Arts, Culture and Politics | The School of the Art Institute of Chicago

fnewsmagazine

10/14

Bowie Does Chicago

Sign Painting Renaissance

The New Space Race

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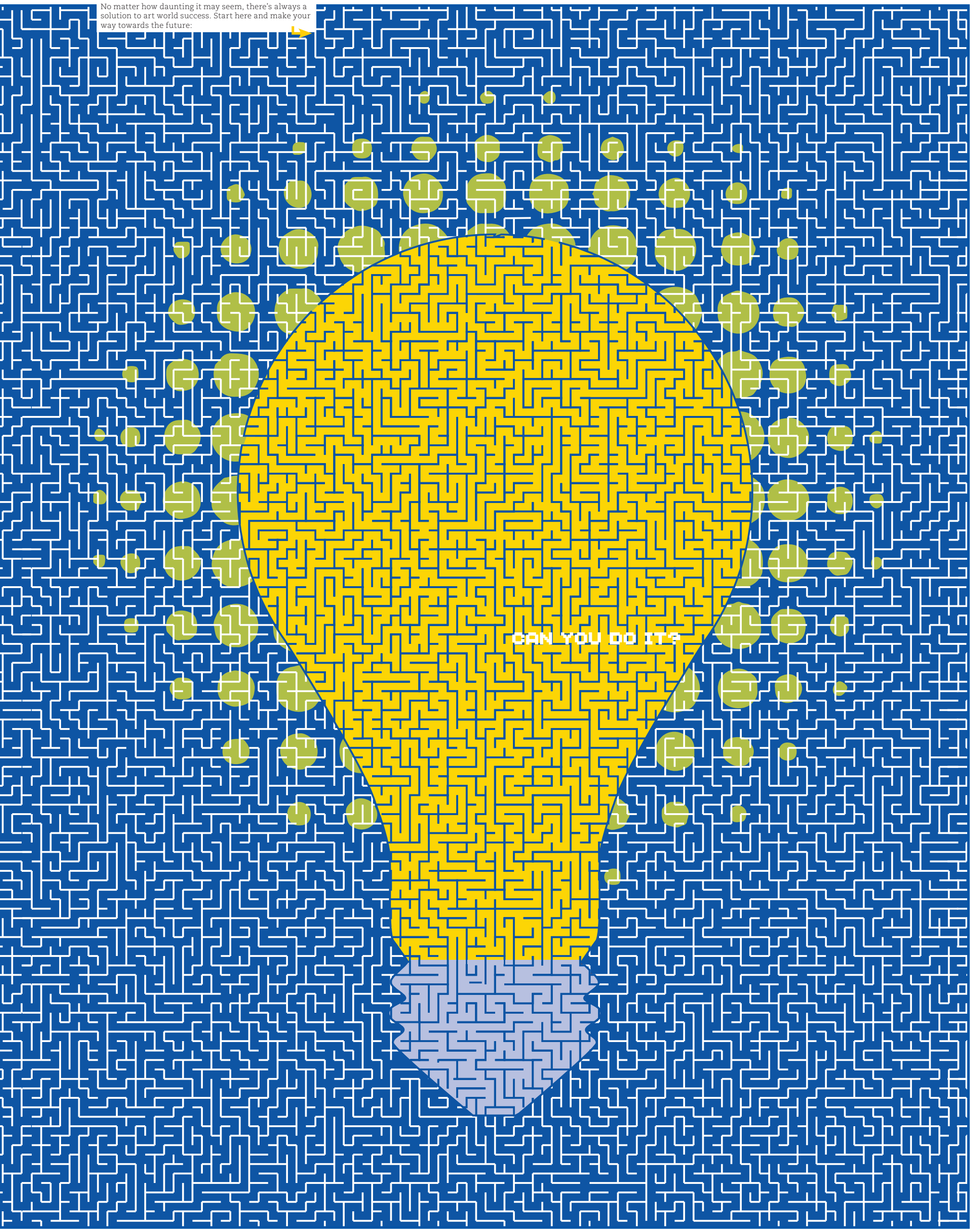

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Mon	Tue	Wed	Thur	Fri	Sat
		01	02	03	04
		8:30am—12pm Coffee & Bagels 11am—2pm SAIC Picture Day with DJ Mike Sullivan	12—1pm Résumé Triage	12—1pm Faculty Talks: Peter Exley & Odile Compagnon & Raffle Prize Drawings	10—3pm Working Artist Saturdays Skill Shares Documenting your work with Robert Chase Heishman *Registration encouraged
06	07	08	09	10	11
12—1pm Chili & Co–op [Student Conversations] Interns from Taryn Simon Projects & Sir New York	4:30—5:45pm Starting a Gallery with Aron Gent Director/Founder DOCUMENT	8:30am—12pm Coffee + Bagels 4—5pm Creating Your Business Card	11am—2pm SAIC Picture Day	12—1pm SURPRISE EVENT & Raffle Prize Drawings	
13	14	15	16	17	18
12—1pm Chili & Co–op [Student Conversations] Interns from Vice Media, New Museum of Cont. Art & Chicago Women's Health Center	4:30—5:45pm Marketing & Social Media for Artists Workshop	8:30am—12pm Coffee + Bagels 12—1pm Résumé Triage	5—6pm Speed Networking event with Students & Alumni	12—1pm Faculty Talks : Bruce Jenkins & Kurt Hentschlager & Raffle Prize Drawings	
20	21	22	23	24	25
12—1pm Chili & Co–op [Student Conversations] Interns from AKMD, LLC & Hedrich Blessing Photographers	4:15—5:45pm What's My Job? Conversations with Recent Alumni *Registration encouraged	8:30am—12pm Coffee + Bagels 4:15—5:45pm What's My Job? Conversations with Recent Alumni *Registration encouraged	4:15—5:45pm What's My Job? Conversations with Recent Alumni *Registration encouraged	12—1pm SURPRISE EVENT & Raffle Prize Drawings	10—3pm Working Artist Saturdays Skill Shares Successful Job Applications *Registration encouraged
27	28	29	30	31	
12—1pm Chili & Co–op [Student Conversations] Interns from Christie's New York & Museum of Contemporary Art	4:30—5:45pm Artist Grant Tutorial Rose Parisi Director of Programs Illinois Arts Council *Registration encouraged	8:30am—12pm Coffee + Bagels 11am—2pm SAIC Picture Day	5—6pm Speed Networking event with Students & Alumni	12—1pm Faculty Talks: Mark Jeffrey & Claire Ashley & Raffle Prize Drawings All day: TRICK OR TREAT!	

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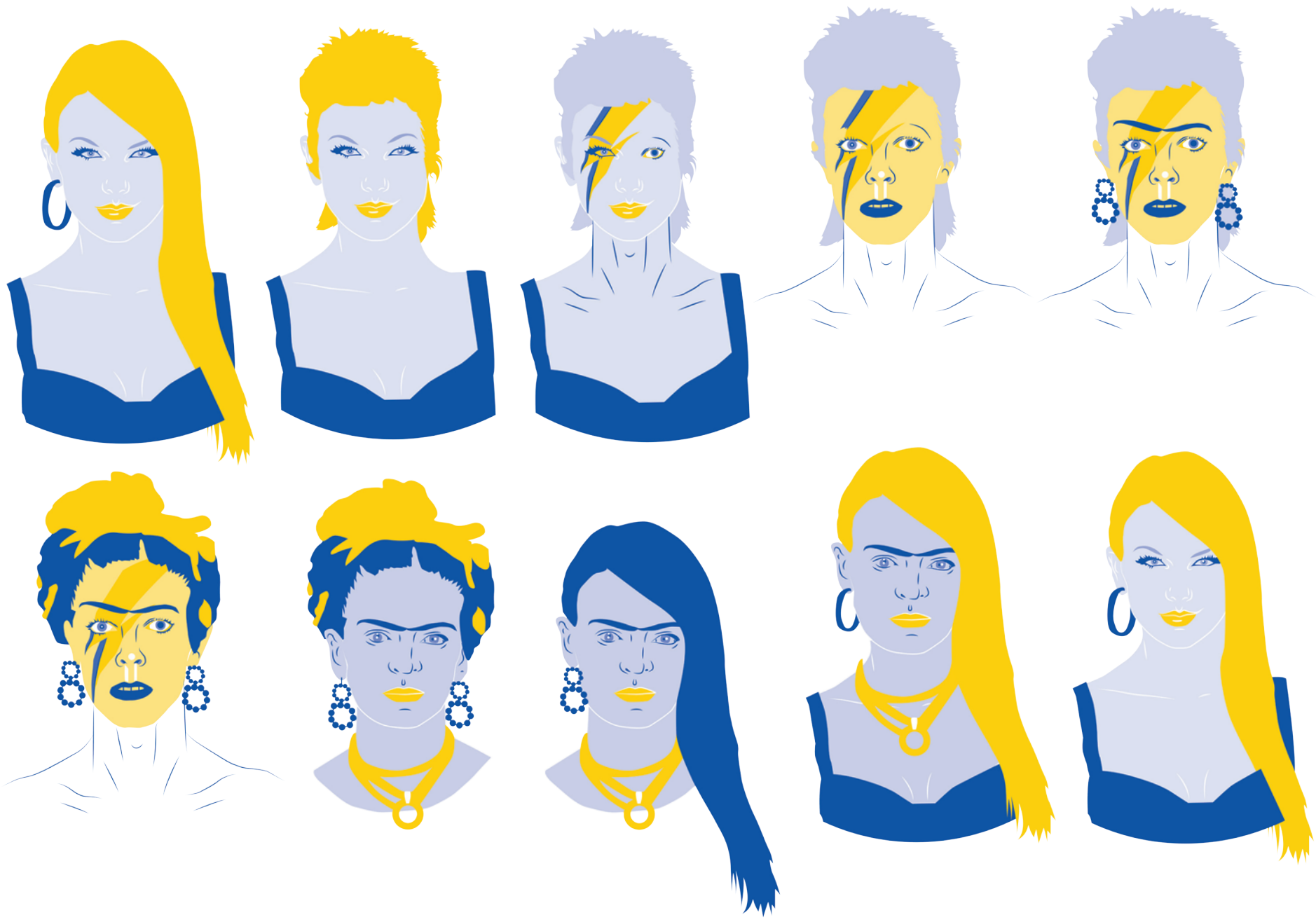

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*fnews*magazine *since 1984*

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fnews Turns 30! (and finally has a long-term relationship)

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illustration by Megan Pryce

WEB EXCLUSIVES

October 2014

Frames Per Second

A new ongoing series of web features highlighting film and video work from current and past SAIC students.

Wearable Archaeologies

Web Editor Jessica Barrett Sattell examines the Worn Stories project, a catalog of interviews with artists, writers, and people from all walks of life about the tales behind their sartorial choices.

Comradely Greetings: The Prison Letters of Nadya and Slavoj

Managing Editor Troy Pieper reviews the recent collection of correspondence between philosopher Slavoj Žižek and imprisoned Pussy Riot member Nadya Tolokonnikova.

EXPO Chicago: Dialogues with France

Arts Editor Alexia Casanova shares her thoughts about the future partnership between MCA curator Naomi Beckwith and freelance curators Matthieu Poirier and Guillaume Désanges to foster a stronger artistic partnership between Chicago and France.

2014: Kubrick Odyssey in Krakow

Weronika Malek reviews the Stanley Kubrick exhibition at the National Museum in Krakow, in anticipation of the show making its way to the United States.

LETTER FROM THE F NEWS TEAM

Writer James Baldwin has said that the distinction of the artist is that in addition to going about the business of life, he is also enjoined "to conquer the great wilderness of himself." In *The Creative Process*, he takes care to point out that this is not a state of nihilistic aloneness but a prerequisite for inhabiting one's true identity. We at F Newsmagazine have here sought to explore what happens when people reach that state and begin to create, and what the phenomena are that mark the gradual changes leading toward a result, be it a work of art, a museum of one's own.

In this issue we investigate the work of a MFA student whose process includes the mediums of light and of vision itself, Patrick Reynolds examines a YouTube user who compiles public service announcements, Henry Harris reviews what happens when three artists look to the West and Jessica Barrett Sattell finds out where the process-based art of sign painting has gone since the advent of vinyl signage.

In a broader consideration of process, Megan Byrne and Anna B. Smylie revisit the conflict in Syria with a look at the rise of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria, Science and Technology Editor Kayla Lewis probes the future of commercial space travel and Troy Pieper uses the Sullivan Galleries' recent exhibition as an opportunity to get to the bottom of social practice art.

Our designers were inspired by the idea of "process" to turn to early Twentieth Century designer Johannes Itten's theory that the color yellow reflects ingenuity. Art Director Jordan Whitney Martin's cover illustrates the meandering and frequently uncertain path by which we often arrive at an idea.

IN BRIEF

▶ Megan Byrne

SMARTWALK

Chinese city establishes sidewalks for users and nonusers of smartphones

In a recent effort to avoid pedestrian collisions, the city of Chongqing, China established the country's first smartphone sidewalks. The Washington Post reports these lanes have been established to prevent "smartphone-related accidents." The city drew its inspiration for the sidewalks from a National Geographic farce-experiment conducted in Washington D.C. showing the dangers of smartphones. Nong Cheng, a marketing official for the group in charge of Chongqing's entertainment zone said most pedestrians ignored the lanes, because they weren't looking down at the assigned lanes.

MORE TARGETED BANS

Gun bans don't ban the right guns.

Rifles only killed 322 people in 2012, according to The New York Times. That's a shy number compared to the 80 percent of the 11,000 murders per year committed by handguns. The guns banned in the late 1990s to the early 2000s included rifles, shotguns and some handguns, but this only figured into 2 percent of gun violence in America. It turns out handguns are responsible for the people who are really dying from gunshot wounds. This total coincides with the 30 Americans who are shot to death each day; of that number, half of the victims are black males. The article goes on to explain that the issue of gun violence can "seem enormous and intractable without first addressing poverty or drugs." Anti-gun violence advocates are now focusing on most-affected neighborhoods and doing their best to intervene.

WE'RE #1!

The Art Institute of Chicago is named best museum internationally

Chicago is already known for having the best hot dogs, winning the Stanley Cup and some seriously beautifully laid out public parks. On top of all of these excellent features, the Art Institute of Chicago has now been named best art museum in the world by TripAdvisor. While the Modern Wing, designed by Renzo Piano, is a marvel in itself, the museum holds over 300,000 pieces by artists who vary by culture, time-period and aesthetic. Maybe it's the folk art collection that leads into the Greco-Roman statue court, or maybe it's the crowds of people who come for artist lectures sponsored by the museum — we can't say for certain.

FIGHT-OPLANKTON

Algae are shown to adapt to global warming

While biologists have been studying the long-term effects of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gas emissions, Emiliania huxleyi, a species of algae, seems to be coping quite well with climate change. According to a German-led study in the journal Nature Climate Change, evolution is studied as a part of climate change studies because of the amount of time species usually take to evolve. While this algae is capable of producing 500 generations a year, scientists explain that this is happening because the algae thrives off of absorbing large amounts of carbon dioxide.

As a consequence of climate change, the oceans are acidifying, which in turn threatens life in it. According to biologists worldwide, some coral reefs, sea urchins and algae are adapting to their changing surroundings. They commented that some life in the ocean is even evolving in response to climate change. Scientists cannot confirm how much longer these species have than they had anticipated, but it is undeniable that the rapid evolution and adjustment is impressive. With greenhouse gas emissions rising for more than six decades now, the damages have already set in. While most creatures have trouble with global warming and increasing carbon dioxide levels, this algae is thriving off of it and is a major source of food for fish, and that's cool.

PAT'S PIX

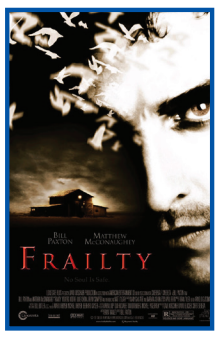
HALLOWEEN EDITION

▶ **Patrick Reynolds**

Every October, I (along with countless other horror movie fans) try to fill up as much free time as possible watching scary movies in preparation for Halloween festivities at the end of the month. At a certain point, though, one realizes that they have watched all of the "essential" horror classics. *The Shining* and *The Exorcist* are great, but even the best films can become tedious when they are viewed year after year.

