

# THE ORGAN

REVIEW OF ARTS

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FREE TO YOU

## NEWS BITS

Things to know about and look forward to

This is a new feature, in which we share very brief news items and upcoming event alerts. Consider this a first draft. The more news you send us, the better it will be next time.

On January 2, **Genuine Imitation Gallery** (328 NW Broadway #116) became the newest art-mart at Everett Station lofts. Gallerist and graphic designer **Vincent Clervi** opened his doors with images of organ grinder monkeys by Portland artist **Jason Mitchell**.

In January, **Pulliam-Deffenbaugh Gallery** will show paintings by rising Los Angeles star and Dave Hickey disciple **Tim Bavington**, whose airbrushed eye candy was on view in PAM's "New In Town" show of contemporary L.A. artists last spring.

On February 9, in a "combination of performance, ordeal, and feat of endurance," Portland artist **David Eckard** will drag himself across the grounds of Marylhurst College and be hoisted into the "crown" of one of his new large-scale sculptures, on view with other recent works in the Art Gym January 13-February 20.

On March 6, **Red76 Arts Collective** will open The International Arts Group Exposition at the Laurelhurst Theatre and other sites. I.A.E. will be a showcase of work created or curated by arts groups from around the world.

**Four Wall Cinema Collective** has secured its first RACC grant for its new Visiting Artist series. The 2003 roster so far includes filmmaker **Jill Godmilow** and videographer **Walid Ra'ad**. In another first, FWCC will curate a program of recent short avant-garde films for the **Portland International Film Festival** in February.

**Gavin Shettler Gallery** will close its doors at the end of January, to be converted into the headquarters of Shettler's and Disiecta proprietor **Bryan Suereth's** new endeavor, nonprofit art organization **Portland Center For the Advancement of Culture** (see Issue #2). Seasoned gallerist **Elizabeth Leach** is their anchor board member.

**The Pacific Switchboard**, which lost its lease at its SE Clinton location late last fall, continues to search for a new home. Until they find one, they plan to program events in ad hoc locations around town.

**The charm bracelet** enters the final two months of collecting stories of inspiring people for their YOU project, which will cut off entries in March.

## LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

I'd like to announce the ESSAY CONTEST.

The day before we go to press, it suddenly dawns on me that this is the Polemics Issue. We have Bryan O'Keefe's dressing-down of the UBS PaineWebber corporate art collection, Heather Larimer's call for more assertive vision in local fashion design, Daniel Duford's defense of the social contract between the public artist and the public, Storm Tharp's alert to the Pop tendencies of Gerhard Richter, Morgan Currie's refutation of the presumed rights of monuments to retain old meanings, and the last-minute entry by Ben Sharvy in which he attempts to prove liberalism wrong by way of convincing aesthetic truths. It seems our writers

PLEASE SEE EDITOR ON PAGE TWO

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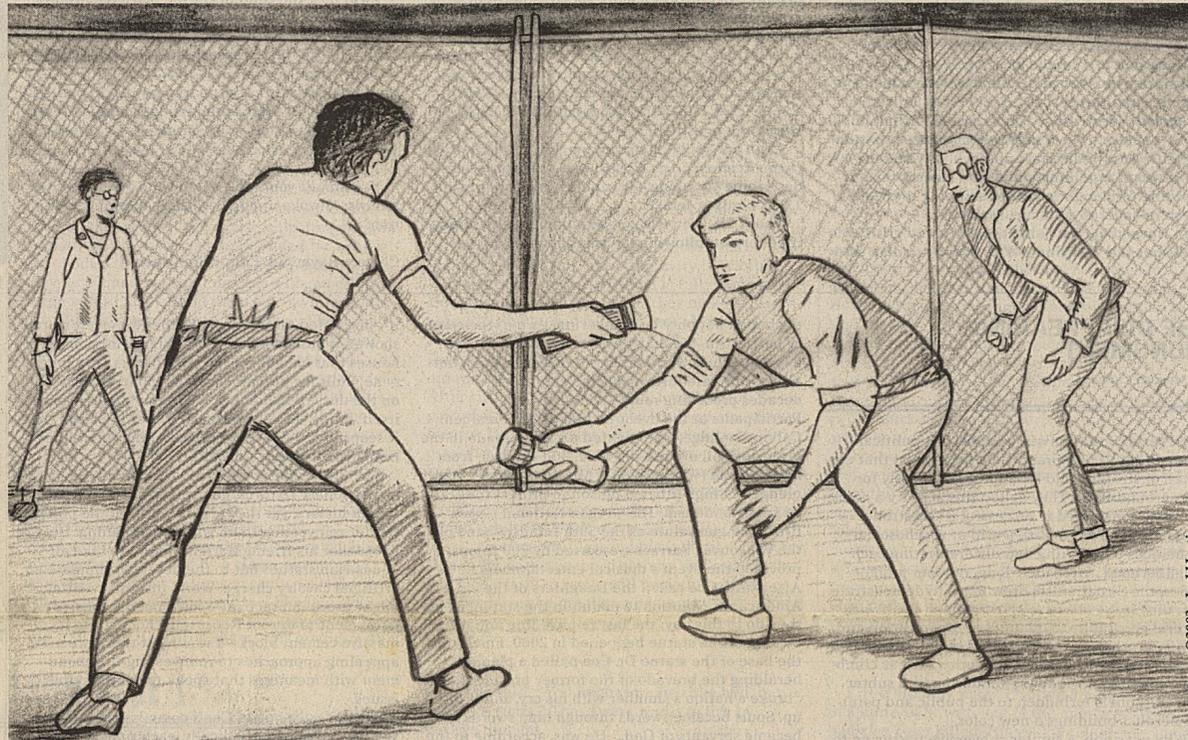
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## A LIVING MOCKERY OF YOUR OWN IDEALS

By Matthew Stadler



Institutions are collective entities that cloak their members in the trappings of power: a name, a logo, a Web site, a schedule, an agenda, sometimes an income and a future. They are the magnets around which history forms. To veil ourselves in new collectivities is to conjure new histories. Institutions can be small or big, temporary or permanent, enabling or stultifying. Wherever they fall on these gray scales, they necessarily subsume persons in the embrace of a new entity, a new power.

Portland is full of them, a flowering of named groups that is perhaps a natural outgrowth of the D.I.Y. pleasures of the last few decades. The

**The projects that interest me are like this: robust in the moment of doing, empty when they fall idle. They make history by acting it out.**

Lecture Series, Red76, The Charm Bracelet, Peripheral Produce, The Lab, PS What?, The Oregon Department of Kick Ass, Joanie4Jackie, Pacific Switchboard, The Organ, Learning to Love You More, the proposed Portland Center for Cultural Advancement. And before these, NANCO, The Donut Shop, and The Poop Parlor. Further, what now seem permanent or established—PICA, PAM, PNCA—were, to begin, just a small number of people making limited commitments. The more recent crop seems to have sprung from a kind of cash-poor exuberance, widespread in a city where the sludgy odor of bureaucratized arts money is regularly cleared away by an evening or week or month of self-invented vitality. Some of them operate as registered businesses, some are nonprofits, some quite deliberately have no legal status at all. Most aspire to permanence—to grow and supplement (or replace) existing institutions—but others easily fall idle, languish, and disappear.

Vanessa Renwick started her film production company, The Oregon Department of Kick Ass, in 1997. "I had no desire to work within any existing structures in Portland," she explained to me. "I was sick of working shit jobs and decided to make my own thing happen. The name came from someone

telling me that that's what I was, so I thought, 'okay.'" While she keeps the organization "as loose as can be," Renwick works with every level of professional (industry operatives, government bureaucracies, friends, strangers, kids). She wants The Department of Kick Ass to last, so she got it a business license.

Where Renwick's business is 99% action and 1% plans, Sam Gould's Red76 Arts Group is weighted predominantly toward the future. Its Web site comprises a virtual map of great intentions under-girded by first steps toward some of the projects has planned. Eight CDs have been produced and are available for sale; the first issue of Dis-Connect (a journal of art) has just come out; and there are plans to publish books, launch a handful of socially-based conceptual art projects, and support a smorgasbord of related services. The Red76 site maps a cross-disciplinary infrastructure that, if it all happens, could help shape and distribute work across many genres (and several continents). "Red76 is extremely permanent," Gould explained by e-mail. "I wasn't happy with what I saw in the art world so I decided to try and change it and the 'existing institutions' are exactly what I wanted to change."

By contrast, the small venue called PS What? dedicates their Web site, not so much to future intentions, as to conjuring a glorified history. PS What? is little more than a shared house, but one that bills its parties as shows, projects films on its rather large exterior wall, and rotates the selection of art in its rooms. On the Web site their living room and basement become The L-Room Gallery and The Lounge, while the house itself gets dressed in the particulars of a modest past (built in 1895, one of a few remaining houses in what was once a working class neighborhood near PSU. Together with the protean act of naming—this is not just a house, it is PS What?—the Web site and its official history flaunt the trappings of a "serious" institution.

Christopher Buckingham of The Charm Bracelet speculates that PS What? might not be anything like an institution, but, rather, just "a place for friends to get together and share something." Yet, the name and the declaration have meaning; they conjure institutional power by mimicking its finery. Buckingham articulates an intriguing ambiva-

lence about these masquerades, a kind of straddling of intention and offhandedness. Regarding The Charm Bracelet, he acknowledges that "yes, we made up a name for something that evolved into a collaboration. But," he objects, "we don't have a mission statement. I'm not sure what makes us seem like an institution." As The Charm Bracelet, he and partner Brad Adkins have solicited and displayed 500 paintings, gathered (and will publish) several hundred stories, hosted social events at which thousands met, taught at elementary schools, and lectured. Yet they wince at the suggestion that this implies anything about the future. The Charm Bracelet exists only in its actions, not as a more permanent infrastructure. Their institutionalization is, in this way, strictly performative.

The projects that interest me are like this: robust in the moment of doing, empty when they fall idle. They make history by acting it out. "Joanie4Jackie was all about lying," the founder of that film distribution network, Miranda July, told me. "When I had no one I said I had ten. When I had ten I said twenty. But that's the thing about institutions. They imply membership, that you are something worth joining, that perhaps other people have already joined. Like the 'in crowd,' but formalized with the decision that this will go down in history."

This kind of performance is reminiscent of drag and all of its tender, doomed grandeur. Joanie4Jackie, The Lecture Series, The Oregon Department of Kick Ass, Learning to Love You More, PS What? The names announce both high ideals and complete failure, commanding an ambivalence that takes us far past the outmoded dualism of sincerity versus irony. Are the beery scholastics of The Lecture Series ironic? The question is absurd, like asking if Maria Callas really meant the tears she shed. Charles Ludlum, founder and principal of New York's Ridiculous Theater, said of drag's special illusion: "You are a living mockery of your own ideals. If not, you've set your ideals too low." Drag drives these impossible ideals on the fumes of pure belief. "Every night," Ludlum wrote of playing Maria Callas in his one-act *Galas*, "I had to go out there believing it would all end happily." This same spirit, I believe, pervades the best of Portland's new initiatives.

PLEASE SEE MOCKERY ON PAGE SIX

## PROOF OF LIFE (FICTION)

By Jon Raymond

George's father was torturing a man. The man was strapped into a chair with telephone wire, and his father was slapping him in the face with his knuckles. He slapped him repeatedly but the man still wouldn't talk.

A group of family friends was watching the interrogation as well. They kept to the edges of the room in the shadows.

The man being tortured was the agent of a Latin American druglord, whom they had captured early in the morning, while invading the druglord's mountain estate.

