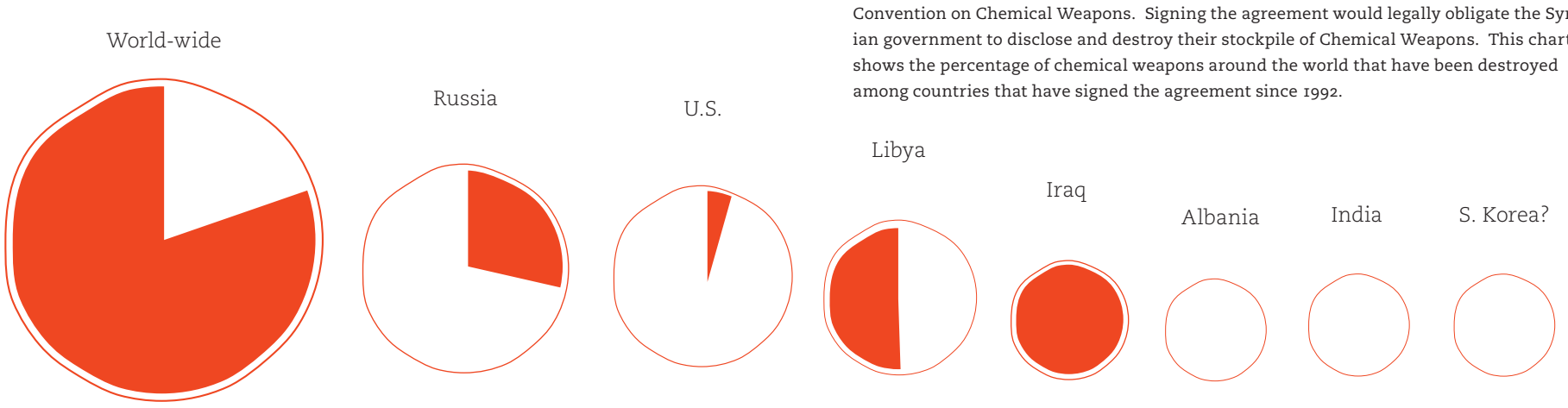
Internal Opposition to Assad

Syrian National Coalition
Free Syrian Army
al-Nusra (Al-Qaeda affiliated)
Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (Al-Qaeda affiliated)

Countries Recognizing the Syrian National Coalition as a legitimate representative of the Syrian People

Arab League
Bahrain
Kuwait
Oman
Qatar
Saudi Arabia
United Arab Emirates
France
Turkey
Italy
United Kingdom
Spain
Denmark
Norway
Netherlands
Germany
Belgium
Luxembourg
United States
Australia
Malta

As a strategy to delay military intervention, Syria has been invited to sign the International Convention on Chemical Weapons. Signing the agreement would legally obligate the Syrian government to disclose and destroy their stockpile of Chemical Weapons. This chart shows the percentage of chemical weapons around the world that have been destroyed among countries that have signed the agreement since 1992.



The Case for Intervention

Chemical weapons attacks against Syrian civilians, which violate international law, are strongly suspected to be attributable to the Assad regime.

The Syrian military has committed numerous human rights violations since April 2011.

The conflict in Syria has created a massive refugee population with no immediate solutions for resettlement or conflict resolution.

According to the UN concepts of Humanitarian Intervention and the Responsibility to Protect (emanating from the Right to Interfere), nations have a moral responsibility to act against the national sovereignty of another state to protect civilians from death and displacement.

Overthrowing Assad could politically weaken Iran and Hezbollah.

The Case Against Intervention

US military intervention would violate international law, which only allows self-defense or intervention approved by the UN Security Council.

However, among the six permanent members of the Security Council, two of them — China and Russia — would veto a military intervention of Syria.

The instability of the current power structure in Syria is such that attempts to ship arms to rebel factions bear the risk of worsening rebel in-fighting and leading to greater loss of civilian life.

Congress is opposed to military intervention, and acting without Congressional authorization would violate the US Constitution. US military intervention could lead to a regional war.

Many people fear that intervention would lead to unnecessary death, suffering and the creation of "another Iraq."

sourced from United Nations, Associated Press Interactive *//graphics by frederick eschrich*

Boots On The Ground

chicagoans march against us intervention in syria

by bonnie coyle

The opposition to US intervention in Syria is widespread. According to a recent Pew Research survey Americans, regardless of their gender, race, class and political affiliations, tend to oppose US military intervention and would prefer diplomacy. Demonstrations against possible military intervention in the area have taken place across the country. On Saturday, Sept. 7, demonstrators gathered in Federal Plaza in Chicago to voice their opposition to U.S involvement.

"We do not think it's a good idea for anybody to go into Syria for any reason. It would only add misery and more destruction," said Janet Fennerty, former Chicago Public Schools high school teacher and veteran anti-war activist. "It's just stupid … to think that it's going to have any effect on Assad or the rebels. Either way, it's the people who are going to suffer."

"I'm afraid we might repeat history," said former US Army Sergeant Alejandro Villatoro, who served in both the 2003 invasion of Iraq and the War in Afghanistan in 2011. "This act of war could bring a lot of implications, especially knowing that Russia and China and Iran are supporting Syria. We cannot afford to send more troops, we cannot afford to send our military or take military action knowing that we don't have the resources and we're already involved in two wars."

Villatoro and other protesters expressed their frustration with Nobel Peace Prize winner President Obama and his administration for wanting to engage in any military action in Syria. "We have elected a president that promised to withdraw from these wars and to bring peace, to bring hope," said Villatoro. "But this is an act of war. He was not elected to take this type of action."

"We invaded Iraq illegally, and we haven't received approval from the UN to take any military action in Syria."

Washington Post columnist Eugene Robinson recently wrote that the United States needs to intervene in Syria because "somebody needs to be the world's policeman." This is an attitude shared by many mainstream news outlets, which also argue that a lack of intervention would make the US and the Obama administration appear weak. Other mainstream news sources believe the US must intervene in Syria to maintain its legitimacy as a world power, arguing it is the job of the US to make sure other countries abide by international law. Some of the protesters gathered Saturday disagreed with these assessments.

"That's kind of hypocritical because we don't abide by the law," said Villatoro. "We invaded Iraq illegally, and we haven't received approval from the UN to take any military action in Syria."

In 2003, the United States invaded Iraq under the pretence Saddam Hussein had "Weapons of Mass Destruction." Iraq is still not confirmed to have had such weapons. Now the Obama administration claims that involvement in Syria is necessary because of Bashar Assad's alleged use of chemical weapons on civilians. Are chemical weapons the new Weapons of Mass Destruction? Syria, unlike Iraq and Afghanistan, is not an oil-rich nation. But are there other reasons the United States wants to get involved in a civil war in Syria?

"It is strategically placed," stated Fennerty. "It is in the middle of the Middle East. It's a very strategic location, and [the US is] also looking out for the interests of Israel, that's for sure. So that's another reason for them to try to take charge."

"I think [US intervention] has a lot more to do with geopolitical consequences, having a government that's opposed to Israel and is not a friend to Saudi Arabia, which are the US' allies in the region," argues John Stachelski of the Chicago Anti-War Committee. "I think that [the US] does not want to have any opposition to their plans there. And there's all this historical antagonism, especially between Saudi Arabia and Syria. It's not necessarily about resources sometimes, or oil specifically. I think it's a lot more complex than just a question of resources."

On Tuesday, Sept. 10, the Obama administration reconsidered launching an attack on Syria. The administration has gone on to claim that it will place its strikes on hold if Assad surrenders his chemical weapons. Still, with no official diplomatic agreement reached, the US' future in Syria remains uncertain. This makes it all the more important for these demonstrations to occur. With the Obama administration continuing to delay the use of military action in Syria, it could be the voices of protesters across the country that ultimately sway its decision in the direction of diplomacy.

Local residents gather at an Aug. 29 demonstration to protest proposed American intervention in Syria.

photographs by tessa elbettar

SILENCE

is surrender

illustration by frederick eschrich

by nadine mostafa*

Two and a half years into the Syrian crisis, with at least two million refugees and 100,000 killed, on my first day of class this year at SAIC, a friend asked if President Obama was about to "start a new war with Syria." I paused for a moment of frustration, having repeated the story of my departure from my country for the nth time, and instead, said, "The war on Syria started two and half years ago. But many were not paying attention."