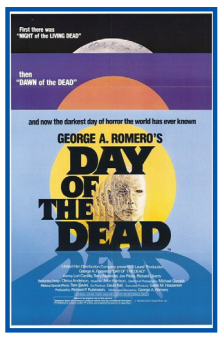
In light of this pressing issue, I have cobbled together a selection of horror films that don't typically appear in the Internet's myriad "Best Halloween Movies of ALL TIME" lists (not toward the top, anyway). These films are, to varying extents, decidedly not typical horror films, and some of them are not particularly scary or traditionally "good." Still, they're all worth watching for their own ~*special~* reasons, and I hope that they help broaden your list of spooky suggestions this Halloween.

✶ *Note: Pretty much all of these films feature strong amounts of disturbing violent and sexual content. I do not suggest any of them to viewers that are sensitive to harsh images or heavy narrative elements.*



Frailty (2001)

With the Matthew McConaughey renaissance threatening to dissolve into inevitable backlash at any moment, now might be the last appropriate time to enjoy his films guilt-free. *Frailty* was Bill Paxton's feature directorial debut, and it manages to cultivate a creepy atmosphere and decent axe-murderer mystery plot without completely relying on genre cliches.

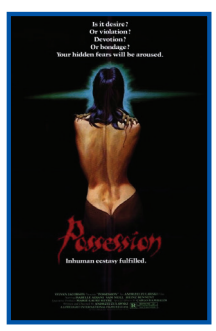


Day of the Dead (1985)

George Romero's third film in his original *Dead* trilogy is simultaneously the silliest and the most ambitious, attempting to tackle not only the conventions of the zombie genre but also heavier themes like medical ethics. One of the main plotlines involves a scientist's sleepless attempts to domesticate and educate a zombie. The acting is pretty bad, the makeup is both dated and impressive, and the movie also features an extremely of-its-time synthesizer soundtrack.

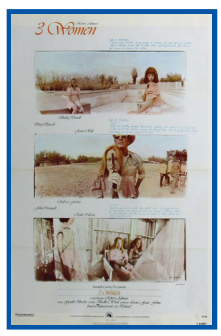
The Fog (1980)

John Carpenter released *The Fog* two years between his classics *Halloween* and *The Thing*, and he somehow completely missed the mark. This movie is bizarre and ridiculous, and its monsters are vengeful ghost pirates. Still, it features plenty of crazy colorful lighting, nonstop fog machines (truly living up to its title), and lots of scenes taking place in spooky dark churches.



Possession (1981)

Possession is a film that toes the line between brilliance and laughability, and it is possibly the strangest film on this list. Fans of Adrian Lyne's *Jacob's Ladder* will be pleased with the dark and mysterious plot about a woman's increasingly strange and violent sexual behavior, but director Andrzej Zulawski manages to pack in enough gore and tentacles to satisfy straightforward horror fans as well.



3 Women (1977)

This Robert Altman film is really not a horror film at all, but it is perplexing and difficult, and its final act is disturbing in a way that is difficult to explain (or comprehend, really). With lots of bizarre culty imagery and strange music, this is a great suggestion for fans of Maya Deren and other abstract psychological filmmakers.

Rabid (1977)

Rabid is one of David Cronenberg's first proper feature films, and it provides interesting insight into the earliest manifestations of the thematic fascinations and stylistic techniques that mark his later work. It's about a creepy phallic parasitic alien that turns an unsuspecting young woman into a bloodthirsty host, so it's also sloppy and weird. The film is a strange take on the zombie movie that predates many of the cliches and conventions that are now typical in the genre.

Perfect Blue (1997)

I don't typically get into anime, but *Perfect Blue* is an exception that will earn the respect of any naysayer. An extremely dark and disturbing psychological thriller, the film follows a young pop star as she attempts to avoid the advances of a mysterious stalker while seguing into a career as a TV actress. The film is also worth watching for its amusingly dated plot elements involving early Internet technology.

○

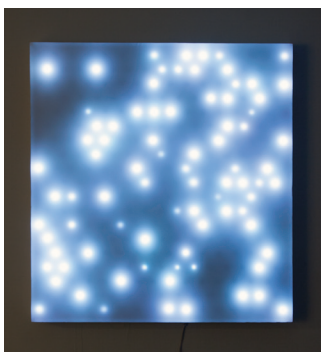
Pat is the multimedia editor for F Newsmagazine. He studied film as an undergrad and all he got was this stupid column.

illustration by Jordan Whitney Martin

5 QUESTIONS

TOBIAS ZEHNTNER

5 Questions profiles SAIC students and faculty at work, in the school and beyond. This month, F Newsmagazine spoke with Tobias Zehntner, a second-year MFA student in Art and Technology Studies.



Untitled (two panels), 2013

What is your background?

I'm originally from Switzerland, where I grew up and stayed until I was 22. After an apprenticeship in architecture, I went to Denmark in 2005 to attend art photography foundation courses. From there I moved to London in 2008 to do my undergraduate degree in Art Practice at Goldsmiths College. I was in London for five years before coming to SAIC last summer. Since I moved away from home, my practice shifted from photography to video, and subsequently, to room installations.

What kinds of themes do you explore in your work?

Recurring themes are light, movement, space and time. I get my inspiration from everyday observations, which I explore in experience- and time-based installations. For example, in my recent work, *Skyline*, I transformed my observation of the downtown Chicago sky into a light installation. The narrow band of light represents the view of the sky, as I perceive it, when framed by towering buildings. It displays the changing color of the sky throughout one night and day, condensed to 24 minutes. Another piece, *Untitled (two bulbs)*, looks at synchronicity and the human longing for harmony. Something else that keeps showing up in my work is the notion of waves, probably because my interests are bundled in its definition of being "a disturbance traveling through space and time."

What are you working on right now?

I'm currently exploring the perception of changing light intensity. An example of this is in a theater, where you notice the lights dimming before you can actually see it happening. I'm interested in this threshold, where loss and gain of light is registered but not seen. I'm planning to incorporate this notion into an architectural intervention of a given space. I like subtle perceptual experiences that make you aware of your surroundings without much intervention. Also, I'm finding myself playing with moving light sources, in its simplest form, as a swinging light bulb. But it's too early to tell where this will lead me.

Skyline, 2014

What do you enjoy most — or least — about SAIC?

I really enjoy my department, Art and Technology Studies. The faculty and students have an incredible amount of knowledge that they are very happy to share. All the elements that I use for my work today, such as electronics, microcontrollers and coding, I learned during the past year. It is a wonderful community, but I think the interdisciplinary part of SAIC could be practiced more across degrees. I would love to see more interaction between the MA and MFA courses, because, after all, we depend on each other when we leave school. Luckily, some students take it into their own hands and make an effort to reach across.

Where do you like to go in Chicago?

To be honest, I don't have much time to explore the city and spend most time at school. But I'm always glad to be near water, so anywhere along the lakeshore.

View more of Tobias' work on his website: tobiaszehntner.com

Untitled (two bulbs), 2013

Are you a current SAIC student or faculty member and want to share your work for a future 5 Questions? Send a brief introduction and portfolio link to editors@fnewsmagazine.com

images courtesy of Tobias Zehntner
portrait by **Max Leitner**

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SAIC School of the Art Institute of Chicago

John M. Flaxman Library

GO WEST, YOUNG ARTISTS

SAIC's Student Union Galleries Show Examines the American Myth

The legacy of American narratives of settling and claiming territory in desolate and undeveloped areas is a mythology of domestication that continues to sustain itself within and toward the West.

► **Henry Harris**

The borders of the Western United States and their relationship to the country's topography are unlike those of Eastern states, which are most often shaped by water systems. The western half of the country is divided into blocks with stiff edges that scale mountain ranges and fall back downward, unwavering, to river valleys, pine forests and continuously shifting desert. At the severe slopes of the Continental Divide, a place many understand to be the opening to the final rings of the Occident, the parallels of New Mexico, Colorado, Wyoming and the United States-Canada borders drift easily over unforgiving terrain.

Borders are often fraught with tension, and are usually drawn against already existing divisions, physical barriers and politics. This is especially true in the Western United States, often regarded as the last instance of Native Americans' true sovereignty and to those outside of it, an unknown realm. The legacy of American narratives of settling and claiming territory in desolate and undeveloped areas is a mythology of domestication that continues to sustain itself within and toward the west.

Such an attitude toward the land and its inhabitants is reflected in the borders themselves. Those who drew those initial lines may never have set foot on these ranges. Borders that do not correspond with physical landmarks suggest a construction in ignorance of reality; demarcation based on coordinates rather than place. Plotting the boundaries of the west seems just as easy as erasing them.

Ourselves outside those boundaries, we look toward *West*, a group exhibition at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago's Student Union Galleries, where two-dimensional works hang on walls, interspersed with three-dimensional pieces. *Topographies*, a suite of collages by Lucas Briffa, is a kind of two-fold chopping that breaks apart previously published photographs of landscapes to form new images. The representation in the found images is dismissed to create new lands with their own borders.

By a similar token, a mountain range crosses the north wall of the gallery: Briffa's large-scale collage-photo *Untitled [Mountain]* repeats the peaks and valleys of the depicted terrain in strips of equal width. Borders can be difficult things — physically and ideologically — yet this is cleanly assembled and adhered tightly against the wall. Each strip seems to be from somewhere else, creating the perhaps the "every-mountain" of the American West.

Near the gallery entrance, research materials housed in vitrines have been assembled by Alison Reilly and Matthew Coleman. This substantial part of the exhibition offers writings, sites from the canon of history and landscape studies. A corpus of detailed technical reports along with photographs and historical monographs orient the viewer toward a larger lineage of concern for the western landscape. Emerging from this fertile ground are transcripts of discussions between Coleman and Reilly, which become a starting point for the whole of *West*.

Finally, Elena Ailes' two-part sculpture *Bluewater*, in the center of the gallery, is a familiar mountainous landscape on a plywood platform at about chest level. The space between the semi-circle halves is large enough to allow a passerby to be briefly surrounded with the slopes of mountains coming toward them. Jaggedness hovers over clean lines, and one can see the precision-cut plywood beneath. The piece's overall slope is akin to the spillway of a dam, the even sides of the California Aqueduct, or a low-tide shoreline. Finished with a rocky texture, the sculpture plays with its own sense of control in a work that represents the organic but is man made, like cliffs of gunite on the set of a Western film.

The works in *West* play upon a sense of terra incognita that has defined the "Wild West" of America in ways that other parts of the United States have not. The show's continuous re-staging of landscape and terrain evokes another quintessential pioneer idea: that we can tame the land, make it better, acclimate to it. *West* seems to be touching on these mythologies with an eye toward what other possibilities could be in store. The cuts and separations so evident in the exhibition present a potential for further re-shuffling, further re-imaginings and perhaps even a different future.

○

Henry Harris is a student in Visual and Critical Studies and chronic Blue Line napper.

untitled [Mountain], **Lucas Briffa**
photograph by Wenli Liu

DAVID BOWIE IS... UNEXPECTED

MCA Hosts Blockbuster Exhibition

Self portrait in pose also adopted for the album cover of "Heroes," 1978. David Bowie. © The David Bowie Archive 2012. Image © V&A Images.

▶ **Margaret Carrigan**

We can all exhale now — *David Bowie Is* finally opened at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago. Organized by the Victoria and Albert Museum in London and showcasing nearly 400 objects from the inimitable icon's personal archive, the exhibition has been the fodder of Chicago art world gossip for the better part of a year. Many began lighting the torches and readying the pitchforks immediately after the MCA announced the show.

"He has no place in a visual art venue!" curators yelled. "A greedy money-making scheme if I've ever heard of one!" gallerists cried. "Nothing but a wanton fête of celebrity and the sure harbinger of the end of times!" stalwart critics shrieked.

Whether or not David Bowie is an adequate subject for a contemporary art exhibition has been the real bone of contention among the art community. The line between fine art and pop culture is a complicated one, no thanks to Andy Warhol. Moreover, the MCA never promoted *David Bowie Is* as an exhibition of an "artist" (at least not a visual artist) in the traditional sense of the word. Even the show's title is vague as to who David Bowie is as a cultural figure.

It is the attention to the performer's shrewd sense of character cultivation and exacting collaboration with countless artists and designers that really posits the exhibition as art museum-worthy. The objects on view include everything from hand-drawn band posters from back when David Bowie was still Davy Jones, to perfectly poised Terry O'Neill promotional photographs for the Diamond Dogs tour.

The real strength of the show is the location-based headphone sound system. An ongoing stream of commentary, interview clips and, of course, music wafts through the individual headsets, immersing you in an intimate Bowie microcosm that corresponds with whatever you're looking at as you meander through the exhibition. Occasionally the sound doesn't sync quite right — you may hear something that you've already read in the wall text somewhere else in the room, or perhaps find yourself watching a video in dead silence for 30 seconds. While this can be disconcerting, it's also wonderfully surprising and strangely poetic, as if you are in some kind of labyrinthine dreamscape.

Furthering this sense of fantasy is the atypical low light and dark walls of the gallery space. The murkiness is partly pragmatic — it allows the numerous video features of the show to shine. Yet it also makes you feel more dependent on the audio tour for guidance as you lose track of peripheral objects and fellow visitors in the shadows.

The exhibition culminates in an all-encompassing, sensory-saturating audio-visual space, replete with a floor-to-ceiling video montage spanning three walls, Alexander McQueen-designed stage costumes on towering pedestals and the transcendent reverberation of the singer's amplified greatest hits. A veritable church of Bowie.

It's true that the MCA is charging over double the standard admission price ($25 versus the $12 for adults). This is the pettiest of grievances — museums have been marking up specialty exhibition tickets for years now. Everyone always complains, and most will go anyway. Just as a pithy point of comparison, it's 23 bucks to visit the Art Institute of Chicago any old day.

According to a pre-Recession study by the Getty Leadership Institute, ticket sales account for a mere 12 to 15% of an average museum's annual revenue. Overhead on an exhibition as big and shiny as *David Bowie Is* certainly isn't going to be cheap, and the increased admission rate will likely cover the added insurance costs and a few headphone kiosk workers' wages. If you don't have Bowie fever, you can see the rest of the museum for $7 during the run of the show.

The ticket price hike makes it easy to lambast the exhibition as nothing but a racket designed to lure in an unsuspecting public nostalgic for the days of Ziggy Stardust. What is probably more suspect as a swindle is the movie about the exhibition that the V&A produced, which was also released on September 23 to just 100 theaters for one-night-only screenings. Yet, according to Geoffrey Marsh, V&A co-curator of *David Bowie Is*, the show isn't a fatuous retrospective of the performer's celebrity arc.

Truthfully, it's the inadvertent PR that has set the exhibition up as celebrity fetishism. When the MCA originally announced its intention to host the show, many assumed it wouldn't be — nay, couldn't be — anything but a zealous exaltation of Bowie's unparalleled stardom. Understandably skeptical tongues wagged eagerly, as evidenced in James Yood's *Visual Arts Source* article about the show that ran in March.

There continues to be as much positive word-of-mouth press as negative. Perhaps the most blatant (and confusing) third-party promotion of the exhibition came from Rahm Emanuel, when he issued an official mayoral proclamation that September 23, 2014, would be forevermore known as "David Bowie Day" in Chicago. While this is certainly a nice gesture on behalf of the city, it inflates the notion of spectacle for which the critics have already impugned the MCA.

What the mayor's proclamation did get right, however, is that "Chicago's own Museum of Contemporary Art stands primed to host and present the first international exhibition of *David Bowie Is*." Regardless of whether or not you accept David Bowie as an "artist," other contemporary artists continue to use new media and technology, confounding traditional modes of consumption, interpretation and display. As a well-executed, multimedia-intensive exhibition, *David Bowie Is* represents a critical exploration of artistic intertextuality and contemporary curation. Given the nature of the institution, this investigation is the purview — if not the responsibility — of the MCA.

While the subject of the exhibition may be about someone famous, it's more about how he came to fame, and maybe even why. *David Bowie Is* is an exploration of identity, creativity and postmodern culture as whole, of which we are all a part. To criticize the show as mere pandering to a celebrity-obsessed public is to admit one's own obsolescence in the field of cultural production.

When the MCA originally announced its intention to host the show, many assumed it wouldn't be — nay, couldn't be — anything but a zealous exaltation of Bowie's unparalleled stardom.