Unfortunately, the druglord himself had gotten away in a Range Rover.

George's father waited for the man to raise his head again. He crouched down next to him and whispered threatening things in his ear. A trickle of blood ran out the side of the man's mouth, and his hair was all plastered to his forehead. He raised his face and spit on George's father's cheek.

George's father turned around calmly to wipe his face with a towel.

"Don't worry, son," he said, "this is just how things are done." When he finished wiping his hands he electrocuted the man with a broken lamp until he cried out in pain.

George wanted to believe his father. His father was generally right about these things. He always knew how much things cost, for instance. And he often seemed aware of subtle codes that George could only guess at.

PLEASE SEE PROOF ON PAGE THREE

## WHO IS THE ENEMY?

By Daniel Duford



Photo courtesy of Gobshtie Quarterly

I felt sick to my stomach when I first rounded the corner and saw the golem in a pile of rubble. *Golems Waiting* was a meditation on vulnerability—what it means to have strength, but no power. Here I was confronting my own powerlessness head on. A direct hit. Pow!

I was pissed. I wanted to find out who would emaculate one figure and steal the hands of another. I wanted to find them and rip their heads off. Granted, the work had entropy and obsolescence built into it from the start. I underfired the pieces so that they would erode slowly over time. And of course, vandalism was not out of the question. The thought was in my mind as I built the work in my studio.

But theorizing and visceral confrontation are two different animals. The destruction began within five days after the onsite firing. At the end of two weeks, all four pink golems were reduced to shards. Various body parts were stolen—hands, heads, and the penis—suggesting a macabre execution. Walking through the site, I found body parts stirred out of the pile. *Golems Waiting* asked questions about our capacity for violence and power. Each subsequent act of destruction became a very graphic answer to those questions. Someone took great pleasure in toppling over prone muscle-bound giants. Was this a way for the vandal to experience personal power?

The four fired-clay figures, whose postures were inspired by photos of interred Afghan prisoners, were physiologically based on a morphing of Jack Kirby's Incredible Hulk and me. The Hulk is the physical manifestation of Dr. Banner's rage and

PLEASE SEE ENEMY ON PAGE TWO

## ONE FLOOR UP, WORLDS APART

January: Debra Beers  
February: Ann Marie Nafziger, Emery Hinkley  
March: Rebecca Guberman-Bloom, Allison O'Donoghue

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SAVAGE

The Organ

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HONORED GUESTS AND RECENT TRANSPLANTS

Charles D'Ambrosio, author of the short story collection, *The Point*, recently moved to Portland. His fiction and essays appear frequently in *Nest*, *Harper's* and the *New Yorker*.  
 Julie Shapiro is managing director of the Third Coast International Audio Festival, from WBEZ, Chicago Public Radio.  
 Matthew Stadler is a novelist, literary editor for *Nest* magazine, and editor and co-founder of *Clear Cut Press*.  
 Jon Raymond is a New York-based writer and editor for *Plazm* magazine and *Tin House* literary review.  
 Rich Jensen grew up in various towns along the north end of I-5. He is co-founder of *Clear Cut Press*.  
 Diane Dove is a Finnish artist who currently resides in Portland.

THERE ARE NOT VERY MANY WAYS TO SAY "PORTLAND-BASED"

Morgan Currie is a writer who likes to take strolls in supermarkets. These days, she's investigating Portland's primate superstars: Tetra, the first cloned monkey, and ANDI, the first transgenic monkey.  
 Daniel Duford is an artist and writer. He teaches sculpture and intermedia at Pacific Northwest College of Art.  
 Brad Adkins is an interdisciplinary artist, curator and co-founder of roving art venue "the charm bracelet."  
 Brent Johnson is an artist and maze architect.  
 Ben Sharvy does this and that, here and there.  
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NON-FICTION CONTENT SUBMISSIONS AND PRESS RELEASES

The Organ seeks writing, drawings, photographs, puzzles, comics, and letters to the editor. We also like to know what's going on, in general. To obtain content submission guidelines; make a pitch; or notify us of your news or opinions, please contact Camela Raymond at:

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FICTION AND POETRY SUBMISSIONS

Please submit fiction and poetry to Dan Frazier, Literary Editor. Snail mail c/o The Organ or email lit@organarts.org

ADVERTISING INFORMATION

The Organ runs on paid advertising. For information about advertising rates, specifications, and deadlines, please contact Camela Raymond at ads@organarts.org or 503-236-2345.

THE INTERWEB

Keep an eye on our nascent web site, www.organarts.org, for updates, announcements, and advertising information. It should be in pretty good shape by March.

CORRECTIONS TO ISSUE #2:

Timothy Scott Dalbow was incorrectly identified as Tim Dalbo.  
 Ralf Youtz was incorrectly identified as Ralph Youtz.

SPHERE (POETRY)

By Rich Jensen

We require fresh description to place us among the right problems.

We beware language full of the problems dead people have.

A hundred and fifty trillion dollar voice still says East and West after five hundred years going west and getting east.

Rotten geometry shapes the plot of so-called civilizations.

With the apocalypse grown cold and corny before most of us were born we make brief homes where the world ends endlessly.

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

EDITOR.....

are in a testy mood this winter, not content to sit by as our nimbus shroud settles over the sky; the hoof beats of a freshly watered Republican administration thunder in the distance; and our community's presumptions about meaning and taste go unchallenged. Everyone is taking issue. Even the illustrators seem to have bucked their assignments.

The Organ got one letter to the editor. It was a response to Amos Latteier's essay in which he suggested that artists use mechanical reproduction and performance as strategies for getting better financial returns. Unfortunately, I couldn't tell if the letter was intended as a critique or affirmation of Amos' points, and the author didn't want to rewrite. Nonetheless, I'd like to summarize a couple of his points: One, if artists think musicians have it easier in the money-making arena, they're wrong. Two, books and prints are especially accessible forms of mechanically reproduced art that more artists should use to reach a wider audience.

Speaking of polemic and tangled lines of communication. I wasn't going to do this, but since it's the Polemics Issue, and since there's a sudden opening due to a couple of writers going AWOL, and since a number of people have asked me to explain...the Tempest in a Teapot, yes. I mean *Willamette Week* writer Richard Speer's thumbnail reports on a couple of narrowly circulated written critiques of my editorial approach. If you don't know what I'm talking about, you haven't missed anything. You might consider skipping to the end. If you're eager to catch up, read on.

In November, Jeff Jahn, the artist and critic who publishes the Web zine *NW Drizzle*, posted an essay

on his site. In it, he took issue with my statement, in an earlier interview with Speer, that I didn't see myself as a "tastemaker." Jeff (actually, a perfectly friendly guy with AMAZING hair) referred to me as a "den mother" more interested in "swilling Pabst" than taking art criticism seriously. I had taken a swipe at him in the same Speer interview, confessing my annoyance with local art critics who see themselves as civic boosters pushing the Portland art "team" into an imagined art play-off in New York.

This triggered a chain reaction of minutiae that I tried to describe before seeing that it was a bad idea. Basically, there were a couple of letters - one addressed to *WW* and one addressed to me and a short list of artists and writers - that echoed Jeff's sentiments regarding my girlish superficiality and choice in beer. I responded to the latter group, defending my views and inviting additional conversation about art writing and so forth. General silence followed, along with some talk of getting together, which hasn't happened yet. Speer reported on the exchange in his column, calling it "a tempest in a teapot" - an apt description, especially before he wrote about it.

What do you think? Is anyone interested in this dispute? Let me ask a more specific question. Why are you reading this paper? Why write about art or read someone else's writing about it? Is either one a useful thing to do? Why? How would you run an arts newspaper, if you were in my position? To get some good answers, I'm announcing the ORGAN ESSAY CONTEST ON ART & ART WRITING. Here's the question:

"You are applying for my job, Editor of *The Organ Review of Arts*. Please write a cover letter describing your aims for running this paper in 1,000 words or less."

That's all. (You will not be automatically disqualified for not following the rules, naturally. I was

born in the seventies.) However, please include your name/alias and contact information. Why? Because there's a prize. Here's how it works. Interested readers who do not participate by writing will be responsible for building the prize pot. Why? Because this is America, where the worth of an idea is measured first by money and then by the popular vote. Money and votes and, okay, whatever else you think is valuable, like a shoulder rub or something, which sounds pretty good right now. The winner shall claim all prizes promised, minus a 10% administrative fee for the Organ.

In other words, the goal of this contest is not just to SOLVE THE PROBLEM OF WHAT AN ARTS NEWSPAPER IS FOR, but also to FIND OUT HOW IF ANYONE CARES. To show my faith in the endeavor, I will carry with me, for the next 60 days, a tablet recording your contributions.

Next question: How will the winner be chosen? (Not by me. But not at random either, or by an intelligent horse or anything. By a panel. Except that panel is such a bad word.) By a coterie of three people. Two of whom will be chosen by the popular will of the prize contributors; and the remaining one by...This is hard, I don't know. I'm going to need some time to think about the third person.

I will post the contents of the prize pot, as it grows, on the Organ web site, www.organarts.org. The pot will be considered FULL on February 28, 2003, and the final contents announced in Issue #4, to be released on March 6, 2003. Qualifying essays shall be delivered or postmarked by 11:59 p.m. on March 31, 2003. Email submissions to editor@organarts.org. Snail mail to The Organ Essay Contest, 425 SE 3rd Ave., Portland, OR 97214.

You may, if you want, begin your cover letter as follows: "I woke up today with a sense of expectation..."

Camela Raymond, Editor/Publisher

THE DISAPPEARING MONUMENT

By Morgan Currie

The French Situationists, an anarchist political group of the 1960s, practiced a form of art that consisted of strolling and hitchhiking aimlessly for days around Paris. They called this activity a *dérive*, and they considered it successful if the stroller could afterward visualize a grid of psychosocial ambiances permeating and differentiating each neighborhood. After their long, random promenades, the Situationists drew maps to demonstrate how the city's collective spirit aligned itself with natural geography to dictate the organization and utility of urban space. Then they would disrupt these patterns by performing antics such as climbing into random windows, wandering into subterranean tunnels forbidden to the public and painting derelict buildings a new color.

Why not apply a similar subversive posturing to the statue-monument? I want to use for an example one of my favorites, the Theodore Roosevelt equestrian statue downtown, located on the South Park Blocks between the Portland Art Museum and the Oregon Historical Society. It was erected in 1921 when Waldo Coe, a Portland philanthropist and physician, contacted the sculptor Phimister Proctor and asked him to create a statue of their mutual hunting friend, ex-President Roosevelt. Proctor, who was known for his animal sculptures and the first-ever monument to Native Americans, liked the idea, and the statue was unveiled a year later, on Armistice Day, November 11, 1922.

The events surrounding the unveiling may seem curiously dramatic to us today. This is perhaps

explained not only by a lingering, turn-of-the-century patriotism, fueled by America's Rooseveltian expansion into world affairs (and world wars), but also by the rare lure of spectacle during the decades preceding radio and television.

Participants at the event included Vice-President Calvin Coolidge, who planted a golden spade in the upturned soil around the base, and children from Ladd School (where the Art Museum is now), who pledged in high-pitched unison to protect the statue from vandalism. The Oregon National Guard fired a 19-gun salute to the 59th Infantry band of the Vancouver Barracks, escorted by 200 troops, provided the event's musical entertainment. Afterward, Coe asked the Daughters of the American Revolution to maintain the statue, which they do to this day: the last re-unveiling and refurbishing of the statue happened in 2000. Finally, on the base of the statue Dr. Coe nailed a plaque heralding the bravado of the former president, who "broke a nation's slumber with his cry, and it rose up. Souls became swords through him; swords became servants of God." He was, according to the plaque, "joyous and tireless, being free from self-pity, clean with a cleanliness that cleansed the air like a gale."