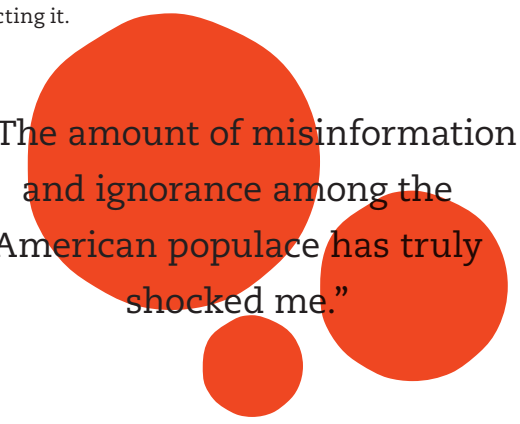
Two years ago and only a few months into the revolution, I remember seeing fewer and fewer of my friends from Daraa on campus. News of tortured children began to circulate. The once-carefree bourgeois mood of our private school was changing, and the environment became increasingly tense as students began to take sides. Among friends, we began to discuss the protests erupting around the country with caution and excitement. Albeit fearful, many of us felt hope, a notion that had been absent from the country since our government had massacred tens of thousands of Syrians in 1982. Ali, a friend of mine who was a fifth year architecture student from Daraa, was living proof of this hope. In his final years of college, he fell in love with a freshman architecture major who was captured by his energy. The two had made plans to get engaged upon his graduation, but he never got his diploma. Instead, he was shot dead, and with him went every ounce of hope.

Secret service agents and buff men with machine guns were deployed to conduct searches on students upon entering our school campus. The student union, which was essentially composed of students affiliated with Syrian intelligence, made sure to monitor every large group gathering on campus and issue plenty of warnings about the harsh punishments awaiting those who spoke poorly of "his majesty," Bashar al-Assad. I had been internally struggling for years with a feeling that my college was too corrupt, and now it was outwardly so. My values were being shattered for having to accept the increasingly patronizing voice of the regime propaganda being forced upon us, depicting the very same people who killed my friend, Ali, as dignified soldiers fighting the Western-backed Islamic terrorists. I would think silently to myself, "How dare they call Hamza al Khatib, the 13-year-old who was tortured for his anti-regime slogans, a terrorist? How dare they call my friend Ali, the dedicated architect, a terrorist?" But I did not dare speak those words aloud out of fear for my own safety and dignity. I was not ready to face rape, torture or even death; nor was I able to remain silent, so I left Syria.

I left for Lebanon temporarily to start an internship in Beirut with a well-reputed architectural firm in the heart of the city. I left without saying goodbye, planning to return. I watered my jasmine tree, pushed all my plants towards the windows, did all my laundry and left it right on my bed; I closed the shutters, turned all the lights off, grabbed my suitcase and made my way to the airport.

In Beirut, the scene was not too different from that of Damascus. Government loyalists marched proudly around al-Hamra Neighborhood, asserting their presence and indirectly threatening those who dared oppose them, but that sort of tension was familiar there. Occasional violence broke out in the Lebanese towns and villages between Syrian regime loyalists and those in opposition. Syrian activists who escaped to Lebanon were also threatened and kidnapped.

Most Syrian youth were not concerned with politics until the revolution. Politics only brought trouble and torture, so for generations parents made sure their children were as distant from the political arena as possible, and teachers made sure to follow assigned curricula to avoid being punished. At Syrian schools, compulsory courses like Nationalism and History were dedicated to etching the nation's "enemies, " Israel and the Jews, into the student's memories. Meanwhile, a growing percentage of the population was living in poverty: according to statistics from the United Nations Development Program, it was close to 30% before the uprising in 2009. For generations, the closest the Syrian public had ever gotten to politics was the Palestinian-Israeli conflict that had not affected Syria nearly half as much as Assad was affecting it.



Back in Beirut, I closely followed the news to both stay informed and to ensure that loved ones were safe. I made frequent road trips to Damascus to visit my sister and her newborn daughter, who later started to have trouble falling asleep due to the loud gunfire from the city of Darayya, only a couple of miles away from our neighborhood. Following the completion of my internship, I made the decision not to return to Syria in spite of having made it to my senior year. The images of homeless children and beggars roaming around the streets of Damascus and the miserable faces of the people struggling to go through their daily lives were haunting me. I knew that returning to Damascus could be a matter of death or torture. As I had broken my silence, I was incapable of returning to my pre-revolution state. I had made the decision to leave as if the crisis in my home country was naturally going to end soon, and that I would be able to make it back home right after graduation, as I'm sure was recently the case for Tunisians, Egyptians and Libyans.

Today, after the militarization of our peaceful revolution, the situation has grown more complicated and tragic than ever. With foreign boots on the ground fighting on the regime's side and non-stop shipments of Russian arms to the Syrian regime, the opposition army saw an influx of foreign fighters claiming to be fighting on its side to topple the criminal regime and liberate the Syrian people. Those militants took over the vacuum of support for those who were defenseless but have now turned against the Syrian people by beheading, killing and detaining Syrians indiscriminately, following in the footsteps of the Syrian regime.

As the world debates military action in response to the Syrian regime's use of chemical weapons against unarmed civilians in an attack which killed at least 1,400, the amount of misinformation and ignorance among the American populace has truly shocked me. This becomes especially clear with peace activists who have, only in recent days, dedicated themselves to what they regard as "helping the Syrian people," unaware of the fact that their activism would have been faced with detention and torture had it been on Syrian soil.

While individuals like these often have noble intentions, their calls could not be further from what Syrians need today. As protesters call for a stand against US intervention, Syrian regime planes conduct indiscriminate strikes and kill hundreds of innocent civilians. These individuals and organizations have been markedly absent from any calls upon Assad to stop the brutality, rape, torture and killing of his people throughout the last two and a half years. While the situation is alarmingly complicated, and Al-Qaeda militants continue to hijack our uprising, detain and torture our activists, the American media and the general public continue to associate them with the Syrian people as a defense mechanism for world inaction.

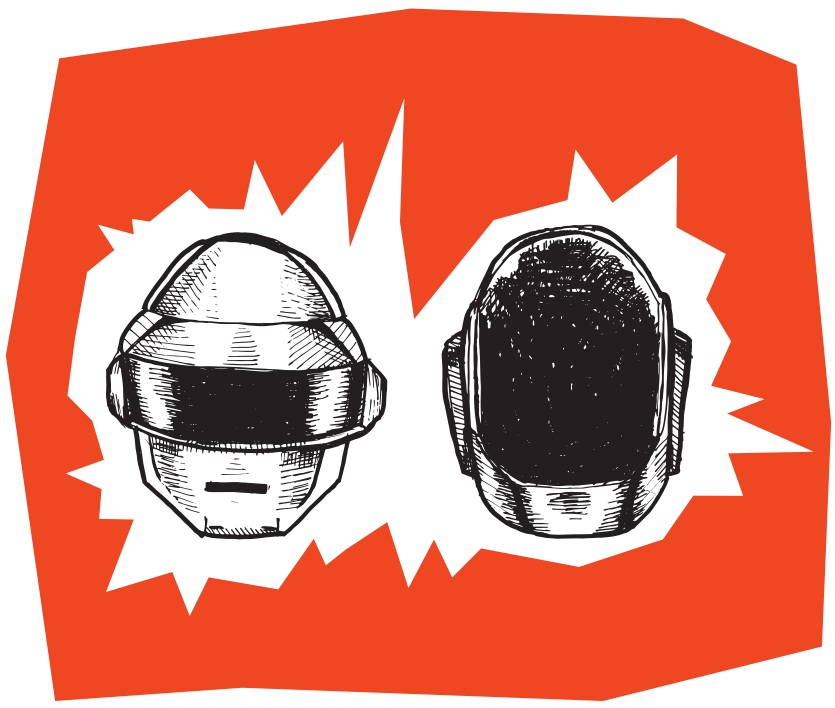
The mobilizing efforts of anti-war activists have been deemed successful, as they resulted in delaying intervention for now and diminishing the chances of a strike on the regime's strongholds. As a result, Assad, right after massacring civilians with chemical weapons, was invited to send a petition to the United Nations and the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons to join the Chemical Weapons Convention to disclose the country's stockpiles in order to have them destroyed within a year. What the self-proclaimed "anti-war" activists, who saw this as a victory, did not follow up on was the use of unidentified deadly gases on another neighborhood in Damascus only a few days later. Had the effective rallying cries of those activists been used towards mobilizing humanitarian support for Syrian refugee children to continue their education, many things would have been different today.

