

*f*news magazine

The School of the Art Institute of Chicago

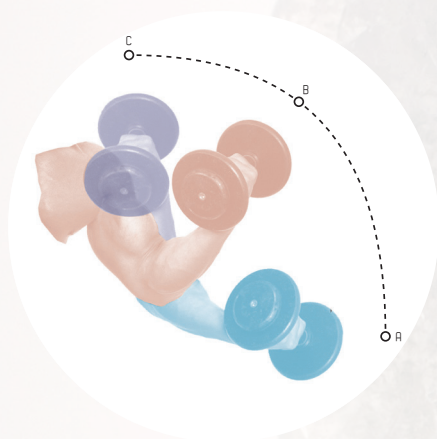
MARCH 2013

*A student journal of arts,
culture and politics*

HAPPINESS
IS A COLD GUN.

fnewsmagazine

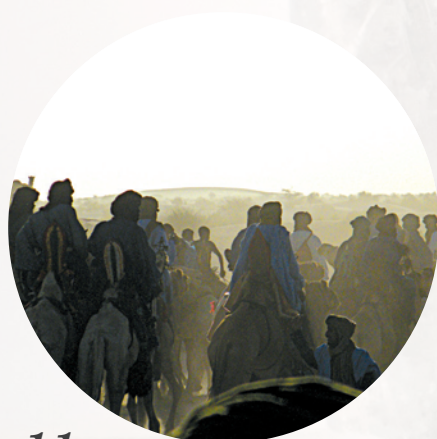
MARCH 2013



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“Between Black and White” — writer Patrick Putze offers an overview of “Color Bind,” an exhibition curated by Naomi Beckwith at the Museum of Contemporary Art.

“F Studio Visits: Molly Welsh” — Gabriella Brown continues a series of student profiles with a video featuring artist Molly Welsh who discusses beauty, generosity and visibility in her paintings.

Contributor Ariel Williams reviews Mary Patten’s show at threewalls and the “IN>TIME” performances at Defibrillator.

“Tritriangle” — in another F Newsmagazine video multimedia editor Sanglim Han visits Wicker Park’s time-based media gallery Tritriangle and interviews its directors.

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COVER: “Happiness Is A Cold Gun”
by Chris Johnson

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LETTER TO THE EDITOR

The Conversation Continues

Art Education faculty weigh in on diversity concerns at SAIC

To the Editor, F Newsmagazine:

In the February 2013 issue, F Newsmagazine published “Against Racial Fetishism: Black Student Group Criticizes Climate of Insensitivity at SAIC,” a letter to the editor written by members of the student group, Black at SAIC (BaSAIC). This letter was prompted by the December 2012 F Newsmagazine article, “The Most Embarrassing Thing I Could Do.” In this article, SAIC undergraduate student Jason Guo talks about the controversial, racially and sexually charged photograph that he had entered into the “New Work” exhibition in the Sullivan Galleries.

In their letter to the editor, Members of BaSAIC raise critical questions about the politics of representing historically marginalized groups; in particular, about the potential re-objectification of the black body through hyper-sexualized, yet docile depictions of black masculinity. While these are important and difficult issues to think about in relation to the photograph under discussion, BaSAIC’s aim is not to single out and critique the work of one artist.

What we appreciate most about this letter is the challenge BaSAIC raises for the wider SAIC community to consider the kind of culture we would like to cultivate within our own institution.

SAIC has a long history of championing the rights of the artist to experiment, and to exercise the freedom to make difficult and challenging work. In the early 1990s, for example, SAIC student David Nelson’s “Mirth and Girth” painting—in which the late Harold Washington is portrayed wearing women’s undergarments—generated considerable controversy amongst Chicago’s grass-roots political and African American communities, and within the school itself. While many people argued for Nelson’s right to make and display his painting, others pushed for the work to be taken down. The ensuing debates were deeply polarized between artistic freedom vs. censorship. With this history in mind, we wonder what it would look like for SAIC to move beyond either defending or promoting “provocative” art works, and on to generating more open, complex conversation about the issues at stake.

We understand that it is dangerous territory attempting to police “who can do what work and where.” What we are calling for is not policing, but rather open dialogue and a renewed attention to curriculum and pedagogy at SAIC. The institution is in an urgent moment in terms of the steps being taken to develop a research culture at SAIC, with stronger ties to the City of Chicago. BaSAIC’s letter to Fnewsmagazine has motivated our own questions: How are we as SAIC faculty preparing students to grapple with the politics of representing historically and cultural marginalized individuals and groups? How can SAIC’s curriculum support the development of a critical research culture, one that is attuned to the responsibilities and ethical dilemmas of community-based art and design practice? How can we respect diversity in the process of developing research partnerships, especially in neighborhoods and contexts where the very concept of “research” is suspect?

This is an invaluable conversation for the entire SAIC community to take up over an extended period of time. We hope that public forums—such as the Visiting Artists

Program (VAP) and the Here + Now Dean’s Lecture Series—will become places to openly discuss and debate, and ultimately deepen all of our understanding of the issues of artistic and institutional responsibility raised by BaSAIC. Ideally, these conversations about “meaning and making” will lead to action steps, including the development of new curricular forms and institutional structures that reflect SAIC’s commitment to diversity, critical thinking and rigorous, socially engaged forms of investigation.

Yours Sincerely,

Andres Hernandez, Assistant Professor, Art Education
Drea Howenstein, Associate Professor, Art Education
Nicole Marroquin, Assistant Professor, Art Education
John Ploof, Professor, Art Education
Karyn Sandlos, Assistant Professor, Art Education



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LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Trans* Issues Oversimplified

Article on Gender-Neutral Bathrooms Focused On a Problem Not Central to Trans* Community

Dear F Newsmagazine Editors,

In the February 2013 issue, F News-magazine published the article “The Bathroom Blind Spot,” which discussed from a conceptual perspective why single-stalled, gender-neutral bathrooms at SAIC are potentially problematic in contrast to the amount number of traditionally gendered bathrooms. We recognize that this article came with the intention of discussing trans* issues and highlighting the shortcomings of the institution’s attempt to accommodate people of all genders. However, we feel that the article failed to recognize the wide array of issues that trans* students are facing in the current climate.

We want to want to acknowledge that we are not the only trans* voices in our community, but as two trans* students who are active members in organizing SAIC’s Queers and Allies group and have participated in the dialogue between students and administration about policy change, we feel we have a unique perspective in regard to these specific issues.

We found quite a few inconsistencies of information within the article that we’d like to address. First and foremost: the article stated that “SAIC’s venture into unisex bathrooms only included single person ‘family rooms’ when in fact there are multiple multi-stall gender neutral bathrooms in the SAIC buildings (second floor of the Columbus Building, Room 235 and tenth floor of the Sharp Building, Room 1002). Also, the first floor MacLean bathrooms were discussed as if they were gender-free when, in fact, they are not. The unisex bathroom in that building is located on the 13th floor (Room 1309).

Secondly, there seemed to be some confusion of vocabulary, particularly in regard to gender identity and sexual orientation. Gender identity refers to the way an individual identifies and represents themselves. A cisgender (cis) person identifies with the gender they were assigned at birth. A transgender (trans*) person does not identify with the gender they were assigned at birth. Transgender is an umbrella term encompassing many genders. The asterisk denotes the multiplicity of identities from binary

trans women or trans men to people who identify as genderqueer, agender, and other nonbinary trans* identities. Gender identity is entirely independent of sexual orientation. A person’s sexual identity is determined by who they are attracted to. Both trans* and cis people can be heterosexual, homosexual, asexual, queer, bisexual, pansexual or any other sexual orientation. Although the article implies that straight is the opposite of trans*, “heterosexual” does not mean cisgender. By the same token, issues of LGB rights such as marriage equality and Don’t Ask Don’t Tell are not necessarily issues for the trans* community. In the same way, many gay rights activist organizations do not concern themselves with advocating for trans* rights.

Thirdly, the article stated that “Throughout the history of civil rights in the U.S., desegregation has been used to provide people with equality and fairness.” We want to dispute this notion on several levels. Firstly, trans* people have never been systematically segregated from cis individuals. Trans* people have been discriminated against, ostracized, and been the victim of hate crimes, but never segregated the way people of color, particularly black people, have been throughout U.S. history. Secondly, desegregation did not summarily cease the problem of racism; a step in the right direction does not automatically create a post-racial society. There are many places that are still racially exclusive. Chicago to this day is one of the most racially segregated cities in the United States, and places of education are particularly prone to unequal distribution of resources, especially to communities of color. To conflate the struggle for trans* rights with the Civil Rights movement in this way places the struggle for racial equality in the past tense and ignores the fact that racism is still prevalent in our culture. Furthermore, it ignores the fact that trans* people of color experience simultaneous racism and transphobia (the fear and hatred of trans* individuals). Trans* women of color in particular are most often the victims of hate crimes and violence spawned by transmisogyny (the specific fear and hatred of trans* women) and racism, especially in bathroom settings. The 2011 National Co-

alition of Anti-Violence Program found that 87% of LGBTQ murder victims were people of color, and 45% of that demographic were trans* women.

While we agree with the article’s point that there should be more gender neutral bathrooms, both at SAIC and in the world at large, the most important feature of gender neutral bathrooms is not the number of stalls they have. On that same note, we also want to make the distinction that we have no desire to remove the existence of gendered bathrooms. Recognizing the

The 2011 National Coalition of Anti-Violence Program found that 87% of LGBTQ murder victims were people of color, and 45% of that demographic were trans women*

fears of many people who have experienced trauma and assault in bathroom spaces is not just a trans* issue, and the importance of everyone’s comfort and safety is paramount. As long as there is an option for gender neutral bathrooms, and gendered bathrooms are inclusive of trans* individuals, male/female bathrooms are not at odds with trans* equality.

The article states that “single person unisex bathrooms force individuals to compromise their identities.” In reality, the absence of unisex bathrooms, of any size, often forces trans* individuals, especially non-binary trans* people, to choose between basic bodily functions and compromising their safety and gender identity. The purpose of gender neutral bathrooms is to provide safety, comfort and the protection of self identification — in that order of impor-

tance. While having multi-stalled gender neutral bathrooms symbolically represents equality, in terms of basic functionality, their size is not nearly as important as their existence.

It is ironic that this article both ignores and underlines a basic lack of understanding about what trans* issues are, and how to discuss them. This lack of understanding is not exclusive to this article, and we want to be clear that we are not trying to personally criticize its author but more, attempting to bring to light the underlying issues at large.

This article was an opportunity to discuss trans* perspectives on SAIC’s policies of gender inclusion. It could have discussed the fact that gender neutral bathrooms are difficult to find and not located in easily accessible areas. It could have discussed the difficulty that trans* students face in having their identities recognized and respected by their peers, instructors, and the school administration. It could have discussed the arduous and uphill battle of attempts to change teaching policies and make SAIC a more inclusive learning environment. Instead, the article revealed the problems that come from discussing trans* issues without consulting a trans* perspective. This ultimately leads to more confusion and misinformation, and disrupts the results of trans* students lobbying to have their own voices heard as part of the SAIC community.

The discussion of how to make SAIC a more inclusive space is one that we believe all students should be engaged in, and we would happily consult for further articles, or participate in larger discussions. If, after reading this, anyone wishes to discuss other queer and trans* issues, or approach us to critically examine our own perspective, we hold Queers and Allies meetings every Thursday starting February 14th in room 205-206 of the Neiman Center. Everyone is welcome to participate.

Florian Palucci and Alex Barnawell

The Writer Responds

More Gender-Neutral Bathrooms Would Be a Positive Step

In my article, “The Bathroom Blind Spot,” I was not only addressing the trans community at SAIC, but was also addressing the lesbian, bi, gay, heterosexual, male, female, transgender, queer and non-transgender population in general. I would like to point out that my article spoke about the inaccessibility of current unisex bathrooms. It was a call for more accessible unisex bathrooms, and multi-person formations of unisex bathrooms, that would try and get identities recognized and respected by their peers, instructors and the school administration. I feel that the issue of gendered and non-gendered bathrooms concerns each of these communities, and all of the individu-

als within them, especially because each person has their own gender identity. For example, in Shelia L. Cavanaugh’s book “Queering Bathrooms: Gender, Sexuality, and the Hygienic Imagination,” which is based on 100 interviews with LGBT and intersex individuals in major North American cities, a lesbian woman (who identified herself as looking “Butch”) was screamed at by a girl in a woman’s restroom who looked at her and believed she was a man.

I took this into account when creating my argument. Much of the prejudice that exists against individuals who stray from hetronormativity or set gender identities is based around the normativity of the

categories male, and female. Normativity is enforced institutionally at the most basic level by distinctions such as male and female bathrooms.

My argument was not borne out of a confusion of terms. I understand the difference between gender identity and sexual identity. Never did I say that this was a finished battle; that discrimination of any kind had ended in the world, or that we live in a post-gender or post-racial society. Those would easily be the most dangerous, facile, and erroneous judgments one could make.

The last thing I would want is to misinform or disrupt the results of trans students working to get conditions changed as it

was stated that I did in the letter. I was not trying to state my argument as if it were the opinion of the trans-community, but I do stand by my belief that creating more multi-person and single person unisex bathrooms may be beneficial for all members of our school and others. It could work towards making individuals of different gender identities more comfortable around each other, and take a step towards reducing instances of prejudice or violence with increased foot traffic in a setting that is otherwise sex-segregated or single-person.

Alexander M. Wolff

NEWS

N
Chicago Expo Art Week Announced

Expo Chicago announced last month that it would expand its programming this year into a full “Expo Art Week,” with an expected roster of “museum and gallery exhibitions, music, dance and theater performances, public art projects and dining experiences.” The events will take place September 16 to September 22, but the centerpiece will still be the Expo Art Fair to be held that same weekend. No specific programming has been announced yet.

E
Cooper Union Continues Effort to Start Charging Students Tution

Early applicants to New York City’s tuition-free Cooper Union School of Art were turned away last month as the administration continues to look for ways to change their unique financial model. President Jamshed Bharucha informed faculty that the applicants to the art school would not be considered for early admission at that moment, while those applying to the schools of engineering and architecture were. The student-led group Cooper Union Student Action to Save our Schools continues to resist any changes to the school’s policy of fully funded tuition for every student, in place since 1859.

H U
George W. Bush Paints in His Spare Time, Media Goes Nuts

Every news media outlet in the country devoted extraordinary coverage to the leaked pictures of paintings by former president George W. Bush. Jerry Saltz and a series of other critics weighed in on the paintings, particularly two self-portraits of Bush in the shower. “Paint, George, paint. Paint more. Please,” wrote Saltz. “If you exhibit it, I’ll write about it. The Whitney Museum of American Art should get on the stick and offer this American a small show.”

W
Jesse Jackson Jr. and Sandi Jackson Spent Campaign Funds on Celebrity Memorabilia

The former Illinois congressman and his wife, former Chicago alderwoman, pled guilty to charges of misusing campaign funds. Jackson and his wife allegedly took \$750,000 from his campaign fund to buy items such as a \$43,350 gold-plated men’s Rolex, nine pieces of Michael Jackson memorabilia for \$17,100, a \$4,000 guitar that once belonged to Jackson and Eddie Van Halen, fur capes and parkas and a football signed by U.S.presidents.

S
Former Director of NYC’s El Museo del Barrio Sues Insitution

Margarita Aguilar left El Museo early this year, amidst financial turmoil and layoffs. She has now sued the museum for employment discrimination based on gender and a hostile work environment. The decision to hire star curator Chus Martínez, who arrives from Documenta 13, has also prompted questions on just how connected to the community the museum will remain.

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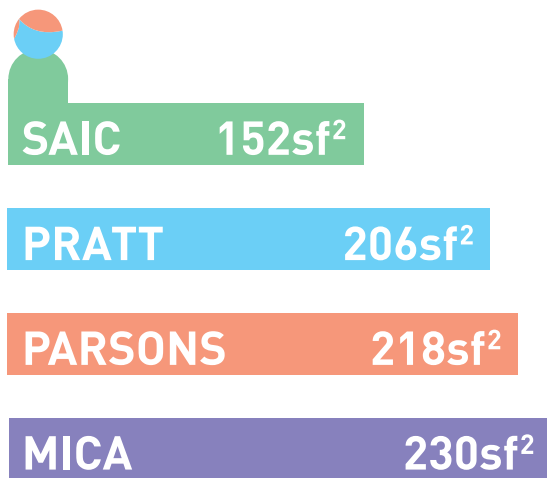
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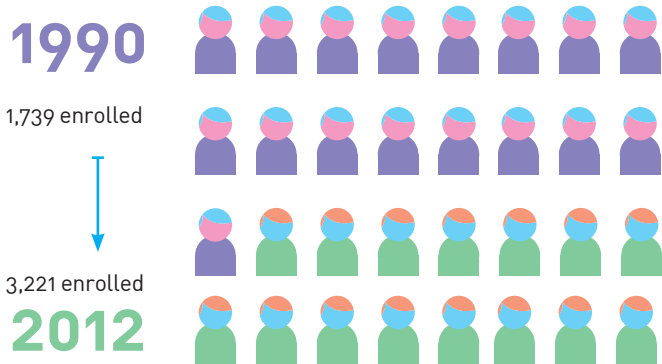
SCHOOL NEWS



The Future of Fitness at SAIC



SAIC’s net square footage per student as it relates to other urban arts universities.



SAIC’s Student Enrollment Growth, 1990-2012

1990

369,920 gf²
191,849 nf²

2012

844,358 gf²
490,499 nf²

2030

1,489,969 gf²
893,803 nf²

SAIC’s gf versus net campus square footage (not including residential) past, present and (planned) future.

BY LINDSEY AUTEN

As late winter sweeps over Chicago, students scurry from their toasty beds to the bus, to class, to work, to the Neiman Center, and quickly back. While the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services recommends that young adults get at least sixty minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity almost every day of the week, the chilly jaunt to and from school is hardly enough exercise to stimulate the creative spirit and foster students’ well being. Indoor exercise space and affordable fitness options are noticeably lacking at SAIC during these dreary months, adding to the perpetual concern for student’s physical and, consequently, mental health.

Almost a quarter of SAIC students have reported symptoms of Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD), according to Dr. Joe Behen, Executive Director of Counseling, Health & Disability Services at SAIC — that’s about three times the national average for college students. To address this, the school is providing SAD light therapy boxes in the resource room of the Wellness Center.