(Incidentally, we also have Coe to thank for the gilded Joan of Arc equestrian statue in the Laurelhurst neighborhood, dedicated to the American doughboys that served in France during WWI, as well as the Lincoln and Washington monuments around town. Coe has his own monument, placed after he died, next to Joan of Arc on Coe Circle, NE 39th Avenue.)

While the furor over Roosevelt's warmongering has died down, the statue remains, faintly voicing its call for imperial conquest. Like most monuments, this one has outlasted the edifices around

it—one dated picture I saw of the Roosevelt statue showed it positioned in front of large mission-style houses that once lined the Park blocks, now long gone. Built for permanence, the monument takes on the duty of upholding the nation's myths about itself, fixing them historically. Yet at the same time, it seeps into the landscape, morphing into something that is nearly invisible.

The Situationists criticized monuments as anti-revolutionary fixtures, guarding a set interpretation of history, yet they also recognized the potential for reinvesting them with new meaning. Debord wrote that his friend Marien wanted to take all equestrian statues out to the desert to simulate an artificial cavalry charge. While this intervention might prove impractical—you'd need intensive equipment to uproot Roosevelt's horse from its massive cement block—I wonder if there are more appealing approaches to re-investing this monument with meanings that speak to contemporary issues.

What if each one of Coe's commissioned objects were re-unveiled periodically, each time to a new dedication? The ceremony at the Roosevelt statue, for example, could go something like this: A black blanket will cover the head and flanks of the monument, so that only the horse's legs are seductively visible. The metal plaque should be concealed as well, and replaced by white cardboard paper that has the statistics of dead Filipinos (20,000 soldiers and 200,000 civilians) to dead Americans (4,200) during the Philippine portion of the Spanish-American War (1898-1901). A voice over the loud-speaker would explain that the war, purportedly started to rid the Philippines of the oppressive Spaniards, actually initiated a long-term occupation of the territory. This had been Roosevelt's goal since 1898, when as Secretary of the Navy he commanded Commodore Dewey to invade Manila Bay. It was 1936 when the U.S. finally granted the Philippines its independence. I would then ask participants to consider how Roosevelt's propulsion of America into its new role as an imperial power might be implicated in the present climate of "big-stick" diplomacy.

If treated in the manner I've described, the statue could be useful again and again as agitators and creators endow it with newly personalized dimensions. Once re-invested, the statues speak more directly to our own experiences, fears and feelings of discontent, with a roving non-fixity that Debord would approve of.

THE INNOCENT CROSS-CONTINENT, NYC DECEMBER '02

By James Yu

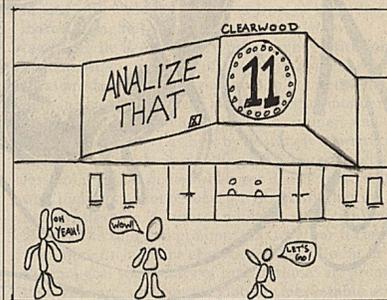


Illustration by Scamper Franklin

0. A couple of weeks before we leave, a call from Stockton, Calif. at work: A Japanese-American, traveling through Portland during the Thanksgiving holiday, listening to the Trail Blazers/Houston game. During the post-game show, he hears an unidentified announcer refer to Yao Ming as "the 7-foot six Chinaman." He picks up my name off a chronology of Blazer mishaps I put together the previous week and calls me to complain. "They used the C-word," he says, and tells me there would be protests around where he's from. C-word? Cocksucker? Cunt? Chinaman.

1. We take a 70-seat turboprop up to Seattle for the first leg of our trip. Sitting in front of us, a twenty-four-year old Idahoan now living in "Tanasbourne" who has never set foot in an airplane. She's nervous, naturally. Ways to avoid conversation: A. Wrap head in jacket and sleep. B. Sleep. C. Stare blankly out the window.

2. Hateful words: A. Registrar. B. Spinal. C. Pupa. 4. Smucker's. 5. Signage.

3. Now playing at the Clearwood 11 Cinemas, N. New Jersey: "Analyze That."

4. At the Metropolitan Museum of Art: Retrospective of Chasserian, "The Unknown Romantic." 1845, Portrait of Ali-ben Hamit. "...is not someone who waits patiently for Renown; he runs to meet her, grabs her forcefully and audaciously, one might say he violates her...What strikes you in this painting is character above all." Also: Illuminated texts from Iran, Klee. Betsy likes a small Max Ernst, "The Barbarians." The coat check is not killing himself for nothing today.

5. Names for children: Ambrosia, Hegemony, Snickers, Dejeuner.  
 6. Macy's in Brooklyn: The heat is oppressive. On the fifth floor, total chaos. The housewares department is in ruins. Ralph Lauren and Tommy Hilfinger sheet sets and comforters cascading into the aisles. A bottle of seasoned vinegar shattered between displays of stainless steel pots and pans.

7. Sparta, New Jersey. Two pilots discuss the impact of the United bankruptcy and its effect on the "A" and "B" pension fund plans. Earlier, one of them says to me, "What's up with the tie?" A log burns in the fireplace, Artie Shaw and Miles Davis on the stereo. Out on the deck, you can see birds arrayed on the frozen lake a block away. Sparta is sort of like Lake Oswego a while ago. Sleepy, formerly a resort town, a prominent country club, a quaint plaza, an artificial lake, two rival high schools, professional families, conservatism. Christmas lights tangled in the trees. A year ago, American flags in every window.

8. NYC is dirtier than last time, but it's raining now, and people are tracking mud and water into the trains, into stores, into the diners. I eat Eggs Benedict and behind me, water drips from the ceiling onto an empty booth. The rain falls and immediately out of the 4th Street subway, a Chinese guy sells us a \$4 umbrella from his cart. Entrepreneurial spirit at its finest.

9. TRENT LOTT (R) MISS. TO STEP DOWN FROM SENATE MAJORITY LEADERSHIP JAN. 6...everything looks so important on the news crawl at Times Square. The NYPD kiosk has a great neon sign.

10. I can't find a knish.

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

ENEMY.....

helplessness. Every picked-on weaking knows the satisfyingly sadistic fantasies of tromping your tormentors. I imagined coming out of the shadows to confront the destroyers. Who would I find? Everyone I've spoken with has a theory. The piece has become a Rorschach test, revealing the prejudices of the accusers.

Drunken frat boys are the most popular theory. A number of people have cited the proximity of such watering holes as The Lotus as proof it was inebriated jocks on a late night bender. This is entirely plausible, since the sight of subjugated naked men would unleash all kinds of homophobic urges. All who cite this villain identify neither with jocks nor frat boys.

Two homeless kids appalled by the wreckage cited a second possibility—boneheads. Unaffiliated skinheads, boneheads are out for wanton destruction. These homeless kids were so upset about the damage that it makes a third theory questionable. When I filed a police report, the officer commented that the cops could not do anything about keeping an eye on public artwork (the site is two blocks from the Justice Center), and that homeless kids "scurry out of the shadows whenever officers turn their backs." That's a quote.

The depressing and almost universal statement

was, "What did you expect by putting something in public?" Which of course, in a cursory way, blames me. Am I my own enemy? Perhaps. What these conversations reveal is that we are a fearful and tribal lot. We inherently distrust each other. I think the work revealed our loveliest and our ugliest tendencies.

The truth is, after the initial shock of seeing the work so brutally ruined, I realized that a profound event had transpired—something I could never have planned. I put something in an unprotected lot that I had lovingly made with my hands. I put my trust in the public. Do I still have that trust? Absolutely. Would I do it again? Yes, and hopefully soon. I received such a moving reaction, such empathy to my work. That excitement and affection for the golems only magnified in response to the damage. The real enemies are the fear, thoughtlessness and ignorance that motivated the vandals in the first place. We are a balkanized and constantly shifting public. Art for that public should be temporary; it should provoke. The story of *Golems Waiting* is now more important than the physical thing itself. Like all golems, it is bigger than its creator. The story, the idea, is unbreakable.

MISCELLANEOUS REVIEWS

IS THERE A BABY IN THAT BUBBLE?

The Fashion Incubator's Winter Fashion Show November 24, 2002

By Heather Larimer

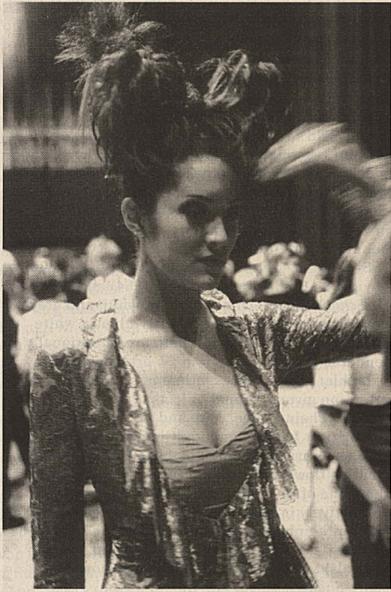


Photo by Aaron Hewitt

A friend once told me he could recognize the airline gate to Portland by the poorly dressed people. But the sudden emergence of many small and somewhat unconventional local clothing designers may revamp this image. Portland has declared itself Fashion Central. Now, the Lake Oswego housewives who ask me for directions as I walk to work in the Pearl District aren't looking for Powell's or Saks; they want to know where they can find local designers' clothes. Fashion designers appear to be Portland's artists of the moment.

The Fashion Incubator's Winter Fashion show provided more evidence of the trend. 1,300 people attended the November 24th show, which was held in the Portland Art Museum. The very un-DIY show had professionally-styled models professionally-walking an elevated catwalk to the accompaniment of two professional DJs. The show was seamless and

grand, if a little slow; it was an Event, and one that potentially heralds a new era in local fashion. Before each collection showed, two large screens at the back of the stage ran a 15-second film about each designer, disclosing their inspirations and intentions. Some time ago, a writer at some fashion magazine declared designers the "new rock stars." These clips were fair evidence.

Fashion Incubator is a nonprofit "established to support the entrepreneurial efforts of emerging fashion artists here in the Pacific Northwest." The founder, Stella Farina, believes Portland is fertile ground for fashion, and wants to provide resources for local clothing designers to develop their business and technical skills. Fashion shows like the one in November will be the primary fundraisers for FI. Portland clothing designers have several obstacles beyond lack of exposure: good fabrics are very scarce here, as are skilled pattern makers and sewers. Farina's organization plans to house a business resource center, a runway, a design studio and a photo studio. In besides offering these technical resources, and perhaps more importantly, FI will get designers in the same place at the same time to collaborate and share advice. It will be interesting to see how this sort of facilitation influences a fledgling scene.

Three designers in the show were standouts, for entirely different reasons. First was Itch Studios. Paola LaMorticella and Marsali Ghilarducci started Itch on SE Clinton Street to have a sewing workshop for themselves and anyone else who wanted to make clothes. Theirs is a populist idea, one that encourages community like a hip quilting bee, both stimulating interest and facilitating skill in the waning art of sewing. Their inspiration is practical and direct, often coming from found fabrics or immediate need. For instance, last summer, they decided there was a void in the mainstream bikini market; all the suits seemed intended for adolescent bodies. Inspired by vintage sewing patterns, they developed swimsuit designs with superior coverage and fit and turned them out in vintage fabrics. Behind the runway at the Winter Show, their projections showed them smiling and laughing, Ghilarducci declaring, "Well, we make stuff, and if it turns out, we put it on the rack!" A mix of '40s color palettes, flippy hems, and substantial knits was equally irreverent, acknowledging fashion's current trajectory while initiating its own tangent.