International inaction has not worked thus far, and continued inaction will not remedy the future. In fact, inaction could lead to an escalation of violence in the region as a whole, resulting in a larger death toll among innocent unarmed civilians and a green light for dictators to use their chemical weapon stockpiles on innocent civilians to silence them. Between a powerful, internationally-backed regime and a terrorist organization, Syrians are left to fight for their freedom on their own as the international community turns a blind eye to international law and the history of genocide. Ziad Majed, a famous Lebanese democracy researcher, stated on his Facebook page, "It is not because of the Jihadists in Syria that the International Community is hesitant about intervening to end the tragedy. It is rather because of the hesitation of the International Community and the continuing Syrian tragedy that the Jihadists are seizing an 'opportunity' and organizing themselves in (and against) Syria."

Today, two years later, I write this all the way from Chicago thinking of my laundry still lying there on my bed. I think of my plants, which I still imagine as alive but realistically are probably dead by now, as are many other things in Syria. I wonder about my chances of returning home. I often regret speaking out, and wonder if this revolution was ever worth it. I remember the world applauding the brave, defenseless Syrians for finally breaking the silence and standing up for themselves, protesting peacefully and chanting for dignity, a sight that no one had witnessed in their lifetimes. When those Syrians were faced with bullets, the world applauded them. They were massacred and the world condemned these atrocities, showing us a mastery of empty condemnations. Any action that has been taken has been in the form of sanctions that only kill more Syrians. As a human being, I am certain that the international community cannot continue to simply observe the indiscriminate killing of Syrians that is only bound to intensify if clear and swift condemnation does not occur.

I mourn the passing of Ali knowing that he was not the first, and he will not be the last, but I pray that the endless stories of children and young adults like him do not disappear with their deaths, but instead serve as a call to action that has become both morally and strategically necessary.

*Name changed to protect identity of the author.



human after all

daft punk's detached celebrity

by jessica barrett sattell

In a celebrity-obsessed world where faces make fortunes, Daft Punk, with their helmets reflecting such glassy, impenetrable depths, are famously anonymous. Their robot personas have been evolving and enchanting the masses since 2001, but the duo's brief cameo in 2010's "TRON: Legacy" elevated their visual branding to the realm of pop culture legend. Although by the film's release it had already been intensely publicized that Thomas Bangalter ("the silver robot") and Guy-Manuel de Homem-Cristo ("the gold robot") had scored this sequel to the original 1982 film, their onscreen presence came as an Easter egg surprise. In a pivotal, tense party scene, their "faces" blend in seamlessly with the hyperstylized digital microcosm of the TRON-verse. Looking on in artfully designed light-up speed suits, they offer nothing more than what they do best: make music and ensure that the crowd is pumped.

Daft Punk's helmets have now become international icons in their own right, so interestingly, the DJs' presence in this onscreen fantasy world creates a link and an anchor back to the "real" world of the viewer; they are our only familiar signifiers of a well-known code. While both fitting in perfectly with their surroundings and sorely sticking out to the eye of the cultural savant, their cyborg personas allow them, as artists, to move between virtual and physical worlds, permanently residing in neither. It could be a statement on our increasing reliance on carefully constructed masks that we put on and take off, depending on the situation; a successful negotiation of our "digital" selves alongside our "analog" selves now marks our everyday interactions within both virtual and physical communities.

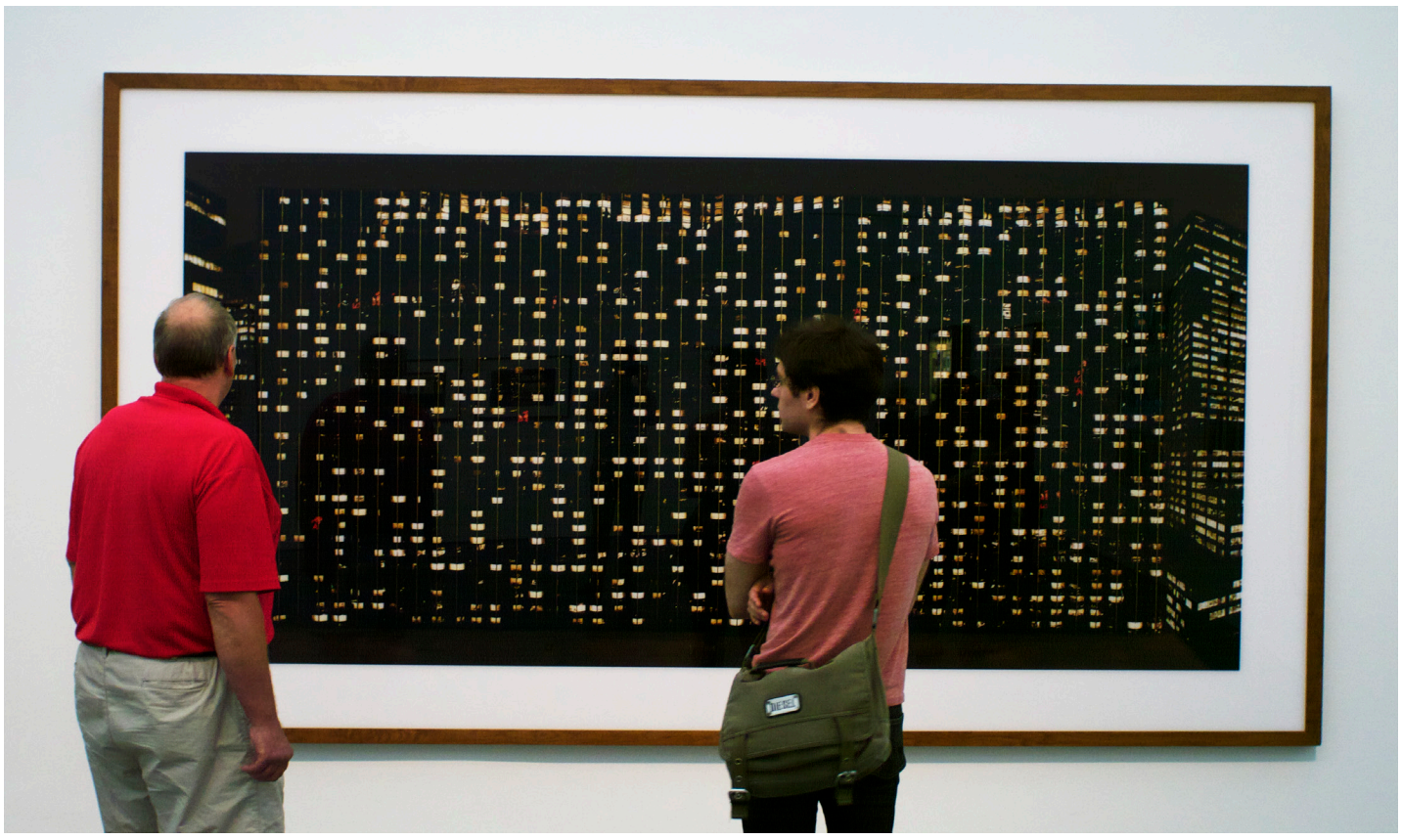
Identity negotiations aside, the robot guises act as a way for Daft Punk to both amplify the reach of their music and buffer the distracting effects of celebrity life. In a May 2013 Pitchfork interview, de Homem-Christo explains: "Looking at robots is not like looking at an idol … It's not a human being, so it's more like a mirror — the energy people send to the stage bounces back, and everyone has a good time together rather than focusing on us." Their costumes act as physical armor to maintain the performers' privacy (their actual faces and bodies) and keep everyone (performers and audience alike) focused on the art.

"As members of undeniably wired societies, we've finally caught up with what Daft Punk has been doing for years: shapeshifting, negotiating and negating the nature of our public faces."

Unlike visual artists, whose works become physical "products" that are separate from their bodies, actors and musicians employ their bodies as their art. But, by utilizing costumes, Daft Punk offers a challenge to the idea that celebrity relies on a human form; they perpetuate their robot faces as visual objects interrelated to and inseparable from their music. The getups also act as symbols of the transitional field between men and music: the instruments. Robots are the intermediaries between machines and humans, technological tools that can become new instruments — transmitters for art — altogether.