Behen knows that exercise can help with SAD symptoms and reduce stress and symptoms of anxiety and depression, but getting to the gym isn’t always feasible at SAIC. The frequented 162 North State Street Residency exercise facility — open and free only for students in residents halls — is often packed from about 9 a.m. until midnight. LA Fitness, the only full-size gym in the Loop offering SAIC students discounts, is a whopping \$50 a month plus fees.

Meanwhile, SAIC keeps expanding, in real estate and in numbers. The MacLean Center, Jones Hall and the 162 North State residences, 116 South Michigan, and Sullivan buildings are all relatively recent additions to the school’s campus. Enrollment has also increased from 1,739 in 1990 to about 3,221 today, according to Instructional Resources and Facilities Management statistics.

A dialogue about more accommodating spaces has emerged in the form of SAIC’s Campus Master Plan. An ambition of President Walter Massey when he arrived in the fall of 2010, the Master Plan consists of five phases. The first two were complete in 2012 — they were planning phases that involved hours of meetings and consultations with designers, students, faculty and staff about the future hopes and needs of the expanding SAIC campus community. Now, phase three is underway, but no plans, conclusions or budgetary projections are yet in place.

The Neiman Center (not a part of the Campus Master Plan) had always been a desire and ambition for the school, according to Tom Buechele, Vice President of Facilities and Operations at SAIC. He and Patrick Spence, Assistant Dean of Student Affairs, know that better exercise facilities and mental health are and have been a high priority, especially with a growing student body.

But a fitness center is different from, say, the Neiman Center — which wasn’t part of the Master Plan but provided students with a dining hall and social space. SAIC is in a specific niche of the collegiate market, Buechele explained, one without sports generating revenue or providing scholarships. What’s happening in higher education, as a whole, in the last ten years, is something he calls a “nuclear arms race” — schools nationwide are providing ridiculous amenities to students, especially in the fitness center category, so students and their families dish out the higher tuition dollars because of the shiny facilities. But SAIC is an art school, a type of institution that doesn’t typically draw students in with their fitness facilities.

And, just as the country is trying to grasp its financial situation, so is higher education. SAIC wants to be realistic about its expenses, and economic factors are a large part of the Master Plan. If a fitness facility were to be in the works, it would take a long time to address concerns about every student and parent dollar.

Along with SAD light therapy boxes in the Wellness Center, the SAIC administration continues to do what it can to accommodate exercise and promote mental health. With the renovation of the 13th and 14th floors in the MacLean Center — which ironically used to be a health club — a new “movement room” is being built adjacent to the student lounges. Over the course of this term, according to Spence, the facility will be open to student groups and classes. “Is it going to hold fifty people? No,” said Spence, “but it can accommodate a small yoga class or tai chi class. It’s designed for this kind of activity.”

Every term, Spence attempts to obtain more discounts from workout facilities in the Loop. He used to be able to get students a discount of \$25 a month (plus a small initiation fee) from Bally Total Fitness. Bally, however, was bought out by LA Fitness, where the monthly price for students has doubled. Some students sign up for it, but a majority of the student body can’t afford the additional monthly dent in their budget.

Looking beyond this year, it will take time and a large

amount of student interest and input to incorporate a fitness space into the Master Plan, which Buechele said is a seven to twelve year endeavor. “If we could just wave our magic wand, of course we would want a fitness center, if there was no budgetary impact or any other impact,” said Spence. “Those just aren’t the choices we’re making right now.”

For now, students must use current facilities and join student groups that involve physical activity, like the Latin Dance Club and free yoga. Student Government recently funded a student group-operated soccer club, Good ‘Ol Futbol. The funds they receive allow them to lease out an indoor facility, travel to the site and play soccer for one or two hours.

Behen insists students should express their interests and concerns to student government. “We need students to speak up about this issue,” said Behen, “and make clear their collective interest in having SAIC support more opportunities for the community to engage in exercise.”

Seasonal Affective Disorder: Most Common Symptoms (from the American Psychiatric Association)

- Fatigue
- Lack of interest
- Social withdrawal
- Craving carbs/weight gain
- What you can do
 - Take long walks outside, weather permitting
 - Arrange your apartment or dorm so that you can bask in light from the nearest window
 - Light therapy, 30-90 minutes a day, best in the morning
 - Exercise regularly. Backonpointe.tumblr.com is a great resource for quick, indoor, smaller space workouts.

STUDENT PROFILE

Representation as the New Attachment

A Conversation with Assaf Evron

BY J. GIBRAN VILLALOBOS

The looking glass holds in its exact depths the ability to capture and release our vision. It is an object that has mesmerized authors, poets, physicists and artists. What the looking glass does is provide the semblance of what we think is reality, but in its reflection back to us, the image is both slightly distorted and immensely familiar. Assaf Evron, an MFA student at SAIC, looks to bring these ideas into focus. As a photographer, he has been looking through lenses for years. His recent sculptural work speaks to how irrelevant exactitude becomes especially when language and image are in a perpetual state of translation.

I met with Evron in his very well put together studio. The space was arranged like a small gallery with sparsely laid out objects on pedestals, three wall pieces and a study desk. The monochromatic exteriors of the objects were all suited to exist in the space. Ranging from faux granite stone to speckled flooring, their arrangement welcomed conversations about what they represented in relation to their position. At the room's center a futuristic, polished gray, oddly shaped object rested on a pedestal. The object was too large for the platform and its sanded edges and smooth surface melted over the sides and beckoned the viewer to inspect beneath. Any view of the studio was interrupted by an artificial rainbow floating in the center of the room — an acrylic sheet suspended midair by a light stand. The translucent edges of the acrylic disappeared from sight, and in the center a small rainbow affixed itself to whatever one tried to see on the other side. Three arcs, blue, red, and yellow, would hazily disappear into the background if not seen in focus.

I sat down with Evron to discuss his recent work and his thoughts on language and images.



There is a whole world of meaning attached to things, but at the same time, those things are not part of it

GV: I've been looking at your work and I'm captivated by the representation of color. Your piece "sRGB 1996" is a shape that takes its origin in how computers read color, which you then construct as a physical object. Can you talk about the construction of your work?

AE: That's a good way to start, with representation. The object and its construction are a mathematical formula, but in order to make sense of such an idea we make a visualization. This is one of many. It is a color space, a visual illustration that creates an object. For me, this is fascinating because the shape of the object is contingent on the mathematical formula that created it, which is then also contingent on the medium and the limits of the actual formula. I wanted to bring it back to the world as an actual object. So I took the 3D model, or representation of color space, and sliced it into pieces, I drew it by hand and assembled them as a topography, in order to almost solidify it like rock. I then covered it in epoxy paste and sanded it down. A couple of things that happened in the process: in a way it contradicted its mathematical formula or the functionality of the color space; it's based on loss of information, and also where digital production and handmade production meet. There is an interesting transformation that happens; it's more of a transformation rather than a translation.

GV: The edges of "sRGB 1996" and other pieces seem to really capture the limits of translation.

AE: Representation and symbolic form are exciting. They are a visual document, or visual appearance. There is a whole world of meaning attached to things, but at the same time, those things are not part of it. Somehow these objects direct us back to how as humans we make meaning into things. Translation is something different. I like Walter Benjamin's take on translations and his thoughts on language. For Benjamin, translation is expanding the gamut of meaning that something can hold. Think of bread, for example. When you say "bread" as an American, the French say "*pain*." I think "*lechem*" in Hebrew. We all point to the same thing, but each one of us imagines it slightly differently. Somehow the meaning changes, it expands. It's how I think of translation. It makes meaning expand.

GV: Since we're on the topic of language and meaning, let's focus on this stone object. I've thought about art and its capability to use language in different ways. What examples do you see where the language of art is transformative?

AE: Now we're in the world of ideas. We see how images move across history in a non-linear way. That's why this object moves in various layers of meaning, art and image making. It can be popular culture like a sci-fi model, it can be common computer-generated architecture; it could be resonating with the way it deals with melancholia. Think of Albrecht Dürer's illustration "Melancholia" and the polygon of rationality

that sits in the background, its a reference point. These are the ways that the image moves through the world.

GV: This physical representation doesn't limit itself to a concrete idea, it doesn't tell you, "I'm color;" it can only say, "This is what color looks like."

AE: If you could say it's about color, or here is red, or green, that's translation. For me it is to create open images that can be legible or read in various ways and by doing that it's on one hand very demanding for the viewer, but also very enabling. In one end you can read it as not giving enough information for the viewer, but on the other hand you give them liberty.

I like leaving a space for the viewer where objects have an origin, but they transcend toward ground for new possible meaning. Things are always saturated with invisible meanings, and on the other hand there's the way the viewer meets the object. It's sort of like a riddle, but riddle is also not a good word, maybe mystery. Riddle has an answer, but mystery is unknown and keeps intriguing. So you could say I'm trying to find the balance between both complexities.

GV: So you're looking for unexpected surprises?

AE: Not so much that, but in simple things I want to take objects out of their obviousness. Simple things are simple things, but sometimes it's when you really look at them is when interesting things come up.

TELEVISION

The Value of “Girls”

Two F Writers Argue For and Against the Popular HBO Show

Lena Dunham is the 26-year-old creator, star, writer, and occasional director of the HBO series “Girls.” The half-hour comedy follows four twenty-somethings — Hannah (Dunham), Marnie (Allison Williams), Jessa (Jemima Kirke) and Shoshanna (Zosia Mamet) — in Brooklyn, navigating the ins and outs of Dunham’s vision of early adult life. Earlier this year the show received two Golden Globes awards and a third season will soon go into production.

Currently in its second season, the show has its fair share

of naysayers and cheerleaders — nearly every pop culture website devotes extensive coverage to every episode, dissecting its every character, storyline and costume decisions (have you heard of shorteralls?) every week. Complete with both awkward and passionate sex scenes, nudity and drugs, “Girls” has brought forth questions of race, class, privilege and feminism like no other show in recent years.

To discuss, two F writers on opposite sides of the spectrum discuss the value, or lack thereof, of the popular TV series.

Viewer, Be Pacified

BY MARGOT BRODY

Even if you’ve never watched this much-hyped HBO show, there’s still a good possibility that you’ve been exposed to the ongoing debates in the liberal media concerning its representation of twenty-something women, or lack thereof. Now on its second season, the show is as celebrated as ever, but much of the negative criticism has, unfortunately, seemed to subside.

Maybe this is, in part, a result of Dunham’s public apology for unintentionally creating what some critics have called a “whitewashed”

version of New York (as if no one at HBO brought up the fact that the main characters were all straight white women). And even though she promised to fix the unintentional-but-kind-of-the-point-of-the-show faux pas in the second season, I’m not inclined to let Dunham or HBO off the hook for their irresponsible stereotyping of an entire generation. While I commend Dunham for diving into Hollywood’s homogeneous pool of mostly male writers and directors, the show nonetheless propagates more harmful images than it breaks down.

Because the show pur-

ports to depict life more or less how it really is — at least to the point that it is credible in the eyes of so many viewers — the dangers of presenting retrograde images of women, gay men (well, gay man) and society in general become all the more real. Maybe “Girls” isn’t the only show on TV that lacks diversity or enforces stereotypes, but that doesn’t make the arguments any less valid, and it certainly shouldn’t let the show’s creators off the hook with an “I didn’t know any better” excuse.

Chock full of embarrassing moments, minor breakdowns, and awkward sex scenes — many featuring Lena Dunham’s slightly chubby naked body — the show, critics argue, thrives on refreshingly flawed characters that are realistic and relatable rather than hyper-glamorized or emotionally constrained one way or another. Delusional yet disillusioned, self-satisfied yet unsure of themselves, the girls are said to embody the legitimately conflicted and often hypocritical position of a particular demographic of young women today.

Aside from proliferating the entertainment industry standard of using white characters to sell a storyline as universally valid, Dunham’s female characters fit comfortably into a pre-digested mold that doesn’t seem to make anyone too uncomfortable. These girls don’t challenge the viewer, they pacify her.

Think about the annoying, but still kind of cute, Hannah. She likes sex with men, but she has low “performance” expectations. She struggles to support herself, but she isn’t a “drain” on society. She’s college educated, but she’s not intellectually intimidating. She’s politically “progressive,” but she’s too self-involved to care that much about anyone else. And Hannah is probably the least stereotypical character of them all.

Jessa is the mouthy, sexually-experienced, but disinterested one who uses and abuses men. Shoshanna is the quintessential stock image of a materialistic Jewish American Princess. While she is arguably more likable than most derogatory depictions of wealthy young Jewish girls on TV, her most recognizable character traits are utterly predictable. And Marnie is the judgemental, uptight WASP who is really just itching to be manhandled by this rich artist guy (a ridiculously

overdone artist stereotype himself) who can’t seem to stop sexually harassing her. In the second season, when he seductively leads her out of her place of employment in the middle of her shift, she — feigning reluctance — asks where they are going. He replies, “You are going to have sex with me,” and they proceed to his apartment where he woos her into bed with his artistic brilliance.

In the second season, Hannah’s now gay ex-boyfriend — who conveniently only has straight friends — moves in with her and proceeds to have sex with Marnie. His character is the all-too-obvious white, upper middle class, effeminate, shit-talking, cocaine-loving, sugar daddy-having gay stereotype. His character merely supports the other characters, which is sadly quite common with gay characters on TV. This isn’t diversity, but tokenism at its best. There is nothing boundary-pushing about that.

I would argue that this is precisely why “Girls” appeals to such a broad audience. It requires little emotional or mental effort to understand the characters. Their struggles, while often funny, are completely non-threatening and utterly inconsequential. Hannah and her petty posse of dumb-dumbs reinforce the good ol’ fashioned fantasy that pretty young women are as adorably ditz as they were fifty years ago. (No wonder right wing media venues could care less about the debates surrounding the show.) Every hilarious hare-brained scheme to get a small taste of validation — like snorting a bunch of cocaine and writing about it for a blog — is like watching the modern equivalent of “I Love Lucy.”

The majority of twenty-something women I know are nowhere near as sheltered, naive or narcissistic as the girls of “Girls.” Masquerading as something not so far removed from real life, the show enforces dangerous stereotypes about women and exclusionary thinking regarding which categories of people can connect with a broad audience. If the characters were as challenging as has been claimed, it would take much more time and patience to allow them into our homes. The fact that critics are calling the show progressive and even “groundbreaking” is the only thing that’s surprising about “Girls.”



TELEVISION

Finding Comfort in Loserdom

BY ANJULIE RAO

There are very few cases in which I would ever categorize television as being intelligent or relatable. After taking a long hiatus from the boobtube, I have reemerged with some serious skepticism about the quality of television programming. Never before did I think that I would ever be able to relate to any of the chiseled-jawed-bright eyed-soft-haired heads I see bobbing around the screen.

Never before, that is, until I watched “Girls.”

The show sounds vapid. And complicated. But that is not what this is about — this is about me.

After spending three years out of school, disenfranchised by art and engaged in the nonprofit sector in a city I detested, I did the one thing any aspiring arts professional would do — I moved to Brooklyn to “make it” in the art world.

My experience was anything but successful; every day was a kick in the ass. I took on a barely-paying gig with a pop-up gallery, watched my housing situation dissolve before my eyes and ended up sitting in parks for two weeks, sleeping on couches, until I found myself living in some-one’s hidey hole in Bushwick.

I remember the day I called home. I had lied to my parents much of the time I was there: Everything is great, I love this place, I’m starting to feel at home. I remember because I traveled to the Brooklyn Bridge to make the call; if it went poorly, I could have just thrown myself off and saved the \$2.25 subway fare.

Fortunately, it did not come to that. My father seemed happy — a sensation which did not translate to me as I was still, at that moment, operating under the belief that anything my father thought was “good” was actually inherently capitalist, short-sighted and disgustingly pragmatic.

Regardless, I left Brooklyn, angry, mostly with myself.

To this day, I still feel chills of failure. It is one of those memories I look back on and shudder at my inability to create a functional world for myself in New York City. I feel shameful for running away, for not sticking it out longer and for letting the city chew me up and spit me out.

However, the story behind “Girls” offers me some solace in my sentiments. Hannah’s unwavering self-critique mimics my own; in one case, during a blowout fight, with Marnie, she says to her, “You can’t say a single mean thing to me ... every mean thing you could say to me I’ve already said to myself in the last half hour.”

And that’s what this is about.

This summer, culture slut James Franco wrote a short editorial about “Girls.” His writing, which can (at best) be described as a stream-of-consciousness meandering through the wilderness of language, offers some critique. He said: “Hannah can be as big a loser as Lena wants because, in the end, Lena is anything but a loser: she is a writer-director-actor spearheading a show on HBO. No matter how many stupid things Hannah says to strangers, how embarrassing her sex scenes are, how awkward she is with adults ... Lena will always shine through as the admirable creative force behind everything on the television screen.”

What he says is true to some extent; Dunham is in no way a “loser.” But what he fails to realize is that real-life successes do not always translate into real-life self-esteem. Lena Dunham is still overweight, small-breasted, and is hardly the picturesque celebrity presence we are all so used to. Being human means recognizing your own loserdom, regardless of whether it exists only in your head.

That is why this is about one’s ability to locate that place inside him or herself that causes the most pain — the source, the well, that delivers buckets of suffering. It is about opening yourself up, to unzip your very flesh and expose your most vulnerable parts to a critical, ravenous public. After all, to be a young, creative person in a world of economic precariousness is akin to wandering, bleeding, through a forest full of bears.

Finally, this is also about the idea that television can validate us — our vulnerabilities — when written with the same honesty that Dunham writes with in “Girls.” Young people of my generation who feel disenfranchised by social or professional gaps can take heart in Hannah’s self-loathing. She punishes herself

frequently through pursuing mediocre romances, by lying to her parents about being financially stable, and she finds respite only in small encounters with the women in her life.

“Girls” is an introspective meditation on the struggle of young people through a third-person lens. After finishing the first season, I feel no

more hopeful about my own life than I did before. But that is the beauty of it; in the story of Hannah there is no satisfactory ending with resolute lessons learned. There are only more moments of despair, self-flagellation and fear. Or, fleeting moments of joy that result from small successes. And that is my story, as I am certain it is the story of others.