Based in a showroom on NW 18th Avenue, Jessie Whipple's label, Cameron, had the most cohesive and exciting collection. I have been a Cameron fan for a couple of years because Whipple just "gets it." Her clothes are ahead of the curve and kind of cheeky. She has great personal style, which, like any great style, is actually a clever assemblage of references, and her designs execute a similar trick. When I buy a Cameron top, I feel like I am acquiring the ultimate thrift store score, only well-fitting and stain-free. (Cameron shares this quality with

Marc by Marc Jacobs, one of the most successful and respected mid-range labels.) As a bonus, almost everything by Cameron feels like a T-shirt on the body. I abuse her clothes, wash and dry them as harshly as my bath towels, and they still look great. Most importantly, Cameron has the air of not trying too hard, the thing that elusively embodies "cool." Her models were cool, like moving Nagel girls; her music was cool; and her interview was cool, with Whipple unrecognizable as the mysterious "Cameron" in a Jackie-O-meets-Robert-Plant disguise of headscarf, curly wig, and giant sunglasses. If cool is important - if it can be considered the aspirational engine of fashion - then Cameron is Portland's best hope.

Lastly, Babe O'Sullivan's Décolleté designs had the very thing that is so conspicuously absent from Portland's hometown fashion: exquisite seamstresship with luxe fabrics. Her gowns had no regard for the obvious question: "Who would wear that and where?" They reminded me of the dreamy Holiday Edition Barbie outfits from my childhood (that first piqued my interest in fashion). Her section, the last of the show, was spectacular. The models held ornate masks while confetti and streamers exploded over the audience. If Itch has the right attitude and Cameron the right style, Décolleté has the raw skill necessary to produce a beautiful garment.

As an "art scene," Portland local fashion is in an enviable position. In Farina it has a patron, and (as demonstrated by the winter fashion show audience) it clearly has a following. Yet the abundance of energy had me thinking about the actual product behind all the fuss. What is the point of fashion? Why does it matter to anyone? Fashion should point us somewhere, both creating and interpreting zeitgeist and drawing from, or inspiring, other artistic media. Fashion is not just wondering if a flack jacket might be funny in tulle; it's far more complicated, perceptive and provocative than that. Fashion without this cultural gravity is "clothes."

It makes sense that Portland is rallying behind clothing artists, because what they make is disposable, affordable, and essential: we all wear clothes. Some of these artists, such as Ghilarducci, LaMorticella, Whipple, and O'Sullivan, are making innovative clothes. Is it really Fashion, any of it? After such a grand production, local fashion is poised at a crossroads. Maybe having a structure like the Fashion Incubator and intense public interest will help local designers evolve to justify the hype. Or maybe the idea of local "emerging fashion artists" expounding on their work in the Portland Art Museum's ballroom while their faces were projected twenty feet tall will seem comical in a few years, a strange fruitless bubble in local art history. Hopefully, with this much activity and support, Portland's fashion scene will begin to harness for itself some of the precious and vital stuff of capital F "Fashion": vision.

wife," he said. "You might love her like hell, but she's not yours." Those were words to live by, George thought.

At 0400 the men loaded up the Jeep Cherokee with weapons. They had grenade launchers and AK 47s, and green camo paint rubbed onto their faces.

They reached the village before dawn, and the men fanned out through the vegetation. George stuck with his father as they crawled on their stomachs and rustled through the ferns. His father was surprisingly strong for his size. He was rail thin, with nearly effeminate gestures, but in the jungle he really came alive.

They reached a shrub on the top of a hill and

BEAMSPLITTERS

PDX Documentary & eXperimental Film Festival December 12 and 14, 2002

By Julie Shapiro

You are at the moving image art show called Beamsplitters and there are eight installations surrounding you, each playing with a projected image. This is the project of Vanessa Renwick and Bill Daniel, longtime mavericks of the Portland-and-elsewhere audio/visual community. The show includes work by animal charm, Brad Adkins, Melody Owen, Phillip Cooper, Thad Povey and The Distance Formula and is part of the Portland Documentary and eXperimental Film Festival. While part of the idea is to showcase the efforts of individual artists, films that range technologically from hi-fi to lo-fi, what's also notable is the way the separate projects live collectively and willingly infiltrate each other.

One minute you're walking around in a steady rain and the next you're in a sprawling darkened space called Machineworks, a former logging machine shop on NW 14th and Lovejoy. It doesn't take long to apprehend that throughout this vast indoor industrial playground, there is a whole lot happening. There are flashes of light and cast shadows; there is a feast of sound, music, voices coming from many dimly lit regions; there are objects hanging, propped, arranged, aligned on shelves and attached to the floors. There is A.V. machinery working all around you, above your head and hidden. Turntables, film/video projectors, computers, telephones, TVs, DVDs. You wander through distinct environments: a railroad campfire and a highway truckstop, a crashing ocean and a dusty road. You pass a row of ghostly urinals leading to a passage-way behind a spread of sheets. They catch four projected images that chase you like a train from north to south, throwing up humpback whale calls and too-slow music.

Each source of light/sound/music/image sits alone, but reaches vaguely toward the others, so that you're never quite not experiencing all of them at once. There are no clear demarcations, this is one thick happening. Clarity is scarce, this is all just one slender notch beyond discernible, like the voices on the phones on the tables in the truck stop, coughing up a single distinguishable word from thirty pronounced, commanding your ears to strain, considering whether to let you in on the joke. Reactions collaborate and change places, curiosity and melancholy taking over from confusion and bemusement. You stand in many variations on one position - watching with your hands in your pocket, mouth pursed, eyebrows quizzical, conscious that you're trying diligently to take it all in, understanding that you're not.

Little did they know, Position 3 had been killed in a knife fight with one of the enemy sentries, who had also been killed. His walkie talkie now spoke only to the birds and snakes of the jungle.

"Cover me," George's father said, and began crawling toward the cages. George watched him move cat-like through the terrain, rolling on his back sometimes and speeding his way from shrub to shrub.

At a mangrove tree about halfway to the cages he came upon a watchman. The watchman never knew what hit him. George's father sliced his neck from the shadows, and the man slumped to the earth. George saw it all.

Unfortunately, the watchman also slumped onto the trigger of his own gun, and shots rang through the village. Someone began beating on a pot. Almost immediately there were men running everywhere.

An explosion went off down below and George saw the silhouette of his father still making his way toward the cages. He knew enough to stay in place himself. He picked up the binoculars and surveyed the scene.

His father was entering the cages and liberating the men. They all looked like crazy homeless people. His father was limping, and clutching his own arm. Gunfire flashed around him and he seemed to shudder, but he kept moving.

Throughout the village, their team seemed to be winning. George saw Position 2 shoot down four men, and Position 4 another six. The explosions rocking the village seemed to be softening the enemy. They were undisciplined and selfish. They had once been fierce and idealistic, but they were just hired henchman now.

His father finally made it to the top of the hill, with George's brother at his side. His brother was dirty, and his fingernails were long, but George embraced him anyway. He didn't even think about it.

Their father did not look so good, though. He had been hit badly. He had blood stains on his shirt and a huge, meaty wound on his arm. They rested him on the ground and tore off his shirt. Beneath it was a constellation of bullet holes. He was fading fast.

George's father was trying to tell them something. His mouth was moving like a fish, and his voice was all raspy and dry.

George leaned down so his ear was just beside his father's mouth. He could feel his breath on his cheek.

"What is it dad, what is it?" George whispered huskily. The jungle had become suddenly quiet. He was fighting back the tears.

George's father moistened his lips, summoning all of his ebbing strength to speak: "The fags," he whispered. "The fags have the best intelligence, son. The fags know everything." And with that he expired.

George cradled his father's body until daybreak, at which point the helicopters arrived. He strapped the body onto a stretcher and loaded it in.

As the helicopter lifted off, he saluted stiffly. All the leaves of the jungle flapped violently in the churning air. His eyes burned like hell from the dust.

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

PROOF.....

The torture ended with the man passing out. But not before giving George's father a crucial piece of information. George did not entirely understand the significance of it, something about vultures and jackals, but everyone seemed to agree: They must ambush the hired guerilla army of the druglord within the next few hours if the Operation was to succeed. It was truly their last chance.

The men went to their private corners of the commandeered drug kingpin's gaudy estate. Nearly all the windows were broken, and the floor was littered with spent shells. They had practically defeated him by now. He was on the run, but he still had a few cards left to play. A cornered animal was a very dangerous thing, even in a corner.

Each man went to prepare for the morning raid in his own private way. It was a time for quiet contemplation.

George went to the garden, beneath the grape arbor, where he watched the druglord's maid through her window. She was braiding a young girl's hair, the daughter of the druglord himself. They were illuminated by candle light. The young girl had been crying earlier, but she looked calm now. It was too bad her father was such an evil criminal.

This was the first covert operation George had ever accompanied his father on. He had heard whispers of them as a child, and detailed stories about them as a young man. He knew about Operation Crucifix, for instance, and the reckoning it had among the intelligence community. He knew the debacle of Operation Poncho, and whose fault it was that it failed.

He even remembered Operation Bilbo a little. He was just a young boy then. He remembered his father's friends all gathered in the workshop in the garage. He remembered them loading their guns, and synchronizing their watches, and running off into the pounding air of the helicopter. He remembered watching the thing rise into the air, beating the grass to the ground.

He remembered his mother standing behind him, and holding him by the shoulders.

"There is something so exciting when the men go off on mission," she had said. She was talking more to herself than to George, he realized, but he was not as dim as people thought. He heard things and filed them away. He remembered her saying to herself: "Their nerves are electric. It is a form of weakness in them. They become so goddamn loveable when they are frightened like that."

George walked to the edge of the garden, where a wall rose and blocked his view. He was still a little young to be accompanying his father on a covert mission, but this one was a special case. His own brother had been kidnapped by narco-terrorists, and his father had come out of retirement especially to save him.

So far the operation had gone well enough. His father had assembled a team of real experts: men who had fought in Vietnam, Afghanistan,

Chechnya. Many of them spent time in Chechnya, actually. They seemed depressed by it. In the last two weeks, however, they had managed to infiltrate a drug lord's organization, and track him using a satellite, and rescue a girl from one of his prostitution rings, all of which had gone some way towards easing the memories of the past.

George was the only one among them, he was



Illustration by Diane Dove

quite sure, who had never killed a man. No one talked about it, but there was a command to their body language that told him they had crossed that line.

He had never realized that perhaps his own father had killed a man until now.

The little girl in the window was asleep now, and the maid was standing at the other edge of the garden. She had not seen George, and he considered calling out to her. She was a kind woman, with a lovely figure.

George thought better of it, though. He had met this woman's husband, an honorable gardener on the druglord's estate. He always remembered his father's highest code: "Don't fuck another man's

looked out over the village. They could see various prisoners of war down there, locked in cages made of bamboo and vines. They all had long beards, and seemed somewhat depressed. His father scanned the area with his infrared binoculars.

He counted seven prisoners of war by sight; but eight by the plates of food their captors brought them in the darkness.

Across the valley, they caught sight of the signal from position 4. He was in place. Position 2 and 3 checked in soon after on the walkie talkie. That made them position 1.

Position 3 was supposed to commence the operation, but at a certain point he stopped responding. Something had gone wrong, they could tell.