As members of undeniably wired societies, we've finally caught up with what Daft Punk has been doing for years: shapeshifting, negotiating and negating the nature of our public faces. As artists, they have a long history of physically portraying the now culturally i ngrained practice of utilizing avatars. We carefully craft and play out our social media, video game or blogosphere personas and seamlessly step into and out of hyperdigitized communities both virtual and real, relying on technological tools to act as buffers. Our digital selves have conformed to our physical selves, and vice versa, and all of the masks that we show the world have become the same guise. Perhaps that is why, at some unconscious level, the duo's popularity continues to skyrocket out of an unassuming development: in stepping into the role of robots, they deny their audience the chance to see them as men but instead present themselves as intermediaries on a path to simply enjoying and experiencing music. By physically removing their real selves from their robot armor, by taking off the costumes at the end of the day and keeping their real faces carefully out of view, Bangalter and de Homem-Christo might be enjoying a luxury that is a new rarity: celebrity away from the public eye.

illustration by meghan ryan morris



Think First, Shoot Later

an exhibition of modern conceptual photography at the mca

by patrick reynolds

"Think First, Shoot Later", organized by MCA curator Michael Darling, and on view until November 10, is one of an ongoing series of biannual shows drawing from the MCA's permanent collection. It works well as a complement to the abstraction-heavy works in neighboring group exhibition Homebodies, while providing the guests of the MCA with an easily digestible primer for modern and contemporary conceptual photography.

The introductory space of the show's four occupied galleries presents a selectively assembled collection of images that have been primarily executed as large-scale, attention-grabbing prints.

The first two photographs that greet the viewer upon entry to the show are Rodney Graham's "Small Basement Camera Shop, circa 1937" and Jeff Wall's "In front of a nightclub." A brief, bold wall description of the idea behind the show explains: "Like much photography produced after the 1960s, these works are highly premeditated, systematic, and staged: in other words, they embody an ethos of 'think first, shoot later.'"

Not only have both the Graham and Wall prints been produced in the past ten years (being completed in 2011 and 2006, respectively), they are also marked by similar aesthetic tendencies and technical specifications. Graham's "Small Basement Camera Shop" presents a seemingly innocuous scene of a man working behind the counter of a 1930s-style camera shop (costumed in wire spectacles and a shiny red bow tie), while Wall's photograph depicts a dynamic but ominous scene of people assembled on a sidewalk outside of an urban nightclub. While the narrative content differs in each of these images, they are notably similar in that each natural-looking scene was executed using a meticulously crafted set inside the artist's studio (Graham, in fact, is the man in his own photograph).

The remaining prints in the initial gallery space follow the lead established by Wall and Graham. Two large Thomas Demand prints explore the intersection of photography and sculpture as he creates naturalistic scenes of real-world locations out of paper and subsequently photographs them. Stan Douglas' "Hockey Fight"(1951) recreates the look of a vintage press camera photograph through the presentation of a carefully-articulated narrative in yet another artificial environment.

The exploration of concept-based applications of photography in "Think First" narrows its scope to three separate themes: naturally occurring visual diversity stemming from historically- and technically-informed photography, the self-aware self-portrait and the steadfast dedication to predetermined aesthetic principles.

The second and largest gallery in the show features works occupying a variety of aesthetic spaces, but they are thematically connected through their collective exploration of photographic processes as means to achieve visual abstractions. The presented works of Wolfgang Tillmans, Roe Ethridge, and Elad Lassry, for example, all serve to illustrate the photograph's potential to simultaneously occupy artistic and commercial spaces by borrowing from the aesthetic tendencies of advertising images. Walead Besthy, Pamela Rosenkranz, and James Welling explore texture, light and color through a variety of experimental printing processes.

The adjacent gallery examines the role of the self-portrait in conceptual photography, with photographs illustrating a variety of interpretations of the self-portrait as a photographic device. Cindy Sherman's work on display draws from two of her well-known series, one of which involves the depiction of fictitious film stills from classic Hollywood films, while the other creates surrealistic crime scene-inspired compositions using prosthetic body parts.

"an easily-digestible primer for modern and contemporary conceptual photography"

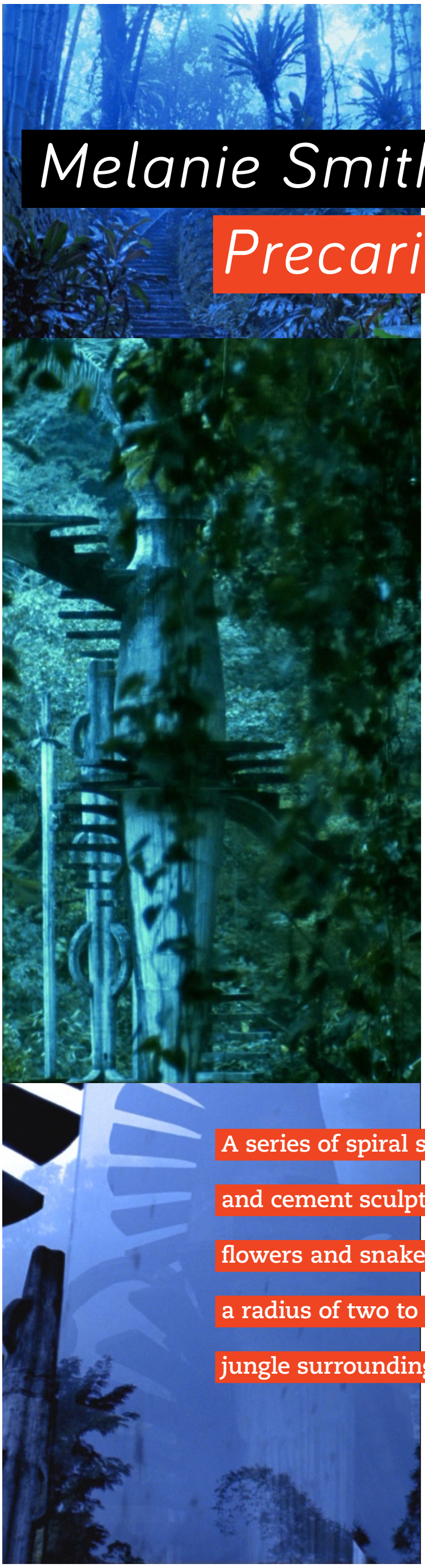
The intersection of Sherman's visually independent works provides an appropriate complement to Matthew Barney's macabre "Cremaster 2: The Drone's Cell", in which the artist depicts himself as the notorious murderer Gary Gilmore. Gillian Wearing's stunning nearby print ("Self-Portrait at Three Years Old") makes further use of prosthetics and theatrical elements, but in this case the artist has used these tools to transform her adult face into an eerily-realistic version of herself as a toddler, with only her eyes peeking through the illusion.

The final gallery space switches gears, analyzing the roles of aesthetic form and visual structure in photography through the work of students of renowned photographers Bernd and Hilla Becher (known collectively as the Dusseldorf School). The Bechers are widely known for their grid-inspired arrangements of photographs depicting different types of industrial structures in similar compositions. "Cooling Towers," a self-explanatory series of twelve black-and-white prints, is on display. The Bechers' primary principle — maintaining visual consistency across a body of work as a means of developing a long-term aesthetic — is apparent within the works of the artists sharing the space, but with differing applications depending on the photographer.

Andreas Gursky's "Avenue of the Americas," for example, uses both architectural and grid-based elements, but it is composed as one single image, as opposed to the Bechers' series. Thomas Struth's photos are on a similar scale to Gursky's, but while he also explores the special examination of architectural feats, he does so without the explicit geometric influence that is so readily present in Gursky's work.

The works in "Think First, Shoot Later" present a variety of perspectives and ideas that have influenced the photographic world for the past 40 years, but its installation fluidly connects these oppositional viewpoints through the exploration of the artists' multidimensional motivations.

photos courtesy of the MCA



Melanie Smith's Precarious Xilitla

framing the scattered jungle castle of las pozas

by alexia casanova

Nestled away in a subtropical valley of the state of San Luis Potosí in Mexico, Las Pozas is one of the most intriguing architectural endeavours of the 20th Century. Imagined by British poet Edward James, this surrealist castle has become the main attraction of the small town of Xilitla. Melanie Smith, a British artist who has lived in Mexico since 1989, dedicated one of her recent works to this fascinating structure.

