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A STUDENT JOURNAL OF ART, CULTURE AND POLITICS

MARCH 2011

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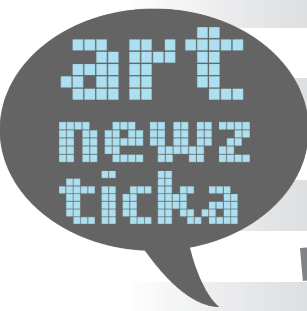
# NEWSMAGAZINE

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In what seems like a revival of 1968, virulent protests have spread from the Middle East to Wisconsin to ... Sotheby’s and the University of Iowa. On February 16, a group of protesters crashed the Sotheby’s auction in London as a Warhol painting was on the block. Declaring an “orgy of the rich,” the hooligans moaned, threw fake money in the air, and outside on the street, held a fake action accompanied by signs reading, “I Like Money on the Wall” and similar sentiments. Meanwhile, across the pond in Iowa, students at the University of Iowa have been protesting the impending sale of a Jackson Pollock painting from the university’s collection. The work is insured for 50 million dollars, and proceeds from the sale would go to funding student scholarships. ... Larry Gagosian will likely find himself in court ... again. But this time, it’s not for tax evasion or copyright infringement — nope, it’s for police brutality. 59-year-old Ingrid Homberg is accusing the police of roughing her up when tossing her out of Gagosian’s Anselm Kiefer exhibition last fall, and Homberg is suing the gallery for “debasement, fear, humiliation, embarrassment, psychological and emotional trauma, [and] physical and mental injury.” ... In slightly more heartwarming art news, as of February 22 the nation of Egypt began reopening the national museums and monuments that had been shut down due to violence and looting during the historic protests of the January 25 revolution. ... And finally, to end on a bizarre note: Banksy has been nominated for an Oscar for his film, “Exit Through the Gift Shop.” However, it appears unlikely that he’ll actually show up for the ceremony, since he has been denied permission to attend the event in disguise. Here’s what Banksy had to say on his nomination: “I don’t agree with the concept of award ceremonies, but I’m prepared to make an exception for the ones I’m nominated for. ... The last time there was a naked man covered in gold paint in my house, it was me.”

Interested in using your mad design skillz to motivate social participation? On March 10, head on over to the ballroom in the Michigan building for a Chicago Designers Accord Town Hall meeting — a student-led event entitled “Design For Social Change.” Best part? If you make it on time at 7 p.m. they’ll hook you up with snacks. ... SAIC student Alexander Choi was recently charged with felony aggravated robbery and aggravated battery for assaulting a cab driver with his friend, Sun Won Chung, a student at another local school. Both were scheduled to appear in court on February 25. ... Straight off of NY Fashion week, Shane Gabier and Chris Peters (SAIC alums) were recently featured on the cover of WWD magazine for the release of their F/W ready-to-wear collection for their label Creatures of the Wind. ... Got the travel bug? Applications for the 2011 Odyssey grants will be hitting the web this week. Keep your eye on www.saic.edu for more information, and don’t forget to apply for \$1500 worth of free travel money! ... Faculty member Roxanne Assaf was recently dismissed, and her class, Israel/Palestine: US Media Myths, was canceled. Students have launched a petition advocating for Assaf, and F Newsmagazine will be conducting an investigation. ... Interested in having your studio video profiled on fnewsmagazine.com? We’d love to check out your digs for our new “Studio Visits” section! Email us at editors@fnewsmagazine for details. ... In keeping with the 21st Century, we’ve relaunched both our Twitter and Facebook accounts. Follow us on Twitter at @fnewsmagazine, and don’t forget to “like” us on Facebook!



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# Brave New World

Guy Tillim, Kahn & Selesnick at the Museum of Contemporary Photography



Guy Tillim, “New town square with wrapped statue of Agostinho Neto.” Image courtesy of the Museum of Contemporary Photography.



Guy Tillim, “City Hall offices, Lubumbashi, DR Congo,” 2007. Image courtesy of the Museum of Contemporary Photography.

By NICOLE NELSON, STAFF WRITER

The play between depicting real and invented histories is the subject of the two shows currently on view at the Museum of Contemporary Photography.

Photojournalist Guy Tillim’s “Avenue Patrice Lumumba” offers a picture of colonial and postcolonial Africa, while collaborative duo Kahn and Selesnick present fantastical narratives of space exploration on the moon and Mars with their series “The Apollo Prophecies” and “Mars: Adrift on the Hourglass Sea.” The two shows look vastly different, but their intent is similar: to present compelling visions of different worlds.

Guy Tillim, an award-winning photojournalist and artist from South Africa, has focused his career on documenting inequality and injustice. His show at MoCP is named after Patrice Lumumba (1925-1961), who was elected Prime Minister of the Democratic Republic of Congo in 1960 after the country won independence from Belgium. Lumumba was deposed in a coup and murdered only ten weeks after his appointment, and his name lives on as a symbol of an independent Africa. In this show, Tillim examines what remains and evolves after the dissolution of that dream.

Tillim’s latest body of work moves away from his earlier examinations of social conflict to document the infrastructure and architecture in several African countries. The large-format photographs feature decaying concrete hotels with laundry draped over railings, government offices sparsely furnished with rusting file cabinets and wooden chairs, and public monuments to failed regimes. Individuals occasionally appear, but the setting takes precedence over the human element. The images are dominated by neutral tones of grey, brown, and green. Even the sky appears pale.

The photographs without figures are the most compelling. Government and university offices, no matter how bare and silent they might appear, still carry evidence of the activity that takes place within. A collection of



Kahn & Selesnick, “Stillborn,” 2010. Image courtesy of the Museum of Contemporary Photography.

*These different presentations of humanity pushing forward — one based on reality, and one based on imagination — are equally compelling.*

rubber stamps and a single white purse sits on a tourism office desk. In the Department of Commerce office, a plaid umbrella rests propped up against a decrepit metal cabinet. On a professor’s desk, a black and white photograph is tucked into the dial of a rotary phone. Though Tillim’s photos show evidence of decay, the stubbornly persistent signs of humanity lend an element of hope to the world he portrays.

Richard Selesnick and Nicholas Kahn take a different approach to image-making. The two have been collaborating for over 20 years as Kahn/Selesnick, a partnership that began in 1988. Past projects include photo-novellas and sculptural installations that present absurdist narratives in ethnographic contexts.

An example of this type of work is “The Pavilion of the

Greenman” from 1997, which explores the Greenman, an allegorical figure that defeats winter to usher in the spring. The pavilion features a roof of leaves, and is walled with a series of portraits of the artists posing as Greenman, with various flowers and plants glued to their faces with honey. Combined with fabricated documentation of pagan rituals, the project offers a fascinating look into a history that never was.

Kahn and Selesnick have adopted a more futuristic outlook in recent years. “The Apollo Prophecies” from 2004, on view at the MoCP, draws its inspiration from the lunar landings of 1969, which both artists witnessed as children. In the photos, they posit a complex mythology of the colonization of the moon in writing, images, sculpture, and video. A panorama of



Kahn & Selesnick, “Squidnight,” 2010. Image courtesy of the Museum of Contemporary Photography.

lunar exploration fills the entire length of the third floor gallery wall. It shows a mission to the moon from liftoff to landing, with astronauts encountering bizarre architecture and other remnants of a forgotten lunar civilization.

“Mars: Adrift on the Hourglass Sea,” Kahn and Selesnick’s most recent work, sees two female figures clad in faceless suits exploring the Martian landscape. As in “The Apollo Prophecies,” the intrepid explorers encounter evidence of a forgotten civilization in bizarre sculptures and concrete structures that litter the planet’s surface. Blue-suited individuals are shown with balloons, gliders, and sandboats that skim over the Martian sands. Images of the deserts of Nevada and Utah, photographs taken by NASA’s Mars rovers, and a healthy dose of digital manipulation combine to create a vision of Mars that is both haunting and beautiful. Their mythologies are so complex, their imagery so compelling, one wishes their narratives were real.

These different presentations of humanity pushing forward — one

based on reality, and one based on imagination — are equally powerful. The artists offer us a glimpse into brave new worlds.

**Guy Tillim: Avenue Patrice Lumumba**  
January 10 – March 6, 2011

**Kahn & Selesnick: The Apollo Prophecies and Mars Adrift on the Hourglass Sea**  
January 14 – April 3, 2011

Museum of Contemporary Photography  
600 S Michigan Ave  
[www.mocp.org](http://www.mocp.org)

# Humor, Whimsy, and Sausages

## “Peter Fischli David Weiss” at the Art Institute

By ERIC BASKAUSKAS

Longtime Swiss collaborators Peter Fischli and David Weiss explore some of the unseen possibilities inherent in daily life in a modest exhibition at the Art Institute. Their chromogenic prints feature humor, whimsy ... and sausages. These elements mingle to produce works that inspire chuckles and the occasional profound thought. It's a small gathering of small work, but it does its best to ask big questions.

The exhibition is divided into two separate rooms. The first, “Photographs,” features two series, the more immediately arresting of which is “The Sausage Photographs (Wursterie)” from 1979. Ten images are mounted in a horizontal line along the wall. With each shot, Fischli and Weiss present tiny food-based re-enactments of monumental human events, from the spectacular (the sinking “Titanic”) to the mundane (some pickles try their nonexistent hands at trade and barter in a “Carpet Shop”).

In some cases the sausages play people, in others they are cars or scenic elements. Cardboard, linens, and other

such materials account for the rest of the scenic tomfoolery.

Simple pleasures abound, like hot dogs wearing hats, and the pictures are seductive in their mixture of apparent haste and crafty meticulousness. But the photographs are mainly appealing for the cuteness and wonder that is inherent in the miniature; taken alone, these images don't travel too far past humor and material intrigue.

The fantastic and the ordinary are again conflated on the opposite wall, albeit in a more subtle, low-sodium manner. The other series in the “Photographs” room, “A Quiet Afternoon (Stiller Nachmittag)” (1984-1986), includes 71 framed photographs. As with the sausages, we see familiar objects occupying unfamiliar roles, but this time typical household items are the stars. Chairs are stacked and precariously balanced upon each other (such as in “The Fart” and “Outlaws,” among others), and rolls of tape become chariot wheels for paint-can-drawn carriages (“Ben Hur”). Many of the images feature unbelievable feats, like physics-defying invocations of Stonehenge and humanity's other various triumphs (one arrangement is simply titled “Monument”).

As a collection, it teeters on the edge of blandness. If the “Wursterie” taught us about the entertaining potential for staged photography, one suspects that the inclusion of some action in this series was intended to ground these images in the realm of possibility.

A second, darkened room in the exhibition houses the series “Questions” (1981/2002-2003), featuring assorted questions in English, German, Italian, and Japanese that are projected on three walls by 15 slide projectors. A large bench is available for patrons to sit, relax, and ponder the meaning of life (amongst other things). The questions range from humorous nonsense (“Is it true that traces of aliens have been found in yogurt?”), to introspection (“Am I pretty average emotionally?”), to the grandest imaginable (“What's waiting for us in the depths of the universe?”).

The room's darkness doesn't hide the occasional eye-roll, however. A number of the jokes aren't funny, while some of the heavy questions fail as both farce or real material for serious pondering. According to the wall text at the entryway for “Questions,” the artists claim not to be asking

these questions themselves; they simply want the viewer to imagine they're being asked.

In sum, the show is modest. Like the balancing acts in “A Quiet Afternoon,” each of the three investigations in the exhibition is most successful when balanced against the others. The playful irreverence of the sausage photos is balanced by the weighty existential concerns next door, giving them a gravity that might otherwise go unnoticed. As a whole, they come together like salami and broccoli in a bowl of condensed mushroom soup (flawed and lacking when solitary, but together, actually pretty good).

The notion that no single object must do all of the work shines through in what ends up being a very human collection of artwork. Sometimes we do ask dumb questions; that's okay. And when considering the tiny morsels that board the beverage container rocket ship in “Moonraker,” one wonders how important we humans really are after all, even at our most magnificent. In the end, aren't we all just ground meat stuffed in intestinal casing, waiting to be grilled and eaten by the great unknown?

**Peter Fischli David Weiss:**  
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**Photographs, and a Quiet**  
**Afternoon**

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Fischli and Weiss, “Fashion Show,” from “The Sausage Photographs,” 1979. Image courtesy of the Art Institute of Chicago.



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# Louder Than A Bomb

Chicago's largest youth slam poetry festival hits the big screen



By **AMANDA ALDINGER,**  
SCHOOL NEWS EDITOR

“The point is not the points, the point is the poetry.” At other youth-based competitions the meaningless clichés don’t change the fact that it’s really all about winning. But at Chicago’s Louder Than A Bomb slam poetry festival, community is genuine and poetry is performed to win. It seems that maybe, just maybe, the point actually is the poetry.

Louder Than A Bomb (LTAB) is the largest youth poetry slam competition in the country. Conceptualized in 2001 by a group of Chicago school teachers and writers, the goal was to repair a growing dissonance in Chicago’s youth community. Kevin Coval — LTAB co-founder, local poet, and SAIC professor — and his fellow educators were struck by the disconnect between youth from different areas of the city, a situation worsened by Chicago’s radical segregation. He notes that around this time, “the city council was trying to pass the anti-gang loitering law that was also criminalizing young people of color in this city.”

Realizing that they were the missing link between their students, the educators began meeting once a month, sharing curricula and a desire to unite Chicago’s youth. “In that culture of fear we wanted to create a culture of hope,” Coval explained to F Newsmagazine. “So LTAB was a good, proactive solution to bringing young people together who had a lot to say and who were traditionally criminalized.”

LTAB developed into a thriving annual event, providing youth from all around the city with the opportunity to compete with original poetry, and commune with kids they perhaps wouldn’t have met otherwise.

“The culture that has emerged from the festival is not just the festival, it’s not just the slam. You see a growing mass of young people who are ignited in their own education process and literacy in a way that I don’t think has happened before,” says Coval. Although the festival blossomed in its own community, it was still a local phenomenon until documentarians Greg Jacobs

and Jon Siskel came along.

“It started just by accident, like so many of these things do,” Jacobs (co-founder of Chicago-based film company, Siskel/Jacobs Productions) told F Newsmagazine.

“I was driving down Clark Street with my wife in March of 2005, and we happened to drive by the Metro and there was a sign on the marquee that said something like ‘Louder Than A Bomb: High School Poetry Slam Finals Tonight,’ and there was a line of kids of all shapes and sizes and colors stretching down the block. To think that they were going to be onstage reading their own poetry, which I never would have done as a high school student — that also seemed really interesting.”

Jacobs’s partner Jon Siskel (the nephew of late film critic Gene Siskel) didn’t initially share his enthusiasm. “To be totally honest, I had seen a little bit of slam poetry, so I was a little reluctant,” he admitted. Nevertheless, Siskel was willing to go out on a limb. The two decided to meet with Coval, which evolved into the pursuit of turning Louder Than A Bomb into the filmmakers’ first full-length feature documentary.

At this point, 30-40 teams were entered in the competition (entry rates have exploded since the release of the film, with a staggering 600 kids registered for this year’s festival), but obviously, the documentary couldn’t chronicle each of their stories. So after traveling to schools and meeting with kids from all over the city, Jacobs and Siskel narrowed their focus down to four main stories culled from participants in LTAB’s 2008 festival: three individuals, and one team.