Margaret Carrigan is an MA candidate in Art History, Theory and Criticism at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. Her academic purview is 19th-century landscape painting, her personal is that of a runner, cat owner, cook and practitioner of 20-minute YouTube yoga workouts.

And She'll Do What She Wants To

► **Rosie Accola**

A common misconception about pop music is that it requires less effort, being vapid and shallow, to produce than other music. After all, most pop songs are mostly chorus; how hard can it be to make? Paul Morley of *The Guardian* referred to pop stars as "travelling sales workers whose ultimate job is to market phones, tablets, consoles, films, brands," insinuating that pop music exists purely for commercial gain rather than stemming from a deeper desire to create art. In a way, this is similar to the assumption that attending an art school is easier than attending a state university, but producing a song of any kind requires countless hours of effort (and probably scribbling, crying and binge eating). When an artist veers toward a more "pop" sound, they have not necessarily given up the badge of artistic integrity for quick choruses and easy money.

The latest artist to be subjected to sell-out scrutiny is Taylor Swift. Her single "Shake it Off" resulted in complaints from around the Internet that she had betrayed her twangy country roots for the manufactured veneer of pop music. One YouTube user lamented "Man Taylor you are seriously THE biggest poser I've ever seen." Suddenly the effortless wit of the song itself cheekily proclaiming "I stay out too late/ got nothing in my brain/ but I can't make them stay/ yeah that's what people say" was a confession of her own artistic ignorance rather than a wry proclamation that she doesn't care what people say, because she's Taylor Swift. She's got a cat named after Meredith on *Grey's Anatomy* and a night out with Karlie Kloss to plan, she doesn't have time for your useless cynicism.

Swift has been penning her own hits since the age of 16, and as with any artist it's natural that her work would evolve as she ages. Not to mention that experimenting with different forms in your chosen medium is perfectly common for artists, especially when they are young. Before he was Ziggy Stardust, David Bowie was just Davy Jones, the front man for The Delta Lemons. When someone grows up in the public eye the expectation for their behavior is usually set at a very young age, and to see Swift deviate from the music she wrote when she was 16 may be unnerving to fans, despite the fact that she has been inching towards the realm of pop music for several years.

Blind hatred of popular music is founded on the idea that anything popular is inherently shallow and requires little thought to produce, as if it were an assembly line on which an army of PR representatives and producers work tirelessly, while the artist sings a few bars and retires to their mega mansion.

One of the difficulties of art is that the public eye makes little effort to separate artists from the brands they cultivate. Band members have a concrete group of people to credit as collaborators, but solo artists are enmeshed with their brand making it nearly impossible to present pop music as a collaborative effort rather than only a corporate one. Musicians, especially in pop music, are expected to promote an album in order for it to sell. Take for example, Ariana Grande's relentless PR crusade to prove that she is more than just an ex-children's TV star. In order to promote her new album *Break Free,* the pint-sized pop star and her ponytail have been making appearances everywhere from *Good Morning America* to *Marie Claire*. Thus perpetuating the idea that pop music and corporations are synonymous.

In December of 2013, Beyoncé single-handedly dismantled the idea that success requires publicity by releasing a 17-track visual album with no warning that she had been working on anything. She had assembled a covert force of artists like Sia and Terry Richardson to create stunning visuals to juxtapose with the hits she had penned.

Beyoncé drew inspiration from all over the place, using her childhood roller-rink as the backdrop to the sex-positive "Blow" and carnival goers at Coney Island as impromptu back-up dancers in "XO." According to her YouTube docu-series which she released alongside the album, she had found a TED talk by Nigerian author Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie while she was scrolling through YouTube watching videos about feminism. This TED talk was later sampled in "Flawless." Throughout the album Beyoncé shows us that even pop music is a group effort and that it can subsist in its own right without the aid of endless advertisements or hashtags.

How artists choose to use or interact with the media is their choice. Some artists want their art life and their private life to become one. Before Lady Gaga was traipsing around the globe and snagging Grammys, she was Stefani Germonotta, an Italian New Yorker who spent her nights performing original songs at local bars in the Lower East Side. It was only when she decided to give herself an avant-garde makeover and trade her bluesy guitar riffs for pop hooks that she hit it big. A transition to pop music isn't a death sentence for an artist's integrity. Some artists produce music for the masses without morphing into corporate playthings. Before condemning the likes of Taylor Swift, critics ought to ask themselves, "What would Beyoncé do?"

One of the difficulties of art is that the public eye makes little effort to separate artists from the brands they cultivate.

Rosie Accola is a freshmen in the BFA in Writing Department. When she's not pondering the cultural significance of James Franco or various pop stars, she likes to make zines and pet other people's dogs.

illustration by Megan Pryce

LEAVE FRIDA ALONE!

Unbound: Contemporary Art After Frida Kahlo at the MCA

▶ **Alexia Casanova**

It's been 60 years since Frida Kahlo died, and her fame has grown tremendously among arts connoisseurs and the greater public alike. *Unbound: Contemporary Art After Frida Kahlo,* at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago (MCA) is definitely surfing on that popularity wave. While it condemns the fact that "she has been turned into a stereotype of Latin American Art," the MCA uses her name as a crowd-drawing and money-making pretext for an exhibition that has very little to do with her or her work.

The exhibition has four main themes, presumably epitomizing Kahlo's work: "The Performance of Gender," "Issues of National Identity," "The Political Body," and "The Absent or Traumatized Body." Although all of the artworks selected for this show are of outstanding quality, their relationship to Kahlo or her work is, in many instances, nonexistant. Worse, some of the descriptions of these sections seem to acknowledge that these selections are random, to say the least, and some of the interpretations of Kahlo's works are debatable.

It is true that in its statement, the curatorial team does not claim that the works presented would resemble those of Kahlo. Rather, the purpose of the exhibition is to highlight the relevance of the themes she worked on and how they anticipated contemporary artists' concerns. But these themes are vague, and the descriptions are broad generalizations that could apply to any other artist. Why choose Frida Kahlo?

"Issues of National Identity" is problematic from its very description: "... many [artists] seek to be defined by their art, not by political borders — unlike Kahlo, who strongly identified as Mexican." Here the curatorial team is explaining to visitors that some of what they are about to see has nothing to do with Kahlo, and is actually in complete opposition to one of her characteristic themes: the love for her country and celebration of its unique roots.

In "The Absent or Traumatized Body," there is an element one could clearly identify with Kahlo: physical trauma. Who knows whose idea it was to add "absent" to this section, but if there is one thing that Kahlo isn't in her work, it is absent. Valesha Soares' work — a marble sculpture of two pillows in which the imprint of a head is visible — while beautiful, is completely out of place; the connection between Orozco's *Hand-ball* (2002) and Frida's work might only be the fact that they are both Mexican, and that is not good enough a reason. Thankfully, José Leonilson's self-portraits and Felix Gonzalez-Torres' *Untitled (The End)* (1990), which illustrate the traumatized body in an original and poignant way, save this section, together with Ana Mendieta's *Silueta* series (1973-1980) and their more obvious relationship to Kahlo's *Alla cuelga mi vestido* (1933). The theme of the traumatized body could have been a whole exhibition in itself, and it is a shame that the MCA didn't see this.

"The Political Body" is a section dedicated to art as a "critique [of] historical injustice and oppression," a vague concept that almost all artists have addressed at some point in their life. The MCA connects it to Frida on the basis that she was a fervent defender of communism, and therefore politically engaged. That seems to be a good enough reason to exhibit Sanford Biggers *Quilt #24*, a critique of the legacy of slavery and racism in America. Try as I may, I can't remember reading about Kahlo's involvement with either of these issues; but the most confusing choice of artwork has to be Rosângela Rennó's red-saturated photograph from the *Vermelha (Militares)* series, representing a young man in military clothes. It makes sense because, you know, it's violent, red and political, like Frida?

"The Performance of Gender" is the marketing icing on top of this opportunistic cake. Frida Kahlo is trending, gender issues are trending too, let's kill two birds with one stone. It is true that Kahlo's work and life have questioned traditional representations of gender, and to be fair, this topic also could have been the sole theme of an excellent exhibition, but once again some of the works completely miss the mark. Martin Soto's *Luminous Flux* (2010) is a great piece, but doesn't correspond to the

image: Frida Kahlo, La venadita (little deer), 1946. Private collection, Chicago.

MCA's characterization of it as "[challenging] notions of gender by working with accessories and items of clothing commonly associated with femininity, while engaging with the history of representations of sexual desire." How is making vagina-shaped creations with pearls and heels, paired with a video of the shadow of a woman taking her clothes off in a lascivious dance, challenging notions of gender? And how can it possibly connect to the way Frida represented femininity? Louise Bourgeois' *She-Fox* (1985) limits the damage. The sculpture, true to Bourgeois' aesthetic, displays rawness and physicality, mixes animal and human qualities, and emits both motherly and sexual energy at the same time.

Among the other works in this section, Julio Galán's *La Muerte morirá cuando pasemos a la vida eterna* (2004) and Lorna Simpson's *She* (1992) easily found their place, while the relevance of Jack Pierson's presence is questionable. He never cited Kahlo as an inspiration and it's not evident how portraits of young gay men — as beautiful as they might be — relate to Kahlo. Rather than a transcendence of the female/male dichotomy, Kahlo's work addressed misconceptions or limited conceptions of femininity and power, and that is an element the exhibition fails to highlight.

The coup de grâce in this exhibition is in the poor treatment of Kahlo's work. The only two paintings by the artist actually on view in the space come from a private collection from across the street from the museum. If you are naming an exhibition after an artist, don't you think you ought to go a little further than 600 feet to source some of their work? Not only did the MCA not make efforts to acquire relevant artworks by Frida Kahlo, it did not do enough research on the ones they have on display.

In the description of *La Venadita* (Wounded Deer), the MCA highlights the idea that the antlers on Kahlo's head "suggest a simultaneous presence of masculine and feminine characteristics." This detail appears as a desperate attempt to connect the painting with the thematic chosen for the exhibition.

The description also mentions different religious symbols in the work: Christian, Pre-Columbian, but most interestingly, Buddhist, because the word "Karma" — or rather, "Carma" — appears at the bottom of the painting. As Helga Prignitz-Pova beautifully explained in 2008 in her *Frida Kahlo: Sadja, Carma, y el venado herido, 1946*, "Carma" isn't Kahlo's misspelling of "Karma," but "Sadja" written in the Cyrillic alphabet. "Sadja," "perdiz" in Spanish and "partridge" in English, is an affectionate diminutive the Mexican artist had chosen for herself.

Of all Kahlo's paintings, so many works could have been more clearly connected to the themes selected for this show. It's a shame that the interpretation of Kahlo's paintings suffered in this attempt to justify the exhibition's themes, and it's a shame that there are only two of her works.

Unbound: Contemporary Art after Frida Kahlo is a waste of talent. The works are beautiful — some of them, such as Shirin Neshat's *Turbulent* (1998) are breathtaking — but most of them have no relationship to Frida Kahlo, and you end up disliking them for the mere fact of being here.

If the show had focused on only one of the themes, if it had really dug into one specific idea and have made relevant connections with Kahlo's work, it would have been a success. Unfortunately, the MCA went for a bunch of general concepts such as duality of self, gender, body, politics and tried to mix them in one confusing show.

Alexia Casanova is an MA candidate in Arts Administration and Policy at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. Like all French people, she is picky about food and loves to complain. Her lifelong passions include the sea, Mexico and octopi..

The themes are vague, and the descriptions are broad generalizations that could apply to any other artist. Why choose Frida Kahlo?

*Images from top to bottom: **Cindy Sherman**, Untitled #153, 1985. Collection Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago, gift of Gerald S. Elliott by exchange. Photo: Nathan Keay, © MCA Chicago; **Frida Kahlo**, Arbol de la Esperanza (Tree of Hope), 1946. Private Collection, Chicago. © 2014 Banco de México Diego Rivera Frida Kahlo Museums Trust, Mexico, D.F. / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York. Photo: Nathan Keay, © MCA Chicago; **Shirin Neshat**, Turbulent, 1998. Collection Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago, gift of Susan and Lewis Manilow. © 1998 Shirin Neshat*

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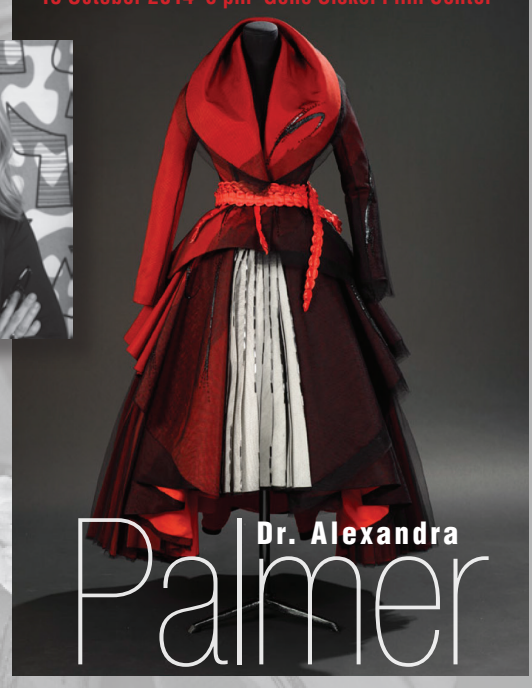
Photo: George Whiteside



Dior

Dr. Alexandra Palmer

Dr. Alexandra Palmer is the Nora E. Vaughan Senior Curator of Textiles and Costumes at the Royal Ontario Museum (ROM) Toronto, Canada. Dr. Palmer will be the guest of the SAIC Fashion Resource Center for its program *Behind the Seams* at the Gene Siskel Film Center. She will discuss couture designer Christian Dior and in an exclusive showing present a documentary film detailing the creation of a contemporary Dior gown at the famed atelier. Q & A will follow.

Dr. Palmer has curated several exhibitions including *Elite Elegance: Couture Fashion in the 1950s (2003)*, and also contributed to the museum catalogue *The Golden Age: Haute Couture 1947—1957, Victoria & Albert Museum (2007).* Her most recent book, *Dior: A New Look, A New Enterprise 1947—57, V & A Publications (2009)* won the 2010 Millia Davenport Publication Award.

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VANITY ART MUSEUMS IN CHINA

The Proliferation of Private Art Museums in China

▶ **Elaine Tan**

Museums have played an ideological role in education in China for a long time, as they have in many countries. The State Administration of Cultural Heritage in 2012 reported 3,400 museums nationwide. What may be different from other countries is that of those museums, 450 are private collections. As the art market booms like never before, collectors establishing museums is a growing trend worldwide. In the past couple of decades, the Chinese economy has boomed just as much, and work by the country's contemporary artists has gained worldwide attention. The trend of private collections on display for the public has gained strength proportionally.

As far back as the early 1990s, a small wave of private art museums were established in cities like Beijing, Chengdu and Shenyang. At a time of rapid economic growth and urbanization, fortunes were amassed in real estate, and the newly wealthy wanted to display their new private art collections to the public. Among them were Yan Huang Art Museum, Shanghe Art Museum, Taida Art Museum and Dongyu Art Museum. Most of these soon closed due to a lack of professional staff and of notable artworks, as well as an economic recession.

As the world is aware, the Chinese economy recovered, and around the year 2000, new museums were established, many as private nonprofits, some as for-profit businesses, and many with the private collections of wealthy real estate developers. Some of the most prominent in China are Today Art Museum and Inside-Out Art Museum in Beijing and HIMALAYAS Museum in Shanghai.

Wealthy entities as well as wealthy people have established art museums in recent years. Minsheng Bank founded Min Sheng Art Museum six years ago, and a wealthy Belgian couple put up millions for the Ullens Center for Contemporary Art in Beijing. This spring, the openings of two enormous private art museums in China signaled another round of the museum boom: Long West Bund, owned by the wealthy Chinese couple Wang Wei and Liu Yiqian (the second art museum they have established in Shanghai) and YUZ Museum, also in Shanghai, owned by Chinese-Indonesian collector Budi Tek. In the city of Nanjing not far from Shanghai, the new Sifang Art Museum, named for the real estate firm that financed it, opened earlier this year.