“Girls” drinking game

TAKE A DRINK WHEN:

- ☐ Shoshanna makes a pop culture reference
- ☐ Adam is working out
- ☐ Marnie is being insufferable
- ☐ Hannah takes her clothes off
- ☐ Jessa is wearing all or part of an animal

- ☐ Ray is being unreasonably insulting
- ☐ Hannah is emotionally eating
- ☐ Jessa says something inappropriate about / around children
- ☐ Someone is having an unfulfilling sexual experience
- ☐ Someone is having a fulfilling sexual experience

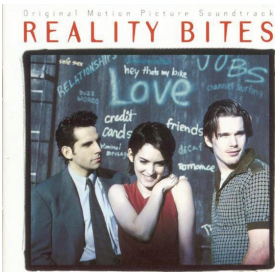
AUDIOPHILES

UNLIKELY HITS

BY PATRICK KLACZA

It makes sense when certain pop songs rise to the top of the charts. A steady beat, catchy melody and sexy singer is usually all it takes. Sometimes one or more of these qualities are conspicuously absent from a song and it still hits #1 (see: Rihanna’s “Diamonds”). The radio-listening public is notoriously bad at recognizing talent and innovation in music, but sometimes an odd song gets through, one normally unfit for radio. These are the unlikely hits, and I’ve rounded up a bunch the best of them for this playlist.

Criteria: To qualify for inclusion, songs had to appear on the Billboard Hot 100 chart.



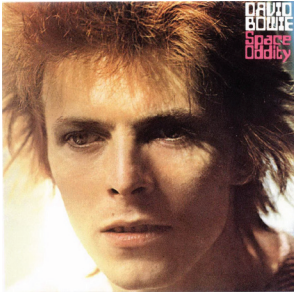
Lisa Loeb & Nine Stories
“Stay (I Missed You)”
Reality Bites:
Original Motion Picture
Soundtrack
(1994)

“Stay” landed on the airwaves in the summer of ‘94 via a series of lucky breaks. At the time, Loeb was living in New York and playing shows around town. She passed her demo to actor Ethan Hawke, who passed it along to “Reality Bites” director Ben Stiller. A song this infectious — how could Stiller not include it on the soundtrack? Loeb became the first person to release a #1 hit without a record contract, and lo, a new generation learned to love a girl in glasses.



Donna Summer
“I Feel Love”
I Remember Yesterday
(1977)

The only governing principle in this smash from disco’s heyday is the persistent whap of the bass. Giorgio Moroder —one of electronica’s first geniuses — composed “I Feel Love” entirely on the synthesizer. The music itself is highly kinetic and suited to the dance floor. My girl Donna’s got the sultriest voice, and she knows just when to cut out and let the groove take over. That something so forward-thinking reached #6 is miraculous.



David Bowie
“Space Oddity”
David Bowie
(1969)

In 1969, the man who would become Ziggy Stardust was still unknown on this side of the pond. He quietly released “Space Oddity,” a folksy number about the doomed fictional astronaut Major Tom. Some seriously nerdy lyrics, people. Nevertheless, it became a #1 hit in Britain, partly because it’s wonderful, and partly because the Brits had gone space-crazy. In 1973 it was re-released in the United States, and Major Tom took off once again.



The Cranberries
“Dreams”
Everybody Else Is Doing It,
So Why Can’t We? (1993)

On paper, The Cranberries were a hard sell. Just another unknown rock band with a singer in her twenties, one with this wild Irish voice reminiscent of the Cocteau Twins’ Elizabeth Fraser. What to do with a band like this? Why, cut them a record deal, of course! This was the grunge era, and executives threw money at any band who could be the next Nirvana. The Cranberries never got that huge, but they came close, selling fifteen million albums in the US. “Dreams” is their definitive statement.



Michael Jackson
“Human Nature”
Thriller
(1982)

In 1982, Jackson sent all seven singles from Thriller to the top ten, so I know that calling “Human Nature” an unlikely hit is crazy. If he had recorded himself chewing it would’ve gone platinum. Fortunately for us, he didn’t, and instead we got this, a sensitive ballad in the middle of what’s essentially a funk record. MJ veers dangerously close to new age cheese, but he holds back and delivers an enduring, wrenching performance. It was the most amorphous thing on the radio that year and the only way to follow the earth-shattering “Billie Jean.”



Fleetwood Mac
“Tusk”
Tusk
(1979)

Like post-Thriller MJ, Fleetwood Mac had that golden touch. They were coasting on the goodwill of “Rumours” (1977) and spending all of Warner Bros.’ money on a follow-up. The first single and title track “Tusk” features the USC marching band, some creepy chanting, and barking dogs. It’s one mess of a tune, and that it charted at all just goes to show how popular Fleetwood Mac were in 1979. The moral of the story: don’t pursue every fleeting idea at once. “Sara,” Tusk’s second single, is more focused and lasting.



Usher
“Climax”
Looking 4 Myself
(2012)

Finally we can forgive Usher for years of unacceptable output. “OMG” and “DJ Got Us Fallin’ in Love” — these were not good songs. He’s guilty of jumping on every lame trend in pop music, especially the trend toward club-friendly singles. “Climax,” though, is a different beast altogether. “It”-producer Diplo offers the fragile beat over which Usher wails like he hasn’t since “Burn.” Can’t dance to it, but it still hit #17, and it was a high point for radio in 2012.



Kate Bush
“Running Up That Hill”
Hounds of Love
(1985)

Bush never quite broke in the US like she did in England, but not for lack of trying. “Running Up That Hill” is her highest-charting single and a total home run — a gauzy, galloping affair that influenced pretty much everyone, from Bat for Lashes to Fever Ray. Chromatics covered it admirably in 2007, but the original from ‘85 still shines brightest. I’m hard-pressed to find another song so canonized by indie rock’s elite and simultaneously forgotten by American deejays.



Mazzy Star
“Fade Into You”
So Tonight That I Might See
(1994)

“Fade Into You” is beautiful, and almost unfairly so. Amidst waltzing, sliding guitars, Hope Sandoval, Mazzy Star’s man-slaying chanteuse, sings languorously and effortlessly, as if under the influence of mescal. Hard to believe radio audiences recognized such understated brilliance, but they did, and in 1994 the song peaked at #44.



The Chipmunks
“The Chipmunk Song (Christmas Don’t Be Late)”
(1958)

A #1 hit in 1958. No further comment.

NEWS

Exiled from Timbuktu

Music in Mali after Rebellion



BY ALYSSA MOXLEY

In 2011, despite security warnings that designated the area a red zone, I visited the Festival in the Desert, an annual festival of Malian music held in the northern Sahara, outside the city of Timbuktu. At that time travel warnings suggested that the area was plagued by low security and tourists were likely to be kidnapped. The festival took place without any incidents involving international or local visitors. Musicians travelled from across the country and the world, cultivating a sense of peace, openness, and downright funky blues in the middle of the desert.

In 2013, the festival was cancelled for the first time in twelve years, as the “security issues” that have increasingly caused concern over the years launched into a full-blown civil war. Since March of last year, the northern half of the country has been under the control of a fundamentalist organization, the Ansar ud-Din, which has thrown the region into violent conflict and banned all music.

In Mali, a country of diverse ethnic groups and powerful musical traditions, music is more than entertainment. Music plays an important role as a potential source for mediation and a site of political comment and contestation. Although there are many festivals in the country that celebrate the diversity of Mali’s musical traditions, the Festival in the Desert was set up by Tuaregs, founded and organized by the musical group Tinariwen and their manager Manny Ansar to celebrate the peace that followed the conflicts and rebellions of the 1990s.

The complicated political scenario in northern Mali is worth understanding; many media sources gloss over the issues as due to either Tuareg rebel insurgents fighting for an independent state of Azawad (the Saharan region of Mali) or invading Islamists. The arid desert region in the north that makes up roughly 50% of the country’s landmass has been subject to political troubles since post-colonial demarcation. The lines drawn in 1960 divided the governments that officially rule over the Kel Tamashek (Tamashek speaking people) and the nomads of the Sahara, popularly known as the Tuareg. This issue has been at the root of several rebellions in Mali as the Tuaregs have struggled to maintain

their language and culture in this developing multi-ethnic nation.

The proponents for an independent northern Mali have many sub-factions, and most are not religious. This fracturing has contributed to the failures of the independence movement in the past. The relative success of the rebellion this time is in part due to an influx of arms made available from the recent change of government in Libya, the continuing buildup of tension amongst Tuareg rebel groups and the central government in Bamako, and the alliance of AQIM (Al Qaeda of the Islamic Maghreb) facilitated by Iyad Ag Ghali, the former leader of the Mouvement Populaire de l’Azawad.

Since the end of January 2012, the northern section of the country has been controlled by a combination of Tuareg secessionists, The National Movement for the

ert blues style includes electric guitar and amplified calabash. Local musicians have had their instruments doused in petrol and burned. The Timbuktu radio station was raided and its collection of local cassette recordings were destroyed. The Ansar Ud-dine even confiscated the SIM cards out of mobile phones that played musical ringtones.

The Festival in the Desert specifically commemorates the “Flamme de la Paix,” an accord established in 1996 with the burning of 3,000 small firearms belonging to both Tuareg rebels and Malian forces. A monument of melted guns still stood in a quiet garden when I visited in 2011. The Festival had provided income, infrastructure and developed community for over a decade.

Although the festival was set up by Tuaregs, the dunes became a cosmopolitan hub for those three days as diverse groups

Khaira Arby are all stunningly hypnotic Kel Tamasheq performers. There were also players and innovators of different traditions — including ngoni player Bassekou Kouyate, hip hop artist Amkoullé and the diva Oumou Sangaré.

Since the outright ban of all music last year, musicians from the Gao/Timbuktu region have fled to neighboring Mauritania, Niger, Burkina Faso, or to southern Mali, continuing to pursue their livelihood, traditions, and artistry.

Festival in the Desert founder Manny Ansar communicated with many musicians who had fled to Bamako with their families. Instead of cancelling the festival, he planned a “Festival in Exile.” He organized two caravans, one from Algeria, and one from Bamako to travel over two weeks to the site. He planned to continue Timbuktu’s tradition of peaceful celebration in Oursi, a small village outside Ougadougou in Burkina Faso, with a similar terrain and mix of peoples. Musicians in the caravans would perform along the way, spreading the message of peace and reaching out to communities.

The MNLA joined the French army in January of 2013, fighting to oust the fundamentalist AQIM and the Ansar ud-Din occupiers; but the north is still fraught with violence and travel through Algeria and Bamako is far too dangerous. The Festival in Exile has been postponed until after the rainy season, next September. Musicians are even being warned to delay their performances in Bamako due to the politically charged atmosphere.

Despite diminishing live performances, musicians within Mali continue to exert their influence. Amkoullé, the Bambara hip hop artist who has performed several times at the festival, set up the foundation Plus Jamais Ça (Never Ever Again) in Bamako to promote dialogue among ethnic groups. His song “SOS” — about men with guns, displaced women, and the security issues of concern to the people in the north — was released after the occupation of the north of Mali, before the coup. Musicians from diverse backgrounds collaborated to produce “Voices for Mali,” incorporating different styles and comments on the political situation, reinforcing music’s potency to discourage cruelty, hate, divisiveness, and isolation and as a mode of criticizing the status quo and celebrating life.

Local musicians have had their instruments doused in petrol and burned. The Timbuktu radio station was raided and its collection of local cassette recordings were destroyed.

Liberation of Azawad (MNLA), AQIM, and Ansar Ud-Dine (Defenders of the Faith), led by the now extremely fundamentalist Iyad Ag Ghali.

The general lack of security in the region led to a lawlessness troubling for its otherwise peaceful inhabitants. Terrorist groups and international drug traffickers were able to travel unimpeded, while the government offered little protection for local villages. In March 2012, the central government in Bamako was taken down in a coup by its own military in reaction to the poor management of the northern situation.

On March 30, 2012, Ansar ud-Din instituted Shariah law over the entire north of Mali. Although Timbuktu is an ancient center of Islamic learning, this type of fundamentalism is foreign to the culture in this area. Referring to particular Muslim medieval theologians who condemned all music that could possibly incite lustful thinking, all “Western” music was immediately banned. “Western” in this context includes any electric instruments and tunes with a regular rhythm. The Timbuktu des-

within Mali came together. The Tuareg travelled in caravans of camels to the festival from villages deep in the desert. Others came by jeep. Some crossed the river Niger at the ferry of Mopti in their journey from the south. Locals from the city of Timbuktu, drove, walked or took mopeds across the sands to the festival site. Songhai, Peul, Fula, Dogon, and Bambara came as well as visitors from around the globe. Established musicians from within Mali and elsewhere performed, met and jammed in impromptu groups.

During the day I had endless offers of tea and spent long hours in a tent shielding out the sun listening to life stories and jams. One day I spent three hours learning to play a thumb-piano (bidiga) made of a giant tomato tin and listening to the maker speak of singing at weddings with Ali Farka Touré. The concerts started after sunset and continued long into the night. Tuaregs especially enjoy dancing very slowly and elegantly to the traditional Takamba rhythm, swaying long limbed in flowing robes. Super Koumeissa, Terakaft, Tinariwen and

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FIBER AND MATERIAL STUDIES *Summer 2013 Courses*

CONTEMPORARY MATERIAL CULTURE

Jenni Sorkin

FIBER 3038 3W1 : May 28 - June 14 / M-F 9-4:30pm

This writing intensive studio-based course is organized around themes that deal with contemporary issues pertinent to materiality, making, and fiber-based practices. Each class session consists of a combination of journaling meant to spawn ideas, discussion and critical engagement with assigned texts, studio-based group critiques, field trips, as well as studio time to make work. Some topics we consider include: a variety of textile histories, DIY craftivism, skill vs. de-skill, process, immersive spaces, installation and the use of scale, theories of intangibility, materiality, and labor, and as well, professionalization in the field.

Sorkin is Assistant Professor of Critical Theory, Media, and Design at the University of Houston. She is currently completing her book, *Live Form: Craft as Participation*, which examines the confluence of gender, artistic labor, and craft pedagogy from 1950 to 1975. She has written numerous in-depth catalog essays on feminist art and material culture topics, and her writing has appeared in several publications.

PRINTED FABRIC WORKSHOP

Aay Preston-Myint

FIBER 2013 6W1 : May 28 - June 5 / M-Th 9-4:30pm, F 9-12:30pm

Beginning, intermediate, and advanced levels are given technical guidance in the use of dyes and pigments on fabrics. Both hand-painting and -printing processes are explored. The technical vocabulary may include: silkscreen, photographic techniques, stencil and stamp printing, and direct painting. Intermediate and advanced students are introduced to a conceptual focus and a technical vocabulary and are encouraged to develop individual direction. Exploration of ideas will be augmented through research, discussions, group and individual critiques, slide presentations, and field trips.

Preston-Myint is an artist and community organizer working across different media and platforms. His projects include *Monsters and Dust*, an online journal of arts and culture, *Chances Dances/Critical Fierceness*, a dance party/microgrant program for Queer artists in Chicago, and *No Coast*, a multi-use studio, art space and consignment store in the Pilsen neighborhood of Chicago.

HOT PROJECTS: GLASS PRODUCTION WORKSHOP

Ignite Glass Studios and Christine Tarkowski

FIBER 3044 3W1 : May 28 - June 14 / M-F 9-4:30pm

In this course students will work with a team of master glass artists/faculty at the Ignite Glass Studios and SAIC faculty Christine Tarkowski to conceive of and produce their art works/design projects in a state of the art glass facility. Students will be introduced to the practice and principles of hot glass: hand blowing, mold blowing, hot casting, cold working but will primarily participate in collaborative production teams to produce their work. Production teams will be lead by the Ignite faculty and rely heavily on their mastery of the material. Territories of production, conceptual and discipline inquiry will be considered relative to students' individual directions. Hot Projects will meet off-campus at Ignite Glass Studios, 401 N. Armour Street, Chicago, 60642.

Tarkowski is a Chicago based artist. Her scope of production incorporates the making of permanent architectural structures, cast models, textile yardage, and temporary printed ephemera. Many of her recent works point toward the flotsam of western culture relative to systems of democracy, religion and capitalism.

DIGITAL JACQUARD WEAVING: ZEROES / ONES, ZEROES / ONES II

Christy Matson

FIBER 3017 FIBER 4017 3W2 : June 17 - July 5 / M-F 9-4:30pm

The computer driven Jacquard goes beyond the limitations of a floor loom by interfacing with a computer to allow for direct control of individual threads. This course explores the historical and conceptual interstices of digital technology and hand weaving through the use of this loom. Utilizing Photoshop and Jacquard weaving software, students realize projects that begin with digital source material and result in hand woven constructions. The strongly debated connection between the Jacquard loom's use of punched cards and the history of computers is central to the course, as is the contemporary use of the loom as a new media tool. Studio work blends work at the computer, weaving on the loom, reading, research and critical discussion. A personal laptop computer is strongly recommended for this course. (FIBER 4017 is a continuation of 3017)

Matson lives and works in California. She weaves cloth on both hand operated Jacquard looms and industrial Jacquard looms. She creates artworks and installations that balance the use of technological, immaterial data with physical tangible artifacts.

To register, visit saic.edu/academics/registrationandrecords or saic.edu/cs

News Fit to Broadcast

How Will Al Jazeera Adapt Its Content For a U.S. Audience?

BY LERIFAI

Al Jazeera, a news network that has been repeatedly accused by pundits of being the “voice of terrorism” and “propaganda for Muslim violence and terrorism,” recently acquired a share in the American television market. In early January, the Doha-based media company announced the purchase of Al Gore’s Current TV channel, to mixed reception. The channel that showed an unmatched commitment to the coverage of the Arab Spring protests will now be a presence in the U.S. mass media landscape, presenting an opportunity for coverage of often ignored topics as well as their signature coverage of the Global South, prompting questions of just how the company will accomplish these aims in the U.S..

In a statement, Al Jazeera Director General Ahmed bin Jassim Al Thani called the purchase of Current TV an “historic” achievement that will significantly expand Al Jazeera’s existing distribution footprint in the U.S., as well as increase their newsgathering and reporting efforts in America. According to Al Jazeera English, 40 percent of all online viewing comes from America and, as far as they are concerned, they are merely responding to the country’s need for a different news perspective. They claim that they will attempt to reach out to American viewers and fill a void by being the “voice of the voiceless.” But just hours after the \$500 million purchase, Time Warner cable dropped Current TV from its roster, citing dismal ratings.