The construction of the castle, which was initiated in 1949 and spread over twenty years, was never completed. A series of spiral stairways leading to nowhere and cement sculptures in the shape of hands, flowers and snakes are sporadically spread with a radius of two to three kilometers in the lush jungle surroundings. James was a fervent patron of the surrealist movement. He was friends with Remedios Varo; René Magritte painted two portraits of him; he spent time with Dalí at Las Pozas; and Leonora Carrington, yet another British artist who settled in Mexico, collaborated on many of the castle's structures. Las Pozas, now featured on the UNESCO World Heritage tentative list, embodies the creative genius of James and his artist friends. This rich combination of gothic and surrealist art also draws influence from Gaudi's aesthetics and the no less extravagant "Ideal Palace" of French postman Ferdinand Cheval. Las Pozas in Xilitla attracts a large number of tourists every year and inspires many contemporary artists living and travelling to Mexico.

Last June, Melanie Smith presented a new version of her film installation "Xilitla" at the Tate Modern in London, followed by a conversation with Professor Dawn Ades and curator Tanya Barson. Smith's previous film installation "Spiral City (2002)" explored the urban grid of Mexico City in a visual response to Robert Smithson's earthwork in Salt Lake and his related film "Spiral Jetty." Smithson's work also had a visible influence on Melanie Smith's exploration of visual patterns and land modification in "Xilitla." Like Smithson's "Yucatan Mirror Displacements," also set in Mexico, the presence of moving mirrors carried by the gardeners of Las Pozas explores temporality in the landscape/earthwork relationship. The effect of entropy on the artistic and cultural landscape is the thread linking Smith's inspiration and Smithson's earthwork to the subject of her installation, James' castle. Smith stresses the fact that James built his structure hoping that the surrounding wild vegetation would reclaim it, in effect creating a hybrid masterpiece.

"Xilitla" is a vertical film, a choice of frame and lines that Smith justifies by the characteristic vertical nature of the architecture of Las Pozas. She presents the castle in all its forms and angles: by day, by night, illuminated by fireworks and undergoing maintenance. The predominance of the color blue throughout the film is not only a reference to the gothic elements of the architecture, but also a wish to present James' castle in a new light, moving away from the overwhelming green of the surrounding jungle. The soundtrack of the film is a curious juxtaposition of silences, sounds of the jungle, voices of the gardener and conversations with collaborating artist Rafael Ortega. The alienation of image and sound — Ortega's comments, for instance, do not refer to the image being projected — is another way of addressing temporality and illustrating the different dimensions of the structure: human-made, natural, hybrid.

Melanie Smith's past and present work is linked to a reflection on modernity, its aesthetic-political system and its relation to social experience. She considers the operation of modernity and modernism in Mexico, drawing parallels between this incomplete process of modernization and incomplete artistic structures. "Xilitla," and its depiction of James' unfinished castle stands as an example of this particular aesthetic mode. She presents the precarious and incomplete nature of modernity as potential rather than failure.

A series of spiral stairways leading to nowhere and cement sculptures in the shape of hands, flowers and snakes are sporadically spread with a radius of two to three kilometers in the lush jungle surroundings.

photos courtesy of melanie smith

it's okay to be wrong

revelations on painting and art criticism in terry myers's sabbatical lecture

by maggie carrigan

I have a sincere respect for avid lecture-goers, who are so dedicated to expanding their minds that they voluntarily spend their free time on hard chairs, arranged in uninspiring rows in dimly lit rooms, to hear someone talk about a specific — and perhaps a little soporifically esoteric — topic for an hour. It is not the rows of chairs or dim lighting that often dissuade me from going to lectures, but the lack of a guarantee — how can I be sure that I will find interest and worth in what this person has to say?

This may sound unnecessarily harsh of me but, in a world with myriad options for acquiring information within just a few seconds, attending a comparably lengthy extra-curricular lecture becomes a risky gamble with my already limited free time.

However, I was persuaded to attend Terry Myers' sabbatical lecture, "Painting Stays While the World Floats Away," because of the claim that it would be "opinionated." "That sounds lively," I thought. I wasn't disappointed. Not-so-freshly back from his 2012 sabbatical, Myers is a noted art critic who splits his time between Chicago and Los Angeles, and is Associate Professor of Painting and Drawing at SAIC. Detailing his

"I've noticed recently that they [SAIC students] are unburdened compared to painters of my generation who have been beaten and ravaged by modernism … Painting is radical again."

experiences as he traversed Japan, Germany and the US during his time away, Myers offered observations into the state of painting today and what it meant to be an art critic, two insights I didn't know I needed until I heard them said.

Myers's sabbatical — or his retelling of it — began in Tokyo where he visited the National Museum of Modern Art just in time for the first ever monographic exhibition of Jackson Pollock's work in Japan. "As many of you who know me know, I would step on a Pollock to get to a de Kooning," Myers remarked, "but Pollock's achievements can't be undermined. I had to go."

Celebrating the centenary of the artist's birth, the retrospective included two exceptional aspects according to Myers: a meticulously accurate facsimile of Pollock's studio that blew MoMA's studio remake in a previous Pollock exhibition out of the water, and the work "Mural on Indian Red Ground." Purchased by former queen and exiled empress of Iran Farah Palavi, "Mural" is one of the prized possessions of the Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art and had not left the country in over three decades prior to the Tokyo exhibition.

Shortly after viewing the Pollock show, Myers had the great fortune to visit another retrospective of ground-breaking Gutai artist Atsuko Tanaka at Tokyo's Museum of Contemporary Art. Myers explained that Tanaka was best known for her work "Electric Dress" (1956), an all-encompassing mop of a frock made out of wires and colored lights. "It must be a museum conservator's nightmare," he joked.

Myers went on to explain that, while not a painting, "Electric Dress" was conceived of by the artist as a painter. Flashing an image of one of Tanaka's paintings on the screen behind him, the relationship between the painting — which looked like a circuit board with a nest of wires — and the famed "Electric Dress" was undeniable.

It was in that simple moment that I realized how multifarious painting is, something I had never taken the time to think about before. Quoting the contemporary American artist Laura Owens later in the lecture, Myers said, "Painting does things, so why wouldn't you take advantage of everything that it does?"

This hit home with me after my brief Tanaka epiphany. I felt like a bum student of art history and theory — why had I not thought of painting as a state of mind rather than a just a medium long before? Bells were going off in my head, neurons were moving across synaptic gaps at an alarming rate. I had learned something, really learned something. What I was hearing was changing the way I viewed painting and maybe art in general.

Meyers went on to discuss two large-scale art exhibitions ("sprawling things" he called them) that he visited during his sabbatical: Made in L.A. in Los Angeles and Documenta 13 in Germany. While he remarked on the limited or lackluster representation of painting in both instances, he seemed relieved that painting was included at all. "In international biennials, painting has disappeared… curators are afraid of it! But that's starting to change."

"At Documenta, I learned that tapestries are back," Myers wittingly said. "That just shows that no medium is ever dead … As a teacher here [at SAIC], I teach younger and younger students every year. I've noticed recently that they are unburdened compared to painters of my generation who have been beaten and ravaged by modernism." At Made, painting also made a comeback through the works of Brian Sharp, Alex Olson, Meleko Mokgosi, Allison Miller and Zach Harris.

"These things are cyclical. Painting is radical again."

As the lecture came to a close, I flipped back to my first page of notes to star something I had jotted down at the very start. Myers had introduced his lecture with a few remarks on his work as an art critic. "The older I get, the less academic I become. I am an art critic … I look at art, try to figure out what to say about it, and I say it as clearly as possible."

"One of the reasons I like being an art critic is that you get to be wrong." By the end of my hour in a hard plastic chair in a dimly lit room, I had indeed realized that I had been wrong. Wrong about painting. Wrong about lectures.

"Electric Dress" Tanaka Atsuko 1956 (refabricated 1986)// *photo courtesy of the Collection of the Takamatsu City Museum of Art*

expanding constricted space

andrea zittel speaks at saic

by alyssa moxley

Andrea Zittel opened this year's Visiting Artist Program series of lectures at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago on September 9th, with a discussion of the evolution and intertwining of her life, art, and work. In her work, Zittel poses questions considering how life functions through her art, experimenting with many of the same concerns of architects and interior designers. In her A-Z world of architectural structures, interior organizational environments, clothing, dehydrated meals, and restructurings of the daily use of time, she explores the shared boundary between freedom and constriction. She introduced the lecture with "Free Running" (1999), where she lived locked in a basement in Berlin, without human contact or timekeeping devices for a week. This piece, she told the audience, was a learning experience for her that further concretized her conceptual investigation of progress, individualism, and the possibility of liberation from socially imposed guidelines by setting her own.