Before the advent of these museums, most museums in China were owned and run by the state, and people who worked in them were government employees. But these private art museums are still new enough that there is no clear law or policy around nonprofit status for any business. Consequently, the museums have no tax-exempt status, for instance, and donors cannot receive tax deductions.

Part of the Chinese government's 12th five-year plan was to pump 171 billion yuan ($27 billion) into the country's culture, sports and media sectors as an investment to drive economic growth. According to the plan, China was to have 3,500 state-owned art museums by 2015. That goal was already reached in 2012 when 451 new private art museums opened in a single year. By contrast, fewer than 40 art museums were established in the U.S in the decade before the 2008 financial crisis, according to a New York Times article.

It is difficult to say whether this increase in Chinese art museums is a benefit to citizens. U.K. art consultant Philip Dodd said in a *Wall Street Journal* article, "Art museums have long been tied to the large egos and profits of businessmen." Though most private art museums in China are established and maintained by wealthy benefactors, they are still not-for-profit organizations, and their core missions require that they provide a public service. But some private art museums in China have little in their collections to display. Those that that were established with large collections often lack the professional management needed to educate people about the art.

Museums without permanent collections are naturally more inclined toward programming like workshops or lectures. Wang Lin, theater manager of Inside-Out Art Museum, says an arts or cultural organization "is obligated to connect with its community to provide art education within that community. Inside-Out Art Museum is actively engaged with the public, organizing exhibition tours and workshops and providing screenings in its theater."

But many new private art museums are less accessible to the public. More than a few have spent millions of dollars for world-famous starchitects to design their buildings. Steven Holl designed the 21,528-square-foot Sifang Art Museum, and YUZ Museum in Shanghai was designed by famous Japanese architect Sou Fujimoto. Both are among private art museums seeking funding, reports China.org, from the national government. Meanwhile admission prices at most of these museums run high, as much as $10 at a museum in Shanghai, for instance, where average monthly wages are $900, according to China Daily.

Whether these museums survive or close their doors like some of their predecessors remains to be seen. Even with strict government censorship of art exhibitions, the Chinese people's interest in contemporary art and consideration of its value to future generations seems to be growing. Lin notes that there is public pressure on private art museums in China to better meet the needs of the people, which in an increasingly Westernized economy, seems only fitting.

Admission prices at most of these museums run high, as much as $10 at a museum in Beijing, for instance, where average monthly wages are $900.

Elaine (Fangying) Tan is an MA student in Arts Administration and Policy Program. In her spare time, she can be found at the zoo or an Asian restaurant, struggling with ginger and green onions.

illustration by Allison O'Flinn

STARTUPS VERSUS ASTRONAUTS

The Current Players in Outer Space Exploration

▸ **Kayla Lewis**

In 2013, TED's Chris Anderson interviewed LA-based entrepreneur Elon Musk. The first question asked about his dreams, and his answer hit all of the keywords: "I thought about the problems that are most likely to affect the world, to affect the future of humanity."

Musk's leadership in Tesla Motors and PayPal is impressive, and his intellect can't be denied. He is also CEO of SpaceX, a private space travel company that remains the most notable amongst its competitors.

I have high hopes for private space exploration as a way of compensating for NASA's recent decline in an already pathetic budget, but when I watch Musk speak, I can't help but feel like I'm witnessing a politician from a Bradbury novel.

Private companies like SpaceX, Blue Origin and Virgin Galactic have all boasted recent progressions in their space endeavors. SpaceX just sent cargo to the International Space Station, and the achievement was heavily celebrated. Neil deGrasse Tyson wasn't amongst those clapping, though.

Tyson, an astrophysicist and spokesperson for *Cosmos* : A Spacetime Odyssey (2014), has been relentless in his critique of the current state of space travel and our motives behind it. "[SpaceX] brought cargo to the space station! NASA's been doing that for thirty years!" he exclaimed during his keynote at the South by Southwest conference in March.

When Neil deGrasse Tyson hovers over a podium at 6'2", I see a man with the same sense of wonder as the first time he gazed up at the stars. Tyson also looks for this wonder in others, and fails to see it in private companies whose main concern is profiting from their endeavors.

Being part of the private sector makes the need for financial gain understandable for a company like SpaceX. Future endeavors won't happen without funding, which sets a problematic trend if private space exploration becomes the dominant approach. The consumer-producer model doesn't permit much room for innovative risk-taking, which has been the reason for many of NASA's most profound discoveries.

The debate over NASA and private companies doesn't seem to have a winning side. In fact, NASA depends on these companies to take over general missions like bringing cargo to the International Space Station (ISS) so that funding can be allocated toward other projects. NASA also just held a competition where companies designed a shuttle for ISS—SpaceX tied with the aerospace company, Boeing. NASA has struck up a harmonious relationship with the these companies, but even as a team, no one will be sending people to Saturn anytime soon.

The most promise for innovation may lie in "the fringe of the movement," as Ken Walczak, the lab manager of Adler Planetarium's Far Horizons project, puts it. Far Horizons has been sending high altitude balloons into Earth's stratosphere for eight years. It relies on funding from means like grants and private donation, and participants are all on a volunteer basis.

"I think that's the positive part of the privatization of space exploration," Walczak explains. "You get rich people to do it first because they have the ability and then it trickles down where it becomes cheaper and there's more technology out there and new ways of seeing things."

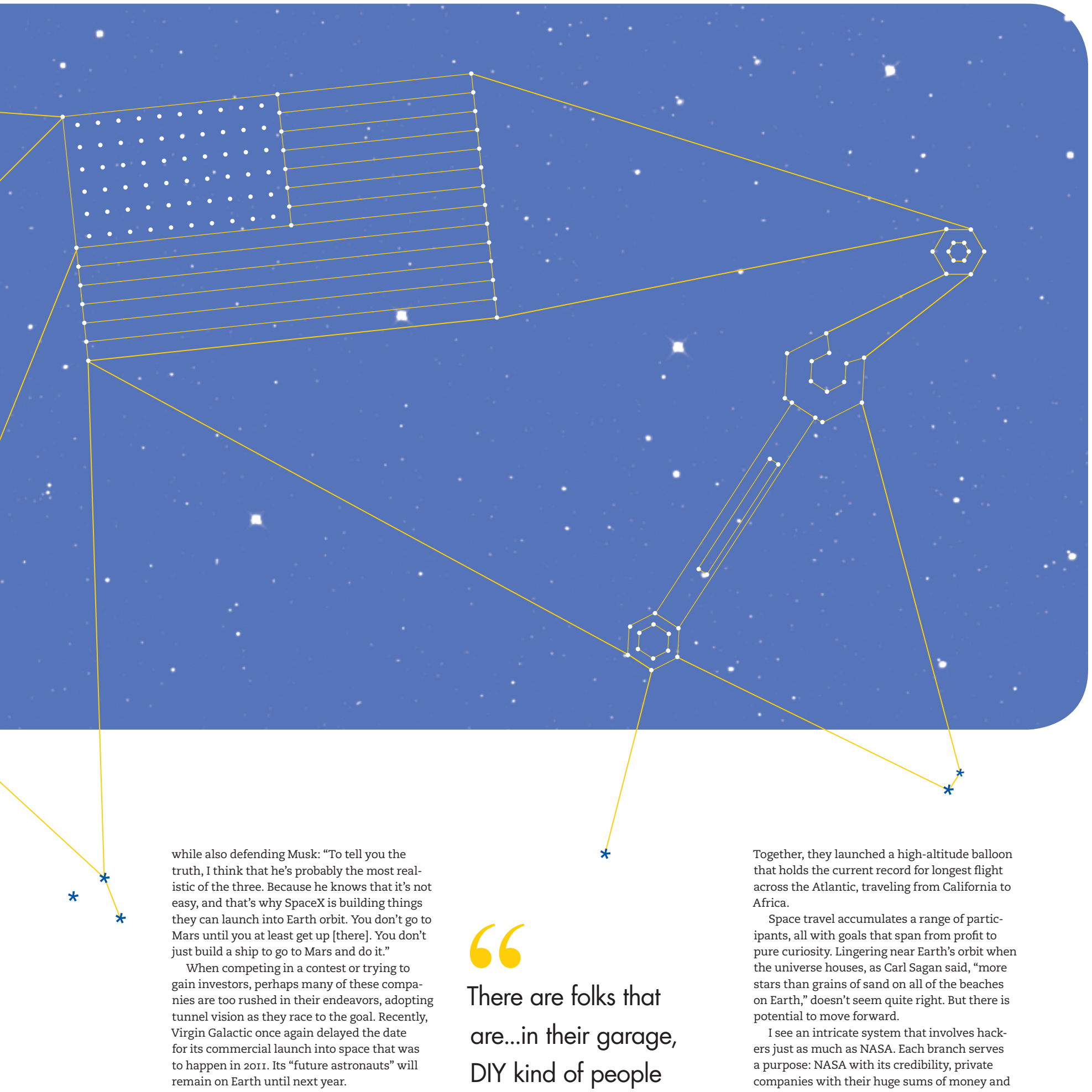
This "ability" stems from more than just money. Private companies don't fall under the same limitations as NASA. Space privatization is new enough where specific laws haven't been enforced, allowing room for both innovation and amateur mistakes. The Outer Space Treaty of 1967 only sets laws for space travel in relation to countries, touching on issues like sovereignty, sharing discoveries, and civilian welfare.

But private companies' ability to escape regulation hasn't deterred potential customers. "You will be joining our community of over 600 future astronauts which has become one of the most exclusive clubs in the world!" boasts The Virgin Galactic website of its commercial flights to space. Your "first step to becoming an astronaut" starts with the small fee of $250,000.

For those without hundreds of thousands of dollars at hand, Mars One recently held a contest where people applied to be sent to a Mars colony in 2024 as part of a reality show. SpaceX also predicts colonies on Mars in its future.

Walczak brings the Mars conversation back down to Earth, both literally and figuratively,

illustration by Anna B. Smylie



while also defending Musk: "To tell you the truth, I think that he's probably the most realistic of the three. Because he knows that it's not easy, and that's why SpaceX is building things they can launch into Earth orbit. You don't go to Mars until you at least get up [there]. You don't just build a ship to go to Mars and do it."

When competing in a contest or trying to gain investors, perhaps many of these companies are too rushed in their endeavors, adopting tunnel vision as they race to the goal. Recently, Virgin Galactic once again delayed the date for its commercial launch into space that was to happen in 2011. Its "future astronauts" will remain on Earth until next year.

If our ventures do have to gradually work their way farther and farther into space, Walczak's "DIY movement" of "homegrown electronics, developers and the hacker community" may be our best bet.

"There are folks that are … in their garage, DIY kind of people saying 'I'm going to build a satellite,' and they have, and they've gotten them in orbit."

One of Far Horizons' current projects is CubeSats (cube satellites), which are four-inch cubes run by $30 computers and launched into space. Adler held a workshop for the project in which volunteers created proposals for CubeSat missions. This DIY initiative "trickles down" from the general purpose of space privatization while still generating an atmosphere of people in it for the thrill of discovery, and not bound by the prospect of financial gain.

The California Near Space Project shares the same initiative as Far Horizons, though its structure is different — a father and son in Silicon Valley run the non-profit organization.

> "There are folks that are…in their garage, DIY kind of people saying 'I'm going to build a satellite,' and they have, and they've gotten them in orbit."

Together, they launched a high-altitude balloon that holds the current record for longest flight across the Atlantic, traveling from California to Africa.

Space travel accumulates a range of participants, all with goals that span from profit to pure curiosity. Lingering near Earth's orbit when the universe houses, as Carl Sagan said, "more stars than grains of sand on all of the beaches on Earth," doesn't seem quite right. But there is potential to move forward.

I see an intricate system that involves hackers just as much as NASA. Each branch serves a purpose: NASA with its credibility, private companies with their huge sums of money and freedom from governmental restrictions, and the DIY space movement that takes these discoveries and builds on them with bizarre ideas that end up being the most innovative. They all feed off of one another.

Another father-son relationship was addressed at the conclusion of the 2013 documentary, *Silicon Valley Goes to Space*, when Dan Berkenstock, the owner of Skybox Imaging, was asked about his son's potential interest in outer space. "If [my son] was passionate enough about changing the game in space, I'd tell him to go do a startup," he said.

In light of all of these structural shifts and initiatives, I'm left wondering what will come of a generation that dreams of being space hackers and tycoons instead of astronauts.

Kayla Lewis is an MFA student in Art and Technology Studies. She likes to make art with scientists. Her lack of athleticism prevents her from being an astronaut, so she looks at pictures of space on the Internet instead.

sign painters

A (Nearly) Lost Art

▶ **Jessica Barrett Sattell**

From massive highway billboards to boutique storefronts, signs are part of any community. We may see hand-painted letterforms nearly every day, but few of us give them much consideration, let alone appreciation. But, for the artists behind many of the signs we encounter, a combination of their lettering artisanship with a nearly 150-year history of the craft is informing a growing fascination with sign painting and the typographic arts.

"We build letters," says Jeff Williams, a Northern Illinois-based sign painter who also practices gold leaf and vehicle lettering, in an interview with F Newsmagazine. "I'm still fascinated by that, even after all of my time doing it." With Chicago area-based colleagues Bob Behounek and Pat Finley, Williams has been working since the 1960s, hand painting everything from show cards to race cars.

Sign painting is a truly American art form. Beginning in the late 19th century, sign painters were the original advertisers, transforming symbols from their original purpose of identification (what was inside a building) into sales pitches (what was special about what was inside). Until as recently as the 1980s, sign painting was a common profession, but with the advent of computers and vinyl lettering machines, it has become a specialized trade. A great painter does not necessarily make a great sign painter; in art, the ego of the artist is at stake, and there is no right or wrong way to paint, but in signs, the ego of the client is at stake, and there is a clear agenda.

VICTORY OVER VINYL

Several sign painters saw their trade take a significant step into the public eye after the release of *Sign Painters* in 2013. First a book, then a nationally-screened documentary, *Sign Painters* is a project by Milwaukee-based artist, photographer, filmmaker and curator Faythe Levine and Chicago-based filmmaker, photographer and writer Sam Macon. They highlight the work of two dozen artists working across the U.S. amidst an overview of the craft's history and near extinction with the onset of digital design.

Behounek, Williams and Finley participate in charity auctions through Chicago Brushmasters, painting automobiles and other items to raise money, but they say that Levine and Macon's film has provided a new outlet for informing others about their work. "The auctions are one way to keep this trade and all of these handcrafted art forms in front of the public eye," Behounek explains. "Before *Sign Painters*, that was all we had, but now that movie has told the general public that we're still around."

Levine got in touch with Behounek after seeing one of his colleagues pinstripe a motorcycle at a Harley Davidson event in Milwaukee. "I honestly thought that nothing was going to come out of it," Behounek says. "We've been doing this for how many years, and no one had ever given a care. But she and [Macon] were right on and diligent." Williams met Macon at the *Sign Painters* book launch in Milwaukee, and they collaborated on scenes for the film that document the process of painting signs, to supplement interviews and historical footage.

Sign Painters addresses the demand for hand-painted work and a recent surge of interest in typography: the difference between "typeface" and "lettering" (lettering implies drawing, while a typeface is a mutable group of letterforms that work together as a system) and that sign painting is the opposite of fast, quick and cheap production. Several of the artists featured say they feel American culture, as a whole, is being aesthetically dumbed down as quality dives and the notion of craft continues to be discarded in favor of speed. Others speak to a steadily growing demand for authentic, handmade items, part of a nostalgia involving re-discovering older technology in new forms.

"If the film is going to do anything, it will bring in new, fresh artists to the trade, people that have never seen sign painting before," Behounek says. "You can assume that anyone under 40 years old hasn't ever seen a sign painter paint anything, anywhere. The movie has definitely opened up avenues for younger people."

"Designers are now realizing that if they can bring in some hand-drawn artwork to what they do, they'll have an advantage over others who are only using computers," says Williams. "They're taking a step backwards to do what we're doing, and they're intrigued by people like us, from the old school, who are still out there."

"Designers are now realizing that if they can bring in some hand-drawn artwork to what they do, they'll have an advantage over others who are only using computers."

CITY OF BIG SIGNS

Stephen Monkemeier is a young Chicago sign painter with a background as an oil painter and graphic designer. He recently started his own sign shop after working for six years as a sign artist with Trader Joe's stores in New York and Chicago. A colleague there got him interested in vintage techniques for handmade signs. "I don't feel like I ever made the decision to become a professional sign painter," he tells F Newsmagazine. "Once I knew it was something that I could do, I didn't look back."