When reflecting on the stories the film tells, the word “inspiring” feels weak. There’s Nova Venerable, a young woman from Oak Park/River Forest High School who performs a poem she wrote entitled, “Cody,” about her younger brother diagnosed with a failed X chromosome, autism and diabetes. “Will he remember how he slept in my bed every night after Momma left/And I held him like an extra pillow, opened my arms with his restraints/ When Daddy said to put him in the middle without a seatbelt, so he would be the first to die in car accidents/Can he know how he

found a mother in big sister?”

Beyond her journey as a poet, the film follows her personal life as a devoted sister and daughter, abandoned by her father at a young age, a co-parent with her single mother. “She silences crowds,” notes Coval in the film, “because her presence is that demanding.”

And then there’s Nate Marshall from Whitney Young High School, who grew up with drug addicted parents but has become a renegade slam poet, slamming since age three — even referring to himself in one poem as “Langston Huge.” An LTAB veteran, his final poem was an ode to both slam poetry and the festival:

“I thank this forum for help making me so strong/For letting me talk about sex, drugs, basketball and moms/Fond farewell to this chapter and for all the joy and laughter/This for every kid whose voice has been louder than a bomb.” A legend in his own right, this intellectual from the projects is notably the one to beat.

Representing Northside Jewish youth is Adam Gottlieb, a long-haired free-spirit whose positivity transfixes everyone he meets. “Adam Gottlieb is one of the best writers we’ve ever had at Louder Than A Bomb,” Coval says. “And one of the most sincere, genuine, gentle people I’ve ever come across.”

Gottlieb performs an individual poem in the film: “She stands with her toes hanging off the edge of the stage/Her whole presence squared like praying/Like she can’t blink even with the force of a storm behind her eyelids, shoulders shift around each other like lovers/Fierce like she’s shouting before she even opens her mouth.”

Aside from the fierce talent chronicled in the documentary, perhaps one of the most poignant journeys is the one taken by the kids from Steinmentz High School. This pants-dragging, bling-sporting team from “the wrong side of the tracks” has the charm of the stereotypical underdog. Their first time in competition, the Steinmenauts came out of nowhere as the winning team in LTAB 2007, and the pressure they put on themselves for 2008 is palpable. Nevertheless, their presence onstage resonates powerfully.

*“I think for young people in the city, in this moment, where they are either segregated or separated because of socio-economics and race or because they are self-isolated in their own home technology, the desire, the need, the demand for a public space that values the oral poetic has become really important. Not only to young people, but to humans.”*

— Kevin Coval

In one scene during the festival’s very tense semi-final round, the Steinmenauts debate which of their pieces will have the greatest impact. A team performance of “Ten Graves” — a lyrical meld of rap and song — shocks the audience with its dark content and passionate execution. “Ten. Nine. Eight/(Seven) year old boy put (Six) feet deep in the (Five) foot coffin wondering what (Four) while (Three) grown men have (Two) drop by and he dodges a couple of bullets but (One).”

The Steinmentz kids cull from a far more desperate set of experiences. These are kids who are admittedly different from the rest of the competitors, but their innate ability to slam is unreal; they are wired with the hip-hop spirit.

The sense of community created by spoken word in a still-segregated Chicago is what ultimately makes this festival such a success. “I think for young people in the city — where they are either segregated or separated because of socio-economics and race, or because they are self-isolated in their own home technology — the demand for a public space that values the oral poetic has become really important. Not only to young people, but to humans,” says Coval.

Siskel and Jacobs may have been going out on a limb in creating their first feature film on a then little-known poetry festival in Chicago, Illinois. But they have helped to spotlight a band of heroes — not only in this particular group of kids, but among youths of all ages and circumstances who use slam poetry to make their voice heard.

“What Kevin and they have created, in some ways it’s so ... it seems a little messy,” says Jacobs. “Which is part of its charm, but it’s so incredibly well thought out and powerful. And you may not like slam poetry, and you may have certain notions of good poetry and bad poetry, and I suppose that’s true; but when you see how brave the kids are, whether they’re amazing or whether they’re sitting up there with their piece of paper and are shaking and nervous, it doesn’t matter. You’re just so moved by it.”

*For ticket info for this year’s Louder Than A Bomb festival visit [www.youngchicagoauthors.org](http://www.youngchicagoauthors.org), or call (773)486-4331.*

*For more information on the film, including its upcoming showing on Oprah’s OWN network, visit [www.louderthana-bombfilm.com](http://www.louderthana-bombfilm.com).*

*To read full interview transcripts with Kevin Coval, Greg Jacobs and Jon Siskel, visit [fnewsmagazine.com](http://fnewsmagazine.com).*

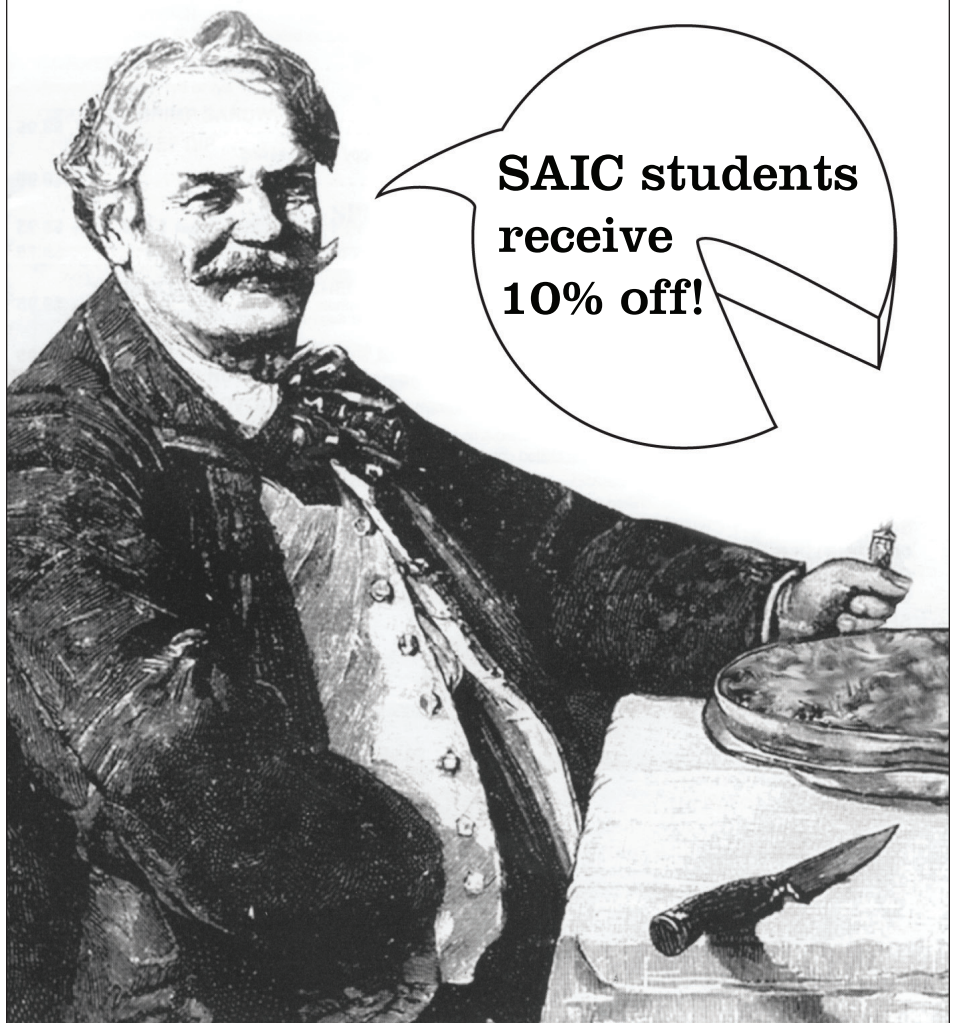


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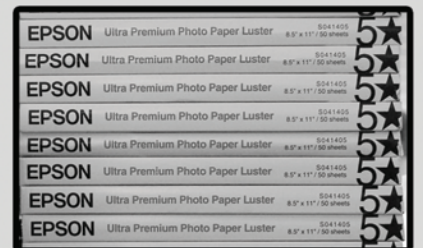
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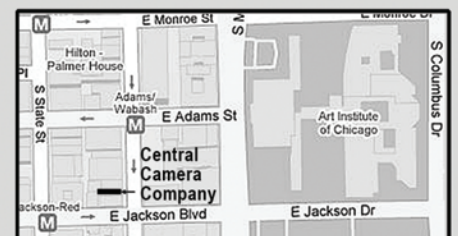
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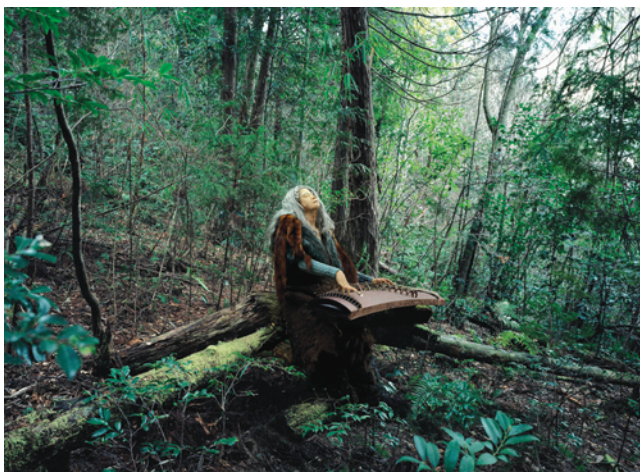


# (En)gendering Violence



Gabriela Morowetz, "The Sleeping Self," 2009. Image courtesy of Artworks for Change.

*Some of the pieces are hard to look at. Serbian performance artist Marina Abramovic presents herself bare-chested in the video installation "Balkan-Erotic Epic" (2005), banging a human skull against her chest with her face covered by her own hair.*



Miwa Yanagi, "Tsumugi, Estelle, Kwany," from the Grandmother Series. Image courtesy of Artworks for Change.

## "Off the Beaten Path" at the Cultural Center explores violence against women

By ALEJANDRA MONSERRAT GONZÁLEZ ROMO, ASSOCIATE EDITOR

One in four women experiences domestic violence in her lifetime, according to the U.S. Department of Justice. That means as many as 3 million women (or more) are abused by a partner each year.

"Off the Beaten Path: Violence, Women and Art," now on view at the Chicago Cultural Center, may raise eyebrows for broaching this social message in the confines of an art gallery. Organized by Art Works for Change and curated by Randy Jayne Rosenbergand, the exhibition manages to escape the threat of hackneyed, overly earnest approaches to the subject matter by including such renowned artists such as Marina Abramovic, Laylah Ali, Yoko Ono, and others. In total, 29 artists from 25 countries are represented, and Chicago is only one stop on this internationally-focused show's itinerary. "Off the Beaten Path" will also be seen in Norway, Mexico, France, and South Africa, among other stops on its world-wide tour.

Some of the pieces are hard to look at. Serbian performance artist Marina Abramovic presents herself bare-chested in the video installation "Balkan-Erotic Epic" (2005), banging a human skull against her chest with her face covered by her own hair. We can hear her wailing, but she won't stop mutilating her body with rage-filled motions.

Two different versions of Yoko Ono's "Cut Piece" performance are also on view. Executed 38 years apart (in 1965 and 2003, respectively), they remind us that the reality of violence against women has not gotten better with time. "Cut Piece" shows Ono sitting alone in a theatre stage wearing a black dress as people come up to her and

cut off pieces of her hair (or clothing, or whatever struck them). She stares motionless at the audience, struggling not to show any reaction to having her intimacy violated, as is the case with so many women around the world. Ono's silence amidst these small acts of violence is an uncomfortable reminder of some tough statistics.

"Not Just Another Day" (1998), a piece by the Cuban artist María Magdalena Campos Pons, shows a woman painted in white as she slowly swallows a long piece of white organza with the word "identity" written on it. The phrase "Patria es una trampa" (homeland is a trap) is written on her chest, perhaps criticizing the Cuban government's calls for heroic sacrifice in the name of the revolution.

Some works also address more culturally instantiated forms of violence against women, like genital mutilation. Three million girls and women are subjected to female genital mutilation worldwide each year. The Swedish Amnesty International campaign, "Rose Petals" (2009), shows pictures of roses with their petals sewn together in a subtle, dramatic analogy of the mutilation of beauty and life.

The exhibition is a sad survey of artworks of protest against a situation that demands an immediate response.

*The exhibition also includes a series of innovative local programs organized by the Ellen Stone Belic Institute for the Study of Women and Gender in the Arts and Media, Rape Victim Advocates, and The Voices and Faces Project.*

**"Off the Beaten Path: Violence, Women and Art."**

January 22 – April 13, 2011  
Chicago Cultural Center  
78 E Washington St  
[www.chicagocultural-center.org](http://www.chicagocultural-center.org)



# VIOLENCE

MADE BEAUTIFUL

Israeli artist Ori Gersht discusses his poetic depictions of trauma



Ori Gersht, “White Noise: Untitled #1,” 1999. Image courtesy of Angles Gallery.



Ori Gersht, “Pomegranate,” 2006. Image courtesy of Angles Gallery.

By ZIYUAN WANG, STAFF WRITER

Last November, Ori Gersht visited SAIC as a guest speaker in the M.F.A. Photography department’s Parlor Room series. In the lecture, this Israel-born, London-based artist discussed his photographs and videos, in which momentary glimpses of violence and beauty are made timeless; the physicality of light and space are poignantly felt; and atrocity is represented as something graceful, even poetic. Deeply rooted in his childhood memories, Gersht’s work weaves together themes of the holocaust, war and violence, themes that are represented through poetic metaphor.

Gersht uses the camera to construct a virtual reality defined by extreme conditions, one that oscillates between explosiveness and quiescence. Time and movement become a disorienting force that highlights the tension between violence and peace, as illustrated by his video, “The Forest” (2006). In this piece, the viewer witnesses towering trees sporadically fall without disturbing the tranquility of the forest. The story behind these images is anything but tranquil, however; these 100-foot trees are deep in the Moskalova woods between Poland and Ukraine, where Gersht’s in-laws hid from the Nazis and witnessed the murders of their friends and neighbors. The detachment of the camera disinterestedly observing the tragedy of a tree’s collapse parallels the impotence of a bystander witnessing horrendous acts of brutality.

Another short video, “Pomegranate,” depicts a bullet piercing through the eponymous fruit, triggering a slow motion explosion of blood-red seeds, juice and flesh. But while the pomegranate fractures into slices and particles, all the other objects in the shot remain completely inert. Gersht’s use of the time-lapse effect emphasizes the striking juxtaposition of destruction and beauty.

F Newsmagazine staff writer Ziyuan Wang attended Gersht’s lecture last fall, and intrigued by his presentation, recently spoke with the artist to learn more about his practice.

**ZIYUAN WANG:** First and foremost, how did you get started in photography?

**ORI GERSHT:** I was interested in painting, but I never saw myself as a natural painter. Also, I was brought up in the context of cinema, for my father was a cinema owner and film distributor, mostly showing artsy European films. The influence of the cinema must have played a part. Then, when I was 20 I started to engage with the camera, and as I became more and more involved with it, it just stayed that way. Photography was always in my background. It came organically, not as a surprise.

**ZW:** Your photographs are reminiscent of oil painting. Is painting a major source of influence on your art?

**OG:** Recently I’ve been examining painting more and more, especially in terms of how it forms art history. I see a direct relationship between painting and photography. As painting was getting closer and closer to realism, there came the point where there was a need to take a step further, and photography was a means to mechanically quote reality.