Much of Zittel's lecture recounted how confronting economic challenges became integrated into her work. Fresh out of art school in the early '90s, she moved to New York during a recession when galleries were closing and high profile artists were getting day jobs. The way survival shapes the life of an artist became an essential element of her practice. She rented a cheap 200-square foot storefront where she lived and worked. In order to manage her project within such a small space, which at that time involved breeding animals, she constructed "management and maintenance" units with spaces for sleep, meals and exercise. Inspired by the micro-spaces she had created for the animals, Zittel constructed her own management and maintenance unit. This piece of portable architecture, initially built as a tool to help organize her living space, became a new focal point for experimentation.

As her home and studio merged into one, she began the reorganization of her life around self-set limitations. She experimented with the built environment and with daily activities like wearing the same handmade clothes and eating meals with the same simple ingredients every day. Finally able to purchase a property in 1994, Zittel acquired the building for a more permanent presentation venue. A-Z East became her Brooklyn testing ground. She experimented with more ideas of dwelling: for example, the thought that the inside of furniture might be more comfortable, building a "pit bed." She blurred lines between public and private by wearing homemade pajamas all day, and explored possibilities for the "multi-use" of space through her Ottoman furniture (which could serve as storage units, tables, chairs and beds).

After moving west and reconsidering her practice in light of a shared life with a partner, the artist developed the aesthetic concept of "Raugh," scrutinizing the meaning of surfaces that camouflage dirt. Surfaces that show dirt are easier to clean, but also require that action; Zittel played with this capacity to show or hide dirt in the construction of giant foam boulders. She also continued to experiment with her A-Z concept within the Californian model of urban planning, what she referred to as "capsule culture," a desire for private and isolated space. She built "cellular compartment units," multi-level living spaces with designated specific uses for every minute cubic room, inspired by the giant single-developer McMansion-style housing developments that were beginning to incorporate such lavish un-necessaries as servants' quarters. She further explored the psychological and social effects of architecture with the construction of the A-Z Pocket Property. While living on this concrete island built off the coast of Denmark on the North Sea, she discovered that the illusion of autonomy can actually lead to increased passivity.

In the late '90s as Zittel's work toured the world more often, she began questioning art as an export. Deeply rooted in American lifestyles, she felt her work lacked something once it was removed from its context. So, once again she decided to create a home that would also serve as a studio. A-Z West, built from the base of a homestead house in Joshua Tree, California, would become the base of creation, conception, and viewing of much of her work.

Wagon Station in situ at A-Z West, 2011 A-Z Wagon Station customized by Chuck Moffitt//*Photo by Jessica Eckert//Courtesy of Andrea Rosen Gallery*
Portrait of Andrea Zittel at A-Z West, 2010 Photo by Giovanni Jance//Courtesy of Andrea Rosen Gallery

Murat Agdas//MFA Performance 2014

Inspired by the landscape of Joshua Tree, which he explored on a roadtrip this summer, Murat Agdas wanted to meet with Zittel to discuss the possibility of initiating an exchange between SAIC and the Institute for Investigative Living at the A-Z West "test site." He's interested in learning "not necessarily about what she makes, but how she makes." He had heard about a residency where A-Z West hosts ten students from Columbia University, New York and Bazalel Academy of Art and Design in Israel to collaboratively make work for ten days. The residency, which happens after the end of the school term, at the end of May, is a holistic art-making experience including specially prepared food, lodging, and visits from alternative healers. Zittel expressed support for the idea and has been in email contact with Murat, sending information and posters. She is also considering building more Wagon Stations to accommodate additional students from SAIC. The ten-day residence costs $1,400 and requires the use of a car. Following on models from Columbia and Bazelel, Murat is contacting administration at SAIC to try to initiate a scholarship fund to support an Off-Campus residency at A-Z, hopefully starting this May and continuing for future years.

As her home and studio merged into one, she reorganized her life around self-set limitations.

The desert, Zittel asserts, is a place people are drawn to for its sense of freedom and autonomy. But within the confines of county government, the construction of a studio and living units required negotiation with local bureaucracy. With these in mind, she constructed guest bungalows, called wagon stations, a play on station wagon cars which are in Zittel's view the smallest place where it's still possible to comfortably sleep. She began to view these bungalows as escape pods, with their hatch doors closing out the outside world. They also became customizable prototypes as the artists that came to stay at A-Z West redesigned the wagon stations according to their own practices.

Zittell has been combining the practice of art-making with the practice of living for decades. Recently she has begun to create paintings of aphorisms to disseminate the hypotheses resulting from her living experiments. The series "These things I know to be true …" take the form of advertising billboards. By framing these proclamations of truth within the format of advertising, she poses a dilemma for the viewer about the possibility of definitive answers.

During her brief visit to Chicago, Zittel took time to meet with several students on studio visits. She will be returning to SAIC throughout the year as the William and Stephanie Sick Distinguished Professor. She will lead three workshops in Thing Lab, a year-long sculpture class led by Dan Price and Tim Parson that includes students from design, art, and writing backgrounds to engage and question the market forces of taste-making and power relationships in the world of collecting objects.

Zittel Visits MFA Students in Their Studios

Lindsey Whittle//MFA Photography 2014

Lindsey Whittle has been making paper, vinyl and tyvek outfits every day since the Spring 2013 semester. Wearing paper draws a lot of attention, and sometimes the disruption this causes ends up creating expectations that for Lindsey can detract from the work. Lindsey felt that "Sometimes you want to create your own freedoms, but you end up getting bound by it; it ends up trapping you too, because people start to expect you to wear it and you can't make your own decisions almost." Lindsey has been following Andrea Zittel's work ever since first seeing her living spaces and outfits on display in a Chelsea Gallery several years ago. When she met with Zittel at SAIC they compared notes on incorporating an art practice into daily life. Lindsey related, "I have to give myself permission to be out of the paper outfit. [Andrea] feels like she needs to keep that control, where she has to be in it all the time, even if she feels like being in just jeans and a t-shirt." They also spoke about the future, and what it means to take your work from an academic setting to real life, which is a priority concern for a second year MFA student. "Andrea suggested that I should be reaching out to gallery owners and museum curators, and to new people rather than relying only on established relationships from the past."

photos courtesy of the artists; Murat Agdas and Lindsey Whittle

levity gravity

art on the ceilings and walkways of the chicago expo 2013 at navy pier

by lauren fulton

In its second year, EXPO CHICAGO enlisted the vision of curator Shamim M. Momin for IN/SITU — the fair's portion of large-scale, site-specific installations — showcasing the work of internationally recognized contemporary artists. Titled and themed "Levity/Gravity," these works can be seen hanging above one's head from ceiling beams, inflated on the floor or mounted in the most unsuspecting corners of the venue at Navy Pier.

The former Whitney curator was able to sneak away to give F Newsmagazine a preview of what she has in store for the art community of Chicago and speak about her public art organization, LAND (Los Angeles Nomadic Division).

illustration by berke yazicioglu

“There was this interesting play with that initial impression of extreme verticality and how people would interact with that in a spatial way.”

Lauren Fulton: When you first visited the Pier, what was it that struck you most about the site?

Shamim M. Momin: Well, one of the great things was that when Tony [Karman, President and Director of EXPO] and Nicole [Berry, Deputy Director] first brought me to the Pier, there was no other event happening. It was actually empty, and all the built structure that you see now was not there. It reminded me of the Park Avenue Armory that the 2008 Biennial used and is a similar kind of space.

That informed a lot of the way I was thinking about the projects I wanted to include. I was thinking of how I could interact with the architecture itself and use not the standard booth space, but how you walk through, where you walk through and the peripheral areas around it. I believe it would have been different if I had seen it how it is now.

LF: How did you decide on the title Levity/Gravity, and how does this concept apply to the works as a whole?