After his time in New York, where he

found Levine and Macon's *Sign Painters* blog, Monkemeier moved to Chicago and immersed himself in the local sign painting community. He connected with Stephen Reynolds, whom he credits as teaching him how to use a lettering quill as well as "how to deal with clients professionally, how to work faster, how to set up a workspace on any job site and most importantly, how to trust my own instincts rather than over-planning everything," he says.

The Chicago area is home to a number of active sign painters, including Behounek, Williams, Finley, Reynolds, Ches Perry, Robert Frese and Andrew and Kelsey McClellan of Heart & Bone Signs, among others. With its printing and publishing industries and its being a major American commercial hub, Chicago has historically been a powerhouse of advertising and typographic arts. Beginning with the work of Frank Atkinson, who published several sign lettering manuals at the end of the 1800s, Chicago's demand for innovative signage kept growing. In the 1940s a number of designers came to work for the Beverly Sign Company, which at its peak employed 50 full-time sign painters. Chicago is also home to the Sign and Display Artist's Local Union 830, where Behounek trained under former Beverly employees; he is now a member and Apprentice Instructor.

Beverly garnered national attention for their development of the avant-garde "Chicago Look," a combination of pastel colors and panelization, as Finley explains. "You take a color-filled geometric shape and insert type into it, and then that breaks down the design into a few different signs, depending on size. That was unheard of before Beverly — those people were pioneers, and with everything they did, the world followed." It attracted flocks of aspiring sign artists.

From sign painting's roots in the city, a creative incubator continues to grow. "Being a part of the community is my favorite secondary characteristic of sign painting. Compared to New York, it's been really fun and easy in Chicago to meet other design aficionados and artists. People aren't as exclusive," Monkemeier says. "It's also a much easier city to live in, so I actually have time to pursue my interests."

Behounek feels that the key to keeping the craft alive is openness and a greater sense of community. "Sign painters have traditionally been known to be secretive, and one of our downfalls is probably not divulging information about technique," he explains. "But if we didn't share information with other painters, the trade would never progress. No one would learn, and there would be no inspiration." This sharing, especially of the finer details, is essential. "It's not the big things, it's the little things that need to be passed on," Finley says. "Like, how many drops of silver you put into white paint to make it shimmer, or how to trim the edge of a striping brush."

DRAW TYPE AND MAKE FRIENDS

Sign painters, despite their varied talents and styles, are linked by drive, dedication and passion; while the trade is based on apprenticeship-style learning, it takes time and commitment to process. "We tell aspiring artists that they need to practice at least eight to ten hours a day, six days a week, for about five to ten years to even get the basics down and get halfway good. Then you're ready to start your own style," Behounek says. "You need a conscious effort of the foundations of lettering. Start with perfecting Franklin Gothic, and draw type until your fingers bleed."

But mentors along the journey are increasingly hard to find. There are not enough sign painters now, Finley notes, and "as much as I'd love to teach someone, I couldn't afford to pay them for helping me out."

Plus, as Williams says, aspiring sign painters often lack an understanding of how much work it takes to gain the skills. "People don't want to just practice drawing block letters; they want to get to the fancy, fun stuff. If you can't hold back and take it slow, you're not going to make it as a sign painter."

Behounek suggests that young sign painters find the work of lettering artists that they admire and try to emulate their work. Or make trips to the grocery store. "You can learn a lot through packaging design, newspaper design, anything that has any kind of advertising on it. Just like Andy Warhol, go down the cereal and candy aisles! Look at all of the different possibilities for color and type combinations."

Monkemeier's advice is simply to practice and to get as much creative input as possible. "Be original! Know the difference between following the rules and ripping someone off," he says. But most important is patience. As if considering the very future of sign painting, he remarks, "Put in the effort and it will pay off."

Jessica Barrett Sattell is an MA candidate in New Arts Journalism. She writes about the intersections between design and community and likes monospaced sans-serif typefaces (especially Letter Gothic).

illustration by Megan Pryce

THE ETHICAL INTERNSHIP

Responses to "Money for Nothing"

In the May 2014 issue of F Newsmagazine, Arts Editor Alexia Casanova published "Money For Nothing," an opinion piece regarding the state of internships at SAIC and beyond. Nola Weber responds to that article here.

▶ **Nola Weber**

I took my first Co-Operative internship with SAIC at the Chicago Women's Health Center (CWHC), a non-profit that offers sliding scale health services to women and trans* clients throughout the Chicago area.

During my two semesters at CWHC, I drafted and copyedited multiple grant proposals and other professional writing pieces, managed the center's donor database, researched prospective grants, and wrote social media updates — all while acquainting myself with the software and best practices of the development field. Not only did my internship remind me that strong writing skills still matter within today's increasingly technologizing economy, it granted me a newfound confidence in my ability to actually translate my (admittedly obscure) Visual and Critical Studies degree into financially stable employment. Yet the institutional structure of SAIC's Co-Operative Education Internship Program continues to incite accusations that internships are too often a waste of time, reserved for trust fund kids and suckers who are dumb enough to pay to work for free.

Internships are a hot button issue, understandably — after all, the prospect of manipulating debt-threatened students into free labor is contentious at best. Yet, I bristle at the manner in which they are so often portrayed as a waste of college credits. In terms of off-campus study, internships are a convenient means to accrue relevant work experience while in the midst of pursuing a degree. In an economic landscape where proficiency is now an unspoken prerequisite to employment, is it really better to build up such experience post-diploma? I thought the whole point of college, aside from accessing resources and connecting to others in one's field, is to enhance employability — or, in the case of an arts school, to offer avenues for publicizing one's creative practice by encouraging participation in shows, publications and other relevant media.

It is true that internships serve more purpose to some than to others. They are especially beneficial to SAIC students, like me, who may look to pursue administrative, curatorial, development or otherwise non studio-based careers post-graduation. SAIC does not offer many courses that would fully prepare students for such positions, and thus, participation in an internship is more likely to result either directly or indirectly in employment opportunities than other credit options at SAIC.

Depending upon one's incoming financial circumstance and field of interest, it is also worth noting that most internships completed within non-profit organizations may be paid through Federal Work Study (FWS), as mine was for both semesters. Federal Work Study-compensated internships can offer a practical way to either reduce living expenses or whittle tuition, and as such should not be perceived as any more indicative of class privilege than paying course tuition or studying abroad.

Yet, my overall conception of college internships remains more nuanced. I think it fair to say that, through the eyes of many, unpaid internships become increasingly unethical commensurate to the host company's profits and actual staff earnings. No bright, innovative student should have to work for free alongside colleagues whose salaries top $60K. While SAIC has, to some extent, avoided this controversy by offering FWS to non-profit organizations that wish to hire interns, the school should take a stand and limit their affiliation with larger employers who refuse to pay interns despite obvious financial capability. I see no reason SAIC should not find a way to apply FWS funds to all internship opportunities.

Should this not be possible, SAIC should rethink the structure of its Co-Op program so that internship tuition is reduced to reflect the actual amount of advisor/student contact, which — despite my having a wonderful and encouraging advisor — was a generous total of six hours per semester. This means students pay roughly seven times more for that sparse interaction than they do for such time in other courses. Offering a reduced tuition rate for Co-Op internships may prompt more students to consider them for credit. This may in turn improve graduate employment rates that would ultimately come full circle and reflect positively on SAIC overall.

Unpaid internships can be the butt of the joke as to what extent liberal and fine arts students will go to improve their employment prospects. Yet, as in my case, they can also offer relevant job skills and insights for which there is simply no classroom substitution.

Nola Weber is a fourth year Visual and Critical Studies candidate. She keeps a low profile.

> "I bristle at the manner in which internships are so often portrayed as a waste of college credits."

What follows is an information supplement written by the Career and Co-op Center at SAIC.

SAIC undergraduate students are required to complete 6 credits of off-campus study toward their degree. These include internships through the Cooperative Education Internship Program, SAIC-sponsored study trips, summer courses at Ox-Bow, and selected study abroad/exchange programs and specific classes. Tuition is charged for all of these credit bearing programs.

Since students receive course credit for off-campus study, tuition is charged. In the case of Cooperative Education Internships, students receive credit based on the successful completion of their internships under direct faculty supervision and are required to work 210 hours to earn 3 credits. At the end of the semester Co-op students submit an evaluation, professional project, time sheet and revised resume to their faculty advisors. Co-op employers supervise students in the development of job skills beyond those taught in the classroom setting and assign tasks that expand professional expertise. This supervision is integral to student mentorship and the basic mission of the Co-op Program.

Federal Work Study (FWS) subsidizes an hourly rate for Co-op internships provided the employer is a not-for-profit organization and they agree to a 25% match. Any Co-op student who works for a not-for profit organization that meets the matching requirement is eligible to be paid an hourly rate using their FWS or assigned Institutional Earning Eligibility (IEE).

As you may know, unpaid internships have received national attention and we make every effort to encourage for profit employers to offer a paid internship. We continue to evaluate internship experiences and ensure they are valuable and academically sound.

We would also like to take this opportunity to inform students that, during the month of October, we are planning many opportunities for students to learn more about the specifics of the Cooperative Education Internship Program in our new Career + Coop Center on the 14th floor of 116 South Michigan Avenue, also connected to the 112 Building through the Student Lounge.

The October programming schedule is included in this month's F Newsmagazine and includes conversations with former Co-op interns who will speak about their experiences, career conversations with faculty, resume triage and networking events.

illustration by Berke Yazicioglu

THE ISIS OFFENSIVE

A Look at the Growth of ISIS

▸ **Text by Megan Byrne**

In 2011, a peaceful opposition grew against the Syrian president, Bashar al-Assad. In 2013, that same presidency used sarin gas on protesters. American involvement in Syria supplied extremist rebels with both the training and weapons necessary to defend Syrian citizens against al-Assad's military. Through economic success via donations and crime, organizations like ISIS (the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria) were able to grow, committing acts of capricious violence throughout the northernmost parts of Syria, and ultimately stretching through Iraqi territory.

As a direct consequence of civil war, Syria has more than 3 million refugees and nearly double that number in internally displaced citizens. The rapid evolution of ISIS and their control of the Iraqi-Syrian border complicate the indistinguishable death toll and displacement of citizens in their territories.

Who is ISIS?

Led by Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria, once known as ISIS came together al-Qaeda in Iraq as early as 2004. ISIS had been allied with al-Qaeda but were renounced by them in February. The group's goal is to create a new state (likely self-promoted as IS,) and be led by an all-powerful religious leader, or Caliph. The group has committed acts of terror, which have been condemned by the UN as war crimes. The group controls land running across the northern part of Syria and now, into much of northern Iraq. Reported by BBC News, this area is roughly the size of Pennsylvania.

ISIS' Foreign Fighters

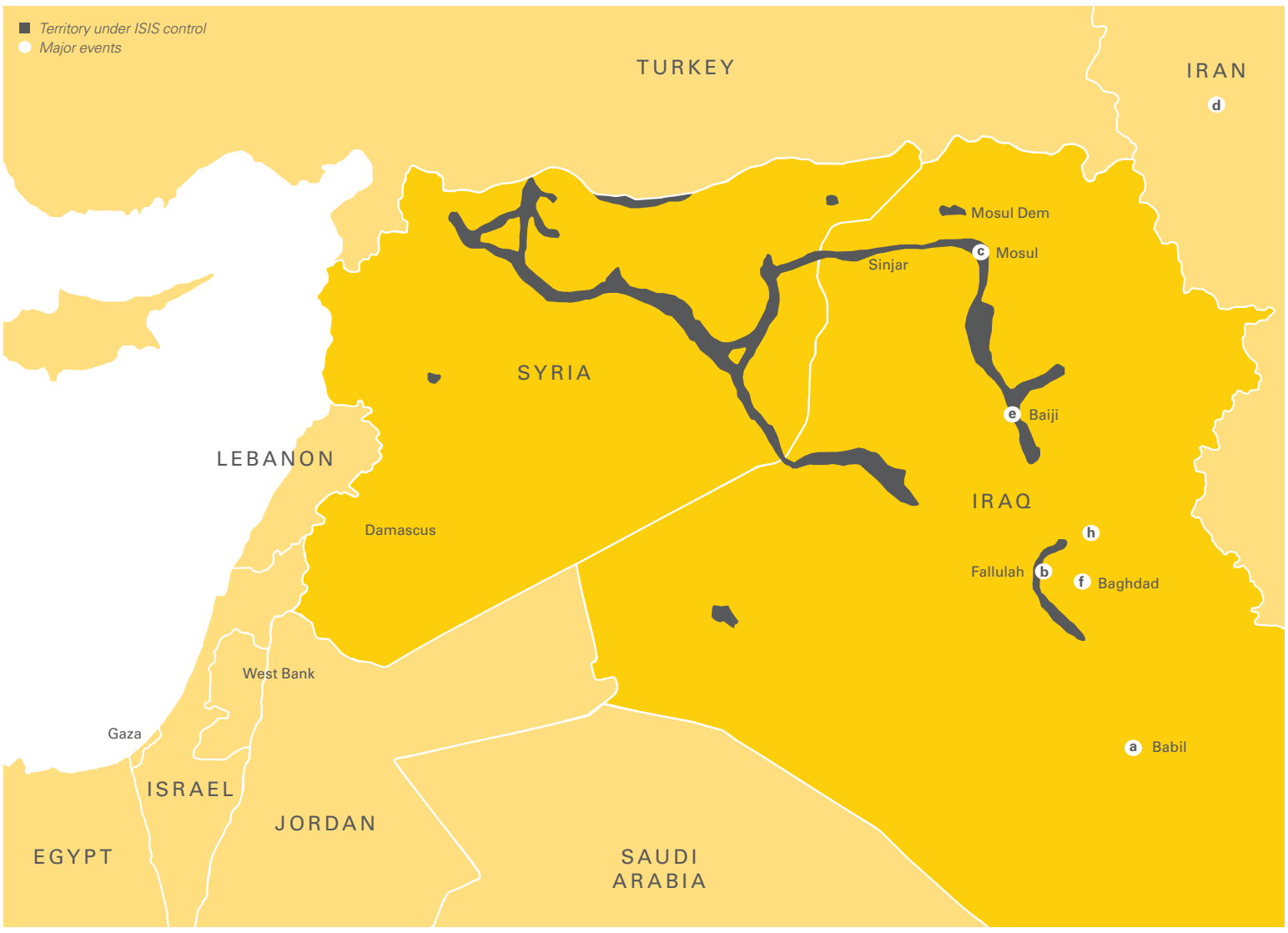
Tunisia, Saudi Arabia, Morocco, France, Russia, United States, Canada, Finland, Ireland, Australia, Belgium, Denmark

ISIS Funding

In the past wealthy individuals such as Kuwaiti former Minister Nayef al-Ajmi were responsible for backing Sunni Jihadist groups. Persian Gulf donors used methods like fundraising via Twitter, which they would later be thanked for by Jihadists in YouTube videos. Sunni Jihadist group ISIS began accumulating Mesopotamian artifacts by invading regions like al-Nabuk in Syria, earning over $36 million from illicitly sold antiques. Much later, after a successful invasion by Iraqi forces, 160 flash drives with invaluable information on ISIS funds were obtained. The extremist group had also been selling crude oil from commandeered oil fields, reaping roughly $2 million per day. Before the invasion of Mosul, ISIS total cash and assets were estimated at $875 million. After the invasion, their assets increased by roughly $1.5 billion.

$2 million a day
a day from selling crude oil

$36 million
from illicitly sold Mesopotamian artifacts taken from al-Nabuk



Map information sourced from: The New York Times

(a) 5/23/07
US soldiers' bodies were pulled from the Euphrates river in the Babil province, south of Baghdad. ISIS claims responsibility and sends video.

(b) 1/3/14
With help from local rebel groups including the Anbar rebels, ISIS overtakes the city of Fallujah.

(c) 6/10/14
ISIS Invades the city of Mosul and cuts off main highways to Baghdad. Mosul carries nearly 15 percent of the oil flow into Turkish coastal ports.