Painting is such a broad and rich source for me that extends beyond photography, but I’m not trying to make photographs that look like painting — although, the outcome is often very painterly. For example, I’m making a photograph of olive trees, and what I’m thinking about is how to destroy the image with light. So I’m doing long exposure until the light that creates the image is starting to erase the image, which yields completely burned out black-and-white negatives.

Another problem I’m dealing with is how can I bring my psychological state into the process of taking photographs of landscapes. This question is reflected in my series “Clearing,” in which my interest is in addressing how photographs can only represent the past. The images can all seem like the same pastoral scenes; but what happened years ago has such a strong psychological impact that when we revisit these places, we project our memories on those scenes. So this triggers a confusion between absorbing and projecting, and a fusion between my subjective memory and the objective experience of being in the landscape.

**ZW:** In that sense, is your photography more about personal or collective memory?

**OG:** It’s a combination of the two. It can come directly from collective memory, but the point of engagement must be a personal one. It’s when these personal memories resonate for years that they become universal. East Israel is all about collective memory and historical relevance. But my work also deals with aesthetic issues. What is the nature and boundaries of a photograph, especially when a photographic image is almost collapsing?

**ZW:** How does the camera operate in your art? Are you using it as a documenting tool? What’s its role?

**OG:** Yes, I’m using the camera as a documenting tool, as it always bears some relationship to reality. I find it difficult to use the camera to represent pure abstraction, but at the same time, the way it captures the world is not objective either. There is always a fusion of the subjective position of the image maker, and the indexical presence of the subject in the scene.

I’m not only interested in the various ways of representing a subject, but also how we can create images based on a very simple process. If we put a camera on a tripod and put film in the camera, then ask people to come and click, we will get almost identical images. The images coming out from the clicks is almost removed from the way we experienced the world. I shoot at a high speed or long exposure so that when the light starts to erase information, reality reveals itself differently. It’s interesting how reality can expand itself through the representation of photography.

**ZW:** What about your choice of subjects? It seems you favor non-figurative over figurative images, but I wonder if your still lifes are imbued with a sense of personification.

**OG:** My desire is to create something that transcends a particular time and location, that moves to the timeless and universal. Photographs of events or persons will become first and foremost about the individuals being photographed; this doesn’t interest me. I’m more interested in ways photography can represent through absence, rather than presence. Paradoxically, there is a resonance of the human being in that historical moment through the absence of the human being, and I’m creating a space for the viewers to imagine or feel these gaps.

**ZW:** References to World War II are explicit in your work, and this makes me curious about how you can try to achieve universality and timelessness when you are addressing such specific subject matter?

**OG:** It is specific, for photography is always related to the moment when the photograph is taken. My work starts with the particular, and from there expands into the universal. When I was photographing the landscape on my way to the remains of a concentration camp, I was charged with emotions. But the train I was riding ran too fast, so I kept missing the scene. So when I went back to the dark room and processed that film, I realized what I captured was a mist, and that was more significant than the place itself. It was almost as if the images were sliding off the film, and I came to realize my inability to capture anything concrete or tangible.

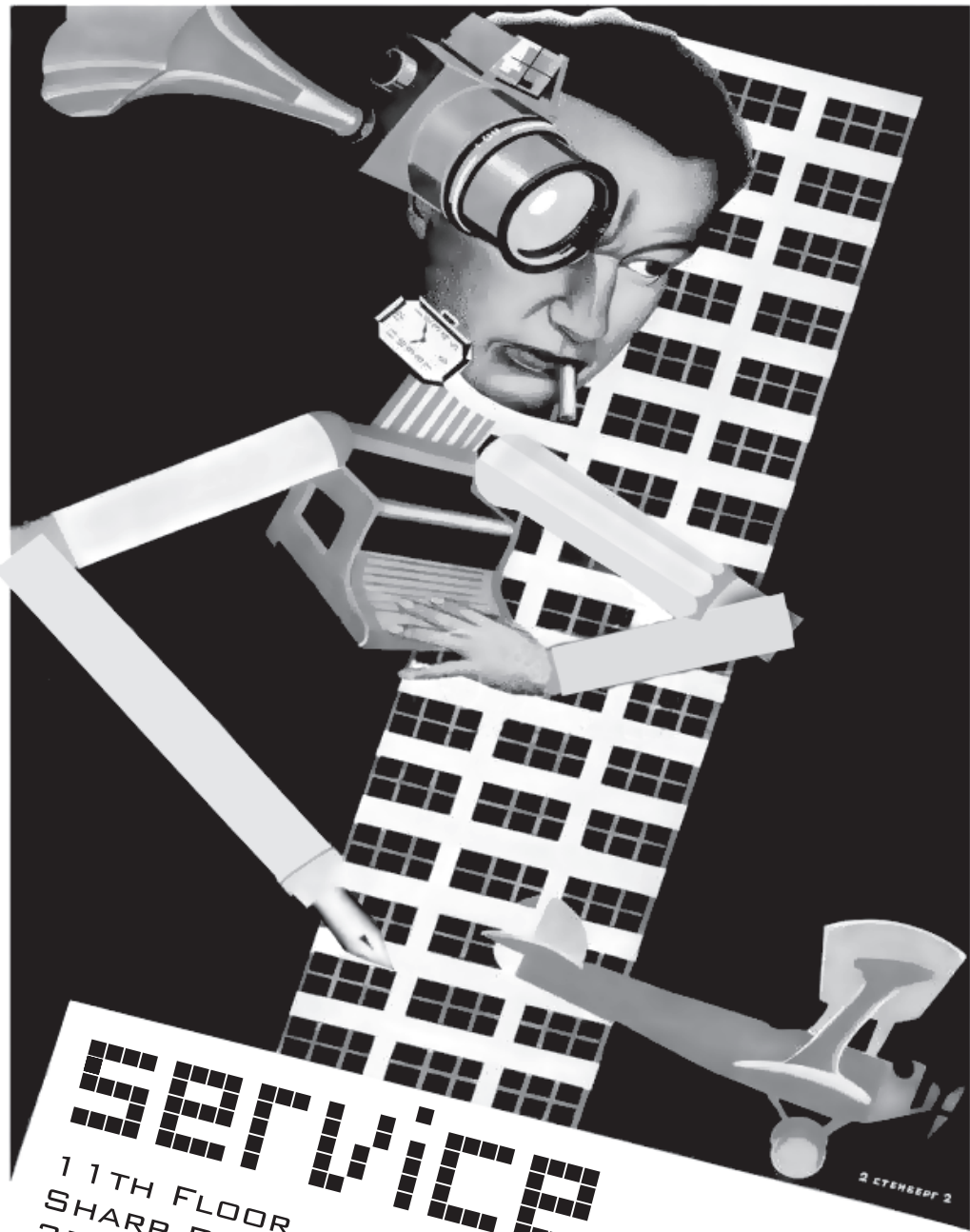
**ZW:** Can you describe how you filmed the video “Forest”?

**OG:** We arranged with the Ukrainian government in advance, and they agreed to collaborate with us and granted us permission to access the local forest. The trees that were falling were being cut down for lumber, but we photographed from a vantage point so that the viewers can’t see the workers preparing them. You don’t know why they fall, the event just takes place. I wanted the entire crew to be very close to them, because I wanted to see the physicality, and to let the filming crew feel the excitement. This sentiment transcends to the film.

The forest is just outside the Ukrainian village where my father-in-law was hiding as a little boy, and it used to be a stage where lots of dark events took place. But there weren’t many witnesses; the forest can hide secrecy. Maybe there is a relation to the Haiku, “If a tree falls in the forest and no one is around to hear it, does it make a sound?” When a tree falls, it is a very dramatic moment. But very quickly this moment is forgotten, and the forest will close the gap as if there were never trees there.

**ZW:** In video pieces like “Pomegranate” and “Time After Time,” an undisturbed still life composition ends up being exploded into infinite pieces. But in such moments of atrocity, every single slow motion frame is breathtakingly beautiful. What is your intention in depicting cruelty as beautiful?

**OG:** Life is made up of these internal contradictions. The contradiction which lies in the moment of atrocity and beauty is the one we always find problematic. As human beings, we experience these contradictory moments every day, but in different ways. We go through life feeling almost untouchable, but then we get a small illness and all of a sudden the world seems to come to an end. This kind of inconsolable moment that brings out a moral dilemma is what I’m trying to create in my photograph.



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# Audiophiles

By BRANDON KOSTERS

HONORING THE BRAVE MEN AND WOMEN AT SAIC WHO PRODUCE VISUAL AND SONIC ART



Noamme Elisha. Photo courtesy of the artist.

This month, we look at **Noamme Elisha**, a first-year student focusing on sound art.

Prior to attending SAIC, Noamme wrote music and recorded with her band Nebulosa in Bucharest, Romania.

**BRANDON KOSTERS:** So music. How did you get involved with it?

**NOAMME ELISHA:** I started taking piano lessons at the age of four, and I'm still going strong. When I was in fifth grade, rock and roll became pretty cool, so I took up the electric guitar. I got bored with it pretty quick, and I switched to the bass guitar. So on one side I had piano where I was playing classical music, and then I joined a jazz band with my bass guitar and that was all high school.

When I was 16, I started to get involved with the Romanian music industry — all the bands that were happening, production that was happening — and I started looking for people to play with that were sort of outside my miserable music scene at the school. I started playing with some really good musicians. I mean, it's a very small music scene, like 25 people or something like that. I started out playing with this guy as his side project from his big successful band.

**BK:** What was the name of the band?

**NE:** We were called Nebulosa. We were together for two years and then I came here. We gigged locally. We got some nice reviews in Europe, like in Sweden for some reason, and we released our EP this winter when I came to visit. And now I'm here, I guess.

**BK:** Are you from Romania originally?

**NE:** No. Originally I'm from Israel. I grew up in Romania. I moved there when I was four.

**BK:** How, in your experience, does the Chicago music scene differ from what you knew in Romania?

**NE:** Well, if you look at the grand scheme of things, Bucharest (where I grew up) is a pretty small city. I mean, the music there was just developing. It was all sort of post-communist, so everything was starting to come out. You have all this great art and music and the film industry is doing really well. But things were just starting out, where here it's just been ... [around] forever. It's a lot more elitist here. It's been hard to find good people to play with. Here, it's also a lot less liberal, because I mean ... you wanna go see a local show, you need to be 21. A couple weeks ago I wanted to go see a jazz show at five in the afternoon on a Sunday, and they wouldn't let me in. I just wanted a lemonade, man. So that's kind of different.

**BK:** What instruments do you play?

**NE:** Piano is sort of my main instrument, but in terms of gigging it's definitely bass guitar. And vocals. I also sing.

**BK:** And so you've been taking elective courses in the sound department?

**NE:** Yes. I just started the Max MSP course [Max MSP is a digital music platform paired with a visualizer]. That's pretty cool. I mean, coming here I sort of left my traditional music background, and started experimenting with a lot of electronics. A lot of "do-it-yourself" stuff. So that's really fun. Like synthesis. These are all things that I didn't

have back home, so it's nice to try them out over here. I'm trying to incorporate classical piano work with electro-trash kind of stuff.

**BK:** Do you produce visual work?

**NE:** Not here. Well ... It's a hard question. I studied film for like four years. I used to make a lot of films. But, coming here I didn't really have any time or energy to deal with that. I don't really see myself as a visual artist. I've dabbled in painting. I've dabbled in photo. I've dabbled in all of these things, but it doesn't really ... compel me.

**BK:** What are your thoughts on the interplay of imagery and music, or imagery and sound?

**NE:** When I did my films, I did the sound work. I composed the soundtrack, and I did the sound design/ sound effects. I handled all the audio. And, it's an important part of the moving image, because if you erase the soundtrack, if you erase the non-diegetic and diegetic sounds, it looks completely ... it's bad.

**BK:** I'm personally very interested in the way that visual art can be used to promote and enrich music. I also think it's interesting to think about the history of something like music video, and different avenues and visual media that have been used as promotional vehicles. The whole thing of constructing and perpetuating some sort of image. What are your thoughts on any of that?

**NE:** I would rather focus on sound and music and doing everything I can just with the audio. And for sure, I'm gonna get bored of it at some point and be like "OK. I need to ..." Or for example, I'd be playing with my band and I'd be like 'OK. We need some visuals in the background. Let's put some weird Chinese movie in the background just to contrast [the sound] ...' Stuff like that. I mean, the visual is pretty important. Especially if you're playing in a band, right? I think the audience remembers a lot more of what it sees than what it hears.

**BK:** Do you have any ideas about how you might want to integrate the visual element into your music in the future?

**NE:** Maybe something with a lot more color. A lot more costumes. A lot more ... set design maybe? Something that will complement the music. I'm thinking lots of silver. Lots of silver. Shiny. I don't know. I feel like that's all eye catching and attractive.

**BK:** Silver.

**NE:** Silver. Silver could be pretty.

*Listen to Noamme's music at [fnewsmagazine.com](http://fnewsmagazine.com)*

# Go, Grad, Go

Travel for new grads can be entirely affordable, if done right

By BRITANY ROBINSON

So, soon-to-be-grad — here’s the situation. You’re about to be thrown into the real world. A plethora of possibilities are opening up, but a grim reality comes with them. The economy sucks, your student loans are coming due in six short months, and you’re an artist who’s graduating from a school that doesn’t exactly emphasize careers and salaries. You’d like to travel, but where’s that money going to come from?

Although often associated with steep expenses, traveling abroad can actually be very accessible as more and more backpackers share the secrets to cheap travel. If done right, traveling abroad can be completely affordable, even for the recent graduate.

**The Benefits**

Traveling abroad transformed itself as a post-graduate opportunity in the 1960s, when educated vagabonds began referring to the “Gap Year.” The gap year is all about experiencing the world before the lure of a salary and full benefits traps your creative mind in a cubicle. For artists looking to stay away from the traditional 9-5, a gap year can mean exposing yourself to valuable new experiences. After four years of making art within the confines of one city, travel can open a whole new world of inspiration.

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the unemployment rate in the United States was last recorded at 9% in January of this year. Whether you hope to make a living out of your art or are simply looking to wait tables while you work away at your masterpieces on the side, the job market is looking bleak for everyone.

Traveling abroad can be a resume-building experience that doesn’t involve applications and rejection letters. Amy Wiss, an HR representative in New York, always notices international travel on the

dozens of resumes that pass her desk each day. “It shows the candidate’s commitment to broadening their horizons and moving outside their comfort zone,” says Wiss.

**Budgeting**

Mia DiMeo, a second year New Arts Journalism graduate student at SAIC, spent three weeks traveling throughout Germany, Austria, Italy and France before starting her masters. She highly recommends couch surfing as a way to save money on lodging. 2.5 million people are registered on couchsurfers.com, offering up their homes to backpackers in exchange for access to other members who will offer up their homes as crashing spots as well. Hosts and surfers post references online so that future surfers know what they’re getting themselves into before showing up on a doorstep.

While couch surfing may save cash on lodging, there’s also the question of day-to-day expenses. These expenses may be easy to navigate in cultures that resemble our own, but there’s a lot more to consider than just an exchange rate. Having spent much time in Southeast Asia where haggling is protocol, Richard Shreiber, a second year MFAW graduate student, recommends watching the locals make purchases before doling out your money. When purchasing street food, he would take note of what others were paying to avoid getting ripped off. Understanding a country’s purchasing culture before you arrive is a budgeting must.

**Using Your Resources**

There are many resources available that provide valuable information about budget traveling. “Delaying the Real World” by Colleen Kinder discusses multiple ways to travel abroad with minimal cash, or how to increase your cash flow

once abroad by getting a job.