SMM: Sometimes I choose a theme or a title beforehand and ask the artists to respond to it, like with LAND’s exhibition in Marfa, Nothing Beside Remains. In this case, I started by talking to artists who I thought would be interesting in the space, and hearing what they wanted to do based on what I thought was interesting about the site. Then with others, I selected pieces I thought would work with the space. The title came last, but it became clear as I started to assemble a list of artists, as well as the projects specifically, that there was this interesting play with that initial impression of extreme verticality and how people would interact with that in a spatial way. The levity/gravity dichotomy was about what had already come together and was a nice way to categorize it. It’s not the only thing happening in the artists’ work, but as with any thematic, it’s just one aspect — one way of reading the work that links them together.

LF: How did you select the artists?

SMM: It doesn’t always go the same way every time. Sometimes it’s very clear, and I know who I want to work with in a certain space. Sometimes it’s the opportunity, the space, the context. Names and ideas pop into my head, and I begin to make lists. More often than not there are a few centered things or people who stand out — not because I consider their work more important but because I see it more strongly in stages of curating the show. There is usually a core list, and it kind of builds over the course of it, and new ideas come up and more works are considered.

LF: Of the 11 artists, how many created pieces specifically for IN/SITU?

SMM: Most of them. Karl Haendel’s is probably the most site-specific in that every ampersand was created for the space it’s in. There are a few that we can work with in variable spaces, but by and large he did it directly in conversation with the dimensions and architecture. Glenn Kaino’s golden footbridge is an idea that he has had but we’re realizing it here, so I consider that a commission. Sanford Biggers came up with the cotton and feather cloud sculpture specifically for the fair. Jose Dávila’s “The contraction between space and time. Time is but a stream I go a-fishing in” — the red balloon anchored to the ground by the heavy stone — is particularly related to the fair and the fair time frame because it’s a process piece, as it deflates.

The ones that were selections are Kevin Appel’s work from his Salton Sea series, Shinique Smith’s four fabric bundled sculptures that will be hanging from the ceiling, Diana Al-Hadid’s bronze bust pieces and Michael Rakowitz’s work. Michael’s inflatable rendering of the failed Pruitt-Igoe complex in St. Louis is one that in this case I consider site-specific, but it preexisted. We also have Alec Soth’s installation “XGF,” which is made up of 65 found photographs of women and presents a portrait of female objectification. There is also Dan Gunn’s wooden screens that play against the light and shadow in the space. Also Andreas Lolis’ installation of discarded packing material and boxes.

LF: You mentioned that these works are to be “encountered.” How does their installation present them in such a way?

SMM: Yes, [they are meant] to be experienced in the public area or a non-booth space. A space that is not specifically defined by a particular gallery, what that gallery represents, or is selling. In the peripheral places where you are not paying attention as much — the hallways you walk through or the “blank space.” I mean there’s really nowhere in a fair that is a blank space, but if you were to divide it that way, there are things that don’t belong to any one place except for the overall fair.

There is a very developmental and evolutionary aspect to it that I like. It’s hard to not assume that everything belongs to some booth, but as you are walking through, I think it will make itself specific. It’s an experiential aspect that is in some ways hardest to achieve at a fair, but it is important to me from a personal curatorial standpoint and it is also very much about what LAND does. Also for those who don’t know about LAND, this is a nice way for them to be introduced to some aspects of what we do.

LF: What is up next for LAND? Will you talk about your cross-country billboard project a bit?

SMM: It’s a concept that was initiated by the artist Zoe Crosher, an LA-based artist, who came to me about doing a multi-artist billboard project along Route 10. Originally she was envisioning it mostly in the desert from Arizona to LA. She was referring to it as “The Manifest Destiny Billboard Project,” as a little bit tongue-in-cheek. Obviously the idea is to investigate — to think about the complex and problematic history of the term and its implications. As we kept talking, it seemed more interesting as a way to engage the full country. Route 10 is exciting because it’s not the standard cross-country route, but it’s a really critical one in a lot of historical ways, along the South in particular. I proposed that we curate it together and expand the list of artists for the entire country. It starts east and moves west, and every artist involved is dealing with the theme in their own way, in some cases more directly than others.

I’m calling each iteration a “chapter” just as a way for people to understand that they are linked over the course of time, but it’s not one after the other like chapters would be laid out. It’s not a single story to be told, but it unfolds in a consecutive manner. Each artist can add what we are calling “activations” to their chapter, and we will work with organizations in those areas as much as possible. We always want to work with people who love their cities and want to work with what is particular to their area. The civic pride of Chicago is a great example of that.

For a review and more information about Expo Chicago, visit www.expochicago.com

Check out LAND at www.nomadicdivision.org

Visit FNewsmagazine.com for more Expo coverage

Out of the Lab and Into the Gallery

the art of Jessica Lloyd-Jones

by kayla lewis

Jessica Lloyd-Jones studies electrical flow in living organisms. She magnifies the stones used to build castles to observe the network of microscopic organisms living within them. With an artistic vision, she draws out physical poetry from what her scientific mind observes. Lloyd-Jones' sculptures and installations use science and technology, manipulating materials and light to reveal new physical perspectives.

In blurring the lines between art and science, Jones creates vantage points for concepts that explore innovations in both fields. This perspective encourages dialogue from people from diverse backgrounds, catalyzing new ideas and approaches toward both scientific discovery and artistic media. As an expansion of the conversation surrounding prominent issues like space exploration and technology's role in works of art, LLoyd-Jones' practice suggests more interdisciplinary modes of creation that could succeed at inspiring people to participate in these essential conversations that evaluate the scientific foundations of our society and the directions it moves in.

In her "Anatomical Neon" series, Jones explores the movement of gaseous elements and the presence of natural electrical activity in the human body through blown glass objects in the shapes of the brain, lungs, optic nerve and heart. Electrical currents in the form of xenon plasma radiate through the glass in vibrant illuminated color. The organs are easily recognizable to viewers, but their translucency allows them to be viewed on a different scale, drawing attention to the fact that energy travels through our bodies, like it does the machines that surround us.

The architecture of built objects as well as biological ones serves as a foundation to many of Lloyd-Jones' works. In "Heaven to Earth" she and composer Ant Dickinson explore the hidden life of the stone used to build Conwy Castle in Wales. Projected onto the castle's walls are views of the castle from outer space, microorganisms within the stone, and intensely magnified images of the plant life on its grounds. Projecting views of the tiny insects that thrive within the stone exposes viewers to numerous perceptions of the castle's context and to the multiple worlds of smaller scales that are so often overlooked. The brightly colored, organic shapes of microorganisms tower over each stone, making the castle itself seem small compared to the magnified creatures that crawl across it in the form of light. "Heaven to Earth" reveals the scientific complexity behind a simple object like a stone, which is often seen as merely a building component.

Art that explores science takes it out of the context of a laboratory or textbook and into a public space designed for interpretation, offering the possibility of a broad critique. People without degrees in science need not feel like scientific concepts are so foreign and daunting that it is easier to disregard them than to consider their impact. After all, the role of science, conceptually and practically, does not just apply to scientists. It is a crucial aspect of our everyday lives and environments.

To many, the subjects of art and science exist as two entirely different fields. Stereotypical images of the starving artist in a studio and the scientist laboring away in a laboratory are common at the mention of either occupation. These practices weave together easier than an outsider might think. In his book, "This is Your Brain on Music," Daniel J. Levitin explores the relationship between the artist and the scientist, uncovering a surprising amount of likenesses, from "similar stages of development" to the idea that "the work of artists and scientists is ultimately the pursuit of truth." As Levitin also points out, "members of both camps understand that truth in its very nature is contextual and changeable, dependent on point of view," and "today's truths become tomorrow's disproven hypotheses or forgotten objets d'art."

An artist's role in bringing science to a public sphere is to spark the same curiosity in audiences that the artist felt while creating the work. This reaction increases the possibility of building an awareness of the universe around us. Artists like Lloyd-Jones simply encourage us to marvel at our own reality. Her work cultivates a happy medium between art and science by using light, sound and video to make science accessible and engaging to the public. The concepts that Jones explores may go unnoticed in our everyday lives, but her way of bringing these concepts into a visual format makes science less foreign and more a part of human existence.