(d) 6/12/14
President Hassan Rouhani of Iran said on national television that ISIS "...is an extremist, terrorist group that is acting savagely." He later declared that (Iran) "...will combat violence, extremism, and terrorism in the region…"

(e) 6/18/14
ISIS attempts to capture Iraq's largest oil refinery in the city of Baiji. The refinery in Baiji accounts for more than a quarter of the country's refining capacity.

(f) 6/18/14
Iraqi government solicits help from the United States Government for air power.

(h) 6/25/14
ISIS occupy the Balad Air Force Base, just 90km north of Iraq's capital, Baghdad.

Military Intervention

Cases for

› Navi Pillay, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights was quoted as saying, "Although the numbers cannot be verified yet, this apparently systematic series of cold-blooded executions, mostly conducted in various locations in the Tikrit area, almost certainly amounts to war crimes."

› The spread of unrest and seemingly unwarranted violence across northern Syria and Iraq including public executions, crucifixions, and restricted civil liberties.

› ISIS claims to have massacred 1,700 Iraqi soldiers as retaliation for an assassination conducted by Iraqi forces this June.

› ISIS calls for its members to attack any country or civilian who doesn't support their organization.

Cases against

› The United States is arming and training Kurdish forces and 'moderate' rebels, but how does the US distinguish between moderate rebels and jihadists?

› Training and arming militias with sophisticated military technology, while some groups have already been accused of selling US weapons to ISIS.

› Civilian causalities are practically unavoidable.

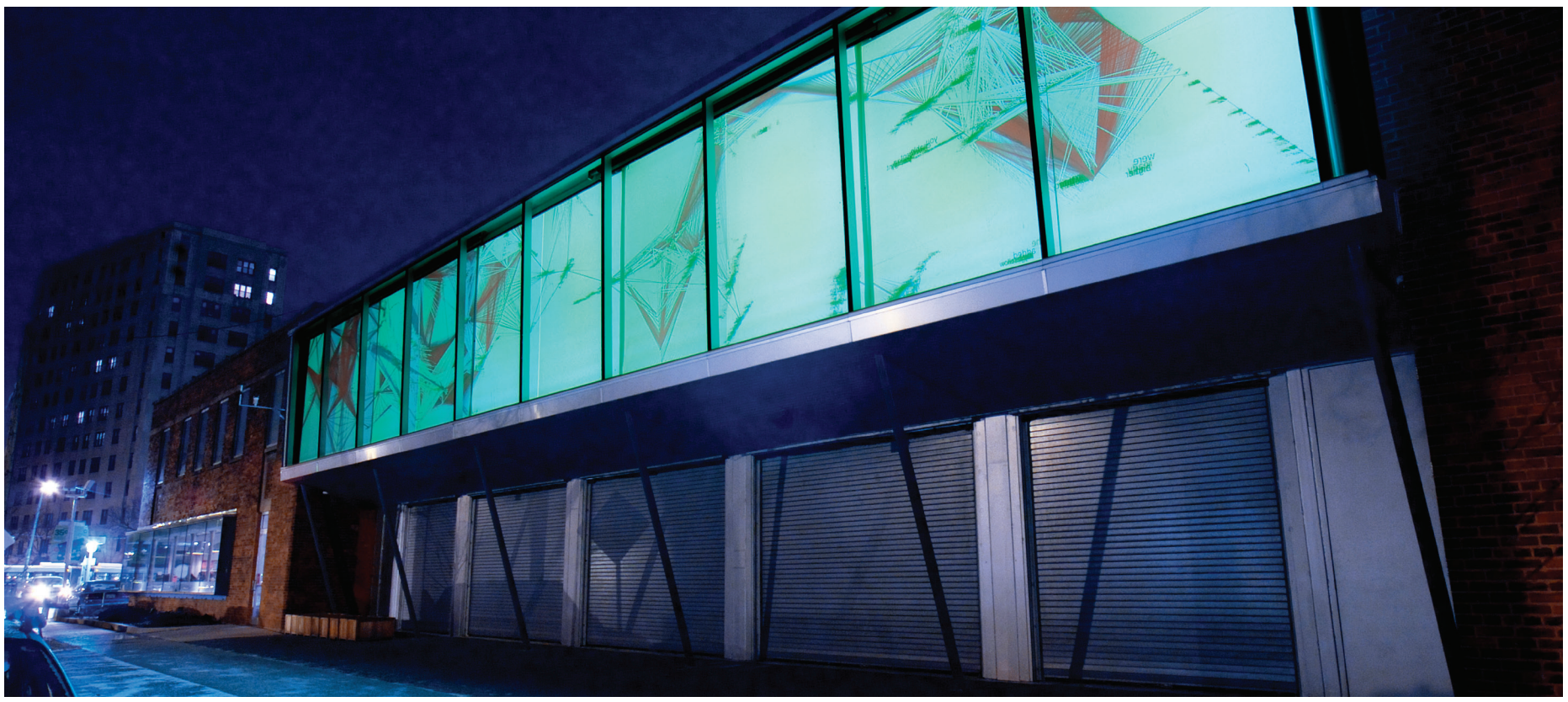
› In a place of civil distress, humanitarian services (doctors, care workers) are almost certain to flee to escape being a civilian casualty.

The Coalition against ISIS

Australia, Canada, Egypt, France, Germany, Great Britain, Iran*, Netherlands, Jordan, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Turkey*, United States, United Arab Emirates

**Not officially a part of the Coalition, but have operated independently*

Sources: ABC, al Jazeera, BBC, CNN, The Guardian, The Guardian UK, NBC, Washington Post, and The New York Times
infographic by Anna B. Smylie



CHALLENGING THE NOW

Hyde Park Art Center, A Creative Engine for the South Side

▸ **Megan Byrne**

"We were found as a collective of artists who wanted to show their work and teach others, with the philosophy that art should be found where people live and work." These words are Katie Lorenz's, executive director of Hyde Park Art Center, which recently celebrated its 75th birthday.

The Hyde Park Art Center is nestled just off 51st and Cornell, a space surrounded by loose-hanging, leafy trees. The building they now occupy has only been their space since 2006. Ms. Lorenz informed F Newsmagazine that the gallery spent a good deal of its time itinerantly, trying to find artists who were interested in a gathering space for visual artists. Although Hyde Park Art Center has an impressive and very serious history as a conceptual gallery, Lorenz admits that, "The openings were huge parties. We hear more stories about the parties than the shows! Ruth Horowitz (a champion of the Art Center) would have everybody over her house after the openings." Looking back on the parties led Ms. Lorenz to reflect on the space itself.

The Hyde Park Art Center is a massive space, which relies heavily on the landscape around it. The Center is filled with natural light that makes even the gallery walls seem less harsh. The space seems to blend in nicely with the neighborhood, even with the giant and colorful lettering that spells out "art" on the side of the building. "That really was the culmination of ten years of thinking about what the Hyde Park art center should be now. The landscape had changed a lot, the community around us had changed a lot," said Lorentz.

> "...a lot of artists have ideas about their work being relevant to real people."

Just a few blocks away from the entrance of the building, a Whole Foods construction sign hangs in front of Uncle Joe's, a Caribbean restaurant whose jerk chicken makes some locals stop there twice a week, highlighting that very change. "We really want to continue offering a space for artists to show, but more proactively build a broader community of people to support them while offering other professional development opportunities for them and really have a chance to be a creative engine for the South Side."

The annual BBQ Block Party Bash hosted on September 13 was free and included everything from a pig roast to a petting zoo (which, thankfully, were held fairly far away from one another). The day in Hyde Park also included work by Tommy Pavletic, who hosted an interactive chalk drawing that was then finished by throwing paint-filled water balloons at its surface. Then, on the street, the incredible artist Candice Latimer hosted a workshop on creating art using solar influence. With adorable event names like *Clay It Ain't So*, free live music all day and a long line of food trucks, the day was momentous.

As teenagers from the area entered in and out of the building during F's interview with Ms. Lorenz, it became evident that the audience and accessibility of Hyde Park Art Center were much different than those at other galleries throughout Chicago. "We find that it creates a lot of exciting opportunities for artists and for us. We'll use *The Beast* as an example," *The Beast* was an installation piece by John Preus, which was on display at the Hyde Park Art Center this past year. The piece was shaped as a bull made out of furniture from closed Chicago public schools, as well as harvested pieces of upholstery. The inside of 'The Beast' became a performance space that hosted stories, music, discussion, dinners and Lorenz points out "a real bunker and hangout for teenagers who go to school or live in the neighborhood. That was very gratifying to John." She explained that "a lot of artists have ideas about their work being relevant to real people and the community, but there aren't a lot of places where that can play out in reality. Here that actually plays out."

It must be difficult to choose which shows to put on with so many varying styles, where there are so many great schools producing art. Hyde Park Art Center will be opening its annual exhibit, Ground Floor, in December. Five students in the MFA program at Columbia College, Northwestern University, The School of the Art Institute of Chicago, The University of Chicago and The University of Illinois at Chicago display their work at the Art Center. It gives young artists a chance to show their work, as well as highlighting the five major MFA programs in Chicago, and provides a space for the community to have access to some of the great, new work coming from students in Chicago.

But what Hyde Park Art Center conveyed the whole time was that it is a gathering space not only for a visual art community, but an access point for art for in community that surrounds the center. The Hyde Park Art Center is, with certainty, a place where education and exhibition spaces collide. Since its establishment under the New Deal 1939, to its big move into a permanent space in 2006, The Hyde Park Art Center has been forced to adapt and change to fit various circumstances. While the Art Center has a striking history, it seems most important that it continues to adapt to its surroundings in order to maintain its identity. Ms. Lorenz concluded her interview with F by saying, "Our mission is about thinking forward, and presenting new work with new ideas and challenging the now."'

Megan Byrne is an undergraduate in the Bachelor of Fine Arts in Writing program. She loves trees and American fiction, and misses New York bagels.

photos courtesy of Carol Fox and Associates

12 MOVIES DISGUISED AS ONE

Life's "Mundane Magic" in Linklater's Boyhood

► **Kayla Lewis**

"How do you plan a twelve-year production?"

"You don't," said Richard Linklater, the director of the recent film, *Boyhood*, in an interview with The Guardian. "There's always a life metaphor. How do we plan for our own futures? You do your best but you have to live in the present."

Ties between filmmaking and metaphors for real life are prominent in interviews with Linklater and the cast of *Boyhood*. The film depicts the life of Mason (Ellar Coltrane) and his family over a twelve-year span, but differs from other films because it was actually filmed over twelve years. We see the actors change and evolve as a product of real time, not makeup. The effect is profound. As we watch Mason grow from a first-grader with a bowl cut to a college student with piercings, visual and audio cues remind us of a parallel time in our own lives.

In an interview with ABC, Coltrane referred to the movie's emphasis on "the magic of the mundane." "Things just happen," he said. Mason's life unfolds with little emphasis on commonly depicted milestones like a first kiss or high school graduation.

"It's all about the little things that don't have a place in a movie," Linklater told The Dissolve. In avoiding cinematic milestones, *Boyhood*'s focus on rudimentary moments makes us realize that they have a greater impact in our lives than prom or the opening night of a Harry Potter film.

While on a drive to go camping, Mason's father raves over a Wilco song that comes on the radio. His explanation of the love and loss behind the lyrics adds layers to his character that don't come out in bigger scenes. These short instances of dialogue thread throughout the movie and contribute the most depth to the characters.

Maintaining both a sense of honesty for how life presents itself and reflecting upon events in his own life was crucial for Linklater. "There's hardly anything in this movie that wasn't real to some degree, that didn't happen to myself, or one of my collaborators," he said, referring to his cast.

An emphasis on *Boyhood* as a collaboration was important to Linklater. The cast and crew met once a year for twelve years, when they would go over Linklater's plot for the year and add changes. The screenplay was not predetermined in order to accommodate for actors' evolution over time. There was no contract, but cast members always came back with life events to contribute to their lives on screen.

The ambiguity between characters and the people playing them makes *Boyhood* unique amongst other films. We are completely aware that our viewing experience is fictional while we watch the actors' real lives unfold in tandem.

Many scenes begin with adult characters commenting on how much Mason has grown, which seems to be as much a product of their actual amazement as a line in a script. Linklater was careful not to include tacky transitions to show Mason's growth, but even without, it is incredibly evident from year to year.

In between filming, Linklater kept up with the cast in order to approach plot structure with an awareness of events in their lives. In fact, Linklater lives in the same city in Texas as Coltrane (the movie also takes place in Texas); his daughter, Lorelei, plays Mason's sister in the film; he and Ethan Hawke (who plays the father) have been friends for over twenty years.

These strange overlaps in Linklater's life and Mason's character make Mason's growth all the more fascinating to witness, and Linklater's dedication to capturing the evolution understandable.

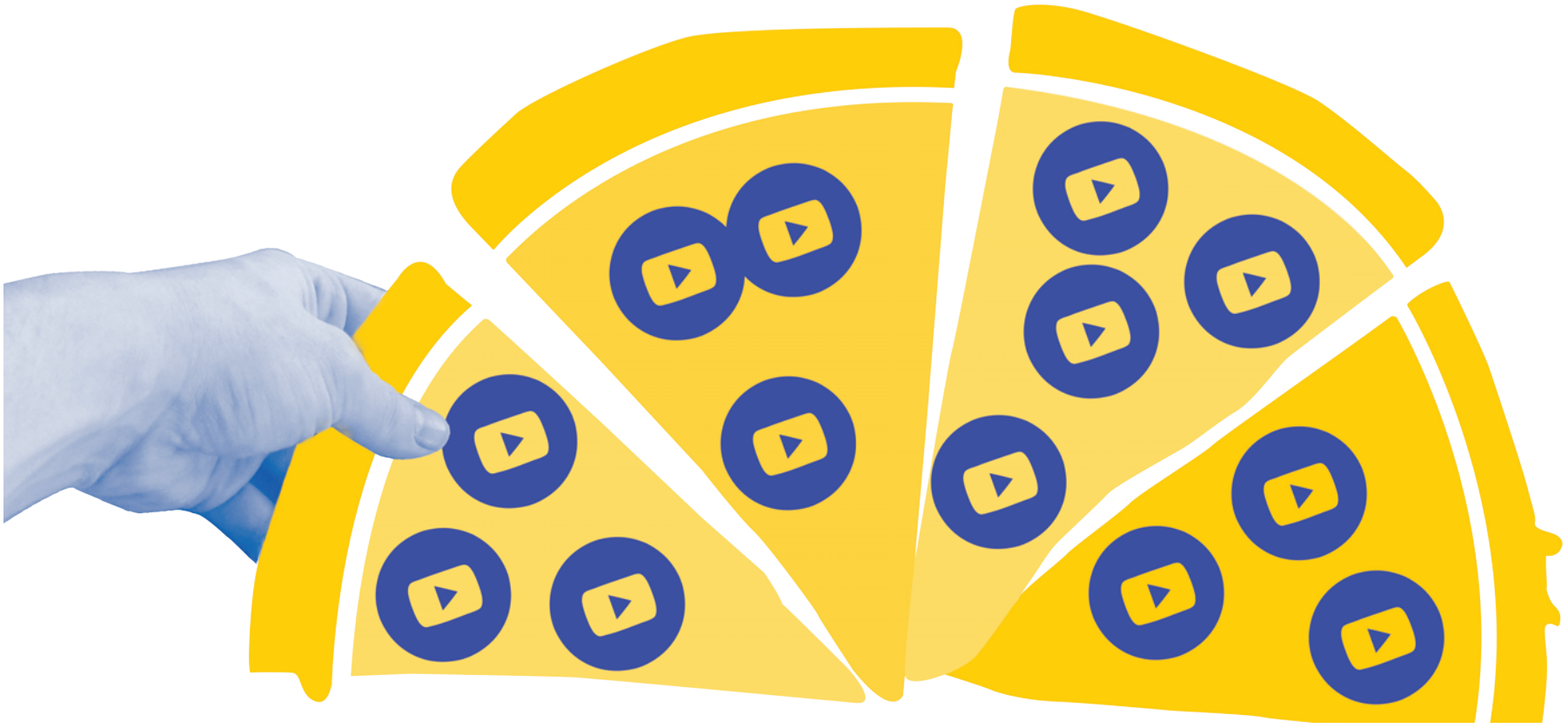
At the end of the film, Mason sits on top of a mountain shortly after beginning college. The dialogue with the girl next to him is self-reflective, but mildly awkward. In that moment, nothing monumental happens, but its effect is moving.