While many see Al Jazeera’s U.S. presence as a step toward introducing a new perspective in the American media market, it has been speculated that they will mostly share stories with American news sources and borrow about 40 percent of its content from its sister channel, Al Jazeera English. This new focus on the United States will perhaps appeal to some of their new American audience, as polling illustrates that Americans care less about foreign policy than domestic policy. Unlike in other countries, international news networks in general, including CNN International and BBC World, have been unable to fare well in U.S. media markets.

Al Jazeera’s dedication to transparency, proudly engraved on the walls of its Doha office, and its aims to “bridge the gap between cultures,” have been found questionable. The network has avoided coverage of the wave of protests that have hit the Gulf region over the past two years, including those in al Qatif in Saudi Arabia and the popular uprising in Bahrain. Some who follow the channel closely are distrustful of the news network and see their purchase of Current TV as just another tool for the

Qatari government to push their agenda, evident in the channel’s audacious backing of the Muslim Brotherhood in Libya, Tunis and Egypt. The government’s strong support of the political organization has not been limited to positive media coverage of the Muslim Brotherhood’s policies — it was further enunciated when Qatar pledged to invest \$18 billion in Egypt’s economy after talks with the country’s newly elected Brotherhood president, Mohammed Morsi. Political analyst, Ghanem Nuseibeh has pointed to the bias by comparing the channel’s take on Egypt to their coverage of the protests in Bahrain. “Despite being banned in Egypt, Al Jazeera went to great lengths to provide non-stop live coverage of events,” Nuseibeh was quoted saying in a 2011 Reuters article. “It did not do that in Bahrain.”

Some who follow the channel closely are distrustful of the news network and see their purchase of Current TV as just another tool for the Qatari government to push their agenda

Amidst criticism, Al Gore defended the sale of Current TV in an interview with David Letterman, saying Al Jazeera is a “widely respected news-gathering organization.” Former American Ambassador to Qatar, Patrick N. Theros, called Time Warner’s decision to drop Current TV from its roster a “short sighted” one, in an opinion piece on The Daily Beast. Hillary Clinton came to the defense of Al Jazeera saying, “You may not agree with [Al Jazeera], but you feel like you’re getting real news around the clock instead of a million commercials and arguments between talking heads and the kind of stuff that we do on our news, which is not particularly informative to us, let alone foreigners.” US News, once known as one of the most conservative American news magazines added to this view that Al Jazeera could bring a new perspective and reinforce America’s core values of freedom of speech and expression.

Al Jazeera will probably try to counter the general American perception by concentrating on quality programming and recruiting commonly known American media names, as sister channel Al Jazeera English has done by hiring ABC’s Dave Marash and CNN’s Tony Harris. Whether the new channel succeeds or not remains to be seen but Al Jazeera’s experiment should be one in adding a new and different voice to the American news market. Al Jazeera America will, at the very least, broaden the discussion and add to the debate in the many issues that the United States has yet to publicly discuss.



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COMMENTARY

The Other ‘F’ Word

Identity and Injurious Language in Pop Culture

BY JOSHUA MICHAEL DEMAREE

Faggot. It is a word so relatively simple yet drenched in a vitriolic frenzy of anger, confusion, pride and pain. To demean its use is to humble its earnest power to cause pain, to repurpose the word is to reclaim its hatefulness, and to use it is to offend. Truthfully, there is no easy way to speak of or use the word “faggot.” Its shock-value obscures an understanding of it in favor of headlines.

For example, in early January, emerging rapper Azealia Banks tweeted: “Seriously, if you were not born and raised in NY.... DON’T CLAIM NY. YOU ARE NOT A NEW YORKER.” The tweet may or may not have been aimed at fellow rapper Angel Haze, whose latest single is titled “New York” despite the rapper living in Springfield, Virginia. Haze, claiming the tweet was intended for her, responded with a diss track and called Banks a “charcoal skinned bitch.” The 140-character-fueled feud that followed drew the typical attention of fans, the music press and the usual celebrity gossip mills.

Where the story begins to take an interesting turn is with the entrance of notorious gossipmonger Perez Hilton into the two rappers’ quarrel. Hilton’s antagonization of the situation is itself not surprising; his means of gathering gossip is often instigative. In this case, Hilton, siding with Haze, demeaned Banks’ hometown loyalty. Banks then responded to Hilton by tweeting: “@perezhilton lol what a messy faggot you are.”

Banks’ use of “faggot” drew the usual ire of LGBTQ advocates. GLAAD debased Banks for ignoring her queer-identified fans who would be offended by the word. National news outlets then picked up the story, speculating that Banks’ newly signed record label, Interscope, would drop the controversial rapper. (They didn’t.) Fellow musician Scissor Sister Jack Shears drew a comparison between Banks’ use of “faggot” and the mid-’80s controversy when late disco singer Donna Summer reportedly said HIV was a punishment from God and subsequently lost favor in the LGBTQ community for nearly a decade.

Amidst the hailstorm of backfire, and further complicating a convoluted dispute, Banks ventured a justification of her use of “faggot” by pointing out that she did not mean it to disparage Hilton’s homosexuality, but his femininity: “A faggot is not a homosexual male. A faggot is any male who acts like a female. There’s a BIG difference.” Banks’ attempt at reclaiming the word “faggot” was supported by a number of her fans.

The word’s original implication is mired in an unwritten history of slang language, but the common history was relayed in an early episode of “Louis,” created by comedian Louis C.K., who also uses “faggot” regularly in his standup. In the episode, a late night poker game comprised of middle-aged men becomes the unlikely forum for discussing contemporary issues of gay identity. Comedian Rick Crom, the only gay man in the group, instructs Louis that in the 15th century “faggot” meant a bundle of sticks used as fuel. When women accused of being witches were burned at the stake, faggots were laid in piles at her feet to fuel the flames of her demise. Crom points out that homosexuals were likewise burned alive but were so despised that they were not given the dignity of a stake but rather thrown in with the kindling. Some claim that it’s this practice that connected the word “faggot” from kindling to its modern epithetic use.

Flash forward several centuries; “faggot” or “fag” is used today as a pejorative term for gay men. The most common occurrence of the word today (outside of high school

locker rooms) is in the ongoing campaign of Fred Phelps, leader of the Westboro Baptist Church based in Topeka, Kansas. Phelps, the originator of the independent Baptist sect, began campaigning against homosexuality through the church in 1991 as a means to address public gay sex prevalent in a nearby park. Since then, Phelps has made his go-to slogan — “God Hates Fags” — world-known by picketing funerals and public events.

The perceived danger of utilizing controversial words is normally that hearing them desensitizes our initial shock-value to them. This is the customary reasoning behind implementing word restrictions on television and other mass mediums. In 1972, George Carlin did a stand-up routine on the “Seven Words You Can Never Say on Television.” Of Carlin’s seven chosen words — shit, piss, fuck, cunt, cocksucker, motherfucker, and tits — any of them can now regularly be heard on either late night cable or paid-subscription channels like HBO or Showtime.

Part of this argument is certainly true; becoming desensitized often stops us from questioning a hurtful word’s original implication. This is the point Crom argued to Louis: his frequent use of “faggot,” though often hilariously playing against common connotations of the word, ignores the past pain that it is capable of triggering. Crom says: “You might want to know that every gay man in America has probably had that word shouted at them when they’re being beaten up. Sometimes many times. Sometimes by a lot of people all at once. So when you say it, it kind of brings that all back up.” This is also the ideological viewpoint that GLAAD and Jack Shears come from in their criticism of Banks: that the word should never be used because of its ability to hurt. But there does exist another ideological camp on the use of controversial words.

In 1990, Dr. Dale Bauer, professor of English and Women’s Studies at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, wrote “The Other ‘F’ Word,” a treatise on how feminism is used as a dirty word. Her point was that the insistence on a politically neutral classroom prohibited constructive conversation, that educators were choosing complacency over true progress. If merely saying “feminism” caused uproar, how would the ideas of gender equality behind it ever come to light? This side of the argument makes the attempt at use and reclamation: that purposefully using or repurposing a definition can impair a word’s ability to cause pain or controversy. This is perhaps best seen in the reclamation of the word “queer,” which was once a derogatory term for gay men, but now is proudly used as an umbrella term for all non-heteronormative identities (much quicker than explaining what LGBTQQIAAP stands for).

Reclamation also has its downside: it is a process not easily completed. It also raises the question of who has the right to use the word and who does not. “Faggot” is a Pot-Kettle term. Like the idiom “the pot calling the kettle black,” there is an unwritten rule that similarly identified people can use reclaimed words. For example, a queer person can use “faggot” regardless of intent simply because they themselves are queer. In the case of Banks, her being an out bisexual woman — a point noted in the resulting media coverage but rarely discussed — would make her use of “faggot” acceptable.

The bigger question is that if reclamation is meant to be empowering, is using “faggot” in the same hurtful way that it has been used in the past really empowering? Historically, “faggot” was specifically aimed not at homosexuality in general but at effeminacy within gay men. When Banks justified

The bigger question is that if reclamation is meant to be empowering, is using “faggot” in the same hurtful way that it has been used in the past really empowering?



her use of “faggot,” she was, in fact, using it as it always had been, attacking Hilton on his most readable quality: his femininity. Banks’ repurposing of “faggot” was far from empowering

Most recently Banks used the word against music producer Baauer, whose latest single “Harlem Shake” has become an Internet meme sensation. She further clarified her definition of “faggot” against more backlash: “Faggot means coward, liar, backstabber..... Energy stealer, blood sucker.” Instead of using it to demean men who, in her opinion, act like women, she meant it pejoratively against all negative character traits. Does she think backstabbing and lying to be inherent to women?

Despite Banks being a bisexual woman, her identities do not justify her use or repurposing of “faggot.” She is a bully and her use of the word is reprehensible. But even in light of this, it is essentially a good thing that Banks continues to use the word. The controversy she feeds brings to light how divisive and misunderstood “faggot” is, making the better point of revealing what its use means over its mere shock-value. It also raises important questions of identity

politics: who gets to claim what constitutes a New Yorker; why could Haze call Banks a “charcoal skinned bitch” and what that means for women of color; and most clearly, why do we demean Banks for bullying Hilton when he himself is a bully (who once infamously called wil.i.am a faggot)?

The question is not whether “faggot” should be used or not: the idea that an existing word could cease to be used at all is a pipe dream. It is also not a question of ethics, dictating who has the right to use “faggot” or not. A realistic approach — akin to Dr. Dale Bauer’s point of purposefully using the word “feminism” in the classroom — suggests that if we try to hide a word in an attempt to dismiss tricky and uncomfortable discussions, then we stop ourselves from learning anything. Using “faggot” does not reclaim its ability to cause pain and it does little to empower those it hurts. What does justify the use of the word “faggot” and empowers its victims is attempting to understand its history and why we continue to use it.

ecopunk

pref. Of or pertaining to the totality or pattern of relations between organisms and their environment

n. A music movement, characterized by aggressive anti-Establishment slogans and a defiant Do-It-Yourself ethos

n. Quality, production and expression according to aesthetic principles, of what is beautiful or of more than ordinary significance

BY KRISTOFER LENZ

Gurgling vats of algae, books written by trees and fungus that brings radioactive dirt back to life. No longer the stuff of science fairs, one can now encounter installations involving art of this sort in galleries and museums. They are the product of a method of inquiry that combines the experimentation and measurable outcomes of science with the creative problem-asking (and problem-solving) strategies artists use to interrogate social and political structures. These artists operate outside traditional expectations of the science lab or the white box. Nomadic in

nature and led only by overpowering curiosity, they hunt for inconsistency across political, social and scientific spheres, presenting questions and responses across a dizzying blend of mediums, including sculpture, photography, performance and installation. Armed with an ethos of DIY independence, their inquiries combine multi-valent collaborations and self-guided scientific explorations. From the staid laboratory to the exhibition space, they threaten to disrupt and undermine any system they encounter. They are ecopunk.

Art as ecological inquiry can exert a powerful influence on the viewer. Christi-

na Cosio, a curator who has worked with artists featured here, says art can instruct without preaching. "(Art) simultaneously has hope and despair embedded in it," she told F Newsmagazine. "It can arrest the attention of people without proselytizing." Birthed from a lineage that includes Robert Smithsonian-era earthworks and utopian environmental art from the '80s, ecopunk is a reaction against the limiting category of "ecart," which bears traces of outdated ideals of environmental protection and stewardship. Ecopunk work falls under the increasingly encompassing umbrella of social practice. Yet there is something uniquely defiant about

this breed of work. The artists are independent from, and often work in opposition to traditional scientific practices. By focusing the lens of viewership on a localized concern they don't intend to extrapolate a universal message about nature. Instead they utilize singular observations and raise questions, rather than seek answers, exposing and subverting false distinctions between "natural" and urban ecologies.

This article proposes "ecopunk art" as a possible term to categorize this environmentally-aware and fiercely subversive method of artistic expression. Included are two SAIC professors who may not fall in the category

of ecopunk, but whose work suggests a model the artists can follow or react against. Their influence also extends to administrative efforts that have cultivated a habitat at SAIC where ecopunk art can flourish. Finally, there is a small sampling from the community of artists who have adapted to the diverse set of opportunities and difficulties presented by SAIC and Chicago as urban workshops. Aspects of their practices embody (and sometimes contradict) the suggested principles of ecopunk. They are pioneers who are blending and binding expectations of what is art, what is science and how they can collaborate to mutual benefit.

WITHOUT FROM WITHIN

recently completed PhD) is to explore the ways art and design can directly affect human behavior. In this mission she sees the placement of her work in museums and galleries as a way to reach audiences who may not expect to see an environmental message conveyed to them. "I feel like the work has more to do with amplifying the concern and using scientific tropes and terminologies to address environmental concerns in an artistic way," she told F Newsmagazine.

As interim Dean of Undergraduate Studies at SAIC, Holmes works to expand the role of environmental disciplines — in departments like Liberal Arts, Sculpture and Art and Technology — to create an "it takes a village" style program throughout the school. The proposed curricular pathway, tentatively called the BFA in Art and Ecology, is under discussion and still being developed.

this summer. It is a collaboration between SAIC and scientists from Northwestern University. Its goal is to help both scientists and artists develop new ways to make complicated data more understandable and appealing. It will be taught by a combination of eight faculty representatives from both schools.

Another project of Holmes' is a BFA concentration that will allow students to construct a degree path that emphasises work on environmental and ecological issues. Participating students would take classes across disciplines — in departments like Liberal Arts, Sculpture and Art and Technology — to create an "it takes a village" style program throughout the school. The proposed curricular pathway, tentatively called the BFA in Art and Ecology, is under discussion and still being developed.

Considering the cyclonic force of her personality, it seems inevitable that SAIC Professor Frances Whitehead would one day expand the range of her art practice to encompass the entire world. From the micro worlds of cellular biology and chemistry, to the expansive structures of architecture and urban planning, she engages every level of the human experience with the creativity and aesthetic sensibilities of an art practice.

One key to expanding her practice has been an increasing will to engage collaborators from non-artistic professional disciplines. Early in her career, she would, in her own words: "hang out in (her) studio being a junior naturalist." But today she reaches out to scientists to further the work of both parties. "In a good collaboration your voice is magnified because you are able to do something you could never do by yourself," she told F Newsmagazine.

THE WICKED PROBLEM

The benefits of collaboration can be founded in her work with soil scientist Dr. Paul Schwab. Whitehead posed questions concerning how Chicago could reclaim the polluted soil of vacant lots left by abandoned gas stations. She reached out to Dr. Schwab, one of the world's leading experts in petroleum phytoremediation (using plants to restore ecological balance) and found a willing and enthusiastic collaborator. Through their work together they developed a method that elevated the science of phytoremediation. For Schwab, working with Whitehead allowed him an opportunity to effect greater change with his studies — companies invested in reclaiming polluted land ignore phytoremediation due to the lack of profitability. By combining scientific processes and art practice, both contributors were able to extend the power and influence of their work.

For Whitehead, the idea of progressive environmental consciousness is more than an art practice; it is a way of life. She has turned her home, The GreenHouse Chicago, into a living space, a laboratory and example of urban green design. She also founded the Embedded Artist Project, which places working artists into management-level City of Chicago city government positions and panels to engender innovation in regard to urban ecology. Whitehead's most recent project takes the idea of "site-specific" art to its logical terminus. She has been commissioned as the lead artist for the Bloomingdale Trail, which will convert a nearly three-mile long abandoned railway into a multi-use park and bikeway. She is working with urban planners, scientists, landscape architects and artists to create a space that cultivates healing and remediation while also serving as a cultural nexus.

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ERASING BOUNDARIES



Scientific problem-solving can require the illusion of binary output. Answers are either right or wrong based on a rigid structure of expectation.

This can create an atmosphere that is not always conducive to creativity. This impulse helped push Lindsey French away from an initial interest in environmental design and toward her art practice. For French, the fundamental divide between nature and urbanity in contemporary thought presents another limiting dichotomy. While environmental conservation and protection have noble goals, they are also the product of a potentially damaging and reductive idea of what is "natural" and what is not. French considers the earth a shared space, and the parcelling of land — as "nature" or otherwise — strengthens impressions that the natural world is foreign. At a fundamental level, this foreignness can be used as justification for subjugation and dominance.

French's artistic output, as she works toward her MFA in Art and Technology, seeks to raise questions that undermine this separation based on pre-conceived ideas about the static nature of vegetation. Her project "Novel by an Oak Tree" is partly motivated by scientific studies that demonstrated how plants

communicate not only via chemicals and light, but also by sound. To extend this analysis she experimented with methods for communicating with trees. During a stay at the Ox-Bow Art Center she chose an oak tree and over the course of several days sat with her back against it while she read the Virginia Woolf novel "Orlando" (which features an oak tree as an important symbolic presence). Using hypersensitive piezoelectric sensors, she recorded the tree's minute vibrations throughout her reading.