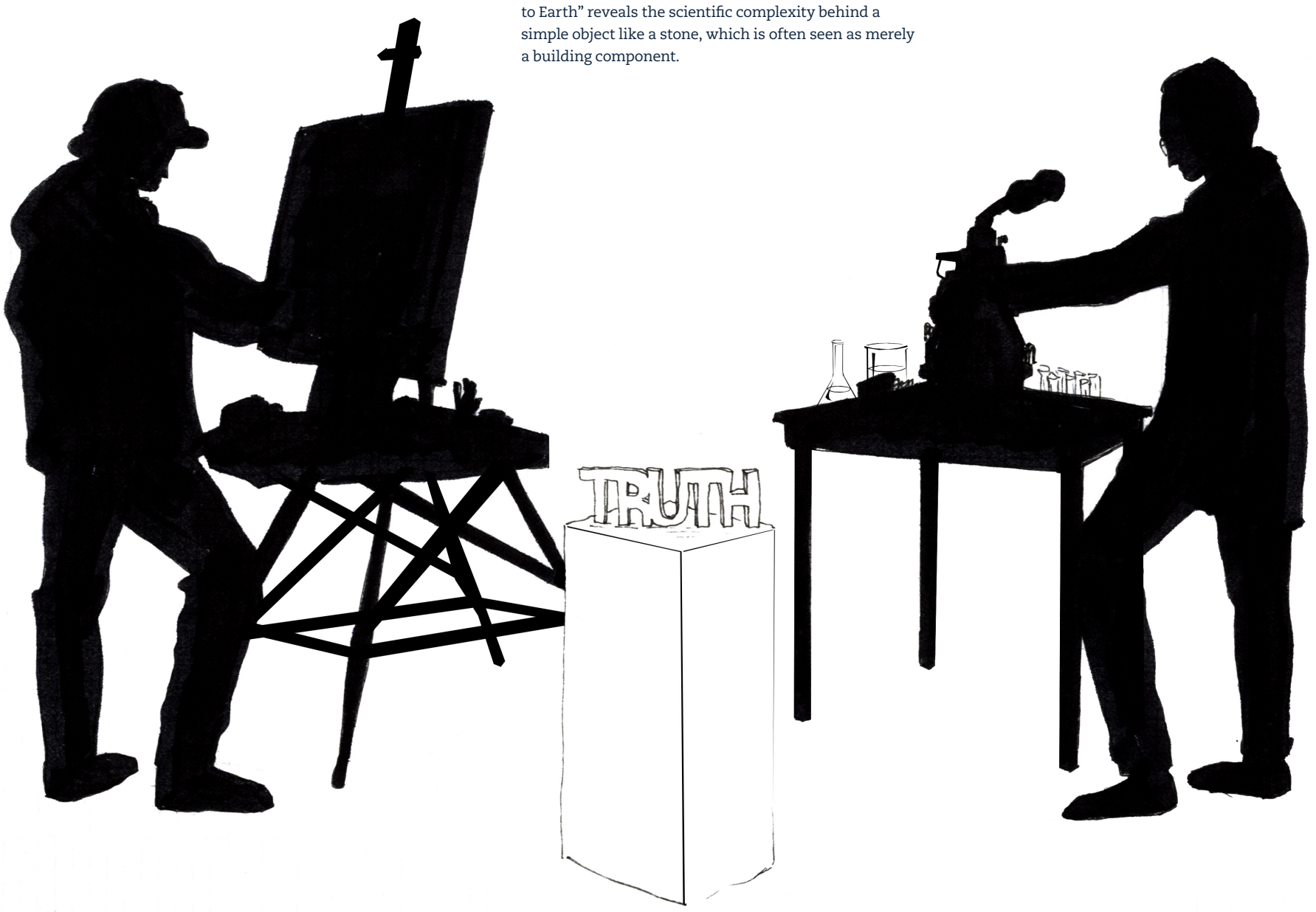


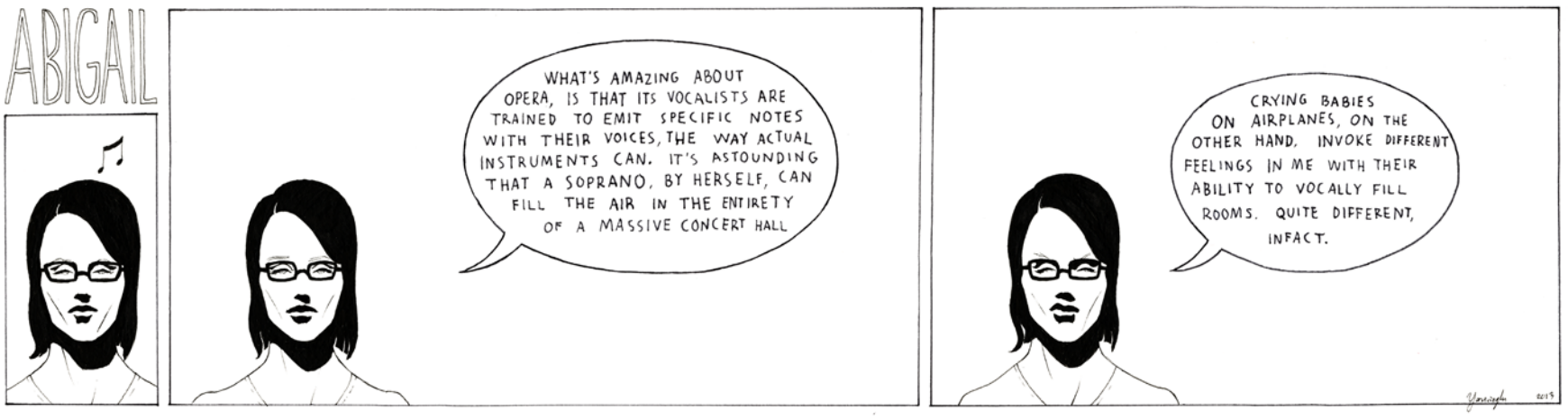
illustration by berke yazicioglu

drawn out thoughts,

drowned out drawings

comics at f

by berke yazicioglu



by lisa claire greene

by eric garcia

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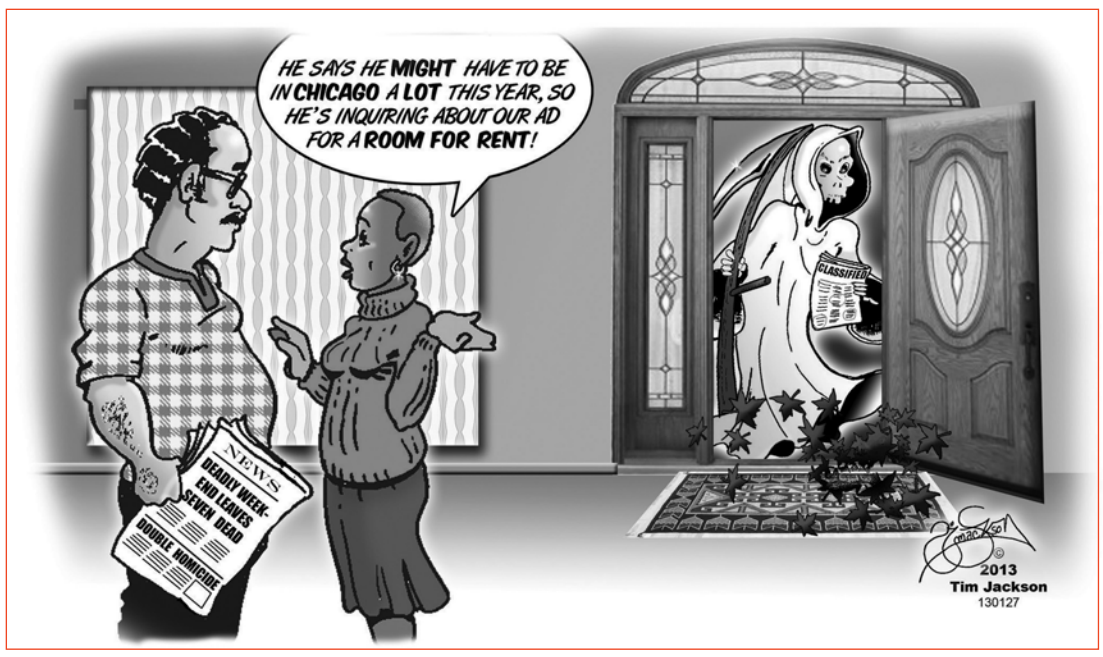
by tim jackson



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Do you draw out your thoughts as drowned out drawings?

If so, we could use some.

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