The depiction of the boy on top of the mountain as both Mason and Elar is a striking representation of the strangeness and wonder of growing up. Although the actor and his character are not the same, the traits that they bring out in one another make it impossible to draw a straight line between them. The most concrete difference between Elar and Mason is their names, while the rest of their traits leave us wondering who the boy on the screen will become after the cameras stop rolling.

Kayla Lewis is an MFA student in Art and Technology Studies. She really likes movies, and writing articles about them makes her feel less guilty for watching.

The ambiguity between characters and the people playing them makes *Boyhood* unique amongst other films. We are completely aware that our viewing experience is fictional while we watch the actors' real lives unfold in tandem.

illustration by Monica Burciaga



COMMUNITY PIZZA

HelloImAnArticleAboutYouTubeVideos

▶ **Patrick Reynolds**

The first video uploaded to YouTube was posted to the site on April 23, 2005 at 8:27 p.m. Entitled "Me at the zoo," the 18-second clip depicts user jawed (YouTube cofounder Jawed Karim) standing in front of an elephant exhibit at what we can only assume is a zoo.

He explains, "All right, so here we are in front of the, uh, elephants. Um, the cool thing about these guys is that — is that they have really *really* really long, um, trunks. And that's, that's cool. And that's pretty much all there is to say."

Seventeen months later, when Google purchased YouTube for $1.65 billion, Karim (who had left YouTube to go to graduate school) acquired 137,443 shares of the company's stock, which was worth approximately $64 million, according to Miguel Helft at the New York Times.

Chad Hurley, another cofounder who was acting as Chief Executive for YouTube, received a package of company shares worth over $345 million.

It's inarguable that in the nine years since "Me at the zoo" was first released to the Internet, YouTube has become much more sophisticated. Its technology has been refined to allow for the rapid reproduction of videos with considerably higher visual quality and longer length. It has been adopted by corporations and artists alike as a simple platform to reach millions of viewers. It has its own awards show, and it is now plastered on all of Chicago's public transportation in an unprecedented marketing campaign for popular user-generated content.

And yet, there is something about the spirit of "Me at the zoo" that seems to live on within the YouTube community. The user base of YouTube is so huge and houses so many types of people that it is seemingly possible to find just about any imaginable content — especially unconventional, homemade and non-commercial — along with a like-minded community of fans collectively discussing and disseminating it.

With popularity, however, comes the inevitable issue of oversaturation. With so many videos to wade through on YouTube like some sort of horrible endless dollar-bin basement record store, there has emerged a number of subcommunities consisting of people who have taken on the valiant roles of archivist and historian for the sake of the rest of YouTube's user base.

I became familiar with one such YouTube user, HelloImAPizza, in August, when I stumbled upon his video, "TOP 50: SCARIEST PSAs (Public Service Announcements) - USA/CANADA." The 40-minute compilation contains an eclectic mix of PSAs from the past several decades, and, as HelloImAPizza explains in the video description, it also includes a few special international videos to round out the list. Some of the PSAs are definitely iconic, some are seemingly extremely obscure, and there are lots of videos from the Montana Meth Project. The beginning of the compilation warns, "Some of the ads featured in this countdown are extremely graphic and of a distressing nature. This compilation is not for the weak-hearted. You have been warned."

In watching the videos, I was fascinated not only the variety of content, but also by the quality and thoroughness of the presentation. Many of the clips, despite their age, were in high definition, and the countdown manages to exclude just about all of the non-scary advertisements (like the "truth" cigarette PSAs) that I was expecting to see. Still, there were several (such as the infamous "This is your brain on heroin") that managed to capture bits of nostalgia.

I approached "TOP 50: SCARIEST PSAs" from an admittedly casual standpoint, but by its end, I needed to know more about how exactly one comes to make such compilations. So I asked HelloImAPizza, whose real name is Niall, a few questions about the process.

I was first curious about how HelloImAPizza became introduced to the YouTube countdown community. As of publication, his channel has 8,690 subscribers, and his views total 4.6 million.

"I have been making compilation videos since September 2012. I firstly became interested in them when I watched a compilation by YouTube user LateNightLogoTV, 'Top 50: Scariest Public Information Films,'" HelloImAPizza explains.

"I guess I have always been interested in the whole idea of providing an audience with a good countdown — I just find them fun to make and I love to entertain people."

Still, the subject of public information films seemed like a very specific niche genre. "I have always been fascinated with public information films and public service announcements since as long as I can remember," HelloImAPizza says. "I guess I was hooked on the realism and the creative aspect of them ... the PSAs from other countries I have found through research — YEARS of research. When I first discovered YouTube back in 2006 I was amazed that I could watch all of these PIFs and PSAs from all around the world all on one website, right at my fingertips. And I haven't looked back since."

HelloImAPizza had an affinity for camcorders and video-making from a young age, but despite the advice of those around him, he doesn't seem to have any current plans to pursue filmmaking on a commercial level. "I never did take their advice," he says. "[I recently graduated] in my A-levels — Biology, Psychology and English Literature. Absolutely nothing to do with cinematography or anything like that, huh?"

For HelloImAPizza, the desire to make YouTube videos isn't about personal gain, but is rather to give back to the community that has given so much to him. "It's great being involved in that community, which is what I love about YouTube. There are thousands of YouTube communities out there ... [that] share your interests. You can just join whichever community you want to and connect with similar people, all on one website. It's something very special."

Patrick Reynolds is a second-year graduate student in the Visual and Critical Studies department. He tried to do scholarly research about YouTube prior to writing this article, but all he could find was one 2009 article in Critical Inquiry about Web 2.0.

> "All right, so here we are in front of the, uh, elephants. Um, the cool thing about these guys is that — is that they have really *really* really long, um, trunks. And that's, that's cool. And that's pretty much all there is to say.
>
> — Jawed Karim

illustration by Allison O'Flinn

Experience-based Art Gets Redefined

▶ **Troy Pieper**

Experience-based art's DNA is old. Already in the 1960s American artist Allan Kaprow was holding "happenings," the most famous of which required visitors to walk through a cave while eating a variety of foods among metronomes set to the pace of a human heartbeat. Decades later, French philosopher Nicolas Bourriaud coined the term "relational aesthetics," in his eponymous 1995 book, which attempted to bring a genre of art into definition. Experience-based art is "a set of artistic practices which take as their theoretical and practical point of departure the whole of human relations and their social context, rather than an independent and private space," he wrote.

Joseph Beuys, a German conceptual artist, is famous for commenting that "everyone is an artist." At documenta 7, he facilitated a project in which thousands of oak trees were planted in Kassel, Germany. Bourriaud's was one of the first attempts to analyze or categorize work like Beuys', and much discourse — and a slew of terminology, including "participatory art," "interventionist art," "collaborative art," "behavioral art" — has developed around it. Writer and art historian Claire Bishop wrote a sort of rebuttal to Bourriaud's *Relational Aesthetics* in a 2004 issue of October, claiming that "An effect of this insistent promotion of these ideas as artists-as-designer, function over contemplation, and open-endedness over aesthetic resolution is often ultimately to enhance the status of the curator, who gains credit for stage-managing the overall laboratory experience." As Hal Foster warned in the mid-1990s, "The institution may overshadow the work that it otherwise highlights: it becomes the spectacle, it collects the cultural capital, and the director-curator becomes the star."

Bishop asks, "If relational art produces human relations, then the next logical question to ask is what types of relations are being produced, for whom, and why?" As it turns out, there are different types. "Social practice" is often used synonymously with relational art, though in many cases it carries a newer weight. The term is maybe only five years old, says Mary Jane Jacob, a professor of sculpture at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago and curator at the school's Sullivan Galleries. She recently organized *A Proximity of Consciousness: Art and Social Action*. She called social practice the "recent iteration of this other kind of working collaboratively, working to create public projects and working with social issues."

Proximity is an overview of several artists whose work is experience-based and has an activist agenda. Pablo Helguera, an SAIC alum (and former editor of *F Newsmagazine*), installed, as part of Proximity, The *Addams-Dewey Gymnasium*, based on the work of pioneering progressive educators John Dewey and Jane Addams in Chicago. In this replica turn-of-last-century gymnasium, Helguera is reenacting curriculum Dewey and Addams developed to include art-making and physical activity in children's education. The project is inspired by Chicago's long history as a hotbed of political movements and community activism that includes Addams, Studs Terkel and Barack Obama. One of the goals of the exhibition in the Sullivan Galleries, says Jacob, is to locate the activist roots of social practice art in Chicago. "Chicago has a great depth of commitment and activism and artists being part of that."

Lifelong Chicagoan Jim Duignan's *A Plea for Playgrounds* in *Proximity* revisits an 1894 publication written by concerned volunteers. With Columbia University architectural historian Jennifer Gray, Duignan is creating a contemporary call for awareness about playgrounds and community spaces as American cities face some of the same issues as citizens did 100 years ago.

Duignan sees Chicago not as the center of the social practice art conversation, but as the place that is central to the conversation. "There are just a lot of practitioners here. It's easy to develop networks, easy to work here." The city has incubated practitioners and projects that have spread to many other cities, he says. Duigan cites Red 76 in Minneapolis, which "creates publics through the creation of ad-hoc educational structures and discursive media forms," and Just Seeds, a network of artists committed to making print and design work that reflects a radical social, environmental and political stance, based in New York. Both have their roots in Chicago. "There's an energy here, a saturation," he says.

The conversation around social practice art seems both new and contested. "I've been working quietly here for years," Duignan says, "and my work seems more visible these past few years." Though she cares deeply about this kind of work, Jacob admits she was hesitant to mount *Proximity*. "Discourse around social practice was so pitted, so aggressive, so antagonistic, or so declarative in terms of rights or wrongs and best practices that I really didn't want to get into this discussion."

Helguera defines social practice as something that has to be "seen in action" to be understood, the implication being that the genre defies definition. "The experience is the art," he says. "It's very relative to the experience of education."

Truly, these artists differ from others who practice experience-based art in that their work is driven by "a political and social opinion or message," asserts Jacob. Duignan does not necessarily draw that link. "I consider myself an activist, but I think social practice is working through its own language. These artists just ask better questions." If participatory art, relational aesthetics or social practice consider learning as content, all could apply to any experience-based art, because learning and experience are inextricably linked.

Experience-based art practitioner Andy Sturdevant leads tours of Minneapolis and curates events that create a dialogue among artists and an audience. He believes that unlike discussions of sculpture or painting, the conversation around social practice art is indicative of just how problematic it is to give it a definition. In the end, what may matter most about social practice is that it requires none. "It can be seen in a lot of different ways," says Duignan, "it depends on who I'm talking to."

Writer Ben Lewis has called relational art the new art "ism," after expressionism, etc., in part because it redefines the concept of art and because artists who could be considered experience-based artists or social practitioners would deny that they are such.

Sturdevant likens this kind of artwork to rock bands he has played with who would never have considered their music to be "indie-rock." Such debates, quips Helguera, "are irrelevant."

If participatory art, relational aesthetics or social practice consider learning as content, all could apply to any experience-based art, because learning and experience are inextricably linked.

Troy Pieper is an MA candidate in New Arts Journalism. He tirelessly engages with society and relates to aesthetics.

illustration by Allison O'Flinn

THE ANTI-DESIGN EXHIBITION

A Critique of Government-Sponsored Mediocrity in Portuguese Design

▶ **Patrick Reynolds**

The respect and discipline required to all, on view through November 2 at the Museu do Design e da Moda (MUDE) in Lisbon, is a perplexing exhibition to encounter at a design museum in a large city. Curated by João Paulo Martins, a Lisbon-based architect and professor, the show is simultaneously understated and wildly bold; its aim is not to showcase fine artistry nor craftsmanship, but rather to execute a quiet political critique (with extensive visual evidence) of pervasive state-sponsored mediocrity.

The exhibition presents approximately one hundred samples of unremarkable furniture commissioned by the Comissão para Aquisição de Mobiliário (CAM), a division of the Portuguese Ministry of the Interior that was established in 1940. The CAM's role was to provide all of the furniture for Portugal's state and government buildings through local commissions. As MUDE's website notes, "The commissioning of furniture for official use in Portugal was an important stimulus for the economy of the sector. However, in the action of the State and its servers it is not found an investment in quality and accuracy nor any strategy aiming to make Portuguese industry more competitive as it happened in official offices in other countries."

Presenting its evidence through four consecutive "nuclei," *The respect and discipline required to all* attempts to show the shortsightedness and general deficiency of the CAM's furniture commissions, specifically through an examination of its dubious political motivations. The show's title, the museum's site explains, is drawn from a quote from the Comissão para Aquisição de Mobiliário dating from 1950: "[The CAM's] relative lack of ambition was expressed in the formula summarizing the main concern in the official furniture projects. The goal was to stage the image of the State, in its relationship with the citizens: bestow the public buildings with 'a minimum of dignity, balance and good taste,' materialize 'the respect and the discipline imposed upon all.'"

The pieces of furniture chosen for *The respect and discipline* were sourced from a variety of locations in Portugal, from warehouses to the actual buildings from which they were initially installed (some of the pieces were still being used up until their entry into the exhibition). The exhibition explicitly notes that the furniture on display had not been cleaned or repaired prior to the mounting of the exhibition. Rather, the various states of disrepair afflicting the myriad chairs, benches, tables and other assorted pieces serve as visual evidence to support the curator's thesis: the furniture commissioned under the CAM lacked inspiration in its design and was constructed using underperforming materials.

The crux of Martins' argument stems from a decision within the CAM in the 1940s to invest in furniture that avoided international design styles and aesthetics as a means of boosting nationalist identity. The exhibition explains two trajectories pursued by the CAM: "rustic" pieces relating to Portugal's agriculture and historicized pieces informed by "the scholarly languages of the past." Accompanying wall text explains, "In all cases, it should be clear that 'respect and discipline' were intended to be established and maintained. The furniture should represent the everyday order, the authoritarian nature of the State in its relationship with individuals, in order to make explicit the hierarchies."

The MUDE is located in a former bank, and its gallery spaces, which lack any sort of noticeable renovation or updating, reveal the raw industrial materials from which the building was constructed. The bare concrete and starkness of the space serve as perfect complements to the show (given its interest in exposing the degrading materiality of Portugal's ephemeral state-sponsored furniture pieces), and its presence is a refreshing counterpoint to the museum's permanent exhibition of famous modern and contemporary design featured on the first-floor gallery.

Still, on an ideological level, *The respect and discipline required to all* is not without its shortcomings. While Martins provides an exhaustive look at CAM commissions, his political critiques lack contemporary context, and one is left wondering about the lingering effects of the state's "authoritarian" commission strategies as well as alternative routes that the state could have taken to improve the quality of its furniture. It should also be noted that the MUDE itself is not immune to domineering oversight. While admission to the museum is provided free-of-charge to visitors, the entire space is covered in elements of corporate sponsorship. The first floor lobby houses a large Samsung television and an accompanying text discussing the brand's commitment to innovative design, and its top-floor exhibition of street artist André Saraiva features sponsors including Nescafé, Schweppes and Absolut. While corporate financial assistance in a museum setting is hardly a new or even notable phenomenon, its presence alongside an exhibition as politically idealistic as *The respect and discipline required to all* is immediately noticeable.

While the show is not without its imperfections, *The respect and discipline required to all* is still interesting and innovative as an anti-exhibition of design. It is certainly subtle, but its historical and political motivations, when considered with "respect and discipline," can certainly be informative and thought-provoking.

Patrick Reynolds is F Newsmagazine's multimedia editor and a master's candidate in the department of Visual and Critical Studies. He has only been to Lisbon once, and he doesn't really care for Super Bock.

> The various states of disrepair afflicting the myriad chairs, benches, tables and other assorted pieces serve as visual evidence to support the curator's thesis.

photos by Patrick Reynolds

STUDENT PROFILE

CALEB KAISER

A Poet Who Has A Thing For Swimming in Storms

▶ **Megan Byrne**

The point of being a writer, I think, is that your words move through the world. When I think of writers, the first people who come to mind are always poets; and when I think of poems that sing, I think of Frank O'Hara, and for some reason Phil Lynott from Thin Lizzy. When I think of poems that are both gorgeous and terrifying, I think of Caleb Kaiser. Caleb Kaiser is a poet, an editor at the Adroit Journal, and a student at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. Kaiser is from all over the Southeast, and continues to return whenever he gets the chance. His work appears in *PANK*, *DIAGRAM*, *Painted Bride Quarterly*, and *A-Minor*.