She then created an algorithm, using the text of "Orlando" as a key, and converted readings from the tree into a retelling of the novel. The resulting text is a re-mixing of the English language via natural interruption. In subsequent performances she has read the translated version to another oak, thereby closing the loop and making a statement about the perceived limits of language and audience.

Her work is not to suggest that trees and humans can, or even should, share a method of communication. Instead she wants to interrogate assumptions about the limits of language and communication, demonstrating that much can be learned simply by listening closely.

AESTHETICS OF FAILURE



personal website, "propositions." She wants to delve into a subject and explore whether something is good or bad.

This distillation of good and bad is illustrated in her work developing bio-diesel fuel from algae. As she worked toward creating an alternative fuel source, using dated textbooks and scientific manuals as her guides, she also encountered complex systems of international commerce, consumption and reliance on fossil-fuels. Oil, itself, is derived from algae transformed over thousands of years. Today, algae has the potential to solve the energy crisis or overpower and destroy an ecology. It is this duality, and the threat/promise of unexpected outcomes that drives her work.

Benedict's sculptural compositions are gurgling, buzzing and messy structures. They bear the mark of or wooden beam dyed green by a spill. In this way Benedict is removes the veil of mythical precision from scientific exploration. She lowers the bar of entry for engaging in such a practice, demonstrating that anyone with a creative problem-solving skills and all-consuming curiosity can make work that could alter the world or our understanding of it.

At the dawn of the scientific age a thin line separated alchemists seeking transmutation via a blend of experimentation and mysticism, and proto-scientists inventing the field of replicable study. Mariassa Benedict creates complicated structures — where meat ferments or algae is transformed into bio-fuel — that invoke this alchemical sense of trial-by-error experimentation and autodidactic innovation.

It is easy to imagine Benedict's studio space as a blend of environmental activism and a mad scientist's laboratory. Benedict identifies as a sculptor and her practice combines elements of art and science as loose and imaginative points of inquiry. Of the advantage of being an artist and not a scientist she ascribes an essential degree of freedom from expectations. "There is a certain level of uncertainty, and of being okay with uncertainty and not knowing where all this is going," she told F Newsmagazine.

She disavows any sense of didactic purpose for her work, and tags like "eco art" are too limiting. "Whenever you work with something green, people want to be like 'oh, it's eco, I get it.'" For Benedict her work isn't as simple as pursuing some environmental truth. Instead it is an exploration, or as her projects are termed on her

Artist Moe Beitiks uses apology as starting point for her recent work. In "Lab for Apologies and Forgiveness v.2" she combined elements of performance, installation and scientific experimentation to engage the nuances of humility in the face of ecological disgrace.

Red Gate Woods, a forest preserve in the Chicago suburbs, is the former site of the world's first nuclear reactor. Built in the early stages of the Manhattan Project, the site was later abandoned and the reactor and other nuclear waste was simply placed in a hole and buried. Today the forest preserve is an island of natural placidity in a sea of suburban sprawl. Yet areas of the forest preserve remain fenced off due to toxic levels of radioactive poisoning in the soil and vegetation.

Beitiks' work is an attempt to create a point of dialogue between herself and an element of landscape. The root of "Lab for Apologies and Forgiveness v.2" was communication between her, the radioactive soil of Red Gate Woods and a bacterium called Geobacter Sulfatidens, which has the ability to control and cleanse radioactive waste. Her installation during the "New Work" show at Sullivan Galleries included illustrations of the bacterium that explained its function: soil samples

from Red Gate Woods enclosed in jars and a series of videos where Beitiks apologizes to various maligned public figures who she feels have been treated unfairly.

In an extension of "Lab for Apologies and Forgiveness," she conducted a performance at Desibrillator, in which she re-enacted a Manhattan Project scientific experiment gone awry, also dramatized in the film "Fat Man and Little Boy." She reenacted a scene where two halves of the "Demon Core," came together releasing a wave of radioactivity that eventually killed the scientists involved. In Beitiks' retelling, the halves of the "Demon Core" are "seed bombs" composed of clay, compost and seeds. As the movie played behind her, Beitiks molded her reinterpreted "Demon Core" and played out the drama depicted on the screen, thereby creating an alternative reality where art, science and drama meet at a crossroads. In this version, the outcome is not an ecological disaster that could take millions of years to remediate, but instead a conversation where awareness of environmental concerns and solutions are raised and disseminated with no other harm done.

ETHICS OF FORGIVENESS



REVIEW



Lucio Fontana, “*Concetto spaziale 57 CA 3 (Spatial Concept 57 CA 3)*,” 1957. The Museum of Modern Art, New York, gift of Morton G. Neumann, © 2012 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / SIAE, Rome.

In the Aftermath of War, a Void

Review of “Destroying the Picture: Painting the Void, 1949-1962” at the MCA

BY SARAH HAMILTON

With a name like “Destroy the Picture: Painting the Void, 1949-1962,” it is easy to assume that the current MCA exhibition is another “greatest hits” of Abstract Expressionism, addressing such popular tropes as “the death of painting.” However, on the entrance wall to the exhibition, there is a large world map covered in small icons indicating important events in the context of the exhibition we’re about to see. Some of the icons mark political milestones (Hawaii becomes the 50th state), while others indicate important historical ones (the signing of the Warsaw Pact). When I saw the icon for “The Debut of Barbie” alongside the icon for the “Execution of the Rosenbergs for espionage during World War II,” I knew this exhibition was not going to be about “greatest hits.”

“Destroy the Picture: Painting the Void” focuses on artists from Europe, alongside a few from America and Japan. While some blockbuster artists are included, like Yves Klein and Robert Rauschenberg, they are overshadowed by lesser knowns whose work is more monumental and painfully wrought. Nearly

everything in the exhibition is large-scale, balancing between traditional European history paintings and the huge canvases of the Abstract Expressionists. Most works are multimedia, picking up elements of Dada and assemblage.

The exhibition opens with an introduction to Nouveau Realism and the idea of *décollage*, a practice of collecting deteriorated posters, mounting them on boards and displaying their undersides. Raymond Hains’ “Les Nymphaes (Waterlilies)” from 1961 is a perfect example of the Nouveau Realist response to the war. The scraped-off poster is mostly a gray-blue with flecks of red, brown and black. Compare it to Monet’s large-scale water lily paintings from 50 years earlier, and Hains’ work looks like the industrial waste of a tailings pond. “Les Nymphaes” seems to respond to a group of artists who had been fetishized throughout the 20th century, calling out to the audience, “How do you like these flowers now?”

Robert Mallery’s “Lethe” and “Trek” are two works in which sand and other detritus are mounted on a canvas and painted over in dark, muddy colors. When peered at up close, it gives the viewer the feeling

of having woken up face down on a New York City Street on a Monday morning. John Latham, an English artist, has a room to himself of large-scale assemblages. The largest work of his in the series, “Great Uncle Estate,” is an assemblage of stunning red, blue and pink books, some splayed open to reveal hymns and poems, blotted out by ashy blacks and browns. The overall effect of these works is like walking through a burned out building — where once beauty and art resided, now only destruction remains. Compare the work of Adolf Frohner, a Viennese Actionist, to the work of Antoni Tàpies: Frohner’s “Disembowling the Picture” is macabre, but lends even greater weight to Tàpies’ “Ochre-Brown with Black Crack.” Both works are strong independent of one another, but in concert become an overwhelming affect of the post-war conditions in Europe.

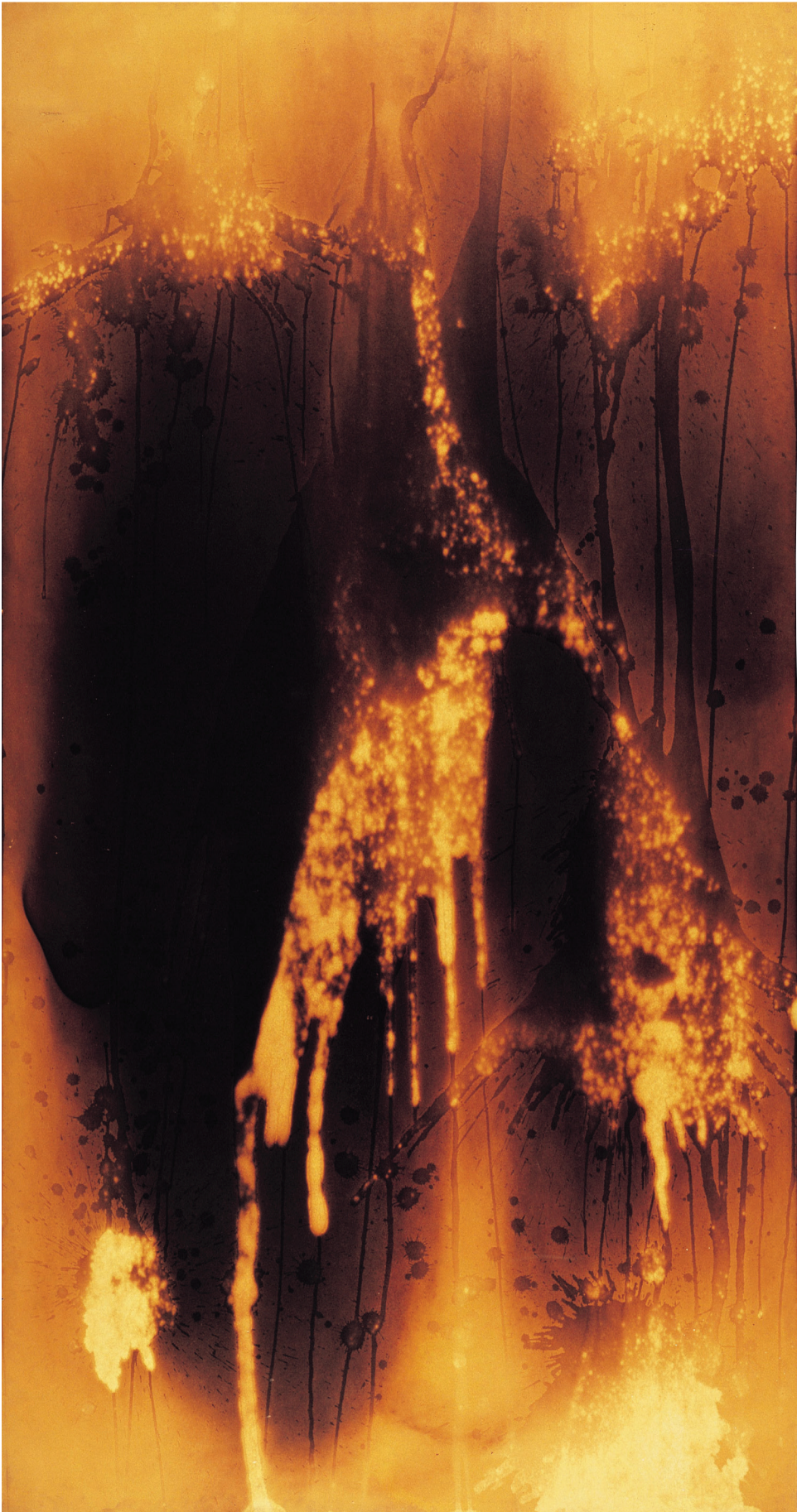
Even the most aesthetically pleasing works are not beyond sharp critiques of the war. Saburo Murakami’s “Iriguchi (Entrance)” is composed of two large sheets of gold paper stretched across one of the gallery entrances. It has been torn so visitors can walk through

the paper to the other side of the gallery. On its own, it speaks as a conceptual predecessor to Fluxus, but alongside Yves Klein’s fire paintings, it evokes imagery of air raids and crumbled cities. Similarly grim imagery comes to mind with Gustav Metzger’s “South Bank Demo,” a colorful installation of nylon sheets burned away with acid.

Reading the canvas as a metonym for the body can’t be helped as you make your way through this exhibition. Canvases are sliced, torched, bound, shot, decayed, corroded and maimed. Jean Fautrier’s “Tête d’otage No.14 (Head of a Hostage No. 14)” from 1944 is the strongest example of this. Fautrier created this series based on his experience living near a Nazi torture camp in France. The paint has been blended to resemble the texture of flesh, and from here has carved into the work, so that the overall effect is of a painting made from human skin. Throughout the exhibition there seems to be a desire among the exhibited artists to work with forbidden materials, but it is that which has been made material nonetheless.

Kazuo Shiraga’s “Inoshishi-gari I (Wild Boar Hunting I)” is a monu-

REVIEW



Yves Klein, "Untitled Fire Painting (F 27 II)," 1961. © Yves Klein, ADAGP, Paris



John Latham, *Untitled*, August 1958. Richard Saltoun, London



Saburo Murakami, "Peeling Picture," 1957. Collection Vervoordt Foundation, Belgium

mental work of fur pelts and red latex paint, which, according to the gallery text, totally horrified people at the time. It still elicits a response from visitors. Stand next to the painting long enough and someone will come up behind you and involuntarily exclaim "Yuck!" and then retreat into the next gallery. Lee Bontecou's "Untitled" has a similar effect. The assemblage projects from the wall, concealing saw blade teeth in its inner recesses. Whereas Shiraga's work is more expressive of visceral horror, Bontecou's sculptures look like set pieces from the dystopian film "Metropolis." This dystopian horror also resonates in the work of Yves Klein and Shozo Shimamoto. A video in one corner shows Klein making his fire paintings with water and fire guns, whereas Shimamoto's work is composed of painted sheets of metal riddled with bullets. The aesthetic of metal bent under the force of a bullet is mildly seductive, but alongside work like Tàpies' "Blackish Ochre with Perforations" (a work composed of a poster actu-

ally riddled with bullet holes), that seduction seems ghoulish. Throughout the exhibition, quotes about power and art adorn the walls from some of the 20th century's greatest minds: Hannah Arendt, Vladimir Nabokov, George Orwell, Simone de Beauvoir, Carl Jung and Theodore Adorno. Though I share a vain love of all these writers, neither the writing nor the art is served well by this narrative (a better format would be paintings alongside selected essays in a visual reader type format). Quotes on the wall give a vague impression of a statement of victory, whereas the exhibition itself seems to be asking sincere questions, like "How do we prevent this destruction from happening again?" In the near 70 years since the end of World War II, we still don't have an answer, only more questions. Hints of the post-modern art world surface in the exhibition from time to time; the war, the bomb, the holocaust seem to have broken down significant cultural barriers that opened previously underexplored countries to the consider-

ations of the global art market. The endgame of this idea, however, has become one where disaster, poverty, and human suffering are just art exhibitions waiting to be curated (grab your camera, folks!) illustrating how cynical and contemptuous the contemporary art world has become. This is an exhibition that makes droll art terms like "one-liner" seem especially silly. If, by some chance, you manage to escape "Destroy the Picture: Painting the Void" feeling at all positive, smug or clever, you've completely failed to understand the exhibition. It is best then to turn back and seat yourself in front of one of the paintings until the severity of the work condescends to you.

"Destroy the Picture: Painting the Void, 1949-1962"
Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago
Until June 2, 2013
mcachicago.org

Reading the canvas as a metonym for the body can't be helped as you make your way through this exhibition. Canvases are sliced, torched, bound, shot, decayed, corroded and maimed.

REVIEW



Allegorical Surrogates

Aestheticized Defeatism in the Art of R.H. Quaytman

BY ALEXANDER M. WOLFF

R.H. Quaytman’s recent exhibition “Passing Through the Opposite of What It Approaches, Chapter 25,” at the Renaissance Society, presents her work at its most insular. It is hyper-aware of itself and dependent upon its context, yet resolutely detached from critical content. When writing about Quaytman’s work in Artforum magazine, art critic Paul Galvez stated: “A cynic would say that Quaytman’s painting reaestheticizes what used to be antiaesthetic ... But what artistic practice has not suffered this fate?” Considering this apologist assessment, and the artist’s own affiliations with Daniel Buren, Dan Graham and Allen McCollum, her work occupies a complicated space in contemporary art — ambivalently stuck between different codes of representation (such as optical and photographic imagery) and modalities of allegory and institutional critique. Though this precarious position would be welcome and exciting for more ambitious artists, in Quaytman’s hands it produces a

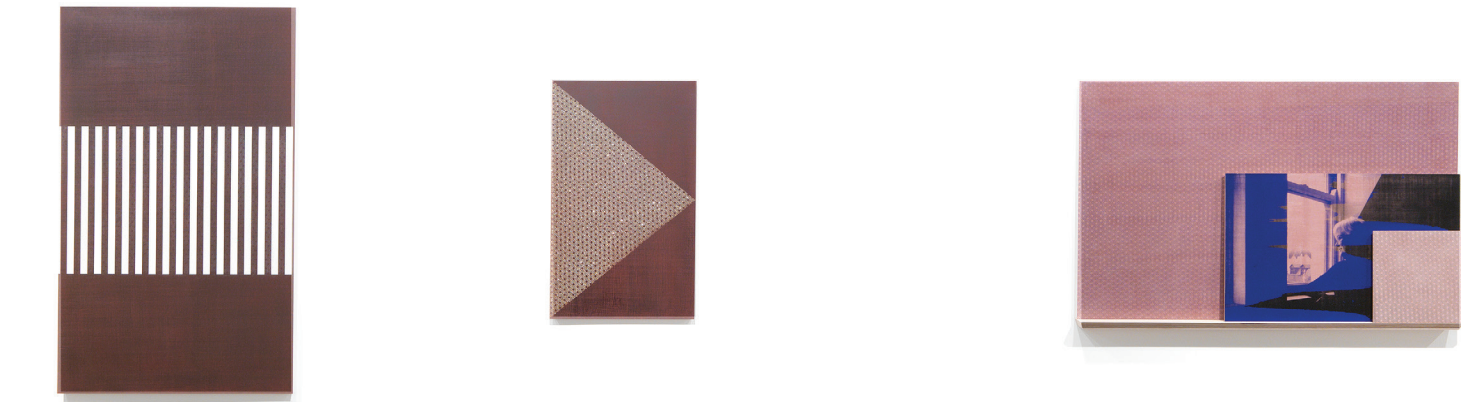
stifling hollowness that seems to drain both allegory and institutional critique of their agency. By consistently producing a body of highly aestheticized and interrelated pieces that maintain similar sizes and motifs, Quaytman’s easily digestible work furthers fetishization of the art object by the public and institutions that desire it. It would then seem appropriate, if not necessary, that an art practice as singular and self-defeating as Quaytman’s have a more cynical perspective.

Utilizing the full breadth of the exhibition space, Quaytman displayed 26 mixed-media wooden panel paintings on three large walls at the center of the gallery. Her art knowingly employs a wide array of modernist idioms and clichés (tracing a line between high-modernism, minimalism, pop-art and op-art) and combines them with a language of seriality and self-reflexivity. Mounted to the center wall and diagonally aligned with the mouth of the gallery, “Passing through the Opposite of What It Approaches, Chapter 25 (From archival photograph of Toroni exhibition at The

Renaissance Society)” is one of the most crucial pieces for decoding the language of Quaytman’s style. The painting depicts a colorized blue and grey screen-printed photograph of The Renaissance Society’s 1990 showing of work by Niele Toroni with a perpendicular band of fine orange stripes cutting through the center of the composition. Toroni’s piece consisted of three dividers in the middle of the gallery, the center one with countless imprints of a no. 50 paintbrush at intervals of 30 cm. The configuration of Quaytman’s show mirrors this set-up, and her piece “Passing Through the Opposite of What it Approaches, Chapter 25 (Imprints of a no. 50 brush repeated at intervals of 30 cm)” exactly imitates the style of Toroni’s work. The blue hue of “(From archival photograph of Toroni exhibition at The Renaissance Society)” is frequently referenced in pieces that depict the executive director of the Renaissance Society, Susanne Ghez and, on another painting that illustrates the back end of Toroni’s wall, now obscured by seven vertical blue stripes — a

clear homage to Buren’s famous banners.

The painting directly adjacent to this work, “Passing Through the Opposite of What it Approaches, Chapter 25 (Hamza’s Shelves)” is a silkscreened image of The Renaissance Society’s associate curator Hamza Walker’s book shelf with a beveled vertical blue stripe on the left-hand side. This stripe’s effect is in many ways similar to the orange collection of lines in “(From archival photograph of Toroni exhibition at The Renaissance Society)” as they reference the striped and layered edges of her beveled plywood panels. The blue line in “(Hamza’s Shelves)” not only evokes the panel’s edges, but refers to the “zips,” or thin vertical lines, in famous color field paintings like “Who’s Afraid of Red, Yellow, and Blue I” by Barnett Newman. This blue stripe is repeated on the left side of a piece in the hallway entrance of the gallery, “Passing Through the Opposite of What it Approaches, Chapter 25 (Portrait of Anne Rorimer),” a screen-print painting of the prominent independent scholar



REVIEW



and curator, Anne Rorimer.

It is clear that Quaytman's work is devoted to site specificity as a means of facilitating interrelation between her pieces, art history and the institutional space. But the real question here is, why should the public and the art world be so easily satisfied with playing empty games of intellectual I spy? Some commentators, such as Galvez, have stated that due to the fact that Quaytman systematizes her exhibitions into "chapters," and only creates works with golden angles in a set number of dimensions (gestures that stand to maintain a dialogue between her past and current work), her work poses major conflicts for "the collector who covets 'originals' and to the historian that craves linear teleologies." While this may be true in some cases, it should also be noted that collectors often don't care whether a piece is divorced from a body of work. The effect of Quaytman's art is not entirely contingent on the fact that they be placed in conjunction with her other pieces, or even her past body of work, just because she started designating them as "chapters." Many pieces at the show were more dependent on their relation to the institutional context than to Quaytman's other pieces, or to her other "chapters" of work. If anything, the fact that Quaytman structures her work to the point where only specific sizes and content can be produced saps any ambition, innovation and experimental variables that her work might otherwise possess.

Still, why is a heightened sense of intertextuality so crucial to her artistic agenda? In many of her pieces this frantic act of historical and contextual referencing becomes reminiscent of allegory. Her pieces approach allegory, but miss the most crucial aspect: they don't attempt any kind of political, historical or social criticism, other than vaguely attempting institutional critique in a defeatist fashion. Her pieces are still so visually and con-

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textually aestheticized (using pictorial representation, easily digestible content and form) they merely feed the hunger of the picture-obsessed public and collectors without doing much to complicate or comment on this situation. In the text "Allegorical Decoys (2008)," Quaytman elaborates on her awareness of the commodified fate of her art: "I thought about paintings specifically made to be stored, I began literally depicting the striped, layered edge of the plywood panel as a means of acknowledging this orientation." Acknowledging self-positionality in art practice is crucially important, as it is the starting point for many critical projects, but it should never be used as an end in itself, as it breeds complacency, inaction and the status quo.

The purpose of allegory is that it should accommodate for conditions

that the previous avant-garde could not. In articulating her vocabulary and technique with the legacies of abstract modernist painting, minimalism, and the institutional critique of Buren and McCollum in mind, Quaytman seems less than interested in innovating or re-orienting their concepts into new iterations. More specifically, her work invokes their ideas of seriality and self referentiality, which were intended to, as Hal Foster states, elucidate the art institution's "conditions of production, exhibition and exchange," and more so in McCollum and Lawler's case to "literalize" the codes of the economic circulation and consumption. Quaytman refers to these codes, but then empties allegory and institutional critique of their critical faculties by aestheticizing anti-visual strategies in the form of panel painting. What is the point of depicting Buren's "Watch the Doors Please," which placed blue stripes on the doors of Chicago's Metra commuter railway in a way that seemed to illuminate the commodified experience of daily life, when it has been depicted on a panel and placed in a gallery? How is a silk-screened portrait of a gallerist or curator more telling than when Louise Lawler presents viewers with an intimate picture of how and what collectors choose to bestow value in?

In "Allegorical Decoys" Quaytman attempts to pin her own positionality in the causal relationship between artistic production and the art market by stating: "I prefer to position myself as the speaker in the audience, even if it seems as though no one is at the podium, and the presenter has left the auditorium. In this environment of late capitalism and neoliberalism any given presenter is quite possibly a collaborator." This is an accurate portrait of Quaytman's work. It over-determines its own positionality in a blank stare at historical, contextual and self-referentiality, while under-determining a com-

mitment to utilizing these ends for institutional, social or political criticality. Her paintings configure their intertextuality and self-reflexivity as a form of self-padding rather than using them as an opportunity for commentary. If one looks at the most recent work by the artist Kerry James Marshall, he subverts the historical legacy of Newman's "Who's Afraid of Red, Yellow, and Blue I," in his piece "Red (If they Come in the Morning)," which replaces the colors of Newman's painting with those of the Pan-African flag. Marshall's work conflates political and social realities of the 1950s with the unilateral narrative of purity and singularity that modernist abstract painting embarked. This type of historically conscious allegory, that actually forefronts contemporary and historical issues for critical reflection, is in many ways what Quaytman fails to do in her own work.

The condition of the aestheticized anti-visual signifiers in her work are almost reminiscent of the way McCollum makes his blank paintings decoys, or surrogates, of painting. In their constitution, they stand as a farce of pictorial fetishization and desire, but Quaytman's work on the other hand stands to reduce the critical practice of allegory to non-productivity. Inasmuch as Quaytman seems to apply this disposition to her work, the title of "Allegorical Decoys" seems to accurately summate her current oeuvre. It possesses all the necessary tools for allegory and other modes of commentary, but in the end fails to be anything other than pastiche. Rather than utilizing the potential of the commodified art object, Quaytman's work calcifies its status.

REVIEW

Love in the Time of Online Dating

Street Artist Don't Fret at Johalla Projects

BY SIERRA NICOLE RHODEN

An impermeable crowd of black and white cartoon faces sport desperate smiles. Their eyes are replaced with sharp, red hearts. They are young and old, and they are all in love — who cares with whom. This hoard of infatuated suckers occupies the wall mural which greets guests at the entrance of Johalla Project's current exhibit: "Don't Fret: Love in the Time of Online Dating."

Don't Fret is an anonymous, locally-based street artist with works in Chicago, San Francisco, Miami, São Paulo, Berlin, Prague and Munich. His (the gender pronoun used by Johalla Projects gallery director Anna Cerniglia) trademark characters, with their prominent noses and triangular faces, are ugly in the friendliest of ways. They classify and exaggerate those he's observed — hipsters, the elderly, young mothers, children, and the homeless. Sometimes they're enormous, lounging drunkenly in their underwear. Sometimes they're life-sized, pushing ice cream carts or holding a briefcase and waiting for a clear crosswalk.

The artist's anonymity began for practicality's sake. "In the beginning it was simple — I didn't want to get caught," Don't Fret explains in an interview, conducted via email for obvious reasons. He relays an unpleasant memory of once being arrested, forced to scrub down his work while surrounded by laughing policemen. "I don't find my characters antagonizing at all," he says, "but it's humorous to me that some people find them antagonizing simply because their placement is illegal."

Don't Fret now hopes that his obscured identity helps shift the focus from the messenger to the message. "I have always felt that the more aware the public is of who I am, the more the work becomes adulterated. It becomes more about me than the work," he explains, noting slight discomfort at the number of people who already know his identity and practice.

Around the corner from the entry mural at Johalla Projects hang Chicago block-scapes teeming with figures going about their everyday lives, their thoughts and dreams floating above them in scrawling text. The format is reminiscent of a Richard Scarry storybook, but with far more grit and irony. A postal worker reflects, "I am content." A toddler asks his mother if God exists. A man on the sidewalk notes, "I have made a lot of bad decisions in my time, but this turtleneck is definitely not one of them!" The scenes read like comics, but the artist says he spent more time as a child with cartoons on television.

Born and raised in Chicago, Don't Fret creates characters who reflect the eclecticity of his hometown. But he aims

to react differently to each new city he inhabits, as was the case while he was living and working in São Paulo, Brazil. "In São Paulo there are catadores, these guys that walk around with these huge carts collecting recycled materials to sell," recalls Don't Fret. "I made a catador for the street there."

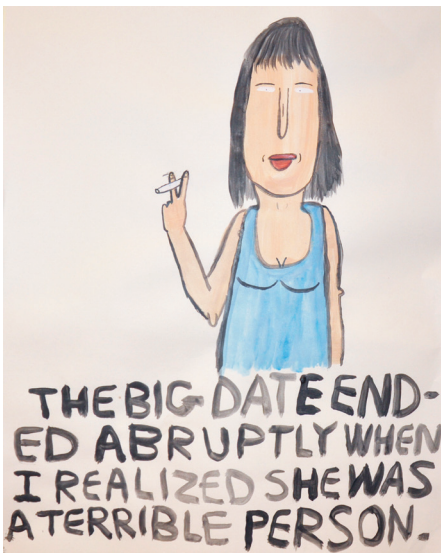
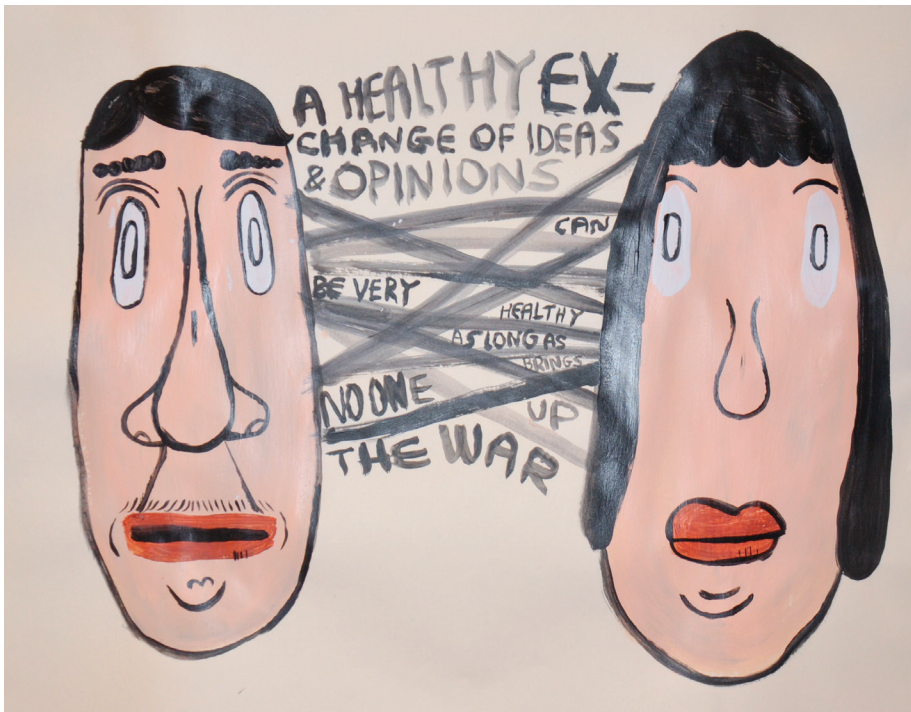
On the opposite gallery wall from the cityscapes in Johalla Projects — as if zooming in on the homes and intimacies of their inhabitants — hangs a dense smorgasbord of panel paintings of people, haphazard paint doodles (everything from a sandwich to a pile of green bottles) and sloppily painted hypothetical personal ads on paper. A panoramic lineup of women archives a romantic history, each with a caption like "The One You Lost Your Virginity To," and "The One You Really Hurt." Other smaller paintings picture couples and weigh their compatibility. Choice commentary includes, "83% Compatible," "She is totally vapid and uninformed, and he is exactly the same. The sex is fantastic," and "They like the same foods and resent the same groups of people."

Some images explore other social issues — a quaint birdseye neighborhood scene reads, "A beautiful sunset befell the town where the racists live," and a couple of hipsters insist that an African tribesman adopt a vegan diet. Others are more random, like the portrait of a sloth, reading "Sloth Seeks Employment to Appease Father," or a bald man wearing nothing but briefs, raising a bottle to his computer and exclaiming "I've found a wonderful Groupon!" One could spend hours immersed in this amusing, unfiltered stream of consciousness, and the show's cluttered nature lends to the fitting feeling of digging in a junk drawer for an old love note or, perhaps even more appropriately, of surfing

the internet.

In this mish-mash of lust, irony, matches and mis-matches, emerges a climate of attention-deficit relationships and statistical compatibility. Are we worse at getting together and staying together than we used to be? Does our tendency toward point, click, "Add to Cart," convenience make us shakier partners? Despite the show's timely title, Don't Fret finds our quirks timeless, our aptitude for love unquantifiable. All one can do is give happiness to others and hope for happiness in return, he says, "then hopefully she wants to see the same movie as you and she's not vegan." In Johalla Projects, the lovingly rendered cartoon faces deliver this message with a sense of hope and whimsy rather than one of despair. With each glance at a sloppy sandwich or an unemployed sloth, the artists' name-sake instruction becomes all the easier to follow.

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REVIEW



A Civil Rights Baby Docks in Chicago

“An Ill Wind Blowing” at Intuit Gallery

BY KIM HARTY

Kevin Blythe Sampson has arrived in Chicago to temper your inaugural glee. His current show at Intuit: The Center for Intuitive and Outsider Art is a dense collection of political imagery that asks harsh questions about the current struggle for civil and political rights. The centerpiece of the show, a large sailing vessel that occupies the entire space, is packed with Americana, ephemera, humor and cynicism about partisan politics in America. The double masted ship is sectioned into three parts that symbolize the stratified political ideology of America, and each section is divided by a small army of rats.

The front section of the boat holds “the broken dreams of the middle class, working poor, the dispossessed and homeless.” The hull contains a picnic basket full of Cheetos and white bread, surrounded by empty tomato cans, spare change and discarded toys. A deflated Uncle Sam figure hangs from the bow like a scarecrow, and on the front mast sails an American flag. The middle section of the vessel is dedicated to “big business, corporations, the Tea Party and its right wing constituency.” It includes a confederate flag flying over toy guns, dolls and pigs all nestled in a bale of hay. The stern of the ship is occupied by the liberal elites, whom Sampson names as, “Nobel Prize winners, women’s rights activists, the gay rights movement, technology and environmental activists.” The section is covered with Obama posters, fake dollar bills, copies of the New Yorker and posters that include the slogans “Quakers for Native Rights,” “Don’t

Take away my Birth Control,” and “Libya Algeria Bahrain Egypt Tunisia Revolution.” There is also a large basket hanging over the stern where viewers can participate in a political free throw. Each viewer is invited to grab a photo of a current politician and “write your thoughts about the current state of politics in America and toss into the fray.”

The boat was created on site, during a two-week residency at Intuit, and includes drawings and prints created by Sampson’s artist friends and the at-risk youth that he mentors in his hometown of Newark, NJ. Sampson claims to make no distinction between art and life; his politics, artwork and community outreach are one in the same.

Sampson is a retired police officer who worked as a composite sketch artist, and his drafting ability is demonstrated in the delicate and iconic drawings that circumscribe the gallery. Inspired by steampunk, each pen and ink sketch functions as a mechanical parable — a gun is piped into a church or the Statue of Liberty weeping over laboratory vessels full of oil — each creating a complex device that tells a story about American culture.

The part of the show that will sting the most for the Democrat, feminist and gay art goers is the positioning of the liberal elite in direct opposition to the broken American dream. Sampson, who is a self-described “civil rights baby,” radiates a nostalgia for civil rights era organizing, when goals were unified, change was legible, when the cacophony of media didn’t desensitize and destabilize the premise of protest. Sampson sees the reelection of Obama, the struggle for gay marriage and the Occupy Wall Street movement as red herrings that do



not represent the needs of the disposed, homeless and poor in America. Rather, Sampson positions contemporary politics as a media cesspool that infects the population and creates an ill wind propelling the country forward (or arguably, backward).

“An Ill Wind Blowing” feels so familiar that it is almost impossible to recognize it as outsider art. Sampson doesn’t fit cleanly into the “outsider” genre — he attended the Newark School of Fine and Industrial Art — but is the first to admit that the label is designed for the comfort of the collecting audience. He contends that academics and museums understand his work best and notes, “the problem isn’t self-taught artists, it’s self-taught collectors.”

What is remarkable about the show is that Sampson is able to flip the label of “outsider” on its head by exposing the “mainstream” media as a collection of intuitive interpretations of fact, schizophrenic imagery and compulsive messaging. The institutionalized hallmarks of outsider art — creativity that is bred from naivety, mental illness, irrational compulsion and imagined narratives — are embedded in the culture that Sampson is critiquing, rather than the artist, himself.

“An Ill Wind Blowing”
Intuit: The Center for Intuitive and Outsider Art
January 11 - April 20, 2013
art.org

INTERVIEW



Ghosts in

BY KIM HARTY

Mary Patten has been creating, directing, teaching, writing and engaging in political actions for the past 25 years. Her latest piece “PANEL,” at three-walls, re-imagines a panel discussion at “Schizo Culture,” a symposium on schizophrenia and radical politics held at Columbia University in 1975. The video installation includes four vertically oriented screens, each with a different “panelist” reading the transcript from the original “Schizo Culture”

event. There is a podium in the center of the raised stage, and a block of chairs where viewers can sit and experience the piece.

Though Patten did not attend the original panel, she uses the transcripts as a frame to re-stage various versions of the piece. In addition to the video installation, she has also staged a live performance of “PANEL” as well as the collaborative reading “SCHIZO PANEL.” Patten responded to F Newsmagazine’s questions about her work and addressed questions about representation, history, performance and reenactment.

KH: What is the purpose of the reenactment in “PANEL”?

MP: I don’t actually see this project as a “re-enactment,” although that is a recognizable genre with which “PANEL” has close affinities. I see “PANEL” more as a re-imagining, a re-embodiment of a slice of marginal history from almost 40 years ago, at once very marked by the “counter-cultures” of the 1970s, but with haunting parallels to the present. There is a transcript, to be sure, of this “panel on asylums and prisons,” as it was called — but it is incomplete. It seems to begin in some kind of middle, with no introduction. There are odd ellipses in the text and it doesn’t take into account the disruption by someone in the audience who accused Foucault of being an agent of the CIA. Judy Clark, my friend who sent me the transcript 10 years ago, doesn’t remember conversations that she had with Sylvère Lotringer and Felix Guattari that are included in the transcript. She remembers the men on the panel — Foucault, Laing, and Harp — as dominating the discussion. Yet, according to the transcript, her words drive it, and take up the most space.

KH: How does “PANEL” function when mediated by video, rather than having a live performers in the gallery space?

MP: This project, in its different iterations, experiments with different kinds of “re-imagining.” The video installation is deeply preoccupied with certain

formal concerns: “panel” refers to “panel discussion,” but each panelist floats inside their own vertical screen, their own panel, separate from the others, yet connected by an imagined table, a shared microphone and a common subject matter. Each video projection is paired with an abstract color print, of roughly the same dimensions and size, that hangs across the room — the “mirror selves” of each of the four speakers.

KH: Why did you choose to put each of the panelists on their own screen?

MP: The fragmented nature of the manuscript reinforces a sense that the panelists were not engaging one other. I imagine them partly as ghosts in separate spheres, arranged in a line and facing an audience that has largely disappeared. Three of the speakers are long dead, and the only survivor, Judy Clark, while very much alive, has been in prison for 32 years. I also wanted to extend the metaphors suggested by “Schizo Culture” by creating four hallucinatory clouds that intermittently interfere with our reception of each speaker: a swirl of color and moving collage that is a kind of “dreaming out loud” by each of them — the philosopher, the radical psychiatrist, the revolutionary prisoners’ advocate, the Insane Liberation Front activist. These clouds of color intermittently interrupt and blur the panelists’ contentious, pensive, persuasive, or rambling speech acts. The installation invokes the air

between a dense piece of ephemera that has slipped through historical cracks and its collective address to what was once a massive social movement.

KH: What other iterations did PANEL have?

MP: The “Schizo Culture” collaborative reading assembled 17 readers, each paired with a text by 17 different artists, writers, activists, theorists, poets and performers who were either involved with the “Schizo Culture” conference, or in various underground, avant-garde or radical political scenes in New York City at the time. So that was another kind of re-embodiment. It was funny, sad, powerful, and moving — every one of the readers / performers / translators brought an intensity and engagement with the words, texts, poems, and screeds they were reading, channeling their “authors” through the prisms of their own singular experiences. The readers were much more than that: they were the co-creators of the event.

KH: How did the collaborative reading compare to the live performance?

MP: For “SCHIZO PANEL,” the live performance, Sylvère Lotringer created a video where he re-invented his own introduction to the original 1975 conference. A perfect “as if” moment. He wore black against a black background, a spectre reminiscent of the floating heads in early cinema. We played it on a very large

INTERVIEW



Separate Spheres

Educator, Activist and Artist Mary Patten talks about her recent exhibition

monitor perched on the panelists' table. There were no introductions, no bracketing out, no "welcome to threewalls" or contextual remarks. It was all inherent in the video, and in the rendition / performance / reading that followed.

It was at "SCHIZO PANEL" that we re-created one of the (in)famous but somewhat apocryphal interventions of the conference, when a LaRouchie, a member of the National Caucus of Labor Committees, accused Foucault of being an agent of the CIA. The person who interrupted Foucault, Dan O'Donnell, is a radical labor organizer who's extremely knowledgeable about the left in the U.S., including its cults, deviations, and conspiracy theories. He re-enacted the invisible scene with his own fantastic embellishments. Darrell Moore then delivered Foucault's brilliant reply: "yes, yes, you are right... I am a member of the CIA, and so is Sylvère, so is Judy, and Howie, and Ronald Laing... in fact everyone in this room is an agent of the CIA, except for you — YOU are a member of the KGB." Most of the audience laughed, but some were upset, and thought that our "plant" was a bona-fide nut.

KH: What was the logic in choosing actors for the piece, specifically the particular choice to make Michel Foucault black?

MP: I did not want a literal re-make of the event; casting decisions were not dictated by performers' physical resemblance to the speakers. I wanted to avoid verisimilitude and theatricality, and find people who brought passion and intelligence to their "roles." Darrell Moore is a Foucault scholar. It's nice that he also has a shaved head, wears glasses and is queer. Mikal Shapiro, who plays Judy, is a former student whose intensity struck me when I heard her perform a voice-over for one of her early experimental videos a few years ago. Matthias Regan (Howie Harp) is a brilliant poet, artist, and educator who is always up for taking risks with new forms, and new forms of collaboration. Mark Jeffery (Ronald Laing), the only professional performance artist in the group, is one of the most

talented and multi-faceted performers in Chicago. They are all beautiful souls, incredibly talented and generous. We spent a lot of time together intensely discussing and debating the text, its contexts, our interpretations, speculating about various gaps.

KH: There seems to be an implicit critique of a panel as an academic, privileged platform to address problems such as torture, schizophrenia, and radical politics (held at Columbia University to boot). How does this critique relate your art practice?

It was funny, sad, powerful, and moving — every one of the readers / performers / translators brought an intensity and engagement with the words, texts, poems, and screeds they were reading, channeling their "authors" through the prisms of their own singular experiences.

MP: Maybe, but it's a friendly one. "PANEL" re-imagines the architecture of academic and political conferences, where discourse is shaped by such things as panel, podium, microphone and stage. It also conjures the spaces of incarceration and repressive institutionalization, then and now, through the pictures, images, sounds, and scenes in the panelists' words. They face an imagined 1975 audience of intellectuals, artists, and political activists.

KH: I think about artist Sharon Hayes who is also invested in the historical reenactment as a site of research, performance and reclamation of history. However, Hayes always has her body within the work, while your role is more of a director. Can you talk about that choice?

MP: I hate being in front of the camera for all kinds of reasons. I prefer to hide, in a way ... and I have an

aversion to the cult of personality. Why, for example, is it necessary for everyone to have a photo portrait attached to publications, websites, academic and institutional listings? Why does it matter what anyone looks like?

I love Sharon's work. I was in Jeanine Oleson's apartment when a very young Sharon Hayes began her early tours and coffee klatches in lesbian households — performances that used the forms of conversation, pot-luck, story-telling and consciousness-raising to

re-embody earlier forms of lesbian and queer cultures. But Sharon is from a different generation. There is no chance that anyone will mistake her work for the actual historical events that move and motivate her.

KH: So do you feel that that is one of the generational differences?

MP: It is really clear in those pieces where time is out of joint — where she holds an "I AM A MAN" sign by herself, without context, in some urban center. Although I didn't attend the Schizo Culture conference, and don't remember it, I lived in NYC throughout the 1970s and was deeply embedded in some of the scenes that animated that conference. This IS my history, so I needed to find a way to get some distance from it, to fictionalize it, to make it strange in some way.

REVIEW

An Anagogic Aim

Terry Adkins’s “Recital” at the Mary & Leigh Block Museum of Art

BY JONNY FARROW

January 12, 2013: Terry Adkins, dressed in a priestly, black, dashiki-like garment, accented with a pink tapestry stole and an ornamented silver chain around his neck, presided over the opening of his show of selected works at the Block. In this garb, Adkins gave off the air of an artist-priest, his manner calm and gracious. For Adkins, this is no costume. His sartorial presentation very much reflects the type of art he makes: art that strives to revive forgotten or under-represented aspects of cultural heroes’ lives — serious topics, approached with reverence. Focusing on figures such as blues icon Bessie Smith, rock-legend Jimi Hendrix, militant abolitionist John Brown, and sociologist / historian / philosopher W.E.B. Dubois, these cultural icons/warriors have significance to him personally, to African-American culture and American culture as a whole. Adkins aims for truth through the vocabularies of the assemblage and multimedia presentation. His work excels in the sculptural form where he transforms already beautiful industrial objects into sculptures imbued with his messages of historical recovery and what he would argue is the anagogic.

The panel discussion, held in conjunction with the opening of Recital is where Adkins presented the word “anagogic” to describe an aspect of his work, for which he always aims. As an important digression, the panel itself was remarkable owing to the impressive assembly of curators and artists on hand to celebrate and critique Adkins’s work: Naomi Beckwith of the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago, Hamza Walker of the Renaissance Society, artists Dawoud Bey and Theaster Gates, Tang Museum director Ian Berry, and Northwestern art history professor Huey Copeland. The anagogic refers to a way of reading the spiritual or mystical in a work and requires one to look beyond the surface and materiality of objects.

One key to understanding the idea of the anagogic in Adkins’s work is that he tries not to materialize ideas, but to immaterialize the objects in the ideas. As an example, Adkins spoke about his musical practice. When playing, he said that his aim is to make the music real, to create a material presence with the sound. His performances can be ritual-like and the idea of conjuring presence through sound, if not explicit, can certainly be inferred in the performance context. And conversely, in his sculptural work he attempts to make the individual objects in his assemblages disappear and work together to form a new, powerful sign with anagogic potential — addressing the subjects’ narratives on which he is focusing. A lofty aim to be sure, and many times Adkins hits his mark.

Sometimes, though, Adkins does not quite reach the anagogic, as in one work from the “Black Beethoven” series. Skillfully executed, “Synapse” is

a video work in which Adkins slowly transforms a portrait of Beethoven into a familiar, brooding, Euro-white representation to an Afro-black appearance of the same demeanor. Here, he is playing on the little-known likelihood of Beethoven’s Moorish ancestry. However, this seems trivial in the face of the larger cultural legacy: the insidious nature of the distribution of hegemonic cultural information (western classical music) over mediated networks (like through the media and education) forming complex power dynamics between those who hold power and those who do not. It is Adkins’ fascination with these small bits of information that sometimes can have too much influence on the outcome of a work. This is where I think a bit of critical confrontation is warranted, when he reaches a pedagogical moment and lets the work rest there.

Though, even when I find an Adkins piece leaving me wanting more (which is rare), for someone else who is not as familiar with the specific histories of the subjects he chooses, Adkins work is revelatory. One of the most successful pieces in this exhibit, “Darkwater Record,” consists of a stack of five vintage tape decks with a bust of Mao perched atop. The tape machines are all simultaneously playing excerpts of a W.E.B. Dubois speech titled, “Socialism and the American Negro.” There are no speakers attached — an interesting conceptual turn suggesting the silencing of this part of Dubois’s legacy. Also effective is the choice of tape machines with all-analog meters. Needles bouncing, the work reaches for the anagogic via the unheard traces of the voice on the tape.

Another piece I feel reaches the level of the anagogic is “Divine Mute.” The title seems to play with the trope of the seer who is blind, one who has vision, and in this case, perhaps one who hears divine commands but cannot speak. The work is a very large metal disk that protrudes out from the wall and is shaped somewhat like a mute for a brass instrument. Does this mute serve to silence the histories of the righteous? And who is the God who uses the mute or is being silenced? Adkins’s work is most successful when this kind of mystery is present.

Terry Adkins Recital
Now thru 3/24/13
Mary & Leigh Block Museum of Art
@ Northwestern University, Evanston, IL
blockmuseum.northwestern.edu/index.html
Performance at Block with
Lone Wolf Recital Corps on March 1:
planitpurple.northwestern.edu/event/438322



“Recital,” installation view, The Frances Young Tang Teaching Museum and Art Gallery at Skidmore College, 2012.



“Single Bound (from Towering Steep),” 2000, steel and rooster feathers. The Blanton Museum of Art, The University of Texas at Austin.

In the '80s a quasi call to arms emerged from the art world. Big issues that directly affected individuals and institutions took center stage and beckoned for increased public and national attention.



LITERARY

CREATIVE NON-FICTION BY SOFYA KARASH

FROM THE TRAVAILS BOOK SERIES

EXCHANGE [No. 044640]

Our cramped apartment was filled with uncontainable hope and anxiety. Three years after we'd fled the city of Baku following the Nagorno-Karabakh War and Black January, we were refugees in Kimry, a village on the Volga about one hundred kilometers north of Moscow. My artist parents, who were used to an urban existence, had no respite from the strains of daily life in this muddy hamlet. The locals were hostile to newcomers, especially foreign looking ones like us, and my parents were not optimistic about our future in a place that was in a prolonged state of post-Soviet anarchy. But we had finally received refugee status from the embassy and our flight to the United States had been booked for the following month.

The main problem was that the newly formed Russian Federation continued to impose countless Soviet-era restrictions regarding items to be transported out. Only two suitcases weighing no more than 25kg each were allowed per person. The state claimed ownership of any **предметы роскоши** (luxury items) such as fur coats, jewelry, or anything else officials lumped into this conveniently vague category. Belongings were frequently seized and bribes to allow forbidden items out were expected.

Art belonged to the **культурные ценности** (cultural valuables) category and was the property of the state if it was determined to have monetary, cultural, or artistic value. Issues concerning works of art were dealt with at the highest levels of the Ministry of Culture, which was closely associated with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the KGB.

My father wrapped twelve of his works in rags and plastic. Among these was a watercolor of my mother and I standing side by side at a window when I was sick with influenza, and a series of works inspired by his beloved city of Baku with its ancient castle walls, narrow alleys, and dangling balconies. He also packed up a painting of three tiny figures walking through an expansive forest beneath a yellow sky which was a gift to my mother just after my birth, and sketches for his latest theater designs "Escape" and "Country of Villains". He secured the bundle with canvas straps and lugged it to the station to board the seven a.m. train for Moscow.

This was the first of three trips he would take in order to transport all forty works to the capital where he stayed with Marina and Yuri Sergeevich. Marina was an art director my father had worked with on his latest book, and her husband Yuri was an art history professor at the Music Conservatory. To circumvent the bureaucratic process at the Ministry of Culture and forge a path for the transport of Russian art abroad, they were forced to participate in the dirtiest of underground dealings. In exchange for a bribe of course, someone willing to help eventually emerged from the bureaucratic system. This person was Varvara Vasileevna, whom Marina secretly phoned about my father's dilemma.

As the stockpile of art in the couple's closet grew, Marina reminded my father that his chances of being granted official permission were slim considering that his name appeared in foreign exhibition catalogues, he sold work abroad for twenty times his monthly salary, and had recent success illustrating for prominent publishers.

With the last bundle of art in hand, my father arrived in Moscow for the appointment with Varvara Vasileevna at the Ministry of Culture and Mr. Sergeevich agreed to accompany him. My father, Yuri, and the five enormous packages were eyed suspiciously by passengers in the metro as they made their way from one underground station to another.

They were shocked to arrive at a modern glass and concrete building instead of one of the drab government structures they were accustomed to. They sat in a circular waiting room with marble floors crammed with people and variously shaped mounds ready for inspection.

My father's name was called and he was directed to a small office and instructed to unpack his work. As soon as he piled his exposed art against a wall, Varvara Vasileevna walked in with a smile. Her beaming face was suspicious and obviously a result of her conversation with Marina. Knowing he was at her mercy, my father became even more nervous.

Varvara quickly surveyed the work then plopped herself in a chair. My father handed her his passport and a list of the forty works he wanted to transport out. He was required to compile this list in advance, including the title, media, dimensions, and a brief description of each piece. She grabbed the list, nodded, and placed it in a drawer from where she pulled out a blank certificate. With his passport in hand, she began to ask questions.

"What is your profession?"

"Artist."

"Where are you traveling?"

"America."

"For permanent or temporary residency?"

"Permanent."

"Why do you need to transport the items in question out of the country?"

"For work."

After ten minutes of questioning he was asked to return to the waiting room and shut the door behind him.

Three and a half hours passed as he agonizingly contemplated various possible outcomes. As he gazed at the oscillating reflections of figures and piles of objects in the polished floor, he was overwhelmed with conflicting thoughts.

Although he desperately wanted his art to become part of his foggy conception of an American future, he also fancied himself a hero—an artist who defies the corrupt system which nonetheless values his ingenious art so highly that they refuse, under any circumstances, to let it go.

When he finally felt a tap on his shoulder, he sprang up from his chair. It was Varvara Vasileevna. "I've taken care of it," she said. "Follow me." My father trailed behind her rapidly striding figure back to her office. "Here," she blurted. "Here is the certificate. Everything is signed. You can remove your things." My father clutched the paper. "Thank you," he said, before clumsily gathering his work.

Varvara Vasileevna continued to gaze at him.

He didn't know the details of the arrangement with Marina, but he recognized this look. "Varvara Vasileevna, please allow me to leave you a few of my works as a gift... if you like them of, of course... to remember this visit by." Her eyes sparkled as my dad scrambled to pick out which paintings to part with. He suspected it might come to this, but it didn't make the process any less difficult.

He could feel her eyes on his back as he shuffled through the art and wondered which selection would leave him with the least amount of pain and regret. He also searched for art that was appropriately conservative to suit Varvara's tastes, judging by the office decor. It wasn't too late for her to change her mind.

He finally settled on two pieces: a realistic still-life that was one of a few paintings he was allowed to keep from art school because Soviet Universities took possession of most quality student work, and a landscape of Kimry painted in subtle green and purple hues. "Oh, yes, thank you," she said in a professional tone, as she squirreled away her new possessions in a back closet. "Thank you," he said, again and again, as he began dragging his work out of the room.

"You're welcome," Varvara replied.

As he walked back through a corridor, he paused and pulled out the certificate. He noticed that the list of his art was attached to the back of it, and each of the forty titles had been carefully crossed out. The sixth line of the certificate stated:

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(Overall value of items - Worthless)

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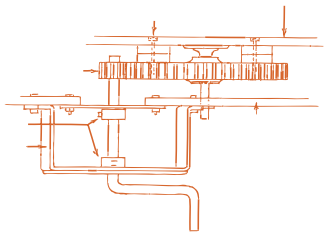
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ТМК РФ



POETRY BY RACHEL WILSON



Blood Portraiture

May those days
run.
Run rummy.
Run to our,
her,
your (guy's)
bathroom.
May the blood flow
down her legs like
babies milking out
from thistle weeds.
The signals of the light
always stuck in yellow
and I'm too slow
to make it.
Too caught
to take your
balls and
rub,
rub them,
rub them hard
until you say you love,
love me.
I'm not a person
but an animal in outer space.
I'm not hollow but a
caterpillar in an hour
glass.
A punch will
do it.
A punch to the
liver? To the
tummy. Stomachs
filled with absent
babies.
It was your (guy's)
it was your
baby.
Your baby
was it your
was it your
was it our
was it our?
The record spins
Anais Nin on dead repeats
on the loft bed 3 years ago.
Even then I thought I was her,
but I heard she has red hair.
Red like blood,
red like hearts in drawings
3 year olds make for their mothers,
red like the punching of keys on this
motor vehicle.
Red like the lipstick
you hated. I wore.
Wore down my sheets
I wore down my intestines
I wore down my hands and
my moles
my hair
I wore down my vagina
for your space vacuum.
Size declares war
and it's only a war
if there's dead babies.
Lets count your (guy's)
first.
Does it matter that I ate
eggs for breakfast
just to puke and
dream of her red hair that
evening.
Does it matter my hands
were never nice
and you said hers were.
I'm a sea in the middle
of a bees nest.
I'm the wedding gown
a goose wears,
the baby you
wished for but ate



Sestina

Chicago isn't what it seems. The streets
talk back to my hacking cough, and the ships
indulge in neurotic wars against the peppered
lake. It wasn't my idea to dream of your mouth
skidding into mine, pressing against my loose
untidy lips. It simply happened, like the earth was

never ours to rest against. The wooden floor was
cracked, or chipped, or perhaps a blanket. Streets
froze in our agonizing silence. Lamps hanging loose
against the concrete desires. I once danced around those ships
like their existence didn't even matter. I ran my mouth
against their cracked spines, a dark pepper.

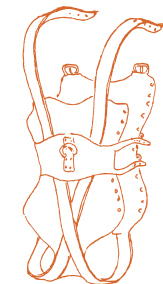
If you feel shaken don't retreat to peppered
glances, smiles coming at you with signs of wear, it was
enough to destroy me once. There are mouths
destructive enough to turn your childhood street
into a place of resistance. Every ship
I knew of could sink, and that's unsettling when loose

Moments are held by glue as shaky as memory. Lose,
or win, its not up to me or even the skulls peppered
and prepared for battle. There are wavering ships
in every harbor waiting for a home. If I was
a floating seagull, I might forget about the cold Chicago streets
and instead focus on where to place a tired mouth.

Instead I lie, look at your silent mouth
and smile, pretend like the thought of losing
you is no big deal. I live on a street
in a city that is yours. I buy myself roses, pepper
them with guilt and leave what was
forgotten. Every night ships

carry my dreams away from me, ship
them out to a distant land where your mouth
rests beside mine, breathing in next to me. I was
yours before you mentioned it, there before loose
ties began to strangle. There is black pepper
inside of me, it covers the swollen streets

and inhabits the ships on Lake Michigan. If I lose,
or forget where you keep your mouth in the peppered
sky don't remind me of what was. Instead let winter fill the streets.



Ballad For Hart Crane 1899-1932

Sometimes there are rocks and walls
in the way. Fifty feet of bells that sing
in our world all at once. You decided
to look to New York, the wrestling ring

of men that ate at your shoulders
and produced fruit through their
slender stiff cocks. Poetry rang
through your collar like prayers

that were revoked and tossed back
down to earth. The steady waves
danced violently in persistent spats
against the boat. Watery graves.

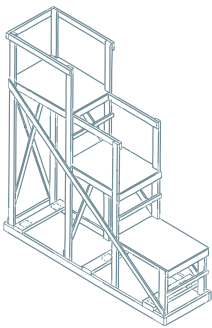
It was not the unwavering alcohol
Or the visions of the tower
Descending through your turmoil
That made you think to devour

The salty saliva of God. It was
instead the sinister breath
echoed throughout your chest
that you left to rot with death.

The bell tower forgets the movement
of your body plunging through tired
azure seas. The gulf never forgets
the skin it's carried, the required

movement from body to sea that ends
with the quiet moments in between.
Your body collided and began to sink
into ocean flaps, disappearing, unseen.

POETRY BY CHRISTOPHER KARESKA



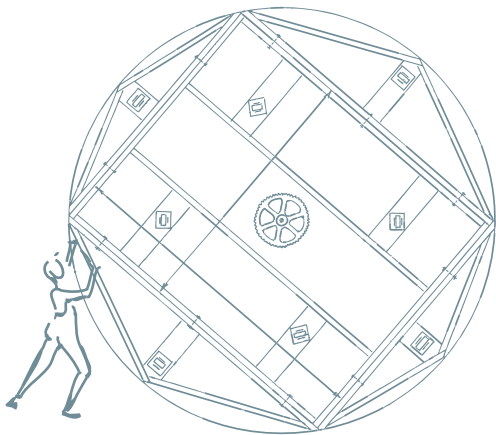
Contrails

stratospheric stillness. still
days away. atmospheres layered
high and cut by
a silent contrail, a steady prayer.

low below
I'm walking.

a youth experiment
in a breeze era.

detuned in daylight
at the supermarket parking lot.
blending, bending
American light.



An Athlete

let the outside sounds make you tired again

a young athlete is running down my street.
appearing where there are street lamps and disappearing where there are not.

a ponytailed ghost in tall trees,
home again.

unfocus your vision.
let the moving world outside you make you tired again.

dissociate again.
dislocate again.

an athlete disappears for good.

TIP SHEET

Is it Spring Yet?!

Runway-Inspired Trends for Our Favorite Fleeting Season

BY ELLI GOTLIEB

Go graphic.

Huge geometric and abstract prints are it for spring. Black and white patterns and individual statement pieces are the most prominent trend this season.



Glam it up in a tuxedo.

Women's wear took a note from the boys this season. Sharp suits graced runways as designers gave a feminine, sharp, strong edge to the traditional tux.



Monochromatic dressing

stole the show in many a New York Fashion Week's collection. Cobalt, peach, and emerald are this season's hot colors. Pick a color and dress in it from head to heel.

Japanese prints

and silhouettes are taking over the catwalks, with designers adding their own modern techno twists. Prada debuted digital-printed kimono-inspired garments. Just don't veer into Ed Hardy territory.



Lace it up

Downton Abbey style. Spring collections are full of fancy frills and delicate, conventionally patterned lace pieces.



It's spring. Wear florals.

Obviously.



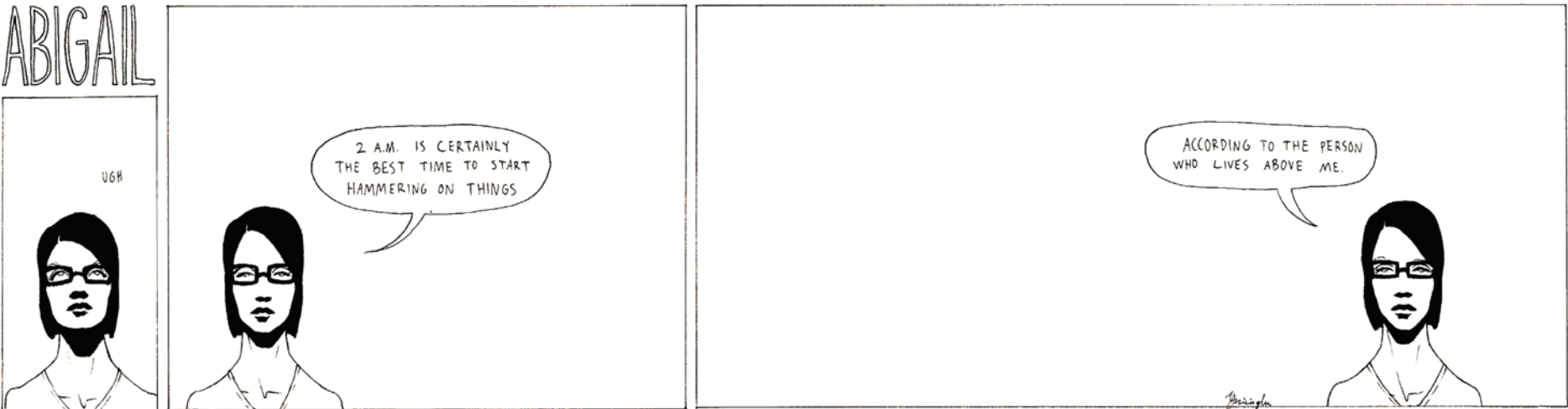
Crop tops + high waisted shorts

have been a hit for a few seasons now. But no crop tops with low-rise bottoms — keep the trend alive by keeping it classy.



COMICS

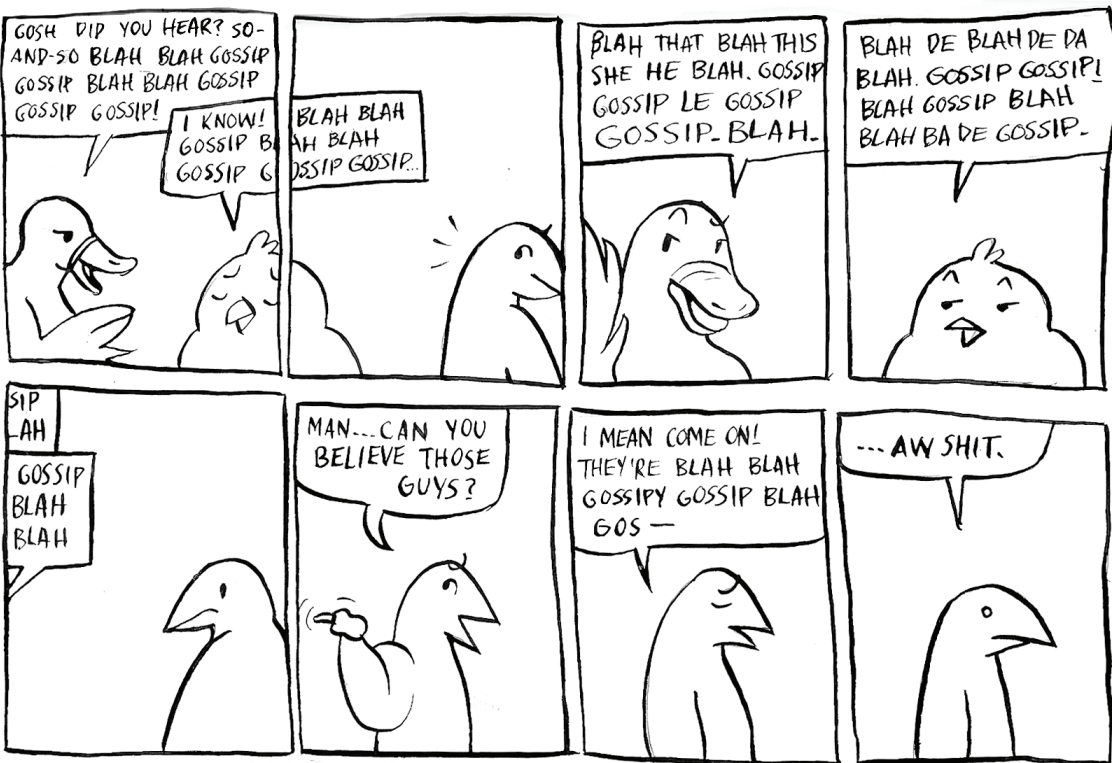
BY BERKE YAZICIOGLU



BY DAN O'DONOGHUE AND SETH JOSEPH



BY JENNIFER YUNG



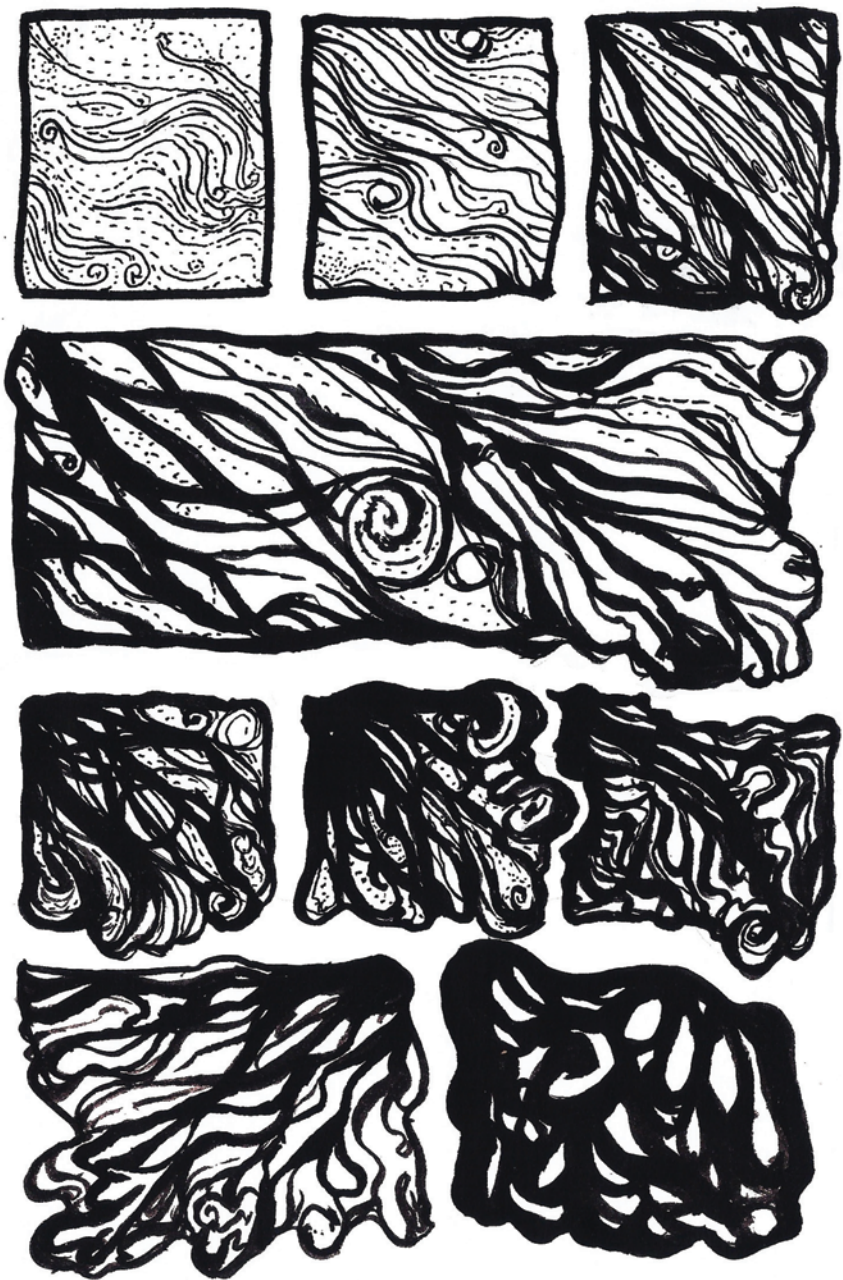
BY STEPHEN PERREAULT



COMICS

MEDITATION

BY SARA WOOLDRIDGE



CHICAGO AT WORK



EDIE FAKE
FRIDAY, MARCH 29
LEROY NEIMAN CENTER, FIRST FLOOR. 4:30 PM

JASON FOUMBERG (ART EDITOR, NEWCITY ART)
WEDNESDAY, APRIL 10.
LEROY NEIMAN CENTER, STUDENT LEADERSHIP SUITE
(RM 205). 4:30 PM

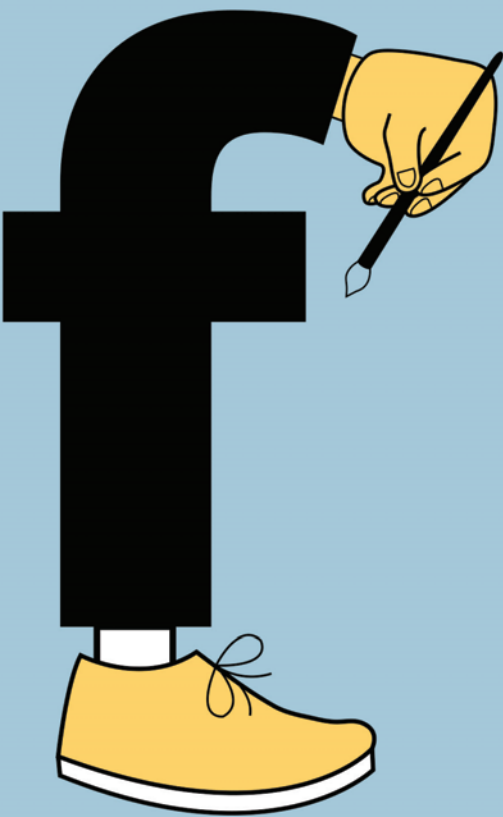
BARBARA KASTEN
MONDAY, APRIL 22.
LEROY NEIMAN CENTER, FIRST FLOOR. 4:30 PM



CHICAGO AT WORK IS A NEW LECTURE SERIES, BRINGING CHICAGO-BASED ARTISTS AND ART WORKERS TO SPEAK ABOUT THEIR PRACTICE AND HOW THEY MAKE IT WORK IN THE CITY WE CALL HOME.

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