

THE ORGAN

REVIEW OF ARTS

VOLUME NUMBER 1

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MARCH APRIL 2003

FREE TO YOU

A LITTLE BIRD SAID

Some things to look forward to...

March 3–April 4. *Blood and Guts Forever* at the Marylhurst University Art Gym is indie curator Brad Adkins' breakthrough to the leagues of institutional sponsorship. In it, nine young artists respond to the theme of "friendship." (Adkins curates the *Organ's* back-page gallery, "make do.") The overall impression: irony is out, sincerity and pathos are in. If you hate to cry in public, be especially wary of graffiti/poster/mail artist Johnne "our Ray Johnson" Eschleman's collection of love-induced memorabilia.

March 10–April 4. Artist Christy Nyboer will be on view via video monitors as she works at her computer and desk in an office temporarily installed in the lobby of the Portland Building. Audiences can interact with her through a drop slot.

March 11–April 5. In the PDX Window Project at 612 NW 12th Avenue, Amos Latteier and Chris Rhodes present *Why Pigeons?* a slideshow about man's love affair with the pigeon that viewers can control via cellphone.

March 12–April 19. An installation by Chicago-based artist Tony Tasset shows at PICA.

March 28–29. Liminal will present *Fluxconcert PDX*, a survey of classic Fluxus performance events at their space at NW 5th and Flanders.

April 2. Janet Koplos, senior editor for *Art in America*, will present "The WORK of Art," a lecture focusing on the "labor of making" in the art making process. Her gist: "...In an era of laborsaving devices, the choice of intensive and apparent labor is itself a statement of values." 7 p.m., Pacific Northwest College of Art.

Some gossip...

Mayor Vera Katz is holding a series of "rant and raves" with local artists, designers, and arts groups. The informal meetings are being organized by the Cultural Economy Initiative, a new effort out of Katz' office with a mandate to, in short, raise the city's "bohemian index" (more on this next issue). The first meeting took place on Thursday, February 26, in a Central Eastside studio/gallery, where sources say Katz opened by asking: "Why are you here and what can we do to keep you here?" ("Oh, and by the way, where do you live?") Signaling a possible future city proposal for a Central Eastside sanctuary for artist live/work space, she asked for a show of hands of attendees who lived in illegal lofts, but no hands were raised.) Word is that by the time everyone introduced themselves, only ten minutes were left to talk, at which point frustrations were running high. Filmmaker Matt McCormick's advice: you should do nothing. From another participant: fund RACC. From artist/consultant Matt Lounsbury: put art on the city's official list of 12 target industries. And what do we need to stay here? Jobs.

The Portland Center for the Advancement of Culture continues to fund-raise toward its goal of founding a neutral, noncommercial center for showcasing local art. Their "Know Portland" dinner and entertainment benefit series hasn't attracted any big dollars, but maybe their first visual art show, slated for the end of April (date and location TBA), will raise interest. No official word on who's in it, but the concept is to put some emerging abstract painters alongside some Schnitzer-approved old fart abstract painters and see if sparks fly. Meanwhile, well-connected gallerist Elizabeth Leach is off the board, citing lack of time.

Pacific Switchboard has a new space in the building formerly housing tidbit gallery at N. Blandena and Albina. They will resume programming in late March.

The *Organ* welcomes Literary Editor Heather Larimer, Poetry Editor Alicia Cohen, and Intern Ashley Edwards.

See our new Web site at www.organarts.org!

AMERICAN AUTHENTIC

PHOTO ARCHIVIST TOM ROBINSON DELIVERS A LOST PAST TO THE PRESENT

By Charles D'Ambrosio

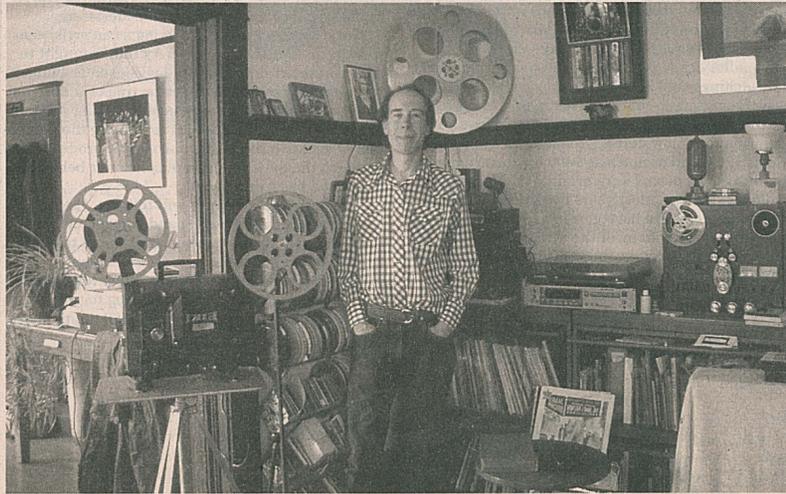


Photo by Natasha Snellman

Walter Benjamin—ah, college!—writes in one of his keen obsessive essays that "mechanical reproduction emancipates the work of art from its parasitical dependence on ritual" but that "the instant criterion of authenticity ceases to be applicable to artistic production, the total function of art is reversed. Instead of being based on ritual, it begins to be based on another practice—politics." After too much liberation, in other words, we eat each other (e.g., Fascism, various extracurricular wars) since art's absolute (but illusory) emancipation from tradition becomes, eventually, an attack on uniqueness. But that's jumping ahead to the epilogue of his argument. Really Benjamin's concern is the influence of mechanical reproduction on what he calls the decay of art's aura, its situatedness, "its presence in time, its unique existence at the place where it happens to be," its historical testimony. As a thinker and social aesthetician he offers a pivot between the 19th century's longing for continuity and the 20th century's embrace of brokenness. Looking ahead, he was wary, and Benjamin's refusal of the modern finally took the form of *felo-de-se*, favoring, as always, the unique and solitary act over the mass and anonymous. In 1940, he was trying to flee the Nazis, whose political apotheosis he intuited in the aesthetic shift to mechanical arts—chiefly, photography and film. Fearing alienation from the means of production—political killing—he gave himself an overdose of morphine, a fittingly 19th-century death.

The jokes on that man's life never ceased, however, and irony, like a Fury, hounded him in the afterworld. The day after his suicide his traveling companions were allowed to cross the Spanish border and press on to Portugal unmolested. His death certificate was fairly straightforward re: cause and classification—brain hemorrhage, natural—but it reversed his name—Benjamin Walter, the Normanized German, meaning "rule" or "army"—which in turn misidentified him as a Christian and allowed the deracinated Jew to be buried within the walls of the Catholic cemetery rather than outside the gate with all the other nonbelievers. After five years his remains were exhumed and moved to a common grave. The whereabouts of those remains are now unknown. There's some kind of lesson in all this but I don't know what.

So okay, but sixty years down the road what does any of this mean to the American scene, and particularly to an archivist like Tom Robinson who, among other things, buys up and preserves negatives from defunct photography studios around the state of Oregon? As I've said elsewhere—in a bar, probably—a graft of High European rhetoric doesn't always take well to American subjects, in part because the very tradition in which a Benjamin—or Adorno, Habermas, Raymond Williams, etc.—picks up his argument doesn't exist. There's hardly any cultural history to have a con-

versation with—it's all soliloquy. And if we do engage tradition, generally it's done with engineers, blueprints, bulldozers and concrete, not Marxist subtleties. A preservationist like Robinson, working privately, is more in the American grain, idealistic and pragmatic, digging up artifacts of culture that have been lost or buried, ditched or forgotten. His vision, differing fundamentally from Benjamin's, restores ritual and a sense of authenticity to a landscape that's been stripped of it. It connects aura back to culture and recreates the conditions for art.

Robinson's collection of photographs is a catalogue of gone things, the offall produced by American hope and optimism and that most insidious trope of the Chamber of Commerce, forward-thinking. Naturally his first focus is on the past, and it, too, is a form of refusal, a wariness. Death is inherent to photography in the sense that things evanesce at a rate dependent on f-stop and aperture; click, and another phenomenologically dead moment is captured on film. But in America, where history and landscape are seen as plastic or pliant, the neglected past finds in photography a delivery mechanism to the future, and moments or even epochs are carried forward and preserved, as long as someone saves the pictures. Walter Benjamin approvingly cites the photographs of Atget, the way his deserted Paris streets seem mysteriously like the scene of a crime, a gathering of evidence; our problem is different—the crime is amply evident everywhere, but where have all the reliable witnesses gone?

And that's where Tom Robinson's work is, for me, most interesting—as testimony. He moved to Portland in 1975 and used to do sound for rock shows but, approaching fifty, needed to find a new creative outlet, one that didn't involve banging around in a mosh pit. Originally he worked out of a warehouse, but now he does everything from his home in NE Portland. He's bought up the entire photographic output of roughly 500 people, the life work of both paid professionals on specific assignments and amateurs who tended to take aimless potshots at the scenery. At one point he had nine fridges filled with negatives. He says he "sort of winds up as the morgue," that "he gets what falls between the cracks," although, even then, he speculates, less than one percent of the pictures taken at any time will survive. Negatives degrade, film is unstable, and the cost of cataloguing is prohibitive. These days historical societies often refuse bulk bequests, unable to handle the enormous flow with their meager staff of volunteers and miniscule budgets.

In this world, one very near the problematic heart of mechanical reproduction, you have to wonder about the role volume and intent play in the processing of history. We're now too sophisticated

PLEASE SEE ROBINSON ON PAGE FOUR

FICTION

Superstar Tips

By Elizabeth Schambelan

Think pale, pale, pale: white pantsuits, bleached hair, nude lipstick.

For that smudgy, soulful look, put on eight coats of mascara and cry. Drink a lot of red wine. Experience dreamlike portents in the form of midgits and circus animals. Drive to a house in the country. Dance, have catfights and make love all weekend. Open the sliding glass doors. Step outside. See a midget. Realize that *la dolce vita* is bereft, from an existentialist point of view. Decide you're sick of Rome. Leave.

Walk the streets of a city famous for its china figurines. Sirens wail. Porcelain shards are everywhere. Bits of tiny shepherdesses imbed themselves in the soles of your shoes.

Never talk about your past. Shhhh stands for chic!

Balance on the pedestal at the foot of the stairs, wearing your most Grecian nightgown, holding a vase above your head. Be eleven when this happens. Listen to your mother's guests in the other room. Someone will come out into the foyer, mill about, walk towards you. A man's voice, below you, will say, "So, if I touch you, do you come to life?" You'll feel the feathery brush of hair against your shin, a tongue on the top of your foot. Shiver. Drop the vase. In the instant before you hit the floor, experience the mixture of terror and pleasure that you'll be addicted to for the rest of your life.

Swing. Drive a P-5 Rover. Take a lot of speed. Accompany an actor in his movie premiere. Loathe the movie, which concerns an executive who, after

being kidnapped by rock musicians, becomes a devotee of LSD and free love. Go to the after-party and loudly refer to Anita Pallenberg as "that vain, stupid hippie." When the actor comes up beside you and takes your arm, slap him. Accuse him of fucking Anita Pallenberg. Be incensed when he fails to deny this. Decide you're sick of London. Leave.

Can't-live-without-it designer: Betsey Johnson. Can't-live-without-it store: Paraphernalia. Sick of: Mary Quant. Most tragic fashion death: Tiger Morse.

Being an ice queen takes time, money, and, most of all, vigilance. Touch your roots once a month. Depilate ceaselessly. Examine your face in the mirror. Is it perfectly expressionless? Remember, physical anomalies—hairs, moles, blotches—are expressions of a sort, evidence of internal processes. Eradicate them.

Go to a psychedelic castle and sleep with a rock star. Have a lot of shock therapy. Walk the streets in the small hours of the morning. Complain, "I hate this city. They roll up the fucking sidewalks at midnight." See the moonlight glinting on the water like a million skeins of platinum hair, a million drowning movie stars. Accidentally walk right off the edge of the continent and into the sea. Decide you're sick of Los Angeles. Leave.

Open your medicine cabinet to find yourself staring into a rundown waterfront district. The narrow rusty shelves are riverbanks, riverbanks crowded with china factories. There are little windows in your pots of Jolen Creme Bleach, and teeny figurines are rolling out on conveyor belts. Your silver tubes of lipstick are storage drums full of suet and arsenic—full of things it's dangerous to eat. It's dangerous to eat.

PLEASE SEE FICTION ON PAGE THREE

EVERYBODY HAS SOMETHING TO SAY

The IPRC makes room for more voices

By Camela Raymond

The Independent Publishing Resource Center is not a secret social club.

"Someone thought you had to go up a secret staircase through Reading Frenzy's bathroom to get here," says Pablo de Ocampo, the IPRC's new Director.

That misconception is what you get for being a truly grassroots organization. Founded in 1998, the IPRC has found its natural constituency in the city's signature artistic underground of the past decade—the book-reading, bike-riding, tofu-eating, mussy-haired, pasty-skinned writer/poet/musician/artists who have made a modest utopia here producing self-consciously humble art, pseudo-academic tracts, and how-to-live-lightly pamphlets for each other. If Reading Frenzy, the beloved commercial outlet for indie press literature, located downstairs from the IPRC, was the movement's first permanent cultural outpost—its General Store—then the IPRC is the factory and school, churning out the media, art, and medium-is-message propaganda for the DIY ethic. Rolling off the photocopyers and presses come zines about World's Fairs ("The Journal of Ride Theory"), napping (founder Rebecca Gilbert's "napcore"), and the Battle in Seattle ("The Tale of John WTO #199055676"); literature and comics zines; diaries; posters, post cards, and handbills. The center also offers a host of workshops, from bookbinding to distribution, and a fully catalogued zine library for browsing and research.

However fitting a secret staircase might be, however, the fact is that the IPRC has its own, public entrance (at 917 SW Oak Street). It's open to anyone, 48 hours per week (afternoons and evenings Monday through Thursday; and noon to 6pm Friday-Sunday). What's more, the center is redoubling its efforts to bring its resources to a wider public. It already offers zine making workshops to alternative high school students and homeless youth, and it recently completed a two-year effort helping a group of Parkrose girls create an 80-page oral history of their neighborhood. This summer, it will sponsor its second zine camp for high school girls, an eight-week program covering all facets of zine publishing. De Ocampo says he and the board wish to build up outreach in the coming year, assigning

dedicated volunteer staff to present workshops and talks at youth shelters, public libraries, and elsewhere. With a recent modest expansion and rearrangement of the center's space (about the size of a large 2-bedroom apartment), staff are also working on making the on-site facilities more visible, useful and commodious. Future plans call for luring visitors with art exhibits in the entranceway and release parties for zines and comics. The idea



Photo by Scott Matz

is to encourage more people to use its free facilities, as well as attract a larger donor base and more people who'll pay the \$40 to \$100 sliding scale membership fee to use the publishing equipment.

In essence, de Ocampo has taken over leadership at the IPRC at a critical organizational juncture. A Phoenix, Arizona-born Bennington College graduate and member of the Four Wall Cinema Collective, de Ocampo became involved with the IPRC as a member, hoping to pick up printing skills for use in his visual art. Like many others, he used the space so much that he felt he needed to give

PLEASE SEE IPRC ON PAGE SIX

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SAVAGE

The Organ

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NONFICTION 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, Editor/Publisher, The *Organ*, 425 SE 3rd Avenue #302, Portland, OR 97214. Tel 503-236-2345. E-mail editor@organarts.org

FICTION AND POETRY SUBMISSIONS

Please submit fiction (1,500 words or less) to Heather Larimer, Literary Editor. Snail mail c/o The *Organ* (see above) or e-mail lit@organarts.org. Submit poetry to Alicia Cohen, Poetry Editor. Snail mail c/o The *Organ* or e-mail poetry@organarts.org.

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THE INTERWEB

Visit www.organarts.org for updates, announcements, and advertising information.

THANK YOU

The *Organ* thanks Storm Tharp, Rich Jensen, and Plazm Media for their support and assistance.

CORRECTIONS TO ISSUE #3

The *Organ* deeply regrets having omitted the final paragraph of Matthew Stadler's article, "A Living Mockery of Your Own Ideals." In addition, we inserted incorrect information regarding PICA's budget. The printed version stated that PICA spends 13% of its budget on securing new cash. The correct figure, which Stadler supplied to us, was 25%. Finally, the article incorrectly identified the Portland Center for the Advancement of Culture as the Portland Center for Cultural Advancement. For the correct version of Stadler's wonderful article, please see www.organarts.org.

Camela Raymond's "Letter from the Editor" stated that Jeff Jahn is the Editor of *NW Drizzle*. Jahn is the Art Editor. Mark Anderson is the Chief Editor and Publisher.

In the "News Bits" column, we stated that the artist Tim Bavington hailed from Los Angeles. Bavington lives in Las Vegas.

All fault lies with the Editor, none with magnificent Copy Editor Allison Dubinsky.

LETTERS & OPINIONS

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

To the Editor,

First of all, thanks for the *Organ*. I have enjoyed the first and third issues (didn't see #2). I just finished reading "The Disappearing Monument" by Morgan Currie and enjoyed the ideas presented, however I noticed a few errors in fact, the first being that the Daughters of the American Revolution do not maintain the Theodore Roosevelt sculpture. It is a city-owned artwork and is annually maintained by the Regional Arts and Culture Council, a local nonprofit arts organization. The second error in the article states that there is a monument to Dr. Coe on the Coe Traffic Circle, next to the Joan of Arc sculpture. The only monument to the Doctor was a bench placed in front of the sculpture after his death, but that bench was removed by an automobile in 1943. Keep up the good work and thank you for your time,

Robert Krueger
 Collection Coordinator
 Regional Arts & Culture Council

To the Editor:

Throughout Bryan O'Keefe's article "Embracing the Present; the UBS PaineWebber Collection," the underlying message seems to be that there is something wrong with a corporation collecting art, and with then allowing it to be shown publicly in a museum. If that's the case, I wish he could have explained it a bit more clearly.
 Of the exhibition he said, "Regrettably, it is... a display of expert liquidity planning within calculated investment horizons, represented by a leveraged and strategized collection of tangible alternative assets."

If it is "a display of expert liquidity planning [liquidity = consisting of or capable of ready conversion into cash] within calculated investment horizons," how does that jibe with the fact that "Much of the collection has been bequeathed to the Museum of Modern Art"? Perhaps there is some financial gain (conversion into cash) here that the "expert" can fathom, but O'Keefe doesn't clarify where the money is. And if UBS PaineWebber can profit by showing art to the public and then giving it away—what exactly is the problem with that?

He does insinuate that UBS PaineWebber just buys what it likes (UBS PaineWebber has "a desire for quality," which is inexplicable since "quality" is purely subjective) and O'Keefe implies that must be wrong, but again I can't see why from the article. "It seems that 'quality' at the simplest level is high real market value," he says, but he makes no case for that interpretation. Perhaps he is unaware of the great "quality" debates of the Bergsonian era (the 60s and 70s). In any case, he bites the red herring of a single word. He implies that there must be something wrong with buying expensive art, too, but we are not told why (probably something wrong with the Trail Blazers buying expensive basketball players as well).

And he finds it problematic that they might be making wise financial investments, but gee, that's what UBS PaineWebber is in business for.

He says, "Money supplants the judgments of... the spectator when interpretation is restricted to simple awe of avarice." I don't know why he didn't take this warning for himself. There was a lot to see in the show beyond any notion of excessive desire for corporate wealth, and if there was actually a greedy corporation doing something underhanded here, O'Keefe gave us no evidence of it.

Sincerely,

Paul Sutinen
 Southeast Portland

THE ORGAN ESSAY CONTEST

Don't forget to enter the *Organ* Essay Contest, announced last issue. The prize pot is growing all the time! Already, it contains gifts from artists Natascha Snellman, Brad Adkins, and Adrian Gaut, plus video editing services from videominds, and MORE!!

Here's the question contest entrants must answer in 1000 words or less:

"Write a cover letter applying for the position of Editor of *The Organ Review of Arts*. Explain your aims for running the paper."

You may, if you wish, begin your letter/essay with the following sentence: "I woke up today with a sense of expectation."

Submit your essay by postal mail or e-mail to Editor, The *Organ*, 425 SE 3rd Avenue #302, Portland, OR 97214 or editor@organarts.org. Don't forget to include your name and contact information.

Deadline is March 31, 2003.

Prize pot contributors select the contest judges. !UPDATE! Prizes accepted through March 31, 2003. See www.organarts.org for updates.

OP-ED

Blue Collar Patron

By Warren Becker

Amos Latteier's winter essay analyzing the artist's quandary of making a living struck a chord with me. Nope, I'm not an artist. Rather, I'm a 40-year-old soon-to-be-unemployed guy who has never brushed a canvas, but who happens to own a lot of art.

Years ago, a buddy and I were enjoying a Lucky Lab buzz and somehow got on the topic of art. My buddy openly pondered what life would be like if everyone consciously acquired one piece of art every year of their life. By the time retirement came 'round, people would be surrounded by objects of beauty—each one marking a passage of time in their life. Our golden years would be suffused with walls and pedestals of true eye candy. Idealistic as the notion seemed, we looked at each other over our beers and said, "Okay, why not?" and pledged to each other to do just that in our remaining years—become yearly art collectors.

My buddy, being the more conceptual of the two of us, immediately began making art—turning found objects into sculptures and wall hangings and arranging dumpster dive finds into wacko-beautiful forms of furniture. I took the greenbacks route and set out to buy, buy, buy—coffeehouse-cum-gallery canvases, garage sale rare finds, street fair etchings, and a gallery wood carving along the way. From time to time, I've surveyed local artist portfolios on the web and even commissioned a painting for a now-defunct romance. I've paid as little as \$2.50 and as much as \$400 for the art, mainly paintings. All pieces were original and most were from local talent. Most years I've purchased more than one piece and have gotten a kick out of dealing directly with many of the artists. The pieces are eclectic and reflect my mood of the moment—primitive and sensual to complex and melancholy. Throughout it all, I've had fun. It's more than a hobby, so I guess I'm a collector. For me, the acquiring process is more contemplative than "collect-

ing" Beanie Babies, but not serious enough to consider my acquisitions a form of financial investment. I have no training in art appreciation, but I sure as hell appreciate what's hanging on my walls. Art has become a part of my budget, meager as it is; and more importantly, art has become a part of my life.

At public debates on the social value of art, much emphasis is placed on the importance of art to our culture and within our schools. Great, but how about looking at art in economic terms? America is a culture of hyper-consumers, so let's treat art in a dualistic fashion: basic consumer good and thing of cultural importance.

Throughout my public school years I remember the many tutorials on personal finances—how to balance a checkbook, create a budget and plan for expenses. Mostly, I remember the creation of budgetary categories: *food, clothing, rent, utilities*, and the all-important *miscellaneous*. Those categories have stayed with me throughout my 40 years. Now, as unemployment approaches, I sit at my kitchen table under the watchful eye of an oil painting listing those same categories and plugging in numbers. Although dollar amounts shrink from time to time, the number of categories rarely do. If, as a student, my instructional on household budgeting included the category of "Art," I guarantee you it would have become a regular consideration.

The struggle of making a living as an artist ceases to be an issue within a society that is taught to incorporate art into its everyday consumer budget. Although art is unique, the collecting of it does not have to be such. The root issue and lasting solution to the artist's fiscal lament is realigning the perception of accessibility to the uncommon product (art), to match the most common of consumer behaviors (making a basic purchase).

Like any good marketer will tell you, "get 'em hooked while they're young and you got 'em for life." As harsh as that sounds, it's time to take the tried and true practices of real "evil-doers" (overzealous marketers) and put them to good use; i.e., get the American public jonesing for art like they do for \$5 cups of coffee and \$150 tennis shoes.



Superhero drawing by Matt Bowen

FASHION REVIEW

Seaplane XOX Fashion Show

January 18, 2003

By Heather Larimer

Seaplane knows its audience—young, art-minded hipsters with a populist sensibility. Instead of resting on their laurels and having their show in a grungy place (like the clubs and bars where much of their audience hangs out), Seaplane capitalized on one of Portland's more dazzling aesthetic resources, the minimal, Jenga-like Wieden + Kennedy Building. The show was held around the grand staircase, a striking space with multiple tiers. The crowd filled the balconies, landings and stairs, as well as the ground level; the models' procession through these levels made the show feel less like a pageant than an interactive performance. The audience/model/art interface created the feeling that everyone there was a vital part of the artistic process behind the clothes, which is ultimately true: Portland fashion is only as viable and as cultivated as its patronage. The graphics, mostly projections, helped unify the show and were interesting design elements in themselves. Seaplane's logistical choices (having the show at Wieden, making it graphically slick) encouraged their audience to raise the bar, to think in a more sophisticated way about a creative community whose foundation is essentially do-it-yourself. For all of the inspired arrangements, however, the clothes were only marginally so. Each piece had the intensity of a "show-piece," but the attention-grabbing became numbing after a while and felt like a diversionary tactic.

Subverting structure, slashing, skewing, etc., are more interesting when applied to a garment that has some internal rigor. Otherwise, there's no tension. The abandon of playing with scissors is less euphoric when there's nothing to destroy.

However, there was a true showstopper: an incredible patchwork dress by Claire LaFaye. Claire LaFaye's clothes are beguiling, both in the Seaplane store and on the runway (her stuff was some of the cleverest in the Fashion Incubator Winter Show). Even though her stylistic ambitions sometimes supersede the balance or integrity of the garments as discrete pieces, her nostalgia for trends most people want to forget—embellishment, men's shirting for women's garments, brocade blazers and fake pearls—is compelling and clever. This dress showed off all her talents. The full-length patchwork gown leaned on her usual retro references, but incorporated them into a dazzling garment. The sleeveless dress was constructed of countless tiny pieces of fabric assembled in an intricate quilt-like pattern. This might sound crafty for Claire's sake, but unlike most of the "creative" clothes in the show, it had a logic, a uniformity of sentiment. A buttery wedge of golden silk tumbled from the waist, which softened the dress and made the patchwork appear even more disciplined in contrast. Besides being visually stunning, the dress stood out because it seemed culturally astute, bringing together two diametrically-opposed versions of femininity: the studied matronliness of a quilt and the preciousness of satin. The product was a confident A-line gown, a form more sophisticated and powerful than either of its ingredients.

I'm not sure what to make of Portland's standout designer, Cameron, who showed the identical Kelly green romper on a handful of models who wore

THEATER REVIEW

CART

defunkt theater

January 16 - February 22, 2003

By Anna Simon

It took me a full week to realize why my e-mail server kept running articles on stockpiling duct tape. ("Can it really save your life?" read the Web site headline). On the seventh day I heard the radio report the country was under a code orange terrorist attack warning. The Administration urged Americans to protect their families from an anonymous yet distinctly foreign entity. Though the warnings didn't bother me, I was troubled hearing about the panic of others—supermarket rushes on staples, mothers writing their children sentimental notes in case they died, people refusing to use the Golden Gate Bridge because of its potential as a target. How long could this state of agitation continue? If no attack came — as surely, I reasoned, it wouldn't — would people's feelings gradually dissipate or continue to build, unarticulated and vague, latent and ready?

Cart, the most recent offering from defunkt theater, has successfully captured some of these sentiments. Portland playwright James Moore looks at those who succumb to paranoia and subsequently battle to feel safe again. It's a startling show: long, ambiguous, unsettling and rife with the uneasy tension that plagues the characters. Is it about a shopping cart? Yes and no.

It begins, more or less, with three 20-somethings, brothers Macy and Rick and their estranged friend Danna, who convinces them to flee the city and its vague air of menace. Their interrelationships are standoffish and nebulous, their past and present a mystery. The trio finds an empty house on the outskirts of Talent, Oregon, and hesitantly make themselves at home. "I feel okay here," shrugs Danna, their self-appointed, hard-edged leader. But their hesitancy turns to a feeling of entitlement when they're confronted by the late-arriving house-sitter, George, who is glaringly notwhite. "I don't feel safe with him here," hisses Danna to Rick. "We are supposed to be here." But the ensuing chat between Rick and George ends with George's violent murder. It will be his first of three deaths that evening.

Moore began the script for *Cart* in the woods 20 miles outside Sisters, Oregon, on October 20, 2001. "Right around the time the U.S. started bombing Afghanistan and people were receiving anthrax letters," he remembers. "I, who am particularly susceptible to mass paranoia, was struck by the general mood of feeling unsafe. This country's freaking out was really very intriguing and frightening to me. My first night there I was paranoid, terrified really. And what did I have to fear? I didn't know. So I began to write *Cart*."

Similar fears and wild imaginations drive Danna, Rick and Macy to their violent expulsion of George. At first the audience, trained in the modern rigors of noticing race and then promptly trying to forget that it exists, is reluctant to pin the gang's unease with George on his ethnicity. Wouldn't that be too obvious and easy? But Moore refuses to let the point be forgotten. He spends the rest of the play reviving George, absurdist style: He just sits up from an imaginary pool of blood and talks. George explains how he came to the house that night, pulled over doing the speed limit by a female cop because he looked out of place. His story is repeatedly interrupted as the kids kill him again, trying to block his words out. They're driven to annihilate the perceived threat without first trying to understand it or its impetus.

At some point *Cart* crosses the line from strange realism to regular absurdism, forgoing a coherent plot—or any semblance of it—in lieu of portraying events that serve only to push the play's many metaphors. It would be heavy-handed if we understood it all. Consider, for instance, the mysterious shopping cart that manifests on stage in low-lit dream sequences—it comes, it acts, it goes—but is the audience any wiser for it? To clarify, at some prior point the cart was pushed by an unknown "other" into Rick's car, completely wrecking it. Bewildered and deeply hurt by the anonymous act of destruction, Rick revenges the cart with a baseball bat. Repeatedly.

Cart has no easy answers—in fact, it may not have answers at all, as answers imply solutions and in general there are very few of those to be had. But it warns, it escapes being preachy, and as with other good pieces of art, it demands to be revisited.

curly wigs, headbands and sunglasses, but I trust it was either a deeply thought-out statement about fashion shows as constructs, or an emergency response to a shortage of new pieces. Either way, the campy uniforms, cool in a fairly unwearable way, were a refreshing intermission from the deconstructed gowns. What was she up to anyway? Were these Girl Scout troop leaders turned go-go girls? Psychics at their weekly tennis lesson? Kelly green? (At the show it seemed a bizarre hue to resurrect, but now, as I'm noticing it everywhere, it seems prescient.) Whatever her intention, Cameron's move brought the rest of the show into perspective. I've noticed this about her in general: she's sort of contrary and always manages to transcend her environment. At a show of one-of-a-kind showpieces, her uniforms made me wonder exactly what grain she was working against, albeit maybe unconsciously. When I reconsidered the designers' competition over who could be more tattered, deconstructed, bricolage-y, my conclusion was: "methinks they doth protest too much." It all felt like a nervous attempt to obfuscate the spectre of their mothers' home-sewn Butterick prom dresses. Better to look rebellious than earnestly homemade.

Seaplane's designer/owners inarguably have their shit together; they have Made It; they rule the Portland fashion scene. Now, particularly via their production elements, they are bravely teaching their own audience to elevate its tastes, which will make it demand more of Seaplane. . . and so on. All of this is highly laudable. It's time for more of their designers to follow suit, so their work will quit screaming, "Hey! Look what I made!" and go the way of Claire LaFaye.

LITERATURE & MISC. REVIEWS

LESSONS FROM THE KOOTENAY SCHOOL OF WRITING

A Vancouver poetry collective ceaselessly collapses for two decades

By Matthew Stadler

Because it is urban—headquartered in a derelict part of Vancouver's downtown—one is not surprised to find that the Kootenay School of Writing has no campus. Still, the modesty of the school's facility is bracing. Up a dimly lit flight of stairs, the KSW library, seminar table, and administrative offices take up a single room, furnished in old smoke and thrift furniture. This location represents a "move up" from original digs that were abandoned when crack sales became too frequent at the front door. An early member described the first office (and years) in an essay called "Island and City": "Repeatedly ascending those stairways, crowding with strangers on sprung couches, breathing stale smoke, apprehensively going along with new friends to parties at Warren Tallman's house, or Roy Kiyooka's, or Roy Miki's, or Gerald Creede's, observing these people who were the poets and editors whose books I was reading was just like sitting inside the modernist plate glass on the Languages and Literature floor of the old downtown Vancouver Public Library watching the nighttime traffic on Burrard Street between sentences. There were movements connecting basements and cabins and studios and kitchens, the books in these rooms, there were passages which gradually became to me what poetry is here—this history of lean-tos, porches, mudflats, sentences: these precise and vulnerable structures which have persisted on edges...Spaces became writing."

In such spaces, a culture is made. KSW started in 1984, after British Columbia's newly elected Social Credit government shut down the short-lived David Thompson University Centre in Nelson, an ex-logging town in the Kootenay Mountains. As with so many things Canadian, Americans will need a few explanations: Social Credit was a centrist party that held power in B.C. for most of the post-War era. In the early 1970s the liberal New Democratic Party ousted them for a few years, initiating the David Thompson Centre as a kind of populist educational experiment. The Centre became home base for a politically inflected poetics around a core of teachers that included Colin Browne and Fred Wah. Together with a handful of students, they moved from Nelson to Vancouver and, in September 1984, Browne and former students Jeff Derksen, Angela Hryniuk, Gary Whitehead, and others, founded the Kootenay School of Writing, Canada's first writer-run collective—unaccredited,

unfunded, and unbundled by the agendas and needs of a university.

For the past twenty years the small collective, comprising a few dozen writers, has sponsored lectures, seminars, and ongoing workshops while acting as a free public resource for poorer and indigent writers in the city. They maintain a library and a journal, while publishing books and articles individually with presses around the world. In any

work and teaching transpired in the more openly contested realms of public readings, local press or self-publishing, and conferences constructed outside the regulating influence of the universities.

(Portland today enjoys similar advantages. Rent is cheap. Intelligent people move here to make culture. Universities play little or no role in public discourse. But the city apparently lacks the intellectual base to support a non-academic discourse around

with a kind of class-based feminism and sexual politics, took over. A third group emerged four years ago, folding these issues into a broader concern with the dialectics of knowing (Althusser, Marx, Deleuze, and Foucault form common points of reference). The writing from KSW has been excellent and awful, profound and trivial—all things. But, notably, the conversation started in 1984 hasn't stopped. "The ideology is consistent," Barnholden contends. Paradoxically—tellingly—former members attribute the school's longevity to a shared predisposition against permanence. "No one lets you institute anything," one poet says. "They just say 'no,' or they don't follow through. It's in a state of sort of ceaseless collapse."

Currently, KSW has occasional workshops, an informal involvement with the Woodwards squat (a kind of pre-Dignity Village group of homeless people that took possession of an empty downtown department store last fall) and an ongoing seminar called "Studies in Practical Negation." Barnholden points out that, while government grants are dwindling, "our largest single source of funding is still intact: that is, the sweat equity of the collective and sympathizers."

The school's discourse reached America long ago (primarily through San Francisco and Buffalo, where Charles Bernstein—who himself studied with Robin Blaser in Vancouver—runs a program in contemporary poetics), but remained relatively unheard in the Northwest until the 1990s when Seattle poet Robert Mitterthaler started crossing the border, initiating some projects that ultimately led to Seattle's SubText collective, a group with strong affinities to KSW. Through SubText, and also through the early Rendezvous Reading Series and the summer festival Bumbershoot, KSW writers such as Jeff Derksen, Colin Browne, Lisa Robertson, and Aaron Vidaver have been visible in Seattle, part of a group that, as they become more broadly read, suggest the presence of a vigorous North Pacific American discourse around poetics.

And what of Portland? Will new collectives like the Spare Room catalyze any public discussion of contemporary poetics? Will we hear from Steinman or LeGuin, that is outside *The Oregonian's* and *Tribune's* book review pages? Will Doug Marx's keen intelligence about contemporary poetry find a forum more ambitious than the daily paper? Will writers take an interest in the vitality and rigor of the local film and video community, which is itself constructing a kind of public poetics that writers could engage and learn from? Will we do anything more ambitious than polishing our manuscripts in workshop, plotting careers, and cashing our modest checks for reviewing the latest books from some distant, other coast?

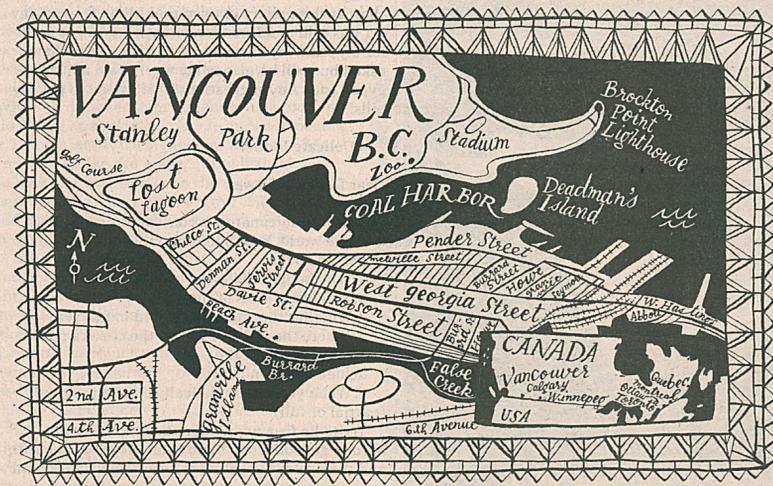


Illustration by Carson Ellis

given year, KSW can be expected to host a score of visiting writers for an evening or week in Vancouver, offer a few dozen classes and workshops, and be visible and vocal in local politics and culture.

Vancouver was a good place for KSW to take root. You could live cheap. The city's discourse around poetic work had been vigorous, public, political, and demanding for at least a few decades. A "watershed" of sorts is often traced to a 1963 conference that brought the American poets Robert Duncan, Robert Creeley, Denise Levertov, and Charles Olson to Vancouver. The conference catalyzed a nascent discourse—leaving new journals and teaching initiatives in its wake—that coalesced around a handful of major figures: Robin Blaser and George Stanley (who fled America during the Vietnam war), George Bowering, Roy Miki, and Ellen and Warren Tallman. Interestingly, these writers were not uniformly enlisted in the universities' tenure system, and so a great deal of their

contemporary poetics. The minds are here, but they're absent from public life: Why don't we hear from Lisa Steinman? Ursula LeGuin? It is regrettable that the work going on in our backyard, by these writers, and also Vancouver's, has been nearly invisible to us. Aspiring locals stare longingly toward the New York publishing economy, memorizing its tiniest nuances—McSweeney's, *Tin House*, the rise of transplanted colleagues through the bigger publishing houses—while remaining broadly ignorant of the vigorous culture that's been in place, nearby, for at least forty years.)

Michael Barnholden, a KSW poet who co-edited the collective's anthology "Writing Class," says that KSW is based in "the radical conception that writing is a social activity, not a personal or private event." The school's initial links to the San Francisco-based poetics later codified as L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E poetry waned in the early 1990s, as founding members burned out and a second wave of KSW poets, more deeply concerned

emerged around the time of CS—gone is the classical economic concept of value dependent on scarcity replaced by a new emphasis on excess and expenditure. The major turnabout to come, much later, in *La Part Maudite*: "It is not necessary [need to acquire] but its contrary, 'luxury' [need to lose or squander], that presents living matter and mankind with their fundamental problems."

Colleagues reacted to these articles and lectures with mixed dismissals. Maybe they were blinded by Bataille's brilliance. More likely, Bataille's awkward self-positioning outside the social sciences (his "Sacred Sociology" was neither), or the latent elitism of his "theory of the potlatch" (only sovereign aristocrats "struggle" as economic agents—forget the proletariat) baffled his leftist audience. Not surprising. The theory seems right-wing adaptable (imagine the Social Security Administration firing all welfare officers and replacing them with personal shopping consultants for the wealthy), but, then, it depends on who is reading.

Or does it? The theory of the potlatch is certainly difficult to grasp. The central scenario, a restatement of Mauss's *The Gift*, is modeled on the behavior of the Tlingit, Haida, Tsimshian, and Kwakiutl tribes of pre-colonial British Columbia: in a potlatch ceremony, the tribal leader destroys/consumes the gift in a public display of rank, humiliating the observing individual, obligating him/her to respond with another display to challenge the hierarchy, and so on. Surya compares these tribal leaders to their *haute-bourgeois* equivalents in Bataille's era, who hoarded their riches, shunned public life, and presented a populist image to the public: "if [the bourgeoisie] acquired, it was not to enjoy its rank in ostentatious challenge, as the aristocracy once did, but to consolidate it." What once looked like pseudo-anthropology looks today like an allegorical response, in the manner of Orwell or Traven, to the bureaucracies encouraged by the deflated European economy of the 1930s. But unlike, say, *Animal Farm*, a focused attack on an existing social order founded on clearly stated political convictions, Bataille's critique can seem like the idle thoughts of a dandy in a satin-tented pink boudoir, mourning the replacement of a gaudy fin-de-siècle aristocracy by a well-tailored, no-fun fascist elite that just didn't get Nietzsche.

If Bataille is arguing in favor of anything at all, it is not philanthropy or conspicuous consumption, or, not exactly, as *Acéphale* shows, the theory of general economy climaxes in human or animal sacrifice. Formed in 1935 with surrealist painter Andre Masson and other initiates, anti-Semites excluded, *Acéphale* was the name of a journal and society devoted to the study of eroticized death. It may be unfair to call *Acéphale* a joke, but it is a fine example of a sub-type of fascist aesthetics Susan Sontag identified as "a sophisticated playing with cultural horror." One thing should be made clear: Bataille actively opposed "fascism," (a term once definable, now a cipher in world political lexicon). But the aesthetic line between anti-fascist rebellion and what was then called by detractors "surfascism," is forever blurred in Masson's drawing of the violent and vulnerable *Acéphale*: "...headless, as was proper (his decapitated head in the form of a skull had taken refuge where his genitals should be), his body upright, his legs firmly planted apart in the earth, arms outstretched, in his right fist a flaming

heart, in his left a dagger-shaped flower. His body is studded with stars but the entrails show through: the center of the body is a labyrinth constructed like a palace." A mystifying image.

What remains of these experimental novels, journals and secret societies? The fiction and several theoretical works remain in print in English, but other than rumors of sacrifices in dark forests, little record survives of the activities of *Acéphale*. (To whom or what these humans and animals may have been sacrificed is anyone's guess. Zarathustra?) Much later, Bataille seemed to regret some of his excesses as much as Breton regretted his infamous call to action: to walk into the street and fire a gun at people at random—an act conceivable only in the faintest recollection of a Buñuel movie, or on our most transgressive reality-based TV shows. Entertainment helps us to forget the history of its appropriations. For extending memory of the fascinating Georges Bataille past the recycled regrets of an avant-garde, many thanks to Michel Surya.

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FICTION.....

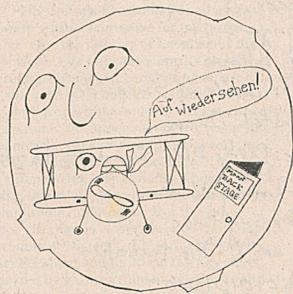


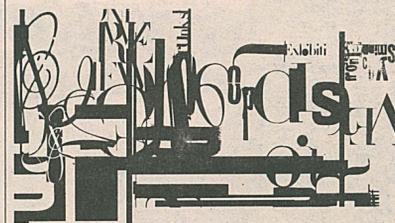
Illustration by Scamper Franklin

In the newsreels, the city runs along the bottom of the movie screen like a comb with broken teeth. Above it, scattered across the white sky, airplanes are turning into puffs of smoke. There he is—the Death Flyer. So handsome, so suave.... His hair is blonde. His smile is the smile of a man who's been lying in a peat bog for ten thousand years. He blows you a kisStaples for the girl who has better things to do than eat: coffee; codeine; cigarettes; and of course, dolls, dolls, dolls...blacks, reds, ups, downs...whatever....

Finally, meet a man who understands you. Impress him by drinking punch straight from the dipper. Tell him he looks like the man in the moon. Get a sort of lunar thing going.—think "lunatic," "sublunary." Inject heroin of dubious provenance to achieve that green-cheese glow. Become a chanteuse. When he projects a giant image of your face onto the wall behind you, realize that that

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Top: Indians fishing at Celilo Falls, Oregon, ca. 1927-1932. Photograph by Benjamin Markham. Bottom: Indians fishing at Celilo Falls prior to 1933. Photograph by Elite Studio. Images courtesy of Tom Robinson.

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

ROBINSON.....

to believe history is everything that ever happened, an indifferent or neutral deposit of events, yet with photographs you either have to scope out the whole range, leaving nothing behind, or curate with focus. A one-man operation, such as Robinson's, probably allows the flexible quirks of sensibility to shape a collection. His living room is the cozy, informal museum of a man at home with his odd passions. Everything in it, from sofas to ashtrays, is salvaged. Instead of a television and VCR, there's an 8 millimeter projector and cans of film on the shelf. This keen eye for neglect likely paves the way for serendipitous finds. He once dreamed that he'd score a bunch of pictures on Celilo Falls and, heading to an estate sale the next morning, did just that.

The real art of America is the Hoover Dam, the John Hancock building, the Boeing plant in Everett—big things, hugely scaled things, colossi that alter and rework the landscape. We put our stamp on space the way a painter strokes acrylic on a canvas, and in a very real sense land is the raw material for our artistic monuments. The dams we build alter rivers, altered rivers ruin habitat, and ruined habitat displaces whole peoples and species—it's like an environmental impasto, each jab of the brush or knife leaving a scar on the land. And so, back to Walter Benjamin: "The authenticity of a thing is the essence of all that is transmissible from its beginning, ranging from its substantive duration to its testimony to the history which it has experienced." Perhaps no country in the world puts so little stock in the idea of duration as ours, but Benjamin's words—*authenticity, essence, testimony, history*—speak to the artistic dimension and value of an archivist's work, the restoration and binding of a culture's aura to time, re-establishing a unique existence. Here, it's the land we have to authenticate, and for that, time itself needs a locale.

For his work in this regard, Tom Robinson should probably receive a laureateship in something, the Whatever Laureate. He is presently busy with a book on Celilo Falls, now buried but once, as everyone knows, the greatest fishing spot in the region, perhaps in the world, and the site of a village continuously inhabited for ten thousand years. The village population is, today, seventy-one, and that stretch of once-turbulent water, white and churning, shot with misty rainbows and rigged with scaffolding, now pokes along as tamely as the Mississippi. Pros like Ray Atkeson snapped the shots I remember from seventh-grade Northwest history, but there's something about them, a lack of strangeness, that undercuts their radical power with an overlay of the familiar and quaint. They're important, of course, but in the end they're too pictorial and genial to disturb—postcard stuff. Robinson says professional photographers tended to take the same pictures, over and over; they were doing a job and their work was limited to their motivations. I would argue, too, that these pros were probably taking pictures of pictures, seeing what others had seen before them, forging the raw moment. But with proper positioning their work might come to life again, stunning us.

Photos from amateurs will likely fill in the necessary gaps, Robinson says, especially in recreating a sense of that ancient village. They didn't know what to shoot, bringing an untrained eye to the pictured scene. You can imagine a horde of goofballs with cameras, unabashedly firing away, all the poorly framed, poorly lit, poorly focused pictures, all the accidents of intent, an incredible volume of anonymous work that will, in Robinson's book, make vivid a time and place that was sold off for cheap power, ensuring that, in the future, or at least the foreseeable future, we could live anywhere we pleased.

Top 24 Names for New Art Collectives

- Futz & Factory
- TV Fine Test
- Beer 78
- Finger Hut
- Millhaus
- The Lords of Burnside
- Dutch Oven
- Ye Dirty Olde Spaghetti Factory
- Fantasy Video
- Meningitis
- I am a little teapot
- 0101010109
- Nova Sibirsk
- Pastaworks
- Contemporary Arts
- KUNST BLATZ
- OUBIZ
- North Korca
- Ree Cack
- Anctil Heating + Cooling
- Bridget Jones
- Philose
- Chicago, Illinois
- Lexus



Dear Stu-ART,

Hi, I'm an artist and I need some advice. I had a show at this gallery in town that I like. Some of my art was sold and I wonder when or how I get paid for my stuff. My show was a while ago and I have asked but still no money my way? I feel a little gyped [sic]. Any suggestions????? I need to pay my bills!

- Delicate Flower

Dear Delicate Flower,

This is unfortunately a consistent problem all over the world. You should certainly ask the dealer in person about:

- a. Who bought the work
- b. What the terms of the sale were
- c. Whether they have been paid in full yet
- d. Where the art is (if it is in the client's possession it is likely that the dealer has been paid)
- e. When you can realistically expect payment (partial or full)

Try to be firm and understanding. It is often hard to get collectors to do what they say they will, and the dealer himself may be waiting. You should have an agreement with your dealer about when and how you will be paid for sales, and you should know who owns your work.

Best,
Stu-ART

Dear Stu-ART,

I just moved to Portland from Santa Cruz, California. I make room-size installations (at least 20' x 20') that map historical battle scenes with materials such as cardboard, yarn, and resin-encased bacteria. I certainly want to work with a gallery here in town. Can you explain to me the various options, the difference between, say, Mark Woolley and Savage? I want the best.

- Ellen

Dear Ellen,

Your work sounds great, I'd love to see it. I do not want to presume which dealer would be interested in what you are doing. I'm always amazed when someone tells me, "You should see this show,

it's just your kind of thing." What kind of thing is that? I'm interested in monochrome painting, public art, expressionism, erotic drawings, robotics, and raku. While many dealers here have a tried and true sensibility, they are also open to being "wowed" and who knows how they might respond. Market (or lack of one) forces make them particularly attentive to what work might be of interest to their collectors. Having been a dealer, I can tell you that believing in someone's work and being able to sell it are not the same thing. Dealers have rent to pay invites to print, insurance premiums, and sometimes wine in those little plastic cups. Artists have studio bills and material costs, slides to shoot and Web sites to launch. They each do the best they can.

But for starters, does size matter? Yes, and Savage, Liz Leach, Mark Woolley, Laura Russo, Pulliam Deffenbaugh, and Butters could install your work comfortably. Augen, Froelick, Duckler, and PDX could accommodate mid-size works, maquettes, or preparatory drawings. How do you choose or how do they choose you? Get to know these people, see what they show, talk to their artists. What are their personalities like? Motherly, mopey, optimistic, cool? How many red dots do you see on their price lists?

Don't forget that there are opportunities with Linda Tesner at Lewis & Clark and Terri Hopkins at Marylhurst and whoever will be the new curator at Reed. There's the Feldman Gallery at PNCA or the Littman at PSU. These university galleries have space, curious curators, and often a small budget for catalogs. These catalogs can help you attract dealers here and elsewhere.

Or you can get together with friends and do a show in a warehouse, a store, a backyard, your car. A lot of the power rests with you. Remember the show that Damien Hirst organized with his pals in London several years ago? The one that launched the whole YBA wave?

Have you sent in materials for the Oregon Biennial at PAM? Checked out the application deadlines at RACC? Joined Harrell Fletcher's book club at the PICA resource room? Have you met Jeff Jahn?

It may also be worth looking for out-of-town venues that exhibit art on your specific subject, battle scenes. For example, the University of Illinois recently announced a call for artworks about "terrorism, poverty, environmental protection, privacy, racism, civil liberties, drugs and reproductive rights" for an exhibit called "Ready for War," which is up in their museum and posted on their website (<http://www.universitygalleries.com>) through March 18.

An Internet search shows that you still have time to submit a proposal for "Civil War," an exhibition at the artist-run gallery EyeCloses Studio in Fredericksburg Virginia. The curators have requested artwork representing the Civil War. "Generals, Majors, and Battles, classical and modern interpretations welcome." See www.eyecloses.com for more information.

I wish you the best of luck.

Stu-ART

We've got the anthem. Who's got the answer?

Red76 International Arts Group Exhibition 2003

By Chas Bowle

On March 13, 2003, the Red76 Arts Group will host "I've got an answer / I've got an anthem - International Arts Group Exposition 2003" (IAE) at the Laurelhurst Theater. The IAE will be the largest gathering of independent arts groups ever assembled, at least in these postmodern times, and will generally serve as a meet-and-greet for these different groups and as an opportunity to see what this art movement is all about. A few dozen national and international collectives, including Superflex, Beige and Temporary Services will either be in attendance or represented by videos, zines or other forms of documentary ephemera throughout the theater. A handful of arts groups will be sending along projects aimed at the community at large - printing posters to be wheatpasted across town, or in the case of Chicago's Temporary Services, passing out transistor radios and broadcasting an "audio relay" via mobile transmitter. More typically, however, one can expect to traipse the theaters of Laurelhurst and stumble upon monitor after monitor of animation and videos of public happenings and to be inundated with zines and fliers. I am particularly looking forward to the IAE because, despite my research and talks with Red76 curator Sam Gould about the event, some aspects of the art group trend don't quite add up in my brain. Or more precisely, the rhetoric of the movement doesn't jive with the practice.

In the January 19 edition of the *New York Times*, Holland Cotter presented "Doing Their Own Thing, Making Art Together," a profile of the burgeoning arts group movement. In a nutshell, young artists, mostly in their 20s, are getting out of school and finding themselves disillusioned with the art world/market, and are taking matters into their own hands. "Doing their own thing" involves producing their own exhibits in "nontraditional" venues, such as basements, street corners, and the Internet, making their own publications, and creating an art environment and community in which they can continue to grow, exist and converse. Finding strength in numbers, many of these artists put their heads together, come up with a rock 'n' roll-sounding name for themselves, and frequently begin to make art as a team. Portland boasts a number of such groups, such Red76, charm bracelet, Collective Jyrk, and countless others who are probably just uniting.

Cotter's angle is that, as in the 1960s, social turbulence and the threat of nuclear annihilation are resulting in an artistic and political counterculture. But I asked Gould if it wasn't true that many of these collectives existed prior to September 11, when Clinton was in office and all that most of us saw were sunny days ahead. What fear and unrest were they banding against then? I remained unconvinced when Gould brought up late Cold War anxiety from elementary school.

More commonly, market forces are blamed for the surge in independent art groups. Frustrated with their inability to achieve mainstream success in the traditional gallery market, the artists' alternative was to create their own system of exhibitions. This is nothing new, with some obvious precedents being Hallwalls Gallery in New York, the Salon des Refusés in 19th-century Paris, or the Zurich Dada movement ninety years ago. There is no arguing that there will be more artists than there are venues to showcase their work, but what's curious about this go-round is the adamant cry of taking art to the public, even when the results are invariably returned to the art world. The IAE press release proclaims "(Arts groups) are the public's most accessible outlet for contemporary thought and practice in the arts." But a look at the attendance figures for the Portland Art Museum's current Impressionist show might deflate this idea. Though their forays into the public sphere are less antiscial than were, for example, those of Vito Acconci, who followed strangers on the street until they fled into private buildings, these groups are no more taking art to the masses than he was. The only people who will likely show up for IAE are people already interested in art, who read *The Organ* or the art section of the newspaper and regularly attend fine art events. There's nothing wrong with that, but it doesn't sync up with this utopian, egalitarian ideal.

Instant Coffee is a Toronto-based group of artists, writers, and curators that produces exhibits, books, CD-ROMs and posters in an attempt to bridge the gap between "studio and exhibition" practice. Their bio states, "It [Instant Coffee] wanted to offer its community a public place of practice, where ideas, materials and actions could be explored outside of the isolated studio and away from formal exhibition structures." I believe the key word in this mission is "its" community, suggesting a loose organization of like-minded artists, rather than "the" community, suggesting everyone sharing the same area code. This is a more realistic approach - a peer-to-peer showcase is easier to swallow than the idea of them breaking down the walls and reaching the *Big Fat Greek Wedding* audience. On the event of a major exhibition, Instant Coffee member Rosemary Heather wrote: "Ironically, performing in the space of an established art institution like the Art Gallery of Ontario gave us access to a broader audience than we could ever get to attend our other events." That's ironic? Of course showing your work in the Art Gallery of Ontario will expose your work more than a one-night party at the local Shriener's hall.

The most encouraging evidence that my doubts are totally off-base here came from *A Secret Location on the Lower East Side*, a book about the mimeograph revolution in the poetry world that occurred in the 1960s and '70s. The approaches of the Black Mountain School, City Lights, and the first-generation New York School sound remarkably similar to the best of what I hear in the art collective movement. Poets like Ted Berrigan, Ron Padgett, and Anne Waldman began to revolt against the established poetry system, printed their

AntiHitler Superstar
The Art of Kurt Cobain and Adolf Hitler

By Tim Appelo

Like most major revolutionaries, they came from the provincial peripheries of the empire, remote from and rejected by the center of the traditional culture they would upend. Each had a troubled relationship with an irascible dad, and despite signs of extreme artistic inclinations, dropped out after sketchy schooling. Each won global fame by screaming eloquently and binding previously unconnected strands of popular culture in an idiosyncratic new form via innovative media technologies. Both succumbed to drugs, fame, power and their own myth. Both committed double suicide, poison followed by a gunshot to the head. And both shared a common calling most people don't realize that each conceived as his core identity: they were artists.

Kurt Cobain and Adolf Hitler were also opposites, in ways that shed light on the work of each. Two important new books, Kurt Cobain's *Journals* and Frederic Spotts' *Hitler and the Power of Aesthetics*, make a fascinating study in contrasts. Each could barely contain his own contradictions. Hitler was "a dual personality, [a] rather gentle artist and [a] homicidal maniac," says an eyewitness Spotts quotes. Substitute "suicidal," and you describe Cobain. Both were impelled to art by their righteous hatred of humanity; but where Cobain also had morbid empathy with humanity, Hitler felt none. Cobain used pens, guitars, violent imagery and MTV to express his raging vision of a new world; Hitler used Speer's architecture, Riefenstahl's film, his own sketches of symbol-laden imagery and actual violence. Hitler said, "Fate made me the sculptor of Germany"—his medium was flesh and stone, his artist's tools propaganda and the camps, terror and technology. He spent every dime on art and drew up plans to resculpt humanity and line Europe with Totenburgen, "castles of death," enormous conical citadels housing his war dead. Spotts says Hitler's risk, instinctive blitzkrieg tactics were aesthetic payback: "the triumph of creativity over orthodoxy...of the failed painter over the artistic pedants of the Vienna Academy of Fine Arts."

Both made art continually from early childhood, keeping mayhem at bay: young Hitler sketching at his mother's bedside as she died in cancer agony and poring over grandiose plans for an all-Europe art gallery as the Russians closed in on him; teenage Cobain coping with a family tradition of self-slaughter by making songs and images of birth, death, decay and persecution.

Both filled their sketchbooks with swastikas and complex, ideologically charged visions, but with a difference. For Hitler, the swastika was an emblem of Aryan superiority; for Cobain, it represented Nazism, and all conservative phenomena, from the

KKK to high-school football to the U.S. military to anyone who contended that heroin addicts are not fit parents. His *Journals* are full of scary images, like a lynched GI wearing camouflage and a football helmet; and the most-repeated phrase in the book, linked to the "Teen Spirit" video and violent drawings, is "Revolutionary debris litters the floor of Wall Street."

Hitler used to ecstatically visualize New York burning, only he took it literally. Cobain was thinking metaphorically: he wanted to destroy crass commercial music culture and replace it with an ideal punk culture inspired by Olympia's dotty utopianism: "I'm going to fucking destroy your macho, sadistic, sick right wing, religiously abusive opinions. ... Before I die many will die with me and they will deserve it. See you in hell Love Kurdt Kobain Thanks for the tragedy I need it for my art." He expressed this in video treatments, which the *Journals* reveal to be elaborately visually thought-out. When he draws an angry gunman on a rooftop blasting away at a neo-Nazi parade, he's not making plans, like Hitler preparing to mow down the SA; it's a metaphor, like the image of the little girl whose KKK hat blows away on the righteous punk winds of change in his sketch for the "Heart Shaped Box" video. He did threaten people with death, but it was just to scare them out of intruding on his life by writing about him.

Though his drawing was technically superior to Cobain's, Hitler's visual art was bad, mostly boringly conventional landscapes and surprisingly accurate sketches of buildings. Hitler could sketch faces, but not the human figure; Cobain was the opposite. Cobain's *Journals* often look like what a modestly promising tenth-grade art student might scribble on his Pee-Chee to while away algebra class. His cartoons are crude both in their language and their line, though they're of psychological interest, replete with murder, rape, bursting heads and excrement. Hitler sketched cute animals, pretty scenes, banal architectural grandeur.

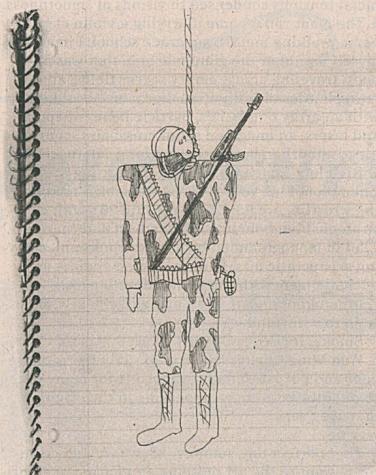
More interesting are Cobain's self-portraits, collages, and notes for rock videos. There are two self-portraits in the *Journals*; another can be glimpsed in the underrated documentary *Kurt & Courtney*. Cobain, who was ashamed of his ill, skinny physique, took it out on himself in these portraits of emotional and physical emaciation. His pre-fame self-portrait (seen in the film) expresses self-contempt; his post-fame sketches (seen in the *Journals*) show a lacerating contempt for his heroic image, the media types who hawk it, and the rubes who buy it.

The rock video sketches revisit a theme seen in the pre-fame self-portrait—trees that reach out toward the skeletal Cobain-man with sinister tentacular tendrils, enclosing him. His magnum opus of visual art, the "Heart Shaped Box" video, features a crucified skinny old man (in part a self-portrait, in part a reference to William Burroughs, who he wanted to cast in the video) and a tree creature Cobain got from Dante's *Inferno*, via a 1935 Spencer Tracy movie by that name. In the poem, Dante enters the circle of hell devoted to suicides, finds a

tree, and snaps off a twig. The twig bleeds and the tree cries out in pain—it's a human turned into a tree as God's punishment. The trees are also a threatening presence: Cobain was deeply influenced by *The Wizard of Oz*, and I believe the trees in his art draw something of their menace from the woods that terrified Dorothy.

Cobain's best sketches remind me of George Grosz in their disgust with society. It's not so much a literal graphic influence—I don't know whether the art teacher interviewed in *Kurt & Courtney* ever introduced him to Grosz's work—but there's a common sensibility and a vaguely similar look. Hitler abhorred Grosz's ilk, and sought to impose health upon art and thereby upon civilization. He famously associated modernist art with disease.

Disease was absolutely central to Cobain's aes-



thetic. In *Kurt & Courtney*, his first girlfriend, Tracy Marander, notes that he was always fascinated with nature's grossness. He filled their home with baby dolls he'd half-melted in the oven and made collages of medical textbook illustrations luridly depicting afflictions of the vagina. The *In Utero* CD jewelbox features a collage of fetal model parts he made on the floor. He once invited a friend to admire the glistening effect of a painting on which he had just ejaculated. The song "In Bloom" captures his loving revulsion for nature and its process-

es. Cobain made something vital out of the morbidity he cultivated. Hitler's aesthetic of health caused death, and the death of art. Yet both had vast success in the art form of their time that combined all the other arts: political opera in Hitler's case, rock shows (filmed and otherwise) in Cobain's. Hitler's whole career was a mutant Wagner opera. Cobain

had an opera stage designer's eye—the colors, candles, and all those funeral lilies in the MTV Unplugged concert were his idea all the way. He art directed Nirvana's entire visual project, from the flailing hair in the solarized photo on the cover of *Bleach* to the staging of his suicide. As a teen, he made a movie, "Kurt Commits Bloody Suicide"; staging his penultimate suicide attempt in Rome, he wrote a note comparing himself to Hamlet, whom he obsessively raved about in nonfatal stoned soliloquys.

Cobain once murdered a cat and laughed about it, but his violence was largely self-directed. His art is about vengeance, like Hitler's, but it's mostly a victim's defiance unto death, akin to beheaded degenerate-art student Sophie Scholl of the White Rose resistance, or the subversive prisoners who installed the "b" upside down in "Arbeit Macht Frei," the logo on Auschwitz's gate.

What his imagination did share with Hitler's was an absolutist fatalism, like a willful sleepwalker on a tightrope, and an angry, dreamy aestheticization of death. Each imposed a personal mood on the world. Spotts' words about Hitler sound like they could be describing Cobain: "He might spend days in a near trance-like state, dozing like a crocodile in the mud of the Nile, and then suddenly erupt in frenetic activity." In concert, both "induced a mood akin to inebriation," exploiting "the effectiveness of repeating rote phrases to instill a trance-like mood." Hitler was more like a rock star than a debater: his words were not rational but imagistic, and one witness says their effect depended on paradoxes that remind me of Nirvana lyrics: "The pompous and the nebulous, brutality and innocence; these are what gave his speeches such resonance."

Both Cobain and Hitler amaze us with a triumph of the will of instinct. But art requires more than will; the instinct must be true. In art though not in life, Cobain passed Scott Fitzgerald's test of a first-rate intelligence: "the ability to hold two opposed ideas in mind at the same time and still retain the ability to function." Hitler was largely unfunctional, mostly just incredibly lucky, and he clutched monomaniacally at one mindless idea to the end. His innocence was jive, the brutality real. In the end, it was all about will, not any ideas at all. Hitler, embracing an inhumanly simplistic vision, negated art. When he was rising from penniless artist to dictator, the joke about him was that he was a faux Schopenhauer—instead of representing Schopenhauer's *Die Welt als Willen und Idee* (the world as will and idea), Hitler was all about *Die Welt als Willen OHNE Idee* (the world as will without idea). Cobain's brain teemed with pairs of contradictory ideas dancing in tandem: innocence and corruption, loud and soft sound, childlike simplicity and arcane complication, love and hate, ugliness and beauty. Hitler's art amounts to nothing but the Autobahn. Cobain's art embraces everything human, and it lasts.



Dear Diary,

JANUARY

Thursday the 9th. Went to the Everett Station lofts and liked the show at Michael Oman-Reagan's all-institution Field Gallery. Portland newcomer Edie T'song's

wall mural made from collaged magazine clippings (women's legs and arms, cars, handbags, hair, etc.) was grotesquely fascinating; its branching structure, like a spidery mineral vein or decaying web, suggested both uncontrolled profusion and a settling of sorts, as if into a fermented or calcified substance that could ultimately be reclaimed. They were oddly similar to collages I spied in Paige Saez' studio later that month, made from clippings of women's legs and arms, jewelry, and so forth, all covered in cellophane tape, that seemed to point to a similar way out of consumption-based identity.

Saturday the 11th. A reading/performance by the Seattle Research Institute hosted by The Lecture Series at a secret location in Old Town (caveat: I'm a member of TLS). The three public intellectuals from the Emerald City—Charles Tondere Mudede (known to many for his "Police Beat" column in *The Stranger*), Diana George, and Nic Veroli—perplexed and provoked with a team reading

of their "aphoristic public history of the secret." The main idea: while you seek protection from the government's prying eyes in these Ashcroftian times, also be wary of simplistic values regarding privacy, since it was probably the state that taught you those values in the first place. During the Q&A, the ubiquitous Bob Wilcox stood and proclaimed himself a "Jeffersonian," arguing that the American government holds no power but that directly bequeathed to it by the people and would never hurt us, or something. The cool-headed Mike Wilder challenged the SRI's blurring of the distinction between the regimes of Ashcroft and Stalin (the point was taken, if I remember correctly). It was cold, the Q&A abbreviated. All in all, Mudede's hurried warm-up reading was more textured, juicy, and well-received, leading a tour of African-American TV sitcoms since "The Jeffersons" (the other ones) and a dazzling dissection of a scene in the film *Ghost Dog* in which Forest Whitaker roams the ghetto to a soundtrack by, uh, RZA (?). Mudede described the scene as a layering of two nostalgias, the song's for the lost splendors of ancient Africa against the viewer's for the unspoiled ruins of America's urban ghettos, which he argued have been all but washed out by waves of gentrification that push the urban poor to the suburbs.

Sunday the 12th. David Eckard's giant sculptures at Marylhurst U's Art Gym, assembled from constructed and found wood, metal, and fabric parts, evoked flowers, industrial/agricultural machines, and torture/pleasure devices. Blending Keimholz Noir, Little Shop of Horrors Grotesque, and echt-Eckard gay farm boy fantasy, the show was also a Matthew Barney-type set piece for a later performance (see February 9th entry). His large charcoal drawings, meanwhile, set fantastic organic forms (evocative of fetuses, sex organs, Sumo wrestlers, or whatever was on your mind) inside matte painted grounds. More of those showed at PDX Gallery. Everyone was all ga-ga over them, but they were a little aggressive for my tastes.

Friday the 17th. Saw the last day of LoveLake's Big show before proprietor Eva Lake temporarily closed her doors to spend time painting and completing an art history degree. Sad: she's the most engaged gallerist in town, a proper hostess who's free with anecdotes but never heavy-handed interpretations. The sweet spot of Big was a small, meticulously painted landscape with rooster, everything bathed in rose-colored light (*Cock-a-doodle-doo*), by Astorian artist and painting restorationist Thomas McKay. But for two spring shows—Le Happy owner and Gallery 333 denizen John Brodie, followed by Eva herself—LoveLake's doors will remain closed through the summer.

Later that evening at Disjecta, the performances by militant activists Ed Mead and Splitting the Sky were stunning. Organized by a consortium of anarchists and prisoners' rights activists, the event starred Mead of Seattle's George Jackson Brigade, the group whose early 1970s attempts to overthrow the government and bring power to the people were financed with bank robberies; and Splitting the Sky, aka Dejacawea, Doc, John Boncore, or John Hill, one of the participants in the epic-proportioned Attica Prison Revolt (1971) plus two successful Native American uprisings that included an upstate New York land-grab from the Rockefeller family (while he was on bail for killing a guard at Attica. Quote: "I happened to get involved with 400 Mohawk warriors") and the 1995 Gustafson Lake standoff in Canada. My meager research efforts haven't confirmed whether either guy is entirely for real, but both were utterly convincing. If Splitting the Sky's yarn holds, Ridley Scott should buy the rights to his life story, the terrors of which begin with his father's death from chemical inhalation in a Buffalo rubber plant; followed by the children's forced removal to white foster homes and, in StS's case, a home run by brutally abusive priests and nuns; then a term of street punkery, politicization bred by the Vietnam protest movement, imprisonment, and the historic rebellions; and end with him shilling for gas money to an audience of white anarchist kids in an old Black Mason hall, bedecked in a leather motorcycle jacket, tinted shades, and a long mane of hair that he flaunted with a terrible gravity. By the end of the

evening, the whole room was on its feet, clapping and chanting. (The thing is, who could play him?) As for Mead, after a bank robbery that went sour in a failed hostage-taking attempt ("I wasn't gonna kill him; I was just gonna shoot his knee cap out"), he ended up in Walla Walla prison ("Needless to say, because we had bombed the Department of Corrections [to protest conditions at Walla Walla], I was well-received by the prisoners there"). In prison, he helped lead a 47-day strike to protest living conditions, withstanding punishment by food poisoning—"Purex in the coffee and soap flakes in the mashed potatoes"—and worked to educate the men about sexism and homophobia, bringing a temporary end to rape amongst the prisoners. "Once Walla Walla was tamed, we set about the process of trying to escape," using rectally stashed files and hacksaws to wear keys, knives, and primitive guns. Mead continues to work for prisoner's rights. For more information on both men, see www.radicalpress.com/interviews/splitting_sky.html and www.thestranger.com/1999-10-14/city2.html

On the 25th, the program that Tim DuRoche curated for Red76 Arts Collective's Bits and Pieces brunch series, hosted by Disjecta, was more than you'd expect for a sliding scale donation on a Sunday afternoon, and the eggs were pretty good, too. The eye-popper was dancer/choreographer Linda K. Johnson's simultaneous performance of and lecture on Yvonne Rainier's seminal postmodern dance, which has a name. As Johnson, in platform sneakers, performed the sometimes awkward series of steps, lunges, arm swings, and balancing acts, she explained that Rainier's vision was to excise artistic ego and expressiveness from dance, eliminating music and other narrative impulses and turning it into a practice between architecture and meditation. Johnson, one of a handful of stewards entrusted to perform and teach the master choreographer's work, then opened the hatches on a recording of "In the Midnight Hour" and danced the piece while attempting—as directed by Rainier—to ignore the music. It was wowing, funny, and masterful. Artist-musician DuRoche and mates made winsome, ear-bending improv jazz with toys, drums, voice, and wind instruments. The whole program was impressively spirited, challenging, uncondescending, and unselfconscious about its hokely avant-garde roots.

Probably around January 27th I saw Buffalo, N.Y., artist/architect Frank Fantauzzi's massive "book" on display at PNCA's Feldman Gallery, which immortalized in hinged bronze pages a partial timeline of Buffalo's civic history, along with reliefs of important Buffalo buildings. As monumentally impressive an object as it was, it didn't tell much of a story, especially since you couldn't move the pages; I couldn't help thinking of it as something Richard Serra's seventh-grade son might make to get out of writing a paper for his social studies term project. If that seems unfair, I can only blame my reactionary prejudice against book arts. And text art in general. And to a lesser extent poetry. The aestheticization of the written word grosses me out, I can't explain why; I'm sure I'm wrong. On the other hand, Fantauzzi's site-specific sculptural interventions; documented in photographs hung in the gallery, were inspiring. Clearly, he's into big, heavy, physically improbable art—dismantling a house and pil-

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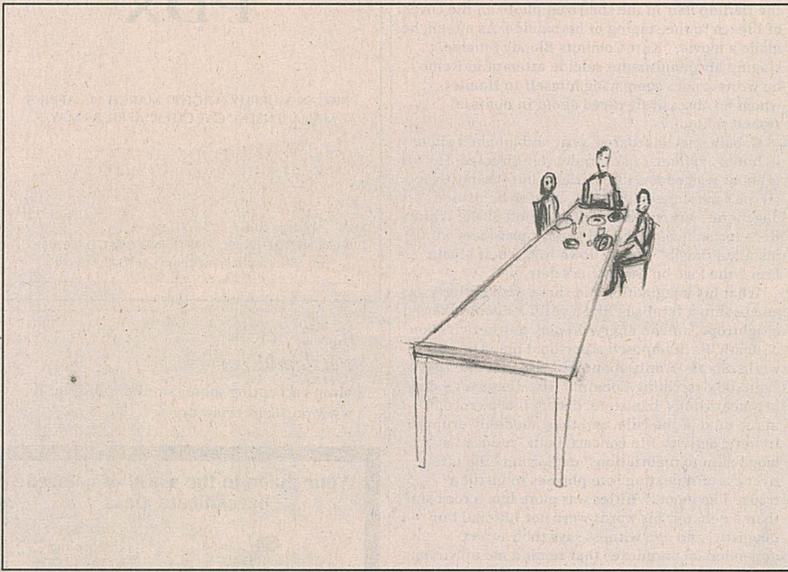
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CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

IPRC.....

back by becoming a volunteer, until his increasingly expert responsibilities made him a natural for the Director slot that predecessor Rebecca Gilbert gave up late last year. Gilbert, who helped found the center to bring isolated zine publishers into more direct communication with each other, will stay involved as a volunteer while focusing more attention on her business, Stumptown Printers. Having built a solid organization that accomplishes much with little money, she has left de Ocampo with the tough question of how to grow from here.

IPRC's facilities are modest, richer in love than capital. In the print shop are four platen presses dating from the second through fourth decades of last century, along with the type, leading, slugs, etc. to fill them. None can print an image larger than a post card (though a box of work samples shows this need not be an obstacle to beautiful effects). In a room that seems to serve as both conference area and de Ocampo's office is a tired old photocopier, soon to be replaced with a faster one. For members, copies are three cents a page, half of what Kinko's charges. The computer room houses four terminals, including a PowerMac G4 and a couple of iMacs, all linked to the Internet and loaded with publishing and design software, along with a color scanner and CD burner. The library just moved from a cramped corner near the entrance door to a spare but homey, newly carpeted and painted room with big, street-facing windows. In it, three seven-foot bookshelves hold what must be one of the world's largest collections of zines in plastic magazine holders labeled "Games," "Health," "Comics," "How-To," "Music," "Politics," "Personal," "Prose," "Poetry," "Transportation," "Women," and so forth. Currently, the center's budget is "somewhere in the \$40,000's," says de Ocampo, \$12,000 of which goes to his half-time salary (for what he admits are more than half-time hours).

The near-full capacity I witnessed during my visit on a typical Tuesday afternoon made me wonder how much more traffic IPRC can handle before it must expand again; and how much it can expand without more paid staff, professional fundraising

and other changes that would fundamentally alter its identity, not to mention erase myths about secret doors. There are no easy answers, but one model that's worth a mention is what's perhaps the IPRC's most inconspicuous resource: the zine catalog created and maintained by volunteer librarian Greig Means. Means, who has a Masters in library sciences and publishes the very periodical "Zine Librarian Zine," designed a fully searchable online database for IPRC's holdings, which is studiously updated by volunteers. Along with standard bib record fields, the catalog contains detailed content notes for each item, so that a graduate student in Pennsylvania can visit the catalog over the Web, do a keyword search on "knitting" or "dish washing" and pinpoint a trove of topically appropriate small press resources. The catalog takes up no physical space, costs virtually nothing, doesn't depreciate with use, and can serve multiple users at once. It's the IPRC's most widely accessible resource and a monument to the kind of capital that the center is flush with: volunteer labor. It seems worth pondering whether such value-added services might fit into a strategy for growth that doesn't put pressure on the center's meager resources and intimate atmosphere.

That's the pragmatic view, anyway. After all, it seems to me that even with more attention to outreach, the IPRC is likely to continue drawing its main sustenance from its core constituency of local DIY lifestyle adherents - for whom the IPRC is indeed a social club, in the best sense. These artist activists will continue to staff the IPRC's essential volunteer corps, doing the sweeping and the fundraising and the tireless creating of unique literature. And if this is true, why the emphasis on reaching even more people? In our information-saturated society, do we really need more self-styled poets and amateur historians adding to the volume? Might the IPRC's efforts be better spent adding value to the resources it has? But here's where the visionary gets a chance to answer the pragmatist.

I asked de Ocampo what he sees as the IPRC's mission. "We're not just creating an audience or a market for zines," he answered. "We're trying to create creators. Everyone has something to say. If it's important to them, or to their close friends, it might be important to someone else. And by having this space, we're making sure their voices don't disappear."

Three Lists

By James Yu

Pleasing things:

1. The Sinclair aptosaurus, est. 1930. In the barbarian landscape of the West, an oasis of reptilian calm, the green brontosaurus pointing east, progress toward civilization, a saurian ambassador of petroleum, decency and superior customer service.
2. Shigeru Miyamoto, general manager for Nintendo Co., Ltd. Progenitor of the Super Mario franchise. Creator of an antiseptic universe free of the constraints of political ambiguity, an algebra of Cute vs. evil-Cute, blue- and green-washed, old racial tensions condensed to visions of smoothness.
3. The giant robot game. Carrying a violin case home, walking home from grade school, I imagined myself a pilot of the giant machine that was my body, traveling across empty soccer fields, annihilating hordes of Lilliputian mechanized soldiers with an array of missiles, particle beam weapons and lasers, an imagined set of crosshairs scouring a bland suburban landscape. Nothing can touch me.
4. Ric Flair. Sixteen-time World Wrestling Champion, Flair and his Four Horsemen terrorized the wrestling world during the mid-80's with a strategic blend of mat skills, sadism and charisma. Clad in monogrammed boots and trunks and carrying aristocratic airs, Flair bested an endless array of challengers with the "figure-four leg lock," a Gordian knot of calf, knee and ankle nearly impossible to withstand.
5. Smoke. It rises and floats where it has to.
6. Wah Ming Chang, sculptor, special-effects engineer and prop designer responsible for many of the sleek, futuristic designs appearing in the original Star Trek series.
7. A tie.
8. That perfect day, summer '88, we walked downtown, went to the art museum and looked at Henri Cartier-Bresson prints. Then later ended up at a rock show at somebody's house and laughed and sang when the police showed up.

Things I wanted to be when I was younger:

1. The Hollywood Freeway, Los Angeles (age 3)
2. The driver of some kind of giant robot with lasers and crap (age 5)
3. A comedian (age 8)
4. A biochemist (age 9)
5. Jacques-Yves Cousteau (age 10)
6. Carl Sagan (age 11)
7. An anarchist (age 13)
8. Franz Kafka (age 16)
9. A modernist (age 18)
10. A drummer (age 19)

Superheroes:

1. THE BREED: A shifting, teeming, squealing horde of genetically enhanced, highly intelligent rats that swarm to form a shape-shifting, ambulatory colony roughly the size and shape of a man.
2. THE HUMAN GRILL: Interior body heat 500°, skin composed of a highly durable, nonstick surface suitable for grilling meats, vegetables and adversaries.
3. THE LIGHTS OUT KID: Hand-to-hand combat specialist possessing the uncanny ability to fry nearby incandescent and fluorescent bulbs ("OK, Lights Out Kid, we've got you now! No funny stuff...hey! What the...?" "Who turned out the lights?")
4. P.P. SLOPPY: Harmless looking old hippie possessing ability to accelerate processes of decay in objects; reducing metals to rust, rocks to sand and organic matter to putrefaction; as a result, rarely wears shirt, pants.
5. DIRTY PETER: Ominous, cloaked mythological figure travels within a flock of starlings from town to town, terrorizing children and young adults with a brutal regimen of reflection and self-examination. Often accompanied by the slobbering BELLE, a wild hairy beast of uncertain origin known for skin-tight, crimson body suits and aggressive snarling.
6. THE KITZ: Charismatic ex-governor and crime-fighter roams the wilderness, disappointing opponents and allies alike with his libertarian aesthetic and centrist cautiousness. Possesses superhuman ability to refuse.

more broadly read and widely remembered than any mimeographed pamphlet she produced when only a select few were paying attention to her writing. In other words, their DIY spirit was a catalyst to parlay a focused goal to the next level, not an end in itself.

All of the following makes sense to me: making your own opportunities; making your own exhibitions; making your own community; making your own secret handshakes if that's what you like. What is more troublesome to me is when these efforts, which were usually born out of necessity, are codified into dogma. Is the DIY approach taken by these arts groups a means to an end, or is it the end itself? Red76's rhetoric sounds like a poor college student espousing the greatness of ramen noodles. Just because you're forced into a steady diet of it, that's no reason to consider steak dinner a worthless enterprise.

project. Yes, the colorful interlocking toys. Will pick up and barter for antique postcards. andrewdickson@earthlink.net

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CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5

DIARY.....

ing its sorted parts in a gallery; sawing out and reassembling a perfect ovoid