Megan Byrne, Editor, F News Magazine: From what I understand, you're both a publishing poet and an editor — do you see these two things as separate acts? How are you able to draw a line between the two? Do they ever get in the way of each other?

Caleb Kaiser: I mean, they're inherently separate because when I'm editing, I'm not writing poems. So when I'm writing a poem, I'm not editing other people's poems.
I think for some people editing might interfere with their poetry, but for me editing is great because it gives me a chance to read some of the great poetry out there. When I'm writing poetry, I'm not thinking about the audience. I'm exclusively writing in the second person, so my conversation with the reader is what matters. When I'm an editor I get to decide what everyone else reads. That means I get to be a part of the great conversation that's going on in poetry. Otherwise, I think that conversation would be completely inaccessible to me, and it's great that as an editor — because I get to interact with other poets — the two become closer and closer the longer poets and editors become friends. I get to work with many people I admire so much, like J Scott Brownlee and Sam Ross. I've published Claudia Cortese, Terrence Hayes, and Dorianne Laux.

MB: There is this very novelized idea of the tragic poet. Arthur Rimbaud once said, "I'm now making myself as scummy as I can. Why? I want to be a poet, and I'm working at turning myself into a seer. You won't understand any of this, and I'm almost incapable of explaining it to you. The idea is to reach the unknown by the derangement of all the senses. It involves enormous suffering, but one must be strong and be a born poet. It's really not my fault." How do you feel about the 'tragedy' or 'scummy-ness' that people often feel comes with being a poet?

CK: Rimbaud is a unique case. In this letter he said, 'I is another.' He believed that you had to lose your body to become part of the poem, he calls this the seer. But I, in general, think that unless you want to be a seer poet, which he eventually renounced, and unless you really believe that there's some universal constant that we can connect to, then being a seer is just a silly idea. I think that people like the idea of being a poet more than they like poetry. But then again, poverty and poetry are probably inherently linked. I think most of it is that we have an antiquated idea of poetry. Poetry has marginalized itself, and I think that contributes more to the idea of a tragic poet than anything else: it becomes that we perpetuate it by writing poems for our weekend workshop, and we are not approaching poetry as something that belongs to everyone. We marginalize it to where you can't help but to be tragic when you're writing for five people.

MB: Who, or what are your biggest inspirations when you write?

CK: Gospel music, hymns, Southern folk music, French poets like Rimbaud, Lautréamont, and Reverdy. Some surrealists like Dean Young, Matt Hart, and Brenda Hillman. I think that my favorite poet of all time is probably Frank Stanford. But what influences me most is definitely more rural surrealist poets. What influences me most is anything with soul, Mary Biddinger, Claudia Cortese, or Anne Marie Rooney.

MB: What's your favorite place to write?

CK: Oh, wow. This is a hard one. Actually, in Charleston, South Carolina, I was in a screened-in porch during a squall, and there were bits of children's toys flying into the stream and the trees were bending sideways; that was probably the most scenic place I've ever written. I wrote a poem called "Swamps" that day, and that was my first big publishing.

MB: Is there anything you can't write without?

CK: I thought I couldn't write without cigarettes. Recently I discovered that I can, so that's been weird. I think I'll have to say a pen. I can't write without a pen.

MB: Your most recently published poem is titled *What Happened in Gehenna*. Can you tell us why you chose the title that you did?

CK: Yeah, Gehenna, if you're Jewish or you just like ideas of hell, you know that it's a place for the wicked. It's the home of Moloch, a wasteland in the middle of the desert. It's the kind of place in the valley where parents sacrifice children to Moloch, and there is something about that sort of place that reminds me of where I'm from a little. I'm from Kentucky, which is full of hollers and valleys and we have a spiritual connection with them. We have songs like "Down in the Valley to Pray." It's as if going down in the valley is some sort of spiritual act. The whole poem is sort of about being born in a place of neglect or a place of abandonment, and I thought of going down in the valley to abandon your children, like they did in Gehenna to sacrifice their children, and how what goes on there is something you can't exactly describe. What goes on in childhood, explicitly stating it doesn't do it any justice, like giving the facts in this case don't matter. Explaining it that way, there's just no need for that. So the whole idea of the poem was trying to explain what happened in Gehenna as in its effect, as in its essence, without making it you know, a case study.

MB: Your poetry seems to meet midway between American regional dialect and a sort of secret language that most of us are only experiencing for the first time. So what I mean to say is, thank you, and how are you able to work this in meter?

CK: Oh, you're welcome. I think meter just comes naturally to me. I'm not a big proponent of meter or form. I'm not against it, but I'm not an ardent supporter of it either. If you spend a lot of time writing in meter, like I did when I was younger, or you read a lot of poetry, or listen to a lot of songs you get used to syllables and rhythms. What I focus on is what comes most naturally to me, it's the lyric itself and phrase. And when you write like that, meter is sort of inescapable. I don't think anyone has ever read my poems and thought, *This is a great example of iambs!* But I do have a solid grasp of it. I use it well at times.

MB: Lastly, in your poems it seems that they always occur in the moments before the beginning of sounding thunder. Can you tell F about your favorite storm you've ever been in?

CK: There have been a lot of storms (he laughs). My tagline in my bio was, or still is actually, "He has a thing for storms." My favorite storm I've ever been in most recently was a storm in South Carolina. It was actually on the same beach where I wrote *Swamps*. There was a lightning storm and I went swimming with a lady but I got caught in a riptide so I got dragged under. When I came up everything would be white, and I was struggling to get back to shore, coughing up salt water and lightning hit the water again. Strangely I felt completely safe the entire time. I never felt like anything bad was going to happen.

Megan Byrne is an undergraduate in the Bachelor of Fine Arts in Writing program. She thinks that if you can't fold your pizza with one hand, it isn't crispy enough.

OF MARSHES
BY CALEB KAISER

On days we'd smother
ourselves in wet reeds, mashing
our muscles until bruises
soaked our skin. When we'd plant
teeth along our spines. Or
fill mason jars with tomato
broth, make reddish swamps
between our gums. Once you
held a head of mud in your
soft hands, a fresh pelt
of marsh womb, and its breath
blistered into thin-skinned
bubbles, squeeming through your
sycamore-still bones. Days we were
made of currents instead of veins,
of clay and fresh-kill, I loved you
enough to pulp my lungs into yours, to
slip a straw between your ribs.

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> "I think that people like the idea of being a poet more than they like poetry."

Photo by Derrick Woods-Morrow

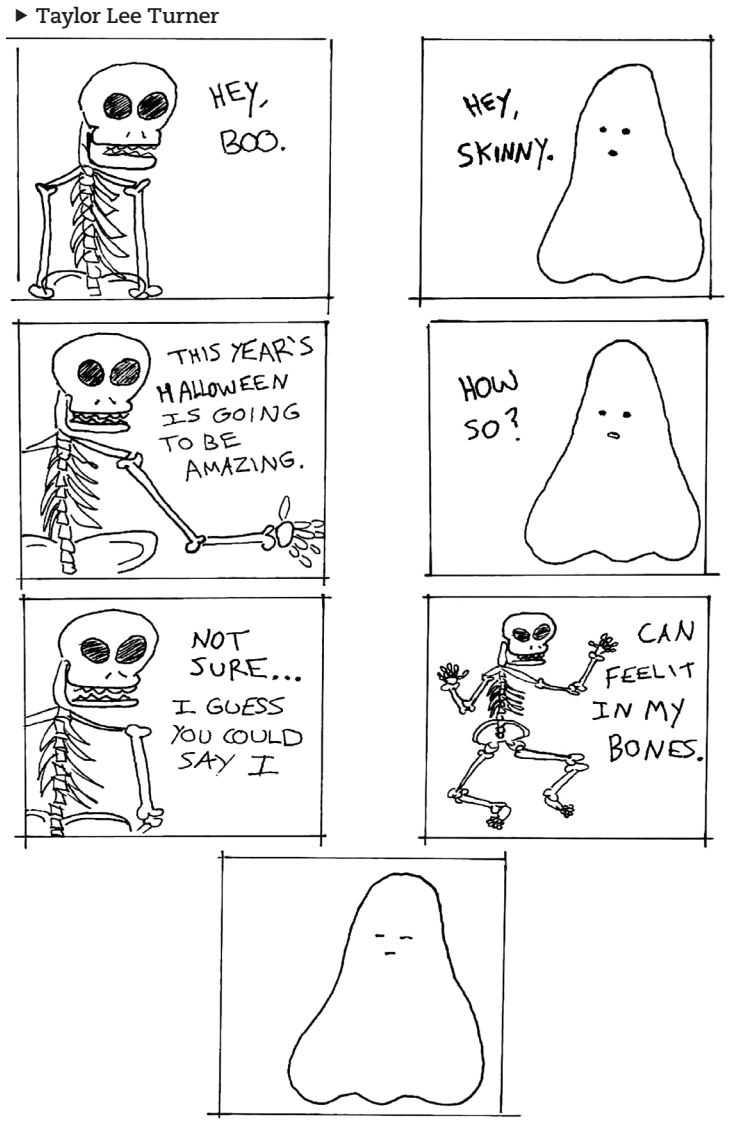
Sin & Comic

▶ Berke Yazicioglu

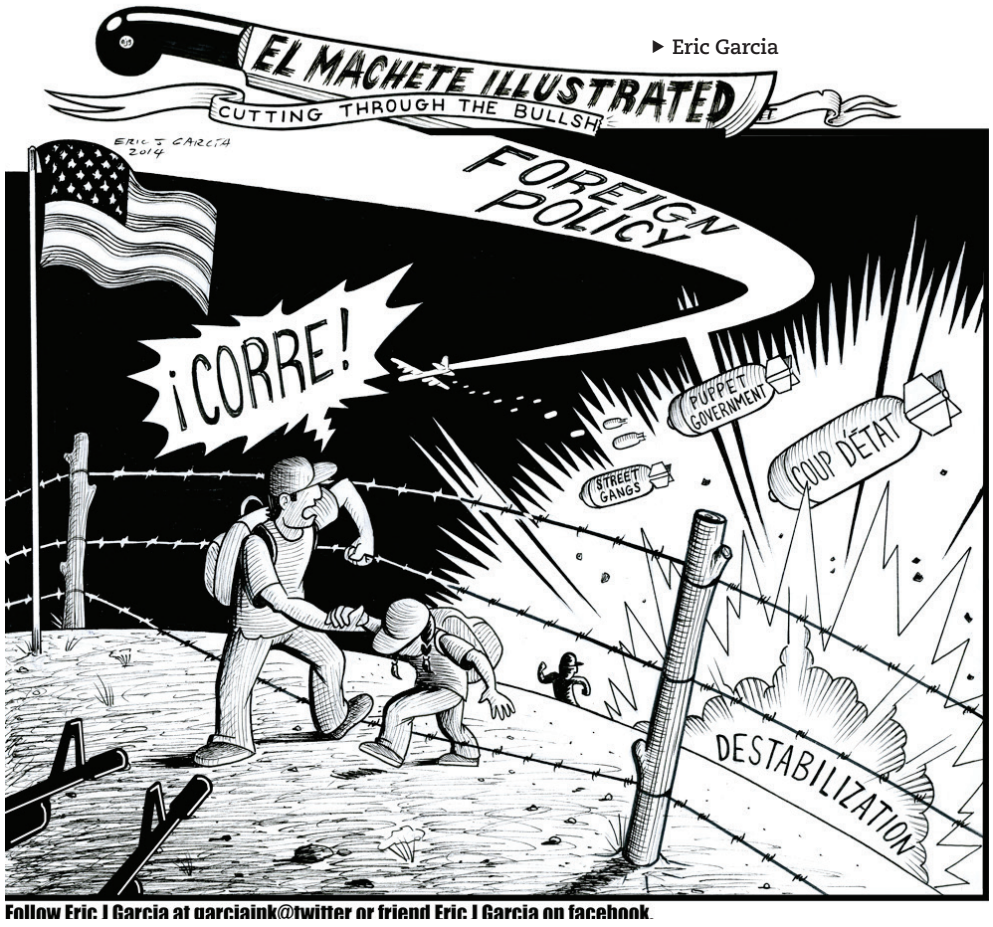
▶ Rae Kim Job

▶ Mimi Heldt

▶ Taylor Lee Turner



▶ Eric Garcia



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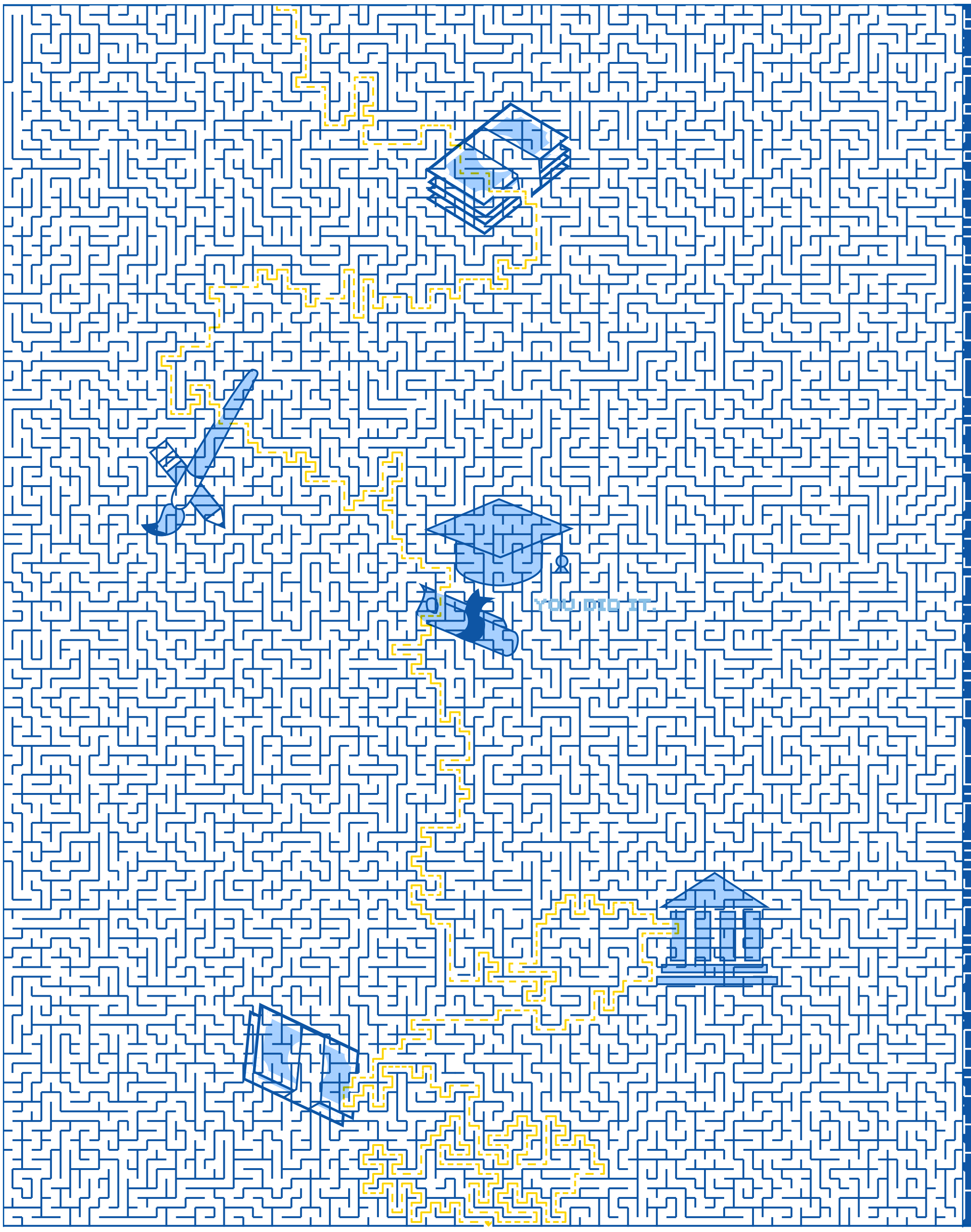
YOU DID IT.