Working at a bar, teaching English as a second language (ESL), and becoming an au pair are all money-making options that Kinder delves into. She urges travelers to take advantage of the Internet in planning their travels. “There is nothing standing in your way other than that idea in your head that foreign things are inherently more complicated and intimidating,” she writes.

The amount of information online can be overwhelming, but it also allows the potential world traveler to compare and contrast different options. Many travel agents and volunteer organizations will handle the nitty gritty details of lodging, airport pickup, and pre-departure planning for a fee. Skipping the middle man will require more time, but you can save yourself serious cash doing it on your own. Organization is key, and the money you can save by doing your research is worth it.

**Grants**

Despite the many ways to travel cheap, extra spending money is always helpful. SAIC’s Odyssey Travel Grant can provide just that. This random lottery, held in late March each year, awards \$1,500 to 20 students to travel overseas. The money is provided by Marion Parry, a generous donor who simply believes in the importance of world travel. Students must use the money to travel within the next year, but no academic project is required for participation.

Students looking to travel after graduation have every opportunity to do so. Those willing to conduct their research, save up their money, and take off into the unknown, will reap the benefits of an impressive addition to their resume and an experience that no job can offer.

The reality is that it is entirely possible to travel abroad

extensively on a minimal budget. Armed with the right resources, your very own gap year is entirely within reach. It’s now or never, and if you’re worried about what kind of job you’ll get when you return, just think of your newly elevated resume and remember: the Craigslist job listings will still be there when you get back.

*“There is nothing standing in your way other than that idea in your head that foreign things are inherently more complicated and intimidating,”*

**TRAVEL CHEAP!**

Volunteer ... Traveling abroad through a volunteer organization allows travelers to do some good in the world while broadening their horizons. These organizations charge a program fee that often covers housing, food, orientation, and host country contacts to assist you while abroad.

**Gviusa.com**

Sea turtle conservation in Mexico, elephant rehabilitation in Thailand, construction work in Nicaragua.

**Realgap.com**

Volunteer on a private game reserve in South Africa, social projects in the Galapagos Islands, youth outreach in Peru.

**Transitionsabroad.com**

Humpback whale conservation in Brazil, work with the elderly in Sweden, community volunteer in Vietnam.

Work ... Finding a job in another country can be daunting, but an international work placement organization can assist with job placement, as well as VISA requirements and job training. Working while abroad (even if it’s a short term, under-the-table stint) can extend your travel time by keeping the money flowing.

**Interexchange.org**

Farm organic foods through Willing Workers on Organic Farms (WWOOF) in Australia, work as an Au Pair in Turkey, teach English in Ghana.

**Workingabroadmagazine.com**

Bartend in Ireland, teach skiing in New Zealand, promote clubs in Ibiza, join a yacht crew in Australia.

**Other helpful websites ...**

**Couchsurfing.org**

Find free places to crash and offer up your pad to fellow wayfarers.

**Hostels.com**

Banish your preconceived nightmares from the movie and stay at one of these super cheap versions of hotels. You’ll sleep on dirty bunks above strangers, but that’s part of the fun.

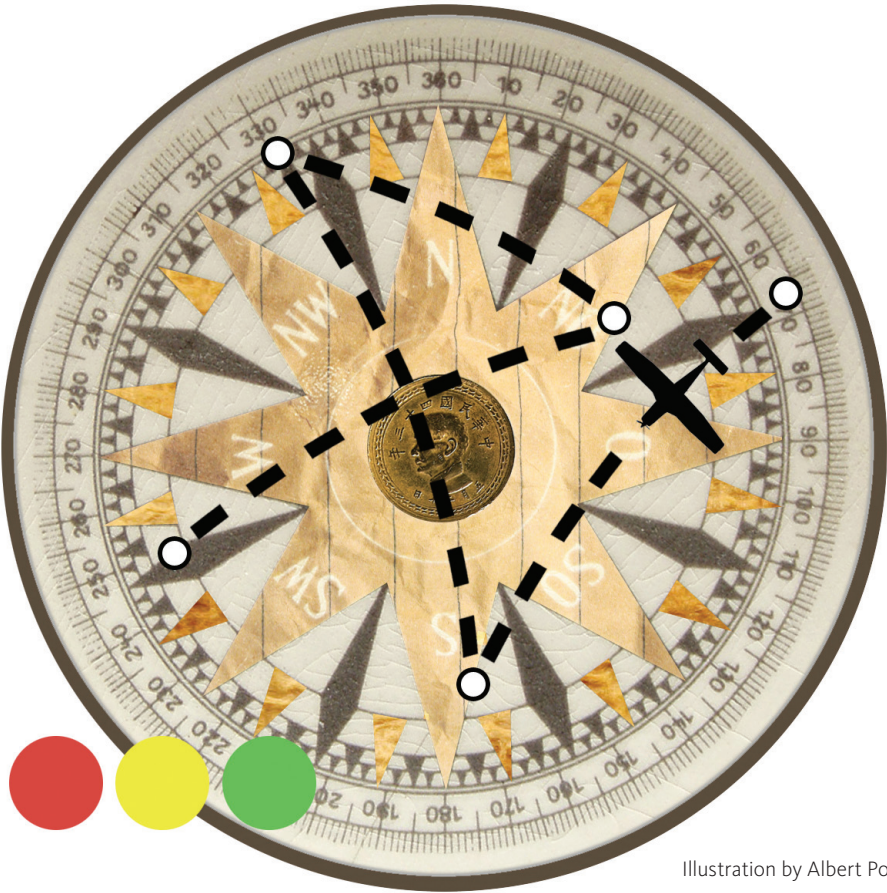


Illustration by Albert Porto

# Currency exchange

Pritzker scholarship tries to forge closer ties to China and its culture

By ZIYUAN WANG, STAFF WRITER

When graduate student Jiaxin Miao brainstormed the idea of laundering tuition money bill by bill, he hadn't yet heard of financial aid at SAIC for Chinese students. In China, where student loans and fellowships are in short, the responsibility of paying for school falls heavily on the parents. The nine hour labor-intensive performance of manually washing, drying, and ironing \$20,000 worth of tuition money calls to mind a pressing need to liberate art-making from financial hardship. "Art is a luxury in that it's not created to make a living. Artists need time to sit around and do nothing, and this nothingness leads to meaningfulness." Miao said, "But last semester by taking up two TA jobs, I hardly had a moment of relief for myself."

Fortunately, sympathetic philanthropists see that urgency too, and their generosity helps to assuage the encumbrance. Last month, a \$1 million gift was received by SAIC from the Margot and Tom Pritzker Family Foundation, designated to financially support students committed to the advancement of art and design in China and who intend to pursue their careers in China after graduation.

This scholarship gift was announced during Chinese President Hu Jintao's visit to Chicago, at a time when China's surging economic status is drawing global attention for its arts and culture. A gesture of friendship on behalf of the people of Chicago, the endowment is symbolic of a desire to have deeper exchange with China and heighten a mutual understanding.

"It is common for donors to approach SAIC with a specific, desired intent for the scholarship gifts they are making," said Cheryl Jessogne, vice president for institutional advancement, "The history of scholarship funds established by SAIC alumni, faculty and friends dates as far back as 1912. We have approximately 270 scholarship funds. Some donors may be interested in supporting undergraduate students, while others may be interested in making a gift that supports Graduate merit scholarships for Painting, etc."

Details of how the scholarship is structured will be forthcoming in the next few weeks. Jessogne explained that the Pritzker Scholarship will be "aligned with SAIC in perpetuity as an endowed scholarship fund, with the annual spendable amount generated from the principal of the fund to be awarded to SAIC students for many years to come. "This means the one million endowment will be put into a bank and last forever, while the interests generated by the bank will be awarded to students as scholarships."

Although this scholarship is dedicated to advance the arts and culture in China, it's not exclusively available to Chinese students. Hiroko Saito, Associate of International Relations for Japan, expects SAIC to enrich its student diverse ethnicity by taking "students from Hong Kong or Taiwan"

or "ethnic Chinese" into consideration. In response to this concern, Rose Milkowski, Vice President for Enrollment Management, clarified that students of any nationality who spent time living and studying in China, have incredible understanding of Chinese culture, and are willing to work in China after graduation will be eligible to apply.

Apart from enhancing the Sino-US relationship, the scholarship gift could also be viewed as a testament to SAIC's long-term symbiotic relationship with China and other Asian countries. China was recently added as a destination of the school's recruiting tour, during which information sessions are held for prospective students. Professor Alan Labb, dean of technology, went on the recruiting tour in Asia last year. He spoke of the high regard for SAIC in Asian countries, "On the one hand, there's the awareness that our programs are uniquely different than art academies they have there, while there is enormous awareness of Asian art in western galleries as well."

Even though Dean Labb acknowledges that there are fundamental differences in the building blocks of the western and eastern cultures, the standard for admission is nonetheless the same as for American students. "We are looking for a sparkle of imagination and the ideas generation. Except the skill set, prospective students are also expected to be imaginative and easily fit into a transdisciplinary institution." According to Milkowski, the admission decision is made based on three key factors: "The admissions office looks closely at students portfolio for their conceptual ability and technical skill set, grades they receive from the school in China high enough to make sure they are up for the rigor, and TOEFL score to ensure the students have a good enough mastery of English."

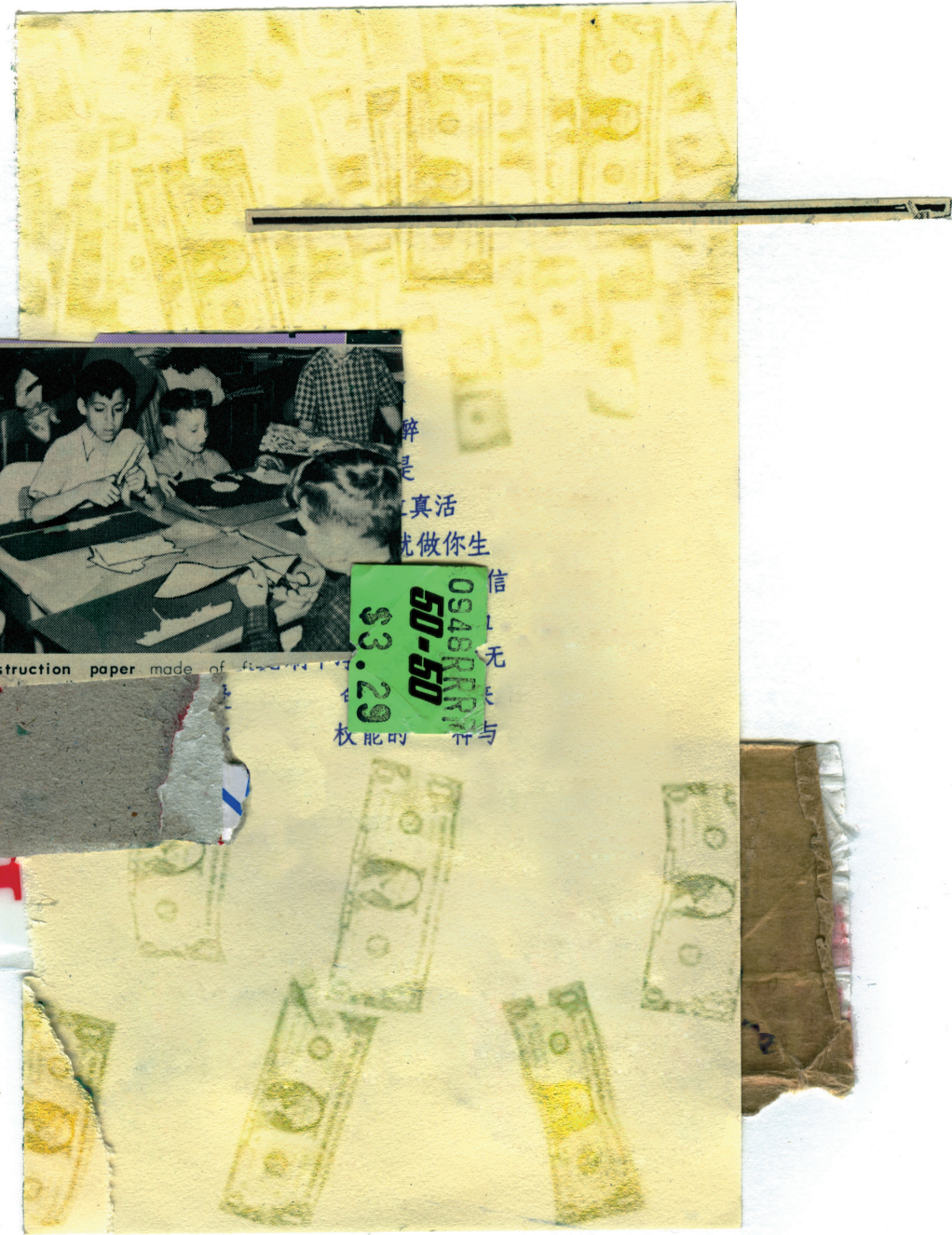


Illustration by Emily Haasch

Numbers of Chinese applicants have been increasing continuously, and the school has no problem attracting Chinese students. But the Pritzker scholarship could help to secure enrollment for Chinese students from lower income families. "We will identify the financial need of some of the students who are trying to come over, so that scholarship goes to the ones who would otherwise not able to come." Explained Milkowski.

But will the funding open up a flood gate of cultural exchange? In SAIC's mission statement of going global, the goal is the promote interchange between cultures. As Milkowski identified, "all students will then have an enhanced opportunity to be exposed to diverse cultures, modes of thinking, and various forms of artistic expression."

However, could there be a lack of curricular interest in including multicultural philosophy and aesthetics? There are a few faculty members actively engaged in academic research and intellectual interest in Chinese culture and art on a professional level, but the school doesn't have any Asian language course yet. So far, SAIC has only two full-time faculties teaching Asian art history and philosophy, and about five such courses are offered each semester.

In the case of Jiaxin Miao, he claims that his art is still rooted in his Chinese cultural heritage, but that he is trying to reach a wider global audience. Graduate Dean

Lisa Wainwright has noted that "artists interact on a global level, with knowledge of the issues that affect artistic practice internationally." In the context of cultural globalization, young Chinese artists trained in western institutions are faced with the challenge of finding their own voice and becoming independent thinkers. Hopefully with the Pritzker grant, we will see an increase in SAIC's commitment to conversing with Chinese culture.

# Getting Paid, Part II: How They Do it in New York

How do New York-based online arts publications make money, and why can't we do that here?

By ANIA SZREMSKI, ARTS EDITOR

Borders has gone bankrupt, and Barnes and Noble is for sale. The term “crisis in art criticism” has been bandied about ad nauseum, but according to a February 26 article in the Chicago Tribune, the publishing industry as a whole now faces a “valley of death” — and which has got to be a lot worse. If that's the case, how can the market possibly support arts publishing, with its tiny, elite target demographic?

Arts publications continue to proliferate in number, but they're hardly making money. In the December issue of F Newsmagazine, we published an article called “Getting Paid,” which featured local arts writers talking about which arts publications pay the best, and which pay the worst. The article revealed (perhaps unsurprisingly) that here

in Chicago, most vehicles for arts criticism either hardly pay, or don't pay at all. The economy being what it is, ad revenues leave something to be desired — translating into less money available for the workers who produce the content.

However, one interviewed writer, Pedro Velez, suggested that comparatively lucrative examples of online arts publications abound in New York. This month, F Newsmagazine sought out some of those online publishing endeavors to discover which models were the most innovative, the most economically viable, and which (if any) could potentially be reproduced here in Chicago.

## THE MULTI-PRONGED, HYBRID APPROACH

Internet pioneer Artnet was one of the first entities to fully exploit the possibilities of making money online with arts-related content.

Its lucrative, hybrid model has inspired similar sites like ArtSlant and ArtInfo, and has influenced more intellectually-minded online arts publications, as well.

Artnet began as an auction database and rapidly expanded to include an events calendar, online galleries, market information services, and a boutique magazine that enlists writers internationally to report on regional art scenes.

Launching a platform for arts writing wasn't the company's initial goal. Editor Walter Robinson told F Newsmagazine that Artnet started “in the early '90s as a computer database with access via a telephone modem funded by investors, mostly old master dealers like Hervé Aaron. Then in 1996, the owner, a German art dealer named Hans Neuendorf, rolled it over onto the web and launched both the gallery section and the magazine.”

Robinson told F that initially the site made money by selling

users permission to search the auction database, which costs about 30 dollars a month for eight searches. The site also sells profile pages to galleries. “The minimum package is \$300 a month,” says Robinson, “but many bigger galleries buy much bigger packages. Selling points include the database concept, which allows the aggregation of content in different forms; and search engine rankings, which Artnet can help with. We have a team of salespeople to convince galleries to sign on.” These revenues are what supports the online magazine component.

Artnet's initial success inspired the company to go public on the Neumarkt in 2000. Robinson says that after that, Artnet “raised 50 million euros, which was promptly squandered, and then the market crashed. We almost went broke a couple of times, but Hans [the owner] is hard-core and we held on. A couple of years ago we launched our own art auctions, which are a third revenue stream. ... [Today, we] do about \$20 million a year in revenues.”

## THE ARTIST-RUN LISTSERV-AS-PROJECT SERIES-AS-PUBLICATION APPROACH

Artnet's hybrid model of activities and revenue streams is surprisingly similar to a perhaps less financially solvent (but far more intellectual) online arts publication: that veritable behemoth of art criticism, e-flux. Since its founding in 1999 by editors Anton Vidokle and Julieta Aranda, e-flux has become one of the most influential international vehicles for arts writing (typically in the form of October-esque theory crit).

e-flux started as a for-profit listserv that eventually generated a series of more tangible projects, including an online publication. Vidokle told Hans Ulrich Obrist the story of how the enterprise was launched: “In November 1998, together with Regine Basha and Christoph Gerozissis, we organized a one night exhibition called The Best Surprise is No Surprise. ... We were all really broke at the time



Illustration by Emily Haasch



Illustration by Emily Haasch

and had only enough money to rent a room for a night, and absolutely nothing to pay for invitations or even mail press releases. At the time, I had just opened my first e-mail account and thought that maybe we should try to e-mail some press releases to our friends.

"A few days later I thought that this is something that could be structured into a service that galleries and museums could use, and a month or two later, together with another group of artist friends, Adriana Arenas, Josh Welber, and Terence Gower, we formed a company called e-flux."

With his hallmark anti-institutional attitude, Vidokle claimed that the enterprise wasn't financially motivated, but "surprisingly it turned profitable, and this enables it to stay fully independent of normal power structures that are just killing everything these days: the market, government funding organizations, collectors and sponsors."

As the listserv component grew increasingly successful, e-flux launched several other projects, including a video rental project in 2004; curating the Martha Rosler Library, which is available for consultation at e-flux's storefront location in New York; pedagogical endeavors like "Unitednationsplaza" at its second location in Berlin; and of course, in 2008 e-flux launched its now widely read online journal, which is also available in print via an on-demand publishing service.

#### THE SCRAPPY INDEPENDENT BLOGGER APPROACH

She may not generate 20 million a year, but Paddy Johnson has managed to establish a big name for herself with the widely read blog, Art Fag City. What makes Johnson's site unique isn't the fact that it's a blog for art criticism; the difference is the way her site has been monetized, and Johnson's sheer pluck in attempting to raise funds to support her blog and its related projects.

"I started Art Fag City in 2005," Johnson told F News magazine,

"and I started it in the same way that a lot of blogs at that time were formed. Usually people were not doing very well in their jobs or were bored; in my case, I was unemployed. I was working at a number of galleries and I kept getting fired from them, so I founded the blog."

Johnson told F that she got started by aggressively marketing the blog by sending emails to every artist she reviewed, and every gallery she visited. "That was the main way I got the word out there," she said. "Blogs, and I think this is true of other publications, don't really work unless they have a relationship with the real world, so that's what I've tried to do."

Johnson joined ad networks in 2006 and 2007, but the writer got her biggest financial break yet with a \$30,000 Creative Capital award in 2009. "Up until that moment, I was making very little," Johnson said, "and half of the grant just went to credit cards and taxes I owed. It also paid for a lot of travel. I went to Frieze, I went to the Venice Biennale, I was able to travel all over the country and look at a lot of art, and that was very important to my growth as a critic and writer."

The next step for Art Fag City was launching more aggressive fundraising campaigns. "Starting three years ago I started to do fundraising. I did it because I couldn't pay my rent. I used twitter to promote [specific projects], the blog, tumblr — all the social media tools that I had at my disposal to raise money. And I think this is something less glamorous, but definitely a major part of my campaign was that I e-mailed people individually and asked them for money."

"Today, I do fundraisers, I have advertising, and I also do speaking engagements. The way I see growing the blog is through

projects, and I've started to curate shows. We'll do more of those types of things that involve working with the community, because I think that is very interesting."

#### COULD WE DO THAT IN CHICAGO?

Could Chicago writers and publishers learn a lesson from their New York counterparts?

Unfortunately, it may be less a question of "learning a lesson," than a question of whether or not Chicago's much smaller arts economy can actually support larger endeavors with a more ambitious scope. According to Paddy Johnson, she couldn't have launched ArtFagCity anywhere other than New York.

"People here care about the art community," she told F. "If I were anywhere else, the community would be smaller; as it is now the community I have is just barely large enough to support what I do."

Steve Ruiz, author of the Chicago Art Review, expressed a similar sentiment. According to Ruiz, his site doesn't make any money aside from "ridiculously low" revenues from AdSense.

"I've experimented with advertising models, and each has failed in its own way," he told F. "There's a conventional blogging money model, which runs on high readership and strong advertising connections for image spots and sponsored posts. There are two reasons why I don't use that model."

"One, there isn't enough to talk about in Chicago's art scene. New York has enough of a signal that it can handle the noise — Chicago doesn't. Chicago Art Magazine is a great example of an attempt to use the conventional blog model in Chicago, and it has to be ridiculously irrelevant in order to keep up with the lack of legitimate news."

The second reason Ruiz doesn't go for that model is his concern for high-quality, thoughtful content, as opposed to writing chatty blog posts that might draw more readers. "Art reviews are a strange thing to market,"

he said, "because they are much more valuable to those closest to the article (like the artist) than they are to the general reader. I think a model for capturing that value would scale to Chicago much more gracefully. I guess I'm saying I could (and would) never do Art Fag City in Chicago."

We do have at least one big hometown success: Bad At Sports, founded in 2005 by artists Duncan MacKenzie and Richard Holland. This podcast/blog has grown in popularity and readership by leaps and bounds over the past six years, and, according to MacKenzie, has amassed an archive of conversations with artists and curators rivaled only by MoMA.

BAS may have excellent content, high readership and a great reputation, but it still struggles on the business end. The site survives on ad revenues brought in from the Culture Pundits networks and the occasional t-shirt sale or donation from listeners. "It doesn't cost us anything to make the show anymore," MacKenzie told F, "but no one *makes* money. We are one hundred percent volunteer run and sustained. We just sort of galvanized around the idea that we were an artist collective that makes something that looks like art journalism ... and that we'd continue to do it until it stopped being fun."

When asked if he had any ideas about how Chicago-based publications could earn more revenue, MacKenzie answered, "Chicago's art economy is undoubtedly too small to support any large-scale endeavors. Well I'm not actually sure if I believe that's true, but what is clear is that no one's been able to galvanize the will. I think that if Chicago wanted those things, it could support those things."

"In Chicago pretty much all our writing is volunteer at this point," MacKenzie continued. "The further we go down that road as a culture that people get more used to not paying for content, people aren't going to value it, so you have to find a way to produce something that people value ... and how to do that? We're not entirely sure."

#### BADLANDS UNLIMITED

Paul Chan has been testing the possibilities of online publishing with his newly founded Badlands Unlimited, an e-publishing endeavor launched in November 2010. The experiment may seem counterintuitive — when you think of art books, you probably think of heavy tomes with glossy pages and color plates. But Chan is placing his bets on the future of publishing being online. In this case, though, the interest is less in the money, and more in the physical and material possibilities of e-books.

On the December 21 broadcast of NPR's "Talk of the Nation," Chan told Neal Conan that e-publishing "drastically expands the potential of people experiencing your artwork in a book form, whether it's paper book or an e-book. I think we started, basically, in June. We launched in November. And I think our model is to waste as much time and lose as much money as possible."

"What we're interested in is publishing what we call books in an expanded field. And what that means is that not only does it expand the field of readership ... this e-book format expands the potential of us as designers and artists, in terms of composing books that are interactive, that are connected to video and audio content, and to provide a different kind of reading experience."

Want to learn more? Check [www.fnewsmagazine.com](http://www.fnewsmagazine.com) for our profile of Badlands Unlimited and our interview with Paul Chan.

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# The Half-Pint Brawlers

## Ringside performances turn to profit

By JENNIFER SWANN, WEB EDITOR

This March, graduating seniors will work tirelessly to add finishing touches to BFA projects, print business cards, set up websites, and finally start logging into those LinkedIn and Twitter accounts we set up when graduation was still months away. And while most seniors will spend more time in the studio than on their resumes this month, we still can't help but wonder how to make ourselves more employable. Throughout the spring semester, F Newsmagazine will examine professions that are inventive and profitable, even at the potential cost of your mother's disapproval. This month, F Newsmagazine spoke with Steve "Puppet" Richardson, an entrepreneur and art school dropout, to uncover the high points of his 15-year career as a midget wrestler.

### THE PERSONA IS POLITICAL

How did a four-and-a-half-foot-tall Chicago radio personality become the owner of a major sports league, the star of his own syndicated TV show on the Spike and MTV networks, and an actor in feature films like Jackass 3D?

It all started with a nationally syndicated talk show, a persona, and an idea. The show was Mancow's Morning Madhouse, which Puppet describes as a Howard Stern type radio show, in which he developed his now infamous persona. As Puppet, he began to gain a steady following that included wrestling fans and marketers, who first pitched him the idea of going pro.

"At first I wasn't too excited about it because what I saw in midget wrestling was clowns, they didn't really wrestle. But then they kept hounding me and saying, 'you'd be great in this business,' so I went into it and I started training with Windy City [pro wrestling], which is [based in] Chicago, and I did a show, and I noticed that the little guys got a lot of attention," Puppet said.

"My brain started racking and I figured, man, what if I just start my own league with little guys and we don't clown around? We train, and we actually do the wrestling, we do everything that WWE does, and we do it hardcore style, which is the old ECW [Extreme Champion Wrestling] style."

Puppet knew he wanted to create a league that not only capitalized on his appeal as a pint-sized wrestler, but that also used the term "midget" to novelize and monetize his stature. The result

was the Half Pint Brawlers, a team of eight wrestlers under five feet tall who perform at bars and arenas across the country, and on television sets around the world.

### INTENT TO SELL-OUT

"We were known as the Bloody Midgets before we were the Half Pint Brawlers, but that name was too controversial for the In-Demand pay-per-views," Puppet said. "I wanted to be taken into the hardcore company where we could do the thumbtacks matches, we could do all the crazy stuff that you see the ECW doing, but we're all little dudes. And that's kind of where I wanted to mix my market, and we were one of the very first companies to go into the bars, the clubs, the bigger clubs and set up a ring and come in and do a show."

Their first show was in the middle of January at Sluggers, the Wrigleyville sports bar. Puppet recalled his first glimpse of success: "We sold it out, people were looking through the windows, watching the show in the freezing cold, and that's when I knew we needed to do something with this and make it a tour."

Puppet attributes his success to the fact that he created his own market for himself, in which he wasn't competing with any other major or underground league. "We would come to the small towns, the big towns, wherever, we just packed our trailer and went. And so it kind of was like an underground band but we were underground wrestlers. We had very loyal fans and we just kept building the market."

### LITTLE PRODUCTS, BIG PROFIT

The Half Pint Brawlers weren't always so marketable. The owner of the company known as the Half Pint Brawlers knows that the loyal fans in his market might also be comprised of people who simply want to see midgets wrestling. For this reason and because of the use of the word "midget," the advocacy organization Little People of America has protested the wrestling matches, comparing their use of the word midget to the hateful and politically charged use of the n-word. For 42-year-old Puppet, semantics is of little consequence, except when it comes to the only m-word he's concerned about: marketability.

"Nobody's going to come out and see little people wrestling," he said, acknowledging that



The Half Pint Brawlers. Photo Courtesy of Steve "Puppet" Richardson

the term "midget" helps to sell what he refers to as his product. Although his cage-fighting, thumbtack-throwing antics have caused an outrage from activists, Puppet defends the trained athletes in his league, who, for obvious reasons, could never pursue careers as professional baseball or basketball players.

"This is what America is about, man," Puppet said. "We started the company, had an idea, had a product, marketed the product, and got a lot of attention with it, and now are making great livings with it. This is how we feed our families. We're just like anybody else, and the fact that [Little People of America] doesn't like the way we market it, that's fine." Little People of America isn't the only group of people that opposes the wrestling spectacles that are intricately staged by the Half Pint Brawlers. When they played a series of shows at Bannerman's Sports Grill, in Bartlett, Illinois last November, residents of the Northwest Chicago suburb tried to ban the Brawlers.

"I had to go to city council meetings because, whatever was wrong with my product, neighbors didn't want it, they were using the lamest excuses that you could come up with," Puppet said of the experience. Ultimately, Puppet prevailed by arguing that banning his shows would be unconstitutional. "The city council pretty much turned down the ban and said that we were getting all the permits and everything," he said. "It made a big stink in the papers and it helped me out. I love it when people try to protest this stuff because it just gets us in the paper and we win the argument."

### SYNDICATED SPECTACLE

As a sport, wrestling has always relied on a certain level of shock

value, and the Half Pint Brawlers are only contributing their performances to this spectacle as a whole. Their self-titled reality show on Spike TV and MTV Australia is giving the Brawlers a mainstream audience, and perhaps making their repeated performances less shocking to the masses.

"Before [the show] we were underground, but we're a little more mainstream now. Some people, they might think it's going to be a funny thing, but by the time they leave the show, they're buying our merchandise, t-shirts, DVDs, you name it. I think it's more mainstream now," said Puppet, who looks to the 1970s as the heyday of midget wrestling. The Brawlers' appropriation of 1970s midget wrestling aesthetics is as obvious as the members of the league themselves. Brawlers Beautiful Bobby and Little Kato are the sons of midget wrestling legend Lord Little Brook.

Though Lord Little Brook is a major inspiration for Puppet, the Brawler said his revival of midget wrestling is evolved and different from the old-school midget wrestlers in the WWE, who were forced to market themselves as the token midgets within a major league. "Back in the day, it was almost like a circus. They were very athletic, they did a lot of things, they did funny gimmicks to make people laugh," said Puppet.

His hope is that when the audience laughs at a Brawlers Show, it will be because of his opening stand-up act, not because of the wrestling itself. And if anybody's laughing last, it's Puppet, who is truly the master, not the puppet, of his own persona.

*To read Puppet's tips on how to market yourself as an artist, log onto [www.fnewsmagazine.com](http://www.fnewsmagazine.com).*

Puppet knew he wanted to create a league that not only capitalized on his appeal as a pint-sized wrestler, but that also used the term "midget" to novelize and monetize his stature.

# Without You I'm Nothing

## Audience as Artwork at the MCA Chicago

By JENNIFER SWANN, WEB EDITOR

When visiting the Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago, the viewer might be more keenly aware of being looked *at* than of the art on the walls. Stoic security guards surround the rooms, fixing their gaze on museum patrons and mentally judging the distance between visitors' bodies and the artwork, calculating the movements that could set off a sensor or sound an alarm. One feels almost criminal for looking too intensely at a Takashi Murakami wallpaper, or wanting to reach out and feel the stainless steel of a Jeff Koons blow-up toy.

A recent curatorial trend has seen museums explicitly engaging with the self-awareness of the art-going public, celebrating and encouraging the innate urge to listen to, interact with, and touch art. The Rudolf Stingel retrospective at the Whitney Museum in 2007 (organized by the MCA Chicago) invited visitors to graffiti the foil-covered walls with pens, wrappers, and anything they had with them. In 2008, the San Francisco MOMA presented "The Art of Participation: 1950 to Now," which featured interactive works by John Cage, Felix Gonzalez-Torres, and Hans Haacke.

Most recently, "Without You I'm Nothing: Art and its Audience" at the MCA features works from the permanent collection that represent a cultural shift towards audience participation and interaction from the past 50 years. In this exhibition, it is the presence of the visitor that activates the artworks themselves.

The gallery space is open and inviting, with works that are so engaging that visitors might feel as if they've been transported into the tactile and experiential environments of a children's museum. But despite the rubber-stamping station and a full-scale house made entirely out of recycled materials, "Without You I'm Nothing" is still a sophisticated, grown-up show.

In fact, some of the works are downright disturbing. In Chris Burden's "The Other Vietnam Memorial" (1991), viewers put on gloves and touch the seemingly endless list of names of Vietnamese casualties that have been inscribed on massive copper plates; Magdalena Abakanowicz's "Cage" (1981) also addresses the atrocities of war. Sculptural oddities such as Dennis Oppenheim's "Attempt to Raise Hell" (1974) and Tony Oursler's "Guilty" (1995) confront the viewer with timed sounds and movements that abrasively jolt our engagement with familiar objects.

Other works include Vito Acconci's "Convertible Clam Shelter" (1990), a clam large enough to crawl inside of, and Charles Long's "Good Separation in Soft Blue" (1995), a sound installation where the audience is invited to sit on a rug and plug headphones into various outlets on a soft blue sculpture.

Dieter Roth's "Stempelkasten" ("Rubber Stamp Box," 1968) is

also on display, along with a contemporary take on the piece: a series of rubber stamps designed by William Picasso Gaglione. His blocks of stamps and ink pads might look like craft store materials at first, but they in fact contain images and text inspired in part by the master of appropriation himself, Marcel Duchamp.

One of the stamps contains the words "Duchamp is a jerk," which invites the viewer to imprint the text onto their flesh, branding and labeling this slogan on any available surface they can claim. But if Duchamp is a jerk for placing an upside-down urinal on a pedestal and calling it art, it was precisely that gesture that places rubber stamps in a contemporary art context today.

Another stamp contains the image of Italian artist Piero Manzoni's "Merda d'artista," (literally, artist's shit, of 1961) which is precisely what it sounds like. The work attempted to position the artist as a celebrity figure whose shit can be packaged and produced for mass audiences. With Gaglione's rubber stamps, the viewer becomes the artist when he or she inks up the stamp and reproduces an already appropriated image.

"Without You I'm Nothing" is accompanied by a four-month series called "Interactions." The series consists of weekly performances and interventions by contemporary Chicago artists, who respond not to images, text, or theory, but rather to the museum visitors themselves.

In "Interactions," the art patron is absorbed into the work itself. During an interaction called "Outpost," for example, SAIC faculty member Lou Mallozzi studied visitors with a telescope and then described their appearance and behavior by speaking into a microphone, much like a sports announcer would dictate the actions and rules of a game.

In his interaction called "Following Dance," SAIC alum Justin Cabrillos paid close attention to the museum visitors by mimicking their every move, all while interacting with Acconci's ladder-based sculpture, "Bridge Chairs for Sex and Gender" (1984). And in April SAIC alum Katrina Chamberlin will offer to tattoo museum visitors for her performance, "Mnemonic," as a way of permanently documenting the viewing of the exhibition.

Exhibitions like this one suggest that the role between artist and viewer is not only symbiotic, but also interchangeable. The performances that take place in Interactions position the viewer as someone who is just as interesting as the artist, thus allowing for the possibility that everything and everyone can be art — if looked at in the right way. And for once, the viewer is permitted to actively participate and critique in a museum space that was previously only reserved for passive consumption. The implications for this type of activity on the future of the institution are potentially enormous.



TOP: Vito Acconci, "Convertible Clam Shelter," 1990. bottom: Chris Burden, "The Other Vietnam Memorial," 1991. Images courtesy of the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago.

### Without You, I'm Nothing: Art and its Audience

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# Egypt’s Revolution

SAIC student Mehri Kahlil on her experiences in Egypt



Photos by Daryl Meador

By ALEJANDRA MONSERRAT GONZÁLEZ ROMO, ASSOCIATE EDITOR

Mehri Kahlil (a 1st-year student in the M.A. Arts Administration and Policy program) was back home in Cairo for the winter break just in time to witness a massive historical change: Millions of Egyptians took to the streets to oust Hosni Mubarak from office. After returning to Chicago, Mehri sat down with F News magazine to share her views on the protests and Egypt’s future.

**ALEJANDRA MONSERRAT GONZÁLEZ ROMO:** Your country is making history right now, and you had the chance to see it happen. Could you tell me about it?

**MEHRI KAHLIL:** It all started when they [police] arrested and beat to death Khaled Said [a 28-year-old who attempted to publish a video showing policemen sharing confiscated cocaine] in the middle of the street, where everyone could see. His case attracted media attention and people were at the point where they felt they could not let this happen again. On Facebook, young Egyptians started the group “We are all Khaled Said” – and this is how the movement started. The first protest [in Cairo] was on Jan 25; before that, any kind of protest was either ignored or suppressed. I got an invitation, but everyone knows the government monitors the Internet so I was scared to reply and I didn’t go. We thought no one would show up, but everyone did. Then, the government cut off telephone lines and Internet all over the city to prevent further protests; and perhaps they didn’t think it would go on after that, but more people showed up the next day, and the next, and the next. Even people who didn’t mind Mubarak started hating him after his reaction towards the protests [reports indicate that protestors were shot with

rubber bullets, water cannons and tear gas, arrested and held without charge, and beaten by the police and the military]. My house is close to Tahrir Square and it is kind of over a hill, so I could see it all from there. I could see the National Democratic Party building (which is considered a symbol of corruption) burning, and I could also feel the tear gas. Four days later, Mubarak gave his first speech saying he was not leaving. Up to that point there were three million people on the streets. I wasn’t there, but I have many friends who were, no one cared about the curfew. The government released people from jail [although this may just have been a rumor] so we all had to protect our houses. My father and many other men were standing with sticks outside our houses to protect them. It was very scary. The next day the city was in chaos, but it was the first time absolutely everyone was working together; we all wanted the same thing. It was very inspiring. We don’t have streetlights in Egypt; it is police who direct traffic, but the police were gone, so citizens took over their job to keep the city going. You could see all kinds of people sharing food, rich and poor. Others were raising funds for poor people who had lost already several labor days; there were people all over the streets cleaning and helping each other, making sure the protest stayed peaceful. It was hard, but very exciting; I had never seen all my country working together. **AMGR:** Wael Ghonim [head of marketing for Google Middle East and Africa, and an Internet activist] became an international figure and a symbol for youth. How do Egyptians feel about him?

**MK:** He had been running a Facebook Fan Page to promote democracy and protests in Egypt. On January 27, he disappeared [Mostafa Alnagar, a major Egyptian opposition figure, reported that Wael Ghonim was alive and detained by the authorities and to be released ‘within hours’]. As days passed, people were losing hope, and they started wondering if staying out protesting was worth it. When he was released after being detained for 11 days and he gave that extremely emotional interview, people felt renewed strength to keep going.

**AMGR:** What happened when Mubarak resigned? You were back in school when that happened, right?

**MK:** Yes, I felt very bad to leave Egypt precisely in that moment. This is why I feel that I need to have a very good plan to do something for my country when I go back. I had already missed a week of class, so I had to come back to school but we had no idea of what was going to happen. When I left Egypt, the Internet and phone lines were still down and I didn’t even know if I was going to be able to talk to my family to know if they were fine. It was very hard for me to leave, very sad. The day Mubarak resigned I was home watching Al Jazeera, and I was listening to the vice president speaking – some nonsense speech, I thought. I was so surprised when he said Mubarak had left. I called my family (the phone was working again) and everyone was thrilled. I had already contacted some Egyptians here in Chicago to see if anyone was going to protest here, but after this, the plans changed and we had to celebrate. Only around 50 Egyptians came out to celebrate, I was one of them.

**AMGR:** Presidential elections are expected to take place in September. Is there someone most of the people would like to lead Egypt?

**MK:** We don’t know who is taking the lead. There are some names, but I don’t think any of them has the support of the majority. The Muslim Brotherhood already started a political party but they said that no women or COPTS (Egyptian Christians) could be candidates, so this is already not looking very good.

**AMGR:** Do you think people will accept the results of the elections? Does it look like they are going to be legitimate?

**MK:** Yes, I think that if people feel they are democratic, they will accept the result. Everyone wants to vote, that is the new fight; there are groups all over the country explaining to poor people that they have to vote and that it is extremely important to do it.

**AMGR:** How do you feel now?

**MK:** I have mixed emotions; it has been exciting and scary. It is very impressive to see history happening before your eyes. Previously we felt like we couldn’t do anything to improve the situation of our country, but the people have united as never before; they feel empowered and like they can really make a change. Everyone feels responsible for what happens next, but now they know what they are able to achieve working together. I think this showed the world how good our people are, they achieved all this in a peaceful and beautiful way. I hope this fights the stereotypes other countries have about us and about Islam. We are not violent people.

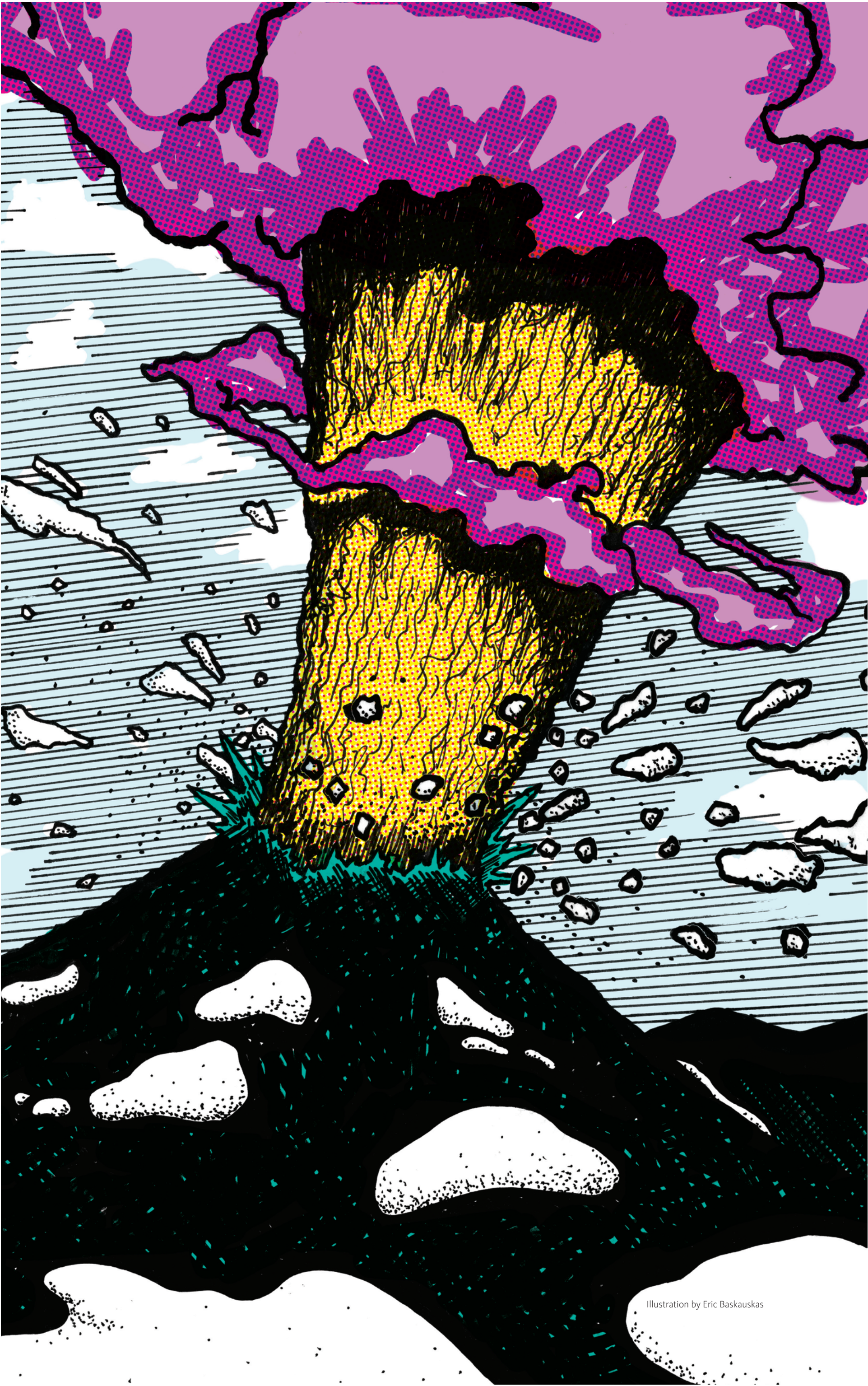


Illustration by Eric Baskauskas



# An Artpocalypse?

Privatizing arts and culture not the solution to city's financial woes

By ANIA SZREMSKI ARTS EDITOR

"We need to cut the fluffery like NPR, the National Endowment for the Arts, those types of things — those are obvious."

Sarah Palin's statement on Greta Van Susteren's show "On the Record" on January 1 may have been spoken by one of the most widely ridiculed politicians of our times, but the sentiment rings true for many. After all, thus far 2011 has been the Year of Crisis; since the beginning of January, the world has witnessed cataclysmic natural disasters, mass uprisings in the Middle East, and now desperate labor protests right here in the Midwest. Despite reports that the economy is improving, more and more businesses are announcing bankruptcy, and deficits at the city, state and federal level continue to grow at an alarming rate. In the midst of all this urgent hardship and turmoil, are the arts and culture really that important?

Not at all, says Sarah Palin — and the House of Representatives agrees. On February 17, a 217-209 vote passed a bill to slash funding for the National Endowment for the Arts by \$20.6 million. And the NEA is lucky that it wasn't worse; on January 20, the Los Angeles Times reported that the 165-member Republican Study Committee proposed the "Spending Reduction Act for 2011," which advocated reducing federal spending by \$2.5 trillion in part by completely eliminating the NEA, along with its "fluffy" counterparts, the National Endowment for the Humanities and the Corporation for Public Broadcasting.

The \$20.6 million cut is the worst blow dealt to the NEA since the Culture Wars of 1995, when a disgruntled Republican-majority House and Senate moved to dissolve the NEA in retribution for funding what the GOP considered to be morally suspect art projects. In the end, they were unsuccessful, but they did manage to eliminate the NEA's individual artist grants and cut its total budget by 39 percent, a cut that has remained in place since then.

With the recent censorship scandal at the Smithsonian fresh in our minds, this most recent spate of cuts to the arts might smack of a Culture Wars-type situation. But in this case, the government's attempt to absolve itself of responsibility for funding arts and culture might be less motivated by Victorian priggishness than by sheer financial desperation, as well as by more

*"I think I would rather see this money spent on school teachers, policemen, firefighters or as a reduction of my taxes. Let the rich artsy farty high tea and crumpets crowd support this stuff with their own money."*

general neoliberal tendencies towards privatization — Milton Friedman would have been proud of these developments.

That certainly seems to be the case here in Chicago. In December, the city made a move that foreshadowed the federal government's actions this February. The entire Department of Cultural Affairs was sliced, diced, and tossed to the private sector, as lame duck Mayor Daley made some dramatic last-minute changes to city departments before giving up his throne.

On December 16, WBEZ blogger Jim DeRogatis broke the story that 20 DCA staffers had been summarily fired (making it a grand total of 29 DCA staffers fired since October), as several of the department's primary functions were transferred to the newly privatized Chicago Tourism Fund. What was left of the department has since been merged with the Mayor's Office of Special Events.

Peter Scales, of the city's Office of Budget and Management, released this statement on these structural changes: "The following functions will be transferred to the Chicago Tourism Fund, effective January 1, 2011: visual/public art; tourism; cultural programs and grants; events, production, and retail; and some finance/administration. These will have no impact on current initiatives. In fact, the shifting of personnel should go unnoticed by residents and event participants."

While it seems downright bizarre that an entity like the Chicago Tourism Fund would be in charge of the visual and public arts, what really got Chicagoans' hackles up was the firing of beloved program manager Michal Orlove, the mastermind behind hugely popular free events like the World Music Festival. Unconvinced by Scales's promise that Chicago's cultural landscape wouldn't really be impacted by these changes, local denizens sent out irate Facebook and Twitter posts declaring undying support for Orlove (most of these posters were unaware that he had been rehired by the Chicago Tourism Fund in a different capacity).

Orlove published his only public statement on the situation in a post on his own Facebook page, stating, "This viral outpouring of support has been overwhelming and humbling to say the least. The past couple of weeks here have been quite difficult, especially having to watch many of my beloved colleagues go through this ordeal. It is hard to explain or understand why this all happened, but numerous dedicated and creative employees of the Department of Cultural Affairs have been terminated."

At the heart of the worries over Orlove's continued role (or not) with public programming is the debate over whether or not city festivals should be privatized, which would likely mean an end to free summer concerts. Since last fall, Daley has waffled back and forth on the issue, until recommitting to privatizing the festivals in early February. It's now up to incumbent Mayor Rahm Emanuel to see that through.

Another big shock to Chicago's art scene was DCA Commissioner Lois Weisberg's sudden decision to resign from her 29-year tenure as of February 1. The move was motivated not only by her ire over the restructuring of her own department, but also by her concerns over the privatization of Chicago's arts and culture. As Weisberg told DeRogatis in an interview for WBEZ, "My concern, and I think it was the concern of everybody in the arts community, was, 'What was going to happen to our free festivals?'"

Everyone would probably prefer to get into Taste of Chicago for free and enjoy summer concerts in the park, but anecdotal evidence suggests that aside from that, the average Chicagoan does not share the arts community's concerns over privatization. In fact, when a brief article on the Huffington Post reiterated DeRogatis's doomsday death knell for the DCA, the majority of commentators seemed to agree with the Sarah Palin quote that opened this article. Darrah Micah said, "I think I would rather see this money spent on school teachers, policemen, firefighters or as a reduction of my taxes.

Let the rich artsy farty high tea and crumpets crowd support this stuff with their own money."

OppressionProof007 agreed: "Seems to me 'departments of cultural affairs' are a good place to start cutting our budgets. We should be cutting all departments and agencies that aren't vital."

For me, reactions such as this are what's truly at the heart of the problem. I am concerned about the government's shirking of its responsibilities towards the populace, and leaving it up to the private sector to support programs that, like it or not, are a vital component of urban health. However, for the time being, I am inclined to agree with Scales: I haven't noticed any real change in DCA offerings since the structural changes (although we'll have to wait and see how the festival season will be impacted).

What's really worrisome is that most people outside of the art community see cultural events as "artsy farty," "fluffy," non-essential luxuries that should be the first thing to be slashed from the budget. If there's such widespread apathy towards the arts, then what's to keep our elected officials from doing away with state support for the arts altogether (no matter how paltry that support may be)?

What this situation calls for is public education regarding the role that arts and culture play in civic life. The arts create jobs and generate revenue for cities; and on an intangible level, provide space for community-building and critique. The arts community needs to stop talking to itself, and find ways to communicate this message to everyone else.

The real question is, how are we going to do that?

Concerned about the future of the arts in Chicago? Look out for continued coverage on the restructuring of the DCA and how Emmanuel responds to the privatization issue in upcoming issues of F Newsmagazine.

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*The Fellowship Competition is supervised by the Visiting Artists Program.*

# NOTEWORTHY



## Paint FX

February 18 – March 19, 2011  
antena  
1765 S Laflin  
[www.antenapilsen.com](http://www.antenapilsen.com)

Antena has been a platform for experimental, internet-based art pretty frequently, and the gallery's current show continues in that trend. Paint FX is a web-based collective of five artists who spurn physical materials to create what they call virtual, "hyperformalist" paintings using computer software. They are meant to render apparent the basic tools of the Photoshop user, "from the emboss effect to the sponge tool." So what happens when you translate the limits of modernist formalism into Internet language, and then display those virtual images in concrete material form on a wall? Visit [antena.net](http://antena.net) to find out.

## Instruments of Resurrection

February 19 – March 19, 2011  
Roots & Culture  
1034 N Milwaukee  
[www.rootsandculturecac.org](http://www.rootsandculturecac.org)

Elizabeth Chodos has curated a star-studded cast of local artists in “Instruments of Resurrection,” including Zachary Cahill, Theaster Gates, Mathew Paul Jinks, Aspen Mays and Cauleen Smith. The curatorial statement is frustratingly vague: “Instruments of Resurrection explores how artists breathe new life into historical figures, personal stories, moments in time, or forgotten scientific methodologies.” When, oh when will curators learn! But regardless, the featured artists are bound to guarantee a high measure of interest.

## Battleship Potemkin

Opening Friday, March 4  
Music Box Theatre  
3733 N Southport Ave  
[www.musicboxtheatre.com](http://www.musicboxtheatre.com)

Here's the "Noteworthy" homework for March: whether or not you've already seen it, the time has come to go watch "Battleship Potemkin" on the big screen. Eisenstein's film irrevocably changed the course of cinema across the world, and even more than that: there's the Russian navy! Violent protests! Massacres! Babies in baby carriages falling down steps! It's the kind of high drama best seen in the cinema, not on the small screen in a classroom.

## Book Launch: Talking with Fear about Dying, by Matt Austin

**By Matt Austin**  
**March 6, 12 – 5 p.m.**  
**The Storefront**  
**2606 N California**  
**[www.propellerfund.org](http://www.propellerfund.org)**

Matt Austin's artist book, "Talking with Fear about Dying," is the second book release for Brandon Alvendia's Silver Galleon Press since the artist/curator/publisher/writer (et cetera, et cetera) launched his new space, The Storefront. It's worth attending the book launch just to check out the new digs. Made possible by a Propeller Fund grant, The Storefront is home to exhibitions, an experimental film series, experimental pedagogical events, and more.

**Ben Russell**

March 11 – April 23, 2011  
threewalls gallery  
119 N Peoria #2c  
[www.three-walls.org](http://www.three-walls.org)

Experimental filmmaker, new media artist and curator Ben Russell is taking over threewalls for the gallery's second SOLO show of 2011. Russell is planning a jam-packed, completely immersive series of video installations that will take over the entire gallery space. Russell's films and performances have, in his own words, "been presented in spaces ranging from 14th century Belgian monasteries to 17th century East India Trading Co. buildings, police station basements to outdoor punk squats, Japanese cinamatheques to Parisian storefronts." His SOLO show promises to be no less intriguing.

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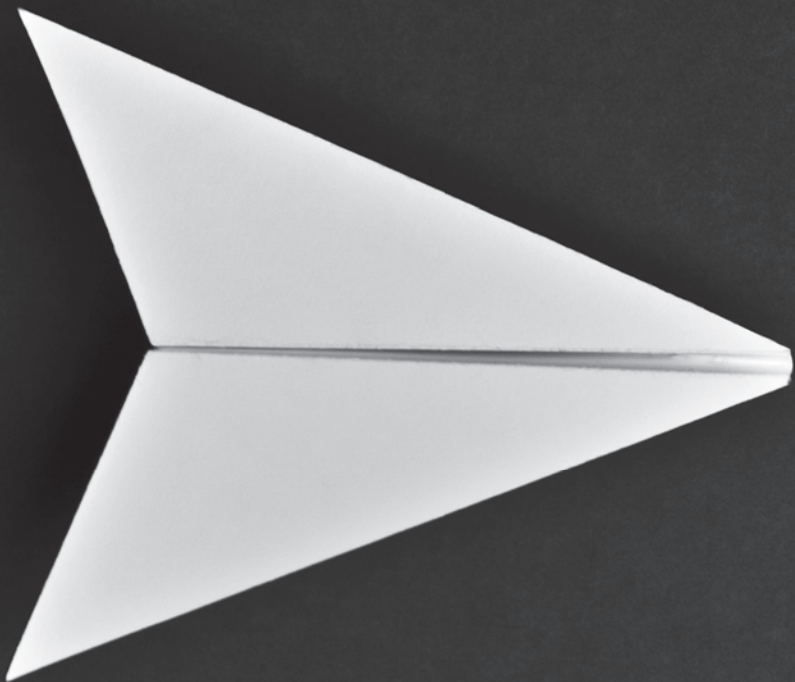
[www.blockmuseum.northwestern.edu](http://www.blockmuseum.northwestern.edu)



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*I Myself Have Seen It: Photography and Kiki Smith* was curated for the Henry Art Gallery by Chief Curator Elizabeth Brown with support from Steven Johnson and Walter Sudol, the National Endowment for the Arts, the Paul G. Allen Family Foundation and ArtsFund. Its exhibition at the Block Museum is supported by the Robert Mapplethorpe Foundation, Myers Foundations, and the Illinois Arts Council, a state agency. IMAGES: Kiki Smith, *Untitled (Head of Kuan Yin)*, 2002; *Untitled (Harpies)*, 2000. Both images are Chromogenic (Ektacolor) color prints. © Kiki Smith, courtesy The Pace Gallery.



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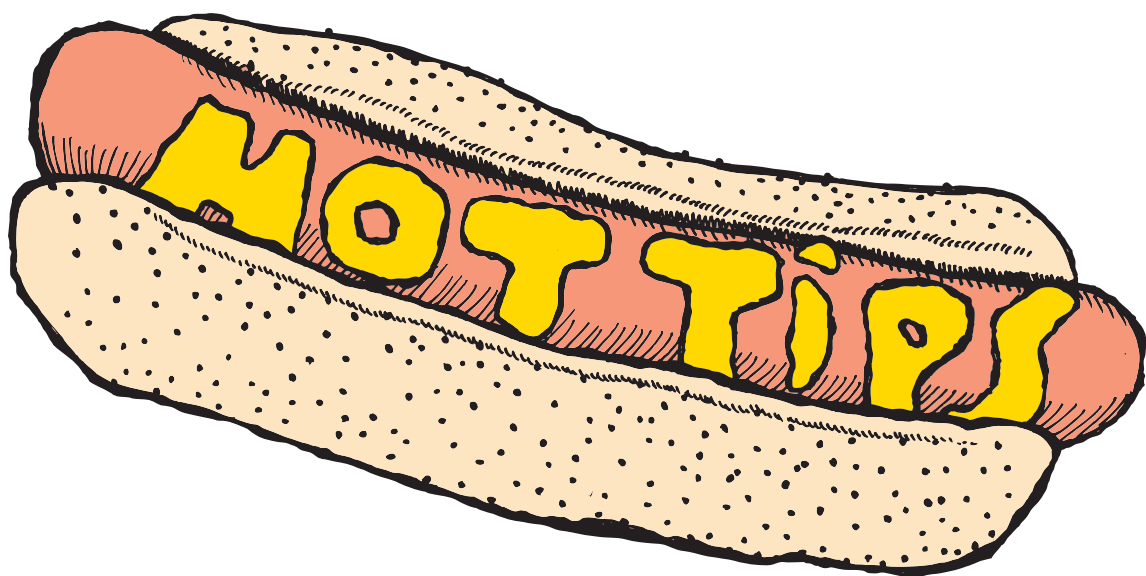
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DESIGN BY SONA HOVHANNISYAN (BFA 2011)



“put some mustard on your life!”

By ERIC BASKAUSKAS AND BRANDON KOSTERS

Ah, art and athletics. They go together like turtles and wombats, whatever the hell that means.

While March Madness proceeds, we ponder who our Dream Team would be if we could only fill the roster with famous artists.

Like your little league soccer coach (and unlike the arbiters of art history), we're all about equal opportunity here: when it came to drafting artists for our basketall superteam, we didn't discriminate on the basis of gender, race, artistic medium, or whether or not we'd be dealing with zombies.

#### STARTERS

##### GEORGES SEURAT POINT GUARD

This pointillist pioneer knows a thing or two about endurance — his masterwork “Sunday Afternoon on the Island of La Grande Jatte” took about two years to complete. This sort of fortitude is just what we need from someone in the guard position. And we know for sure that, at the last second, he just might throw in a monkey.

##### CINDY SHERMAN SHOOTING GUARD

There's nobody more versatile and skilled than this quick-draw shooter. She's spent years practicing her craft solo; we think she's finally ready to be a team player. As a bonus, she'd have no problem playing the role of cheerleader when she's sitting out.

##### SHAQUILLE O'NEAL CENTER

What's that you say? “Shaq's not an artist”? Good sir or madam, perhaps you have forgotten the Big Diesel's extensive catalogue of musical and performance endeavors? We needn't direct you further than 1996's big-screen bonanza “Kazaam” to prove our point.

##### PABLO PICASSO POWER FORWARD

Picasso believed that one must first learn the rules, and then break them. First rule broken: “Basketball is not for short Spaniards who live in France.” He'll likely get the most technical fouls on the team, but then again those referees sort of look like mountain zebras anyway. His dedication extends beyond the hardwood: he'll crush the spirits of the opposing team by sleeping with all of their wives the night before the game.

##### RACHEL WHITEREAD SMALL FORWARD

She's the only artist we can think of who, instead of showing up to the game, would fill the whole stadium with concrete. This trick will come in handy to avoid a forfeit when we eventually realize that half our team is dead.

#### ON THE BENCH

##### LAURIE ANDERSON

Disarms opponents with soothing vocoder melodies and dunks with ease from her gigantic chair.

##### SOPHIE CALLE

This tender romantic has probably fielded more than a few rebounds in her day.

##### SALVADOR DALI

Possesses the unique ability to grow his legs an extra 10 feet, turning layups into much simpler “dropdowns.”

##### JEFF KOONS

We can confirm that he owns at least three basketballs and knows who Michael Jordan is.

##### JACKSON POLLOCK

Always was at home in the paint.

##### RICHARD SERRA

The other team doesn't stand a chance when they've been crushed by giant pieces of steel.

##### ANDRES SERRANO

Always most willing to offer up his urine to comply with league drug testing standards.

#### COACHES

##### ANDY WARHOL HEAD

When he says “jump,” people ask, “how many times? And should it be the same jump every time, or a little bit different?”

##### THOMAS KINKADE ASSISTANT

He'd hire the Harlem Globetrotters to play in place of the team. As with the rest of his work, children and idiots will be delighted, and Kinkade will take the lion's share of the credit. MVP candidate? Probably.

Illustrations by Eric Baskauskas

By ERIC GARCIA



By DANIELLE CHENETTE



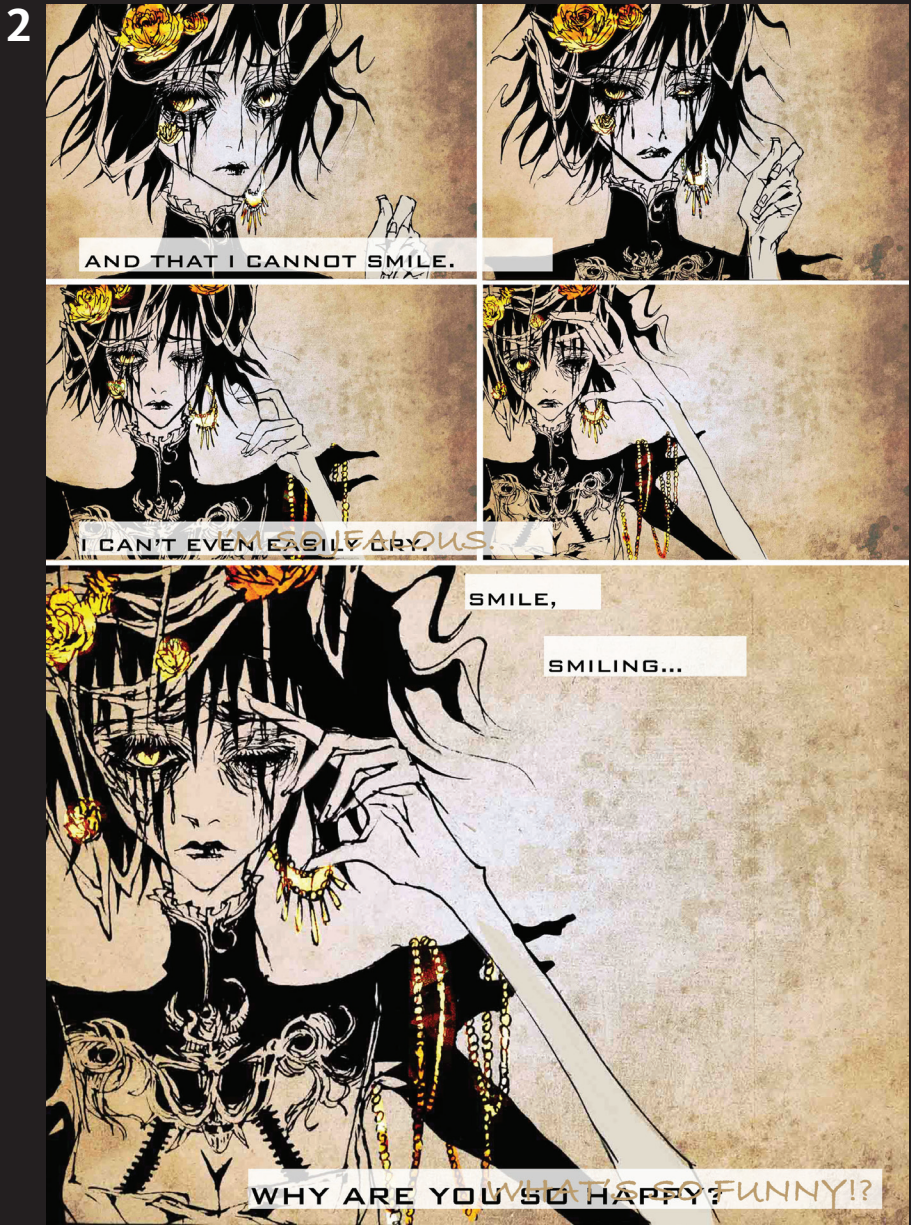
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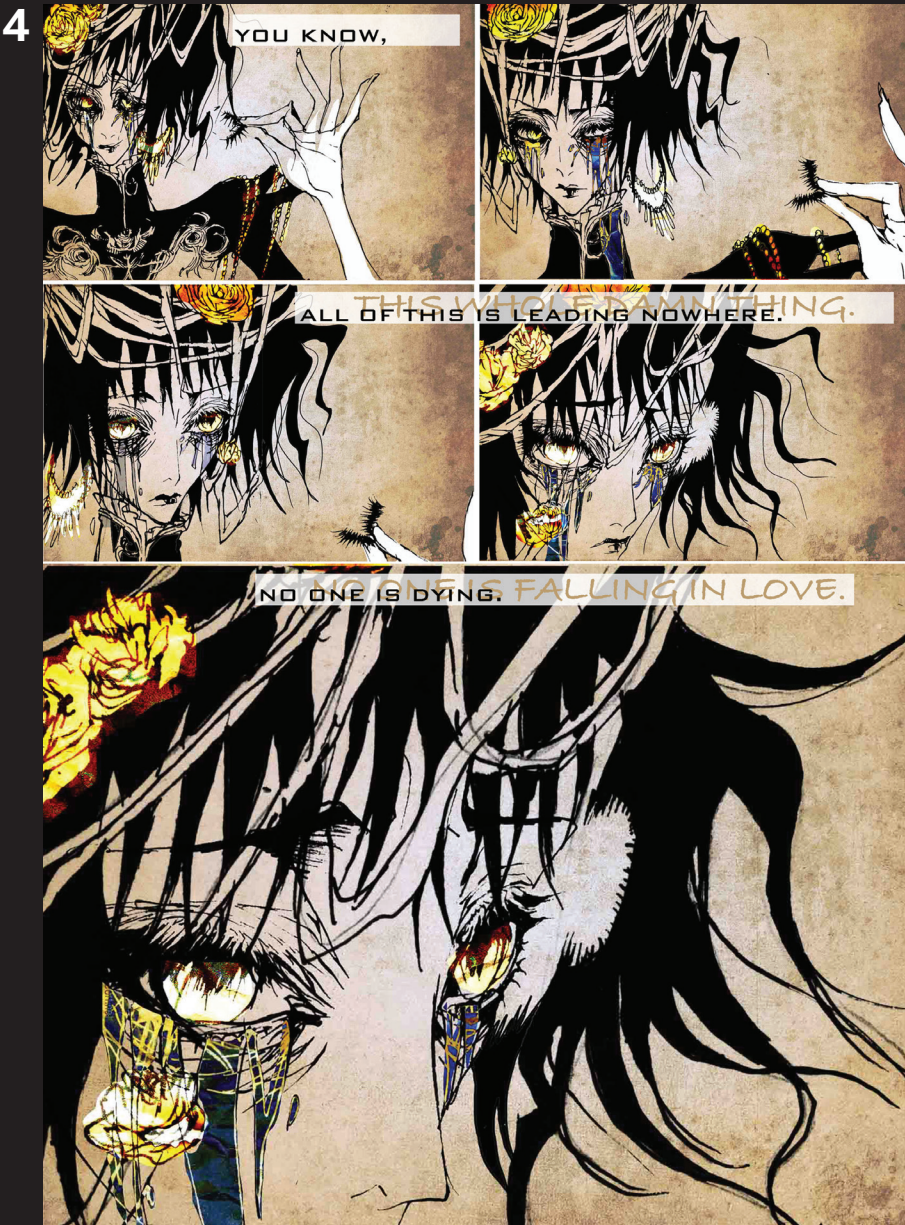
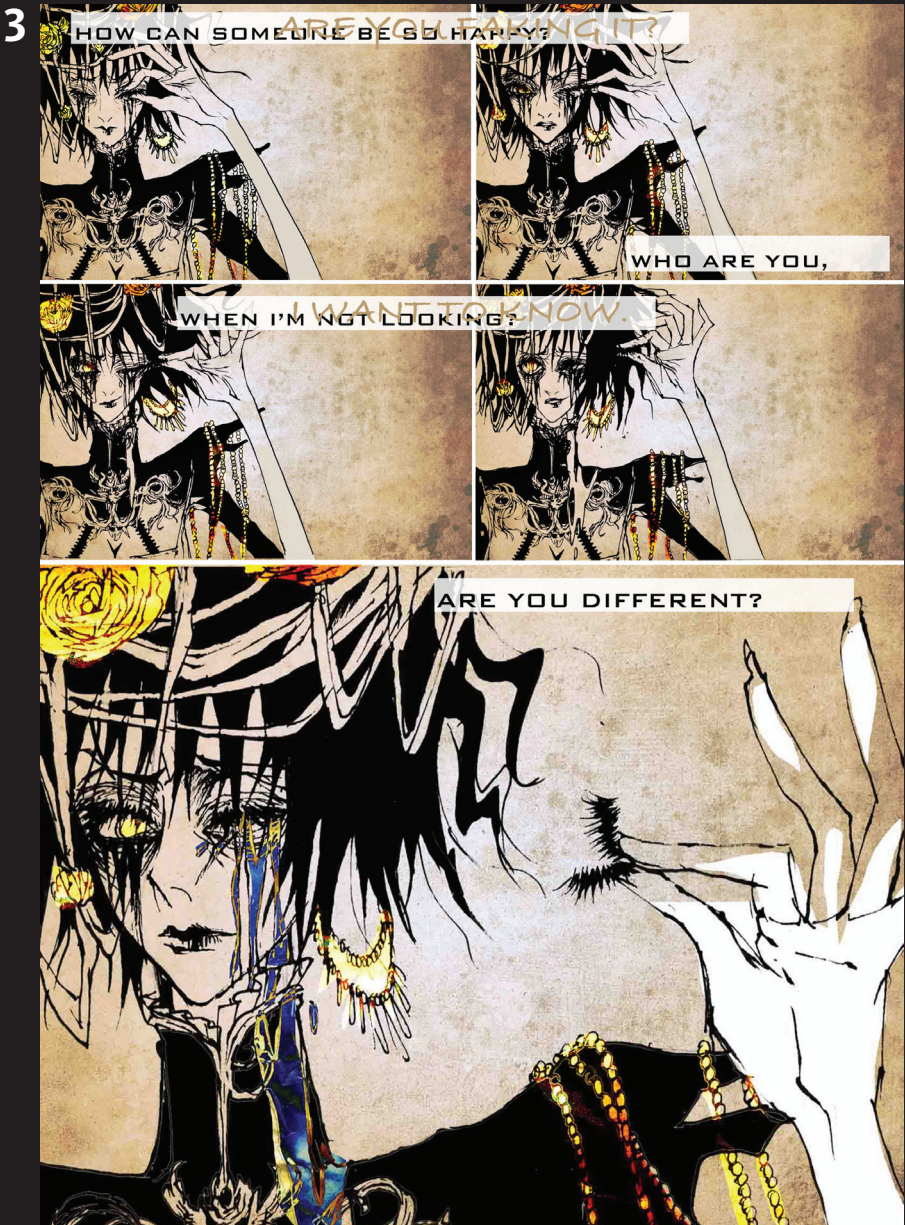


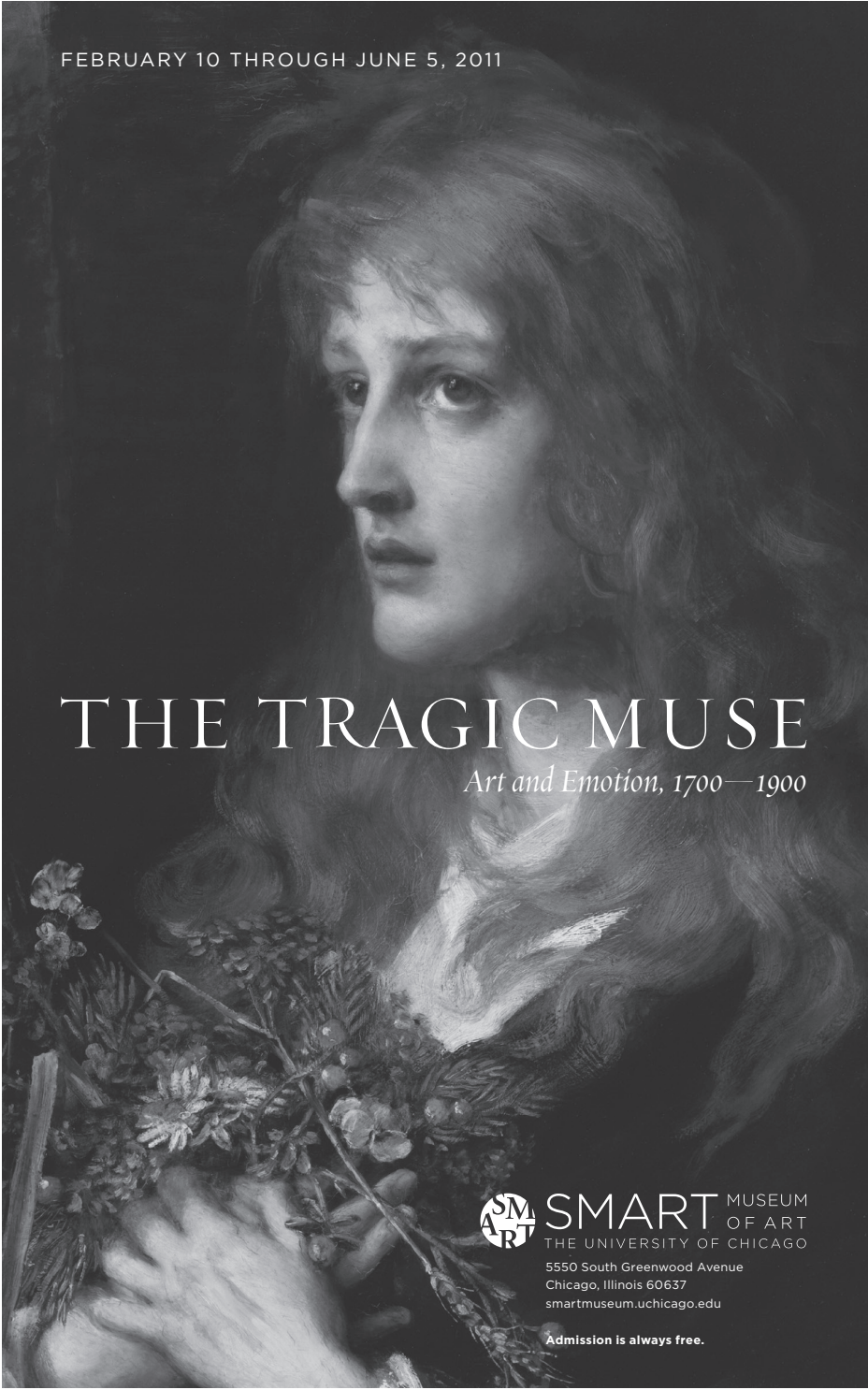
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