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# TWO VIEWS ON THE RICHTER RETROSPECTIVE

**GERHARD RICHTER: FORTY YEARS OF PAINTING SAN FRANCISCO MUSEUM OF MODERN ART**  
**OCTOBER 12, 2002 – JANUARY 14, 2003**

**I HAVE EVERYTHING TO SAY AND I AM SAYING IT**  
 By Mark Hansen

There is something about seeing this show—what even curators now refer to as a "blockbuster" show—in a well-lit, fortress-walled cosmopolitan museum that begs glib postmodern rumination. There's the giddy verticality of the lobby, the decidedly casual viewers, the transmedia marketing blitz, the chop-chop chronological liberty taken in the choice of hanging order, and any of the jolly disjunctions you might find between signifier, signified, artist, audience, or the "Gerhard Richter: 40 Years of Painting" banners hung from the street lights of Chinatown. But then there's the unlikely kid in the too-small skate rags with the audio tour headphones around his neck, zoning out on a painting like *Cathedral Square, Milan, 1968*, that snaps you to and trips you out.

Before we went to the show, my friend Julia had me read the *Artforum* letters section tit-for-tat between Robert Storr, who curated the Richter retrospective, and Rosalind Krauss, doyenne of Modernism, who crapped all over his choices/exclusions/chronologies. She essentially said that he had teased us (American audiences) irresponsibly by leaving out all of the really good stuff, and by veering from the vision of Richter laid out by Benjamin Buchloh. Storr replied that Krauss had become a caricature of herself with her narrow set of references/lenses/metaphors. Then she was all

you into the show, because it created a bottleneck of people trying to figure out who's who. As the title indicates, it is a series of traditional portraits of notable white men whose faces share the sullen look of grave thought, but whose names don't necessarily spring to mind. As I listened to people match names with faces, I realized that the placement immediately directs attention to Richter's choice of subject matter. This is key, and kind of funny here (I heard a few people say "Oh look, Einstein," with a kind of relief at being able to recognize at least one of the "venerated" subjects—the only other one I knew was big-eared Kafka). It was easy to be swept away by the technical prowess and formal inventiveness of his paintings while ignoring their content.

Richter himself addresses this tension between technique and depiction in the convivial interview which follows Storr's catalog essay. He relates that he escaped the representational artist's longstanding frustration with subject matter selection by deciding to reproduce found photographs. He had really found permission to paint anything. But there's no escaping the fact that he's rendering, say, a snapshot of his smiling uncle in Nazi regalia (*Uncle Rudi, 1965*), or a group of women who were murdered by a serial killer (*Eight Student Nurses, 1966*). The selection of representational painting also includes the more cozily domestic (series of his second wife suckling their child, *S. with child, 1995*), and the episodically "historical" (a formation of WWII aircraft careening over the Rhineland in *Mustang, 1964*; Jackie O. crying the day her husband was shot in *Woman with Umbrella, 1964*). It is a confounding spectrum of ideas to ingest as a viewer, much less to assimilate into any kind of overall "project." And that doesn't even take into consideration the wealth of abstraction Storr has amassed.

The one that really gets me, though—at least partially due to how it had entranced the aforementioned skater kid—was *Cathedral Square,*



Left: Gerhard Richter. *November* (detail), 1989.



Right: Andy Warhol. *Shadows*, 1979.

painting. Painters working within a pictorial tradition, where objects in the world are "apprehended" (Richter's term) by the eye and the hand, have been confronted with a technology that can actually capture light.

This legacy is something that Richter has explored to great effect. By compelling the viewer to zoom in and out, as it were, he accomplishes something akin to what Don DeLillo often does in prose. In *Underworld*, DeLillo strings together a handful of characters and vignettes—some that end up crossing paths, some that don't—that in their sum constitute a chilly but still almost euphoric history of Cold War America. The prologue of *Underworld* alone swoops around a 1951 Dodgers/Giants playoff game in the Bronx where Jackie Gleason barfs on Frank Sinatra's shoes. J. Edgar Hoover is informed of the second Soviet atomic bomb detonation and a young boy makes off with the game-winning ball. For the rest of the book, we're looking for that ball and gliding in and out of various lives and historical moments. Like Richter, DeLillo carefully lays out the horror and violence which troubles individual lives, but with a keen eye for the way they fit into a grander historical scheme. Neither artist ever lapses into tidy ideological posturing or simple allegory. Stories, in DeLillo's case, and images, in Richter's, are never emblems of a simplified historical argument; they are not presented as symptoms.

Instead, both artists cannily compose the granular bits of character and event that make up a larger story into a smeared weave that seems at once off-hand and terrifying. They also rouse what might otherwise become stiff or too cerebral by adopting a perspective that is always slightly askew and inflected by a very human voice/vision, like a snapshot taken in the revered Gothic cathedral but centering mostly on the peripheral street scene.

Some have likened this vein of Richter's work to views from underwater: blurry and distant, allegories of historical narrative coming to pieces, evidence of the fuzzy particles that make up solid facts. But standing there with the skater kid, leaning in and out, I was swept away by the simple fact of beauty. And I think this is Richter's spooky power: the seductive beauty of his work allows a profoundly personal feeling to arise from public stories blurred beyond easy apprehension. Though he certainly means to create a sense of ambivalence in the viewer and to draw attention to his representational strategies, he never fails to elicit something cogent. Where other artists use "disruptive" painting strategies to question the history of representation and end up with a dissolute critical distance, Richter finds something in the aggregate of tiny gestures—something that is neither focused nor illegible, that captures a thought in progress. Whether rendering the quotidian, the catastrophic or the effect of paint smeared across a canvas, he is depicting with great personal resonance what it means to remember publicly. The distance and ambivalence of memory are always there, but you are drawn into his accounting nonetheless.

*\* For anyone who follows these academic donnybrooks, you'd be interested to know that Storr is leaving his powerful directorship at MoMA to take a powerful professorship at NYU, which, because Krauss is at Columbia, sets up a kind of*

*intra-Manhattan Modern Art subway series.*

**I HAVE NOTHING TO SAY AND I AM SAYING IT**  
 By Storm Tharp

The first Gerhard Richter painting that I remember seeing was an Abstract Picture ("Abstraktes Bild"). The colors and the diagonal geometry were brash and ironic, and I thought it looked like New Wave, Memphis-inspired interior design from a video game arcade. It was 1989. I didn't know who Richter was, and it didn't occur to me that I was faulting his painting for the same elements that made me love Andy Warhol. Thirteen years later in San Francisco, I entered the Richter retrospective, *Forty Years of Painting*. By this time I considered him to be one of the world's greatest painters. The exhibit indulged my senses, offering up all of Richter's virtuosity and insistently curious exploration of technique. It also punctuated a feeling that I had never taken seriously before: Richter was a Pop Artist, and Andy Warhol was everywhere.

As I walked through the early photo-based paintings, I found myself examining Richter's unique skills as a painter. By transforming the surfaces of his paintings into intoxicating blurs, Richter emphasizes the distortion effects in photography and in turn exploits what he calls "the altered way of seeing." This is a convenient trick that elevates the work beyond the standard nomenclature of photorealism and thus bypasses easy categorization. It also draws attention to the surface and away from the subject matter. It was not until I backed away from the canvases that I found myself saying

*Eagle, 1972*  
*Red-Blue-Yellow, 1972*

*Skull, 1983*

The Baader-Meinhof series, 1988

At first, my surprise at seeing Jackie Kennedy seemed fleeting and novel. However, by the end of the exhibit, I found Warhol all over the place and in areas that I never dreamed of. Primarily, Warhol's and Richter's subjects were similar: *Eight Student Nurses* (1966)—a horizontal series of black and white yearbook portraits of eight murdered nurses—reminded me of Warhol's *Thirteen Most Wanted Men* (1964), a grid of FBI mug shots installed outside of the New York State Pavilion at the New York World's Fair. Richter's art historical play on *Woman Descending the Staircase* (1965), suspected to be the Queen of Iran descending the stairs in a shiny silver lamé column, shared the tongue-in-cheek references of Warhol's *Gold Marilyn* (1962), in which the icon of feminine glamour is preserved behind a golden seal of mass commodity.

Similar use of text, tone and composition are obvious in Richter's *Cow [Kuh]* (1964) and Warhol's *Dr. Scholl's* (1960). One is a black, white and grey portrait of a cow, and the other is a black, white and grey portrait of a foot. Both are intentionally rendered as fragments from advertisements or pamphlet design. This sentiment is shared in the attention given to banal objects of the consumer world: a chair, a shoe, soup and toilet paper. And to celebrities: Jackie Kennedy, Chairman Mao, Bridget Polk and various blonde bombshells. Both painted candied flowers, skulls and funerals, and both knew the value of the monochromatic. This is seen respectively in Richter's 1988 portraits of the dead Baader-Meinhof gang (a response to the suspicious suicide deaths of the young, imprisoned German radicals) and Warhol's unusually emotional and spare *Shadows* series (1978).

As Richter's work changed and evolved, he took with him devices learned from his Pop years: not only the use of the photograph and the banalities of iconography, but also the way he elevated the mutations of manufactured silk-screen marks in the conjugation of his abstract paintings. (The squeegee was Warhol's primary tool, as it is Richter's.) As this discovery rushed over me, it changed the way I looked at the work. It felt more attainable and less precious; suddenly the greatest painter in the world was simpler and less enigmatic. The paintings were still impossible, but the painter was less of a mystery.

I am not keen on the idea of examining the intentions behind art that I like. However, in this case, I researched further to determine whether the relationship between Richter and Warhol went beyond the visual. The written word offers many parallels between Richter and Warhol, illuminating a shared objective that relates to the John Cage quote, "I have nothing to say/and I am saying it/and that is poetry/as I needed it." Richter cites this as a tool or prayer and mentions it frequently in his book, *The Daily Practice of Painting*. "Grey... like a photograph... has the capacity that no other color



Top: Gerhard Richter. *Dead [Tote]*, 1988.

Bottom: Andy Warhol. *Three Jackies*, 1964.

"No, you're a caricature," etc. This kind of Art Historical turf war is certainly not unprecedented (e.g. the flak over MoMA's "Primitivism" or "High/Low" shows, the moaning about Krauss' own "Unformed" show, or the routine bluster around any Whitney Biennial or Documenta show). These are just the pages of *Artforum*, after all, but it's this brand of flushed *ad hominem* wrangling that makes careers, advances the field, and keeps art journals readable.\* This is relevant in that it points to the importance of this show and the agendas at stake in the curation, but it has little bearing on what Richter's work actually looks like.

What it does look like is astounding. Every piece—except a handful of the eighties abstractions, which stand out for their general clunkiness and unsettling color schemes. They're also distinct from the other work in that they lack their typical optical depth. Everything else, which ranges from gauzy photo-realism to squeegeed over-painting to monochromatic abstraction, is almost psychodetically rewarding, whether you're standing across the room or leaning in close enough to make the docents nervous.

I first thought it an odd choice to hang *48 Portraits, 1971-2*, along the curved wall that leads

*Milan, 1968*. It is a striking nine feet by nine feet, and depicts the Duomo from a facing fourth or fifth story perspective in fuzzy shades of gray. Whoever took the photograph from which Richter copied the piece showed little regard for the actual cathedral, bisected as it is on the right edge of the frame, favoring instead the busy Via with all of its hazy cars and pedestrians.

It is apparent as you enter the gallery that the whole surface is uniformly blurred, but it isn't until you approach the painting that you can see how he brushed over the whole surface with sine wave strokes about the thickness of a finger. This makes the whole thing undulate. Julia pointed out to me that you have to really get in close to find the seams, where one stroke ends and another picks up the hazing-out. Combined with the distortion caused by enlarging what was probably already a blurry snapshot, this "un-painting" technique sets up a curious slippage between part and whole, between the small constituent pictorial elements and the big picture. If you were to cut out a square from the canvas—of the statues on one corner of the cathedral, for instance—it would be hard to see it as more than a pretty grisaille composition. This is the legacy photography leaves representational

into a dangerous if lovely object (not unlike Cornelia Parker's larger-scale pieces). Here, as with many of the pieces, the real thrill was to intimately experience the work by turning it over in your hands. Paige Saez invited art-diners to go further as co-creators, offering a bag filled with red thread heads, limbs and bodies of various stuffed animals for us to sew together into peculiar and fantastic outcomes.

Other pieces that worked well involved a teasing unwrapping. Chandra Bocci's boxed piece contained a Duchampian mini-photo gallery of her full-scale constructions, which employ shredded pieces of used paper wrappers and boxes. Buried deeper in the box was a jar with holes poked in the top that contained tiny bird-like creatures nesting in shredded paper. A string-tied box titled *Lost Expressions* by San Francisco artist Tucker Nichols held cards with odd phrases such as "it's your pigeon" and "put that in your messkit," each illustrated with a simple drawing. This personal favorite spotlighted the wacky and ever-changing ways we use our language.

Video offerings included Brian Boyce's very funny *Election Collectibles* a QVC-esque sale-a-thon of election artifacts by Bush and Gore (with stunt mouth dubbed in); and Zac Margolis' witty and

weird black-and-white animated creature romp, *Scarletta* with music by Unwound. Finally, we ordered work by the proprietors: the excellent *Pravda*, Soden's meticulously drawn and darkly funny absurdist comic; Gould's show of color-saturated slides, mostly lovely, frank portraits of friends and fellow artists; plus a sneak preview of Red76's new zine, *Disconnect*.

We left having enjoyed a true dim sum experience—forced to rely on the wait staff's suggestions, we sampled widely and left many mysteries steaming in the kitchen. Juxtapositions of diverse work and the inclusion of zines and comics in a fine art gallery setting were good choices.

As performance, if not as a cohesive exhibit, *Dim Sum* worked. A limited-time offer, performance challenges the audience to engage in an immediate and focused way, to etch an experience into memory. Chance dictated a distinct experience for each viewer. *Dim Sum*'s four-night-only performance emphasized the here-and-goneness of any experience of art, of any experience at all.



Left: Gerhard Richter. *48 Portraits* (detail): Paul Hindemith, 1971-72.  
 Right: Andy Warhol. *Thirteen Most Wanted Men* (detail), 1964.



things like: "I wonder if those pictures come from yearbooks," or "I didn't know that he painted Jackie Kennedy."

Despite this obvious preoccupation with surface and banal iconography, Richter's paintings have a way of convincing you that they are about something important. When I conjure up any one of them, I think of big, passionate ideas executed with boldness, sensitivity, and existential optimism. Even his darkest, most nihilistic canvases seem to resonate with a profound sense of knowing. For example, the "abstraktes" in this exhibit—the ones that seemed so weird to me years earlier—seemed miraculous and tempered, like a kind alien's memory smear of finding paradise. (*Abstraktes Bild* (1984) and Busch (1985)) or hell (*November, December and January* (1989)). However, in light of this newly formed association to Pop Art, I questioned whether my initial viewing of the work had been short-sighted and romantic. I went back to the beginning of the exhibit and started again.

*Woman with Umbrella (Jackie Kennedy)*, 1964

*Woman Descending the Staircase*, 1965

*Eight Student Nurses*, 1966

*Bridget Polk*, 1971

*48 Portraits, 1971-1972*

has, to make "nothing" visible." Although the quote specifically relates to his grey paintings, it resembles the language Richter employs to describe his creative intentions more generally. He states, "Pictures are interpretable, and those which contain meaning are bad pictures."

How could an artist who makes work filled with idealizations, politics and poetry assert that he strives for nothing? It comes as something of a surprise; one you don't encounter with Warhol. In this way, Warhol's work seems more authentically tied to his stated intentions. As he said, "My instinct about painting says, 'If you don't think about it, it's right'... Some people, they paint abstract, so they sit there thinking about it because their thinking makes them feel they are doing something. But my thinking never makes me feel like I'm doing anything."

In short, both Richter and Warhol work with the idea that "nothing" is something. While neither attempts to make something from nothing, both make paintings about "nothing." The question still remains: how can Richter claim that his paintings are about nothing, when in my mind they are about everything? Perhaps Andy Warhol answered this question when he said, "If everybody's not a beauty, then nobody is."

## DIM SUM

Organized by Red76 Art Collective  
 Gavin Shettler Gallery  
 December 11-14, 2002

By Lisa Radon

It was easy to forget we were in the Gavin Shettler Gallery when the theatrically mustachioed staff (*Dim Sum* curators Sam Gould and Chris Soden) seated us at a table, proffered a menu of 150 local and international artists, poured us wine, and took our art orders.

Organized by the Red76 Art Collective and running only four evenings in mid-December, *Dim Sum* was not a traditional group art show. Its non-descriptive menu only hinted at a pantry that overflowed with works in diverse media—videos, CDs, zines, objects and interactive projects. Instead of a tightly curated exhibit, Gould and Soden put on a performance that offered a fresh take on the presentation of works of art in a gallery space.

Our first order brought Zefrey Throwell's small white china figurine, smashed and reconstructed

**EMBRACING THE PRESENT: THE UBS PAINEWEBBER COLLECTION**

Portland Art Museum  
October 12, 2002 - January 5, 2003

By Bryan O'Keefe

*Embracing the Present: The UBS PaineWebber Collection* is a coup for PAM's chief curator of Modern Art, Bruce Guenther, who has successfully attracted a high profile touring collection to Portland. Regrettably, it is also a display of expert liquidity planning within calculated investment time horizons, represented by a leveraged and strategized collection of tangible alternative assets. Rather than an art historical argument or even a survey, what the show primarily offers is an elaborately structured corporate identity.

Although UBS was founded in Switzerland, look for no familiar Swiss cultural references like DJ Bobo or Ricola commercials or Swingen wrestlers Hochschwungung their opponents to the ground accompanied by Anthrax's "Phantom Lord." The collection, heavy on the oversized chromogenic prints by Germans (Andreas Gursky's *99 Cent* and *Fortuna Düsseldorf*, Frank Thiel's *Stadt 7*), emphasizes largeness and the "changing global currents" through which even the most space and time-bound observations travel.

There's no question that UBS CEO Donald Marron has chosen works of high "quality," even such nostalgia-inducing signifiers of eighties neo-expressionist cash frenzy as a Julian Schnabel drop cloth (smeared in gesso and resin by an adhering suede jock) and an untitled Basquiat self-portrait (of the artist as saint surrounded by cruciform scavenger crows, formerly of the private collection of Metallica drummer Lars Ulrich). The collection also includes some fine examples of work by artists who are infrequently shown on the west coast, such as Susan Rothenberg, whose violent winter hunting scene, *Dogs Killing a Rabbit*, is a vivid way to scare/inspire an accountant, as well as a great

painting in which the bloody snow describes the colors as much as the colors describe bloody snow. A more subtle standout is Vija Clemens' Galilean exercise in gray-saturation, the stunning *Coma Berenices*, three meticulous graphite drawings of a constellation seen through a telescope.

Nor is there any reason to doubt Marron's good intentions. Much of the UBS collection has been bequeathed to the Museum of Modern Art, NY, to be held in a kind of semi-public trust. (Of course, charity has its limits, and visitors to MOMA will be asked to pay twelve dollars to see the entire gift, forty-four works of an estimated value of \$15 million, when it is exhibited in the new midtown Manhattan building in 2005.)

But what's the end message? Recall the definitive show of its kind, the Whitney's 1960 *Business Buys American Art*, which, during pop's ascendancy in the world market, invited the spectator to view art as heroic acquisition. By contrast, the ludicrously titled *Embracing the Present...* answers old questions about art-as-commodity with a dollars-and-cents nihilism. Critical discourse yields to a kind of cheerful appraisal, as though we are looking at antiquities, which, arguably, we are (a Warhol "unique silkscreen on paper" of James Cagney). The show's Web site even offers a veiled warning against interpretation: "the collection is not intended to be a strict survey of contemporary art as the selection of the artworks was driven by a desire for quality rather than comprehensiveness." While such logic may work for a Pottery Barn gift registry, as a description of one of the most highly regarded corporate collections in the United States, it is disingenuous at best.

What does quality look like? It seems that "quality" at the simplest level is high real market value, independent of personal "taste" or relevant cultural contexts. Money supplants the judgments of the collector and the spectator when interpretation is restricted to simple awe of avarice. Under this framework, meaning is flimsily constituted from anthropomorphic synecdoche and whim (e.g. "J.P. Morgan, individual and corporation, wanted the Unicorn Tapestries because he liked medieval kitsch"). The real story told here: the corporate collector satisfies his "desire for quality" through a purchase of goods; real market value rises if he is

lucky; and Einfeld universalizes itself as greed.

Further attempting to explain "desire for quality" is like removing pennies from the eyes of a corpse. Anyone who disagrees need only consider the banalities offered by corporate collectors when they ultimately go on record, like the dull press release from UBS telling us that the collection "is an important part of our corporate identity in the United States and a source of inspiration to our employees." We're left to wonder about the precise object of this inspiration—covetousness, perhaps, or fear, in this time of escalating layoffs.

Is there an established artist who would not be absorbed by the suitability criteria? Even Tracey Emin is represented, with a neon sign. This is a minor surprise—the artist's reputation is underdeveloped, the liquidity risk too high, the art is deliberately "bad" and Oxygen-network inspirational. Emin has become a celebrity during the last decade for the autobiographical content of her work and her recovered-social-suicide reputation—read the accompanying text to her recent show at the Lehmann Maupin gallery in NY ("the idea of meeting her at a party might make us nervous") for a clue as to how abstemious, post-feminist art scenes receive her. She evokes at least two generations of "outsider" artists by assembling an abject sexual past out of pillows, condom wrappers and dirty sheets (*My Bed*, purchased by Charles Saatchi for \$150,000, U.S. \$234,000), then boasting about her herpes in a television interview. Her pre/post-coital neon signs, one of which is seen here, are effulgent, expensive witnesses to either sexual terror or bogus self-affirmation (*Fantastic to Feel Beautiful Again*, *Good Smile Great Come*, *My Cunt is Wet With Fear* or *Be Faithful to Your Dreams—Christies*' set the estimated value for the latter at £12,000-£16,000, or U.S. \$19,000-\$25,000, at its Post-War Art Day auction in June). The piece at PAM, *Trust Me*, is a pink neon light-tube giving dual voice to both the deceptive promise of a sexual partner about to impregnate or infect with disease, and the delusional pretense of the conceptual artist herself.

But there is a third voice at work here with none of the seediness implied by neon's inevitable South Beach/casino/porn shop indexing. At PAM, the *Trust Me* sign looks like post-ironic advertising, or the unctuous promise of a Wall Street sleaze. It could hang in the UBS PaineWebber building on Avenue of the Americas, if not for the energy bill and potential accusations of sexual harassment. (It has in fact been argued demonstratively by Chinese artists Cai Juan and Xi Jianjun that "critical sex" is a necessary response to Emin's work—let us hope that suggestion does not leak to the water cooler conversations of PaineWebber securities analysts.) Aside from those objections, it is easy to imagine this simple neon entreaty on a senior vice president's wall, where it would best fulfill its corporate-sadistic role as a "highly sophisticated management tool." Until that time, any response to the neon sign, and the rest of the PaineWebber collection, is refuted by the greater failure theory.



Paul Green is an artist whose paintings can be viewed at Laura Russo Gallery in Portland. He made these drawings on record sleeves when he was in high school.

**GRANDMA MOSES IN THE 21ST CENTURY**

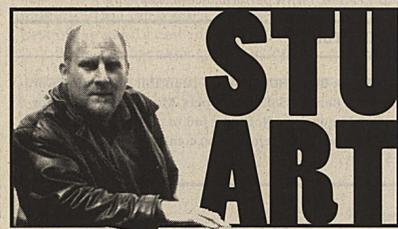
Portland Art Museum  
August 17, 2002 - January 5, 2003

By Charles D'Ambrosio

I'm not an art critic, and I'm hopelessly corny—qualification enough to say a few words about Grandma Moses. For a while in the fifties, her small hard-widened face was as folksy and familiar as Robert Frost's, but where Frost's persona—his shock of silky white hair and rumpled avuncular suits—buried from sight the darkest lyric poet America's ever produced, Grandma Moses seems to have painted as she lived, happily and without guile or much bother of any sort. Their lives overlapped, and similar amounts of snow fell through their work, his isolating and anxious and modern, hers more like soapflakes in a glass globe, quaintly falling over a souvenir scene. But her paintings are too joyously full for the elegiac mood—there's no loss—and occupy instead a genial present that's just a little idiotic, although it feels carping to say so—her stuff's folk-art, and shares a sturdy narrowness of function and the same lack of ambiguity you'd find in a clay pot or wooden spoon or quilt. If anything, she's a utopian, and her paintings give us not a look into a vanished past, but a visionary's idea of the future. There is snow but no cold; there is work but no backache. It sounds like heaven, and, indeed, as hardworking and diligent as her people are meant to be, shoeing horses or tapping maple trees, they float around her chalky snowscapes like the angelic figures in Chagall.

In a less pragmatic culture, or in an artist who hadn't spent her first seventy years scrubbing floors, the energy might have found a more florid outlet, probably in religious icons. With Grandma Moses, though, the religious impulse is confined to duty. It's all work, but the work itself seems celebratory, prompted by the seasons rather than economic necessity. There's no voice inside her paintings but the one expressed communally—you can't imagine a complaint. There are no individuals, and all the people have those strange folk-art heads, shaped, it seems, by mongolism. I kept trying to imagine myself in her scenes, some mopey fuck, some blurry guy skulking around the distant woods while the good folks in the foreground dip candles or shear wool—but that Frostian thing ("Come In," "Stopping By Woods on a Snowy Evening," "Acquainted with the Night," etc.), that strolling poetry of suicide and despair, doesn't make it into Grandma Moses. Just trying to imagine yourself alone in those frozen woods, and hearing, far off, the voices of shared love and duty, voices with that ringing clarity, that timbre that travels so well in the cold, you feel yourself totally bashed by sadness. Perhaps that's the appeal of her paintings, your shitty self gone, the weight of life lifted, everything dissolved in a conformity, the quaintness of which partly accounts, I think, for the peaking of her popularity in the fifties. Her work offers a benign version of mass culture, of television as community, of the American Way. It's Beaver in the sticks instead of the suburbs, a society whose adhesive stuff, all that impossible goodness, that inhering sense of obligation and purpose, is so idealized you feel it palpably in her painting—and the deep-down soothing emotion is this: that someone once believed it was beyond argument.

We're far enough down the line that her work now digs back into a nostalgia for nostalgia, a longing for an old longing, for the coonskin caps and reproduction flintlocks, for the train sets and toy Winchesters, for all the boyish Xmas booty that, fifty years ago, was already about a certain homesickness. There's just enough space in here for irony, but her work resists that sort of positioning, certainly a lot better than the nightmarish realism of Norman Rockwell—Rockwell, whose sweet faces are always just a push away from Alfred E. Newman. It's hard to locate or imagine the ideal world she depicted—Martha Stewart's hints about how to archaize life borrow from Grandma Moses, leaving out the sinew, the social cohesion arrived at through duty. It's been a long time: a century ago Grandma Moses was forty-two years old. Late in her career, the limning blurs and a pleasant haze like failing eyesight softens the pictures. The vistas are foreshortened, the horizons drawn in, but the impressionism is most noticeable in the things you'd expect to hold the clearest lines, in the buildings, the civic base of houses and churches and schools that make up her huddled little villages. It wasn't the past that was dimming, but the future. The time sense in her work, though, is hard to track. It's found more in the cycle of seasons, in the round of what used to be known as women's work, so that the past and future are always held to the present—among the many things that don't exist in her world (and at times her pictures seem arrived at entirely through blind exclusion) most noticeably absent are birth and death. But if utopia is, broadly defined, the future without the stink, then I'd say Grandma Moses was a futurist, since we're all standing stupidly downwind of death and don't smell it. We know the past is foul, but there's none of that in her work, and her late popularity was a sign, a recognition, that her vision of the future could be good, it could be all right, but that we weren't going there.



Stu-Art is on vacation, but he'll be back next issue to answer your questions about art practice, collecting, and curating; loneliness; anxiety, etc. Contact Stu-Art c/o The Organ, 425 SE 3rd Ave. #302, Portland, OR 97214 or email: editor@organarts.org

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make do



Cynthia Lahti  
Untitled, 2002  
Pen and colored pencil on paper

Cynthia Lahti's drawing is part of a series of drawings based on photographs from Fat Kid Fitness Camps. Lahti is represented by/can be reached through Laura Russo Gallery. [www.laurarusso.com](http://www.laurarusso.com)

Those interested in exhibiting in/curating for "make do" can contact Brad Adkins; [makedoart@yahoo.com](mailto:makedoart@yahoo.com)

MOCKERY.....

The Lecture Series, which appears to be a party in a big loft, but also features a jacketed emcee, sturdy podium, logo, a secretary who keeps exacting minutes for the self-titled "steering committee," and stated goals—among them, to "create events that 'kids,' the kind of people who go to rock shows, etc., can enjoy, e.g., where beer will be available"—wears its policies and protocols like a fabulous cloak of social ambition. The steering committee also talks about creating "a 'brand' that people can learn to trust and associate with certain aesthetic and other expectations."

The Oregon Department of Kick Ass (besides working very hard) orbits around a perfect logo designed by Vanessa Renwick and Sean Tejeratchi. This bureaucratic seal, its title circling a bucking donkey, adorns the hooded sweatshirts Renwick gives out as partial payment to any one who works with her. "It's an organization that people want to be a part of," she explained, "which they can be through the T-shirts or stickers." Bereft of, say, any office or staff, business plan or advertisements, The Department is nevertheless constantly alive through the medium of its logo. "Sometimes I think about coming up with a logo for every state," Renwick added, "and marketing the hell out of it, since it seems to have a broad appeal. But fuck that. Oregon is the only state that deserves the department, and I've got movies to make."

The Charm Bracelet also relies on the pitch-perfect design of its logos, benefiting from their considerable talent for simple forms and color choice. This is all the more important since performance, such as lecturing, sometimes reduces Adkins and Buckingham to a beguiling and very deep sort of discomfort, like that of a dog covered in its own shit. However winning this posture may be, their discomfort transfers the focus off themselves and onto the paraphernalia of their projects. In its latest incarnation, "You," that means, primarily, some nifty buttons with the single word "You" on a brown sunburst over a light blue ground.

Because drag—like institutionalization generally—masks "real" individuals and replaces them with obvious constructions, it grants the practitioners a sort of autonomy that eludes most unadorned persons. Adkins and Buckingham are uncomfortable lecturing on behalf of The Charm Bracelet because they become ensnared in the personal; the project starts to be all about them, when the point was to not be all about them. They stand exposed, like Enron accountants dragged from behind their logo-strewn desks to answer for the crimes of their

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

corporation. The accountants don't want to take the fall, while Adkins and Buckingham flinch at taking credit. As with Enron, part of the point of inventing this thing was to stay out of any spotlight, shedding, was it ego or culpability?

There is an obvious further echo of corporate life in these performative institutions: they have branding strategies. Charm Bracelet's logos and posters and buttons, Renwick's T-shirts and stickers, The Lecture Series' preoccupation with maintaining a consistent look and cultivating a narrow audience. Artists and corporations, it seems, feel similar pressures. The need for cheap, viral propagation of images leads both to deploy graphically refined information, and to curate their audience and associations so as to clarify, and then magnify, the meaning of their work.

Miranda July explains that "these actions can help you pretend that what you have to say matters, until you begin to actually believe this." For example, she remembers a time in high school when "my best friend and I made pamphlets containing directions for how to make us cum. It's not like we were going to give these to our boyfriends, or even had boyfriends. It was good because it was the exact opposite of reality. In reality there were no institutions that cared about whether anyone got us off. We were on our own."

What possibilities does this sort of drag approach to institution building open up? Dedicated to performance, they waste little time on permanence. The practice harbors an intuition that the kinds of discourse framed or enabled by permanent institutions may no longer be worth the cost—that such a model facilitates one kind of art and it is increasingly irrelevant.

"The big institutions," Renwick wrote me, "PICA, PAM: BORING STAIID DEATH ROT. So out of touch with what is going on, even the galleries in this town. That whole system seems so over and out of touch with what I am interested in."

Here is a provisional speculation as to why: Cash management is the primary duty and burden of permanent arts institutions. Beholden to their histories and futures, responsible for jobs, holdings, and facilities, entities such as PICA, PAM, or PNCA depend on a substantial flow of liquid capital to keep functioning. At PICA, the smallest of the three, around \$1.2 million must be drawn each year, and about 25% (\$313,625) of that will be spent securing new cash and managing its movement. While this river irrigates PICA's activities (\$376,200 in salary and related expenses for staff and \$455,600 for the direct costs of exhibitions)—the institution will always as its

primary duty the management of cash.

But what kind of art moves enough cash? Money—like wood or bronze or iron, or any other material engine—has its own culture, its own tastes. In the age of money, permanent institutions become fluent in a kind of placeless, globalized cultural production that is readable to both big funders (mostly government and foundation money) and colleagues elsewhere (the programmers and critics who support a show by hosting it or writing about it, or simply applauding it). Curators become less able to hear or see whatever doesn't read this way, including a lot of local particularity that is nontransferable. A curator might like the city, but she's got to find and promote art (whether it comes from here or Japan or elsewhere) that's fluent in the mongrel vocabulary of international art production. This pressure toward globally marketable art powers the inevitable drift of permanent institutions toward the generic—away from relevance, into irrelevance.

Among the great potentials of Portland's self-invented institutions is to irrigate new work by breaking the reliance on cash. The city is rich in all kinds of other capital—intelligent audience and colleagues, a pool of labor, cheap rent, combustible ideas—and the performative institutions circulate a great deal of it swiftly. What sort of art can arise outside of money's hegemony?

Miranda July tells me "to this day joanie4jackie is financially supported to a large degree by two tape duplication companies who give me unusual prices. My rehearsal space is essentially an ongoing donation to PICA from a local landlord. Sean Tejeratchi paid my rent for my first studio for about a year before I could do it myself. There's always been this economy here (maybe everywhere, I don't know) that really has to do with people simply giving to other people because they are able. I am just one of many instances of this."

Here is a provisional speculation as to why: Cash management is the first duty of any permanent arts institution. Beholden to their histories and futures, responsible for jobs, holdings, and facilities, entities such as PICA, PAM, or PNCA depend on a substantial flow of liquid capital to keep functioning. At PICA, the smallest of the three, around \$1.2 million must be drawn each year, and about 25% (\$313,625) of that will be spent securing new cash and managing its movement. While this river irrigates PICA's activities (\$376,200 in salary and related expenses, of which \$200,000 goes to artists' fees), the institution will always have as its primary duty the management of cash.

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5

DIARY.....

photographs. But everyone understands what this column is about, right? There are no checks and balances here in my Organ fiefdom, no way to assert professional authority or objectivity. In this setting, I am essentially a performer trying to evoke a mood. I saw John Baldessari speak today. "Art is a convincing lie," he said. So is art writing. That doesn't make it less worthwhile.)

November 5. Kudos to Four Wall Cinema Collective for mounting another winning experimental film program with their showcase of Hollis Frampton films from 1968-1973. While it had its tedious moments, the show was overall a staking out of defiant narrative territories that contemporary experimental filmmakers are still profitably exploring (pardon the imperialist metaphor). In *Critical Mass*, a hippie couple's angst-ridden spat—cut, stretched, reversed, and otherwise manipulated into a tortuously funny temporal collage—was proof that cinema can pull you into the grip of a story while challenging your idea of what a story is. (It's interesting to compare *CM* to a recent film like Matt McCormick's short found-informercial video *Destiny*, in which, in a similarly constructed tableau, a wholesome Christian couple testify cheerily to the camera. *Destiny* manipulates time sequencing in similar, but more punched-up and purely comedic fashion; editing becomes torture as the subjects are reduced to twitching puppets emitting unintelligible noises. I wonder, if we were to draw such a ridiculously blinded lineage, what would we conclude about the progress of experimental cinema? Does *Destiny* represent a dilution of meaning, or a sharpening of semiotic prowess? That's a stupid question, actually, for all sorts of reasons. I think it's an attempt to find an excuse to talk about comedy. *Destiny* makes me want to applaud my generation's permissive sense of pleasure and and apprecia-

tion of comedy as an art form, both probably results of television and early recreational drug use. But it's also an excuse to talk about prowess. Does current experimental cinema pay too much attention to things like layering and juxtaposition, and not enough to story-telling?)

Nov 12. I drove up to Seattle, where my guide took me on a tour of the city's museums and top galleries. First stop was the Bellevue Art Museum. *Trespassing: Houses x Artists*, which closed January 5, was an exhibit of housing designs by artists. Most of them sucked, and many of the shoddily constructed models were falling apart. Jessica Stockholder offered an exception, with her Barbie-modernist-shack. I don't have the architectural vocabulary to describe it, sorry, but it looked like an honest-y fun, pink place to live. I was put off by the museum's wide-lipped staircase, which frustrates a normal human gait and recalls an early, superstitious fear of breaking my mother's back.

Next stop, the Henry Art Museum for *Out of Site: Fictional Architectural Spaces*, which was organized by the New Museum (up through February 2). The premise: "young artists responding to developments in digital technology, virtual reality, urban and suburban growth and global expansion." Oddly perhaps, the paintings were the best part; while, for example, Patrick Meaghan's "user-navigable sculpture and data projection" (controlled from a vibrating styrofoam chair) lost its flavor pretty quickly. Painter Adam Ross, who had a concurrent show at James Harris Gallery, offered scenes from a future where bodies have seemingly given way to pure information and ideal forms: lozenges and screens and flattened portholes of orange and lavender against misty blue fields.

At Greg Kucera Gallery, Anne Appleby's large color-field paintings (with titles referencing nature's seasonal turns, e.g. *Spring Cherry* and *August Sky*) took your breath away, glowing almost maddeningly like candles. On a totally different note, at Esther Claypool Gallery, David Brody's curiously dry paintings—of (1) peeing and masturbating women (big-breasted, shaven, wearing controlled smiles and Mary Janes with bobby socks) and (2) objects constructed from engorged boobs and vaginas—were beautifully painted, pulling you nervously into their

oddly cool embrace.

Breezed through the painfully over-crowded Frida Kahlo show at the Seattle Art Museum, landing at the exquisite show of works by Korean artist Do-Ho Suh, who is best known for his recreations of architectural interiors out of silk and nylon fabric (on view at the Asian Art Museum, which we missed). The show, which closed in December, included *Floor*, a large plexiglass-topped platform supported by thousands of small plastic human figurines in camouflage colors, palms upheld; *Some/One*, a massive sculptural rendition of ancient Korean war armor, made entirely of dog tags; and *Who Am We?* a wallpaper pattern covering a large wall, composed of tiny portraits of the artist's high school classmates (something about its scale and density made my spine tingle).

Returned on the 13th for the Zadie Smith reading at the Schnitz (poor sound and bad interviewing deflated expectations), followed by Clear Cut Press's film and lit night at Disjecta. The occasion was a visit by Bruce Benderson, the gay noir writer whose "de Toqueville" study of the Northwest the Astoria-based press will publish later this year (caveat: they also help distribute the *Organ*). A long-time frequenter and literary interpreter of NY's Times Square in its times of high seediness, Benderson's "research" tends to attract curious street hustlers. Between this and the setting—a sparse audience; a cold, cavernous darkness; black silhouettes of bare trees against a gray sky through the distant windows—it was a very Lynchian-Van Sandtian couple of hours. At one point during Benderson's reading of story of abject sexual longing, Walt Curtis groaned in delight, "That's the best fucking reading I've ever heard!"

November 16. The second *Thirty Days Notice* show at Conduit—a series of time-based performance nights curated by Erin Boberg, David Bryant, and Joe Janiga—was an overall success, highlighting the more ambitious side of DIY curating. Lightbox Studio's four-part sound and movement "opera" and Andrew Dickson's one-man performance and Powerpoint presentation (treating the subject of Portland as a community of migrants) were standouts.

Robert Storr was enthralling in his Sunday lecture at PAM, speaking on the *Embracing the Present* show. He didn't have much of an overall point (see Bryan O'Keefe's review of the exhibit for a possible explanation), but it was a joy to watch his supple mind nibble through the slides of great contemporary artworks like sugar cookies. That didn't make any sense, sorry—time presses.

November 20. The Luca Buvoli show opened at PICA, to a pretty flat reception. The installation of resin sculptures of Buvoli's signature flying man seemed sparse and gimmicky. I still haven't watched his whole film—a pseudo-scientific lesson on human flight—so I can't comment on it.

Honestly, once the holidays came along, my art viewing efforts slowed considerably. I was really excited to see *Honey in the Horn*, ART's performance of a recent adaptation of H.L. Davis' fascinating 1930s novel about life in Oregon at the turn of the century. It seemed like a strange choice to adapt this particular novel, since its story line is so sprawling and poorly structured, and all its pleasures are in the lyrical descriptions of ranching, farming, fishing, and itinerant working life. However, the play was pretty effective, especially in its staging; improvisational use of props as puppets; and classic hand-made sound effects (e.g. sheet metal thunder). On the other hand, Lightbox's *Someone Who'll Watch Over Me*, Frank McGuinness's egregiously long play about three men held hostage in a Beirut prison, could have used some serious

editing, and the actor who played the Englishman sounded like C-3PO.

Red76's *Dim Sum* show, which opened December 11 at Gavin Shettler Gallery, was delightful. You wish dim sum-style sitting and sampling was the standard art viewing procedure, rather than the exception. See Lisa Radon's review on page 4. Project/Room/One's show of WA artist Jane Talbot was uneven (the photographs of cast shadows were boring; the painted diagrams of tennis, basketball and other courts were sort of interesting; the film por-

traits of two women's faces as they solved the same math problem was compelling), but proprietor/artist Jen Rhoads' converted space, in an old brick bakery building on the edge of the Columbia River industrial area (55 N. Farragut) is worth a visit. Colin Longcore's intricate wall collages (incorporating magazine clippings, photocopied images, and drawn patterns) at Clark College invited engrossed contemplation. The final big event of the year was Matt McCormick's Portland eXperimental Film Fest, which deserves more attention than I can give it here.

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EVENTS & CLASSES

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PERFORMANCE WORKS NW - JAN-FEB EVENTS

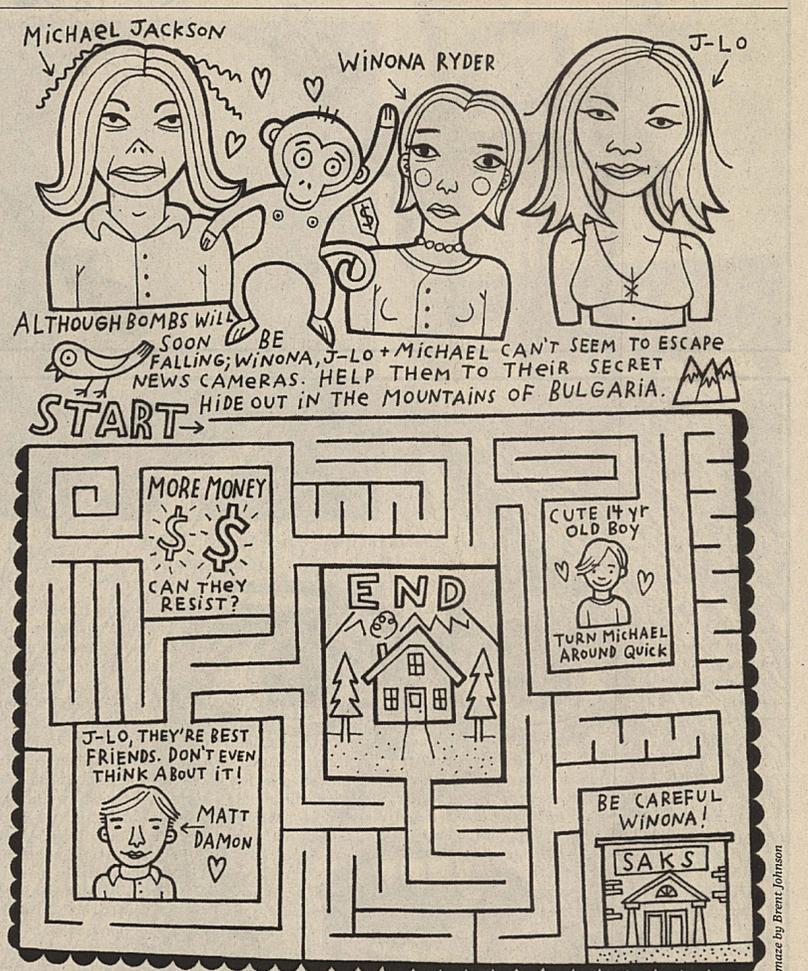
JAN 12 @ 2pm HOLY GOATS! Sunday Afternoon Improvisations w/Anne Furfey, Kerry Schaefer, Cydney Wilkes & Mike Barber, & AREA: Carmen Resendez, Joseph Bradshaw, Bethany Wright, Holly Blackwell, Seth Nehil, \$7. FEB 9 @ 2pm HOLY GOATS! w/Linda K. Johnson, Eric Shaw, Noelle Stiles, Linda Austin & Joel Taylor, \$7. FEB 22 @ 9pm Cabaret Boris & Natasha, \$10-12. FEB 24 Catherine Egan new work. 4625 SE 67th, 503.777.1907. [www.performanceworksnw.org](http://www.performanceworksnw.org)

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- Schedule
  - February 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup>, 7:30 pm
  - Multnomah County Public Library
    - Central Branch, US Bank Meeting Room
- Free



made by Brent Johnson

joke  
So this guy tells his doctor,  
"Doctor, every time I eat carrots,  
I shit carrots. And everytime I  
eat pears, I shit pears."  
So the doctor says, "Why don't you  
eat shit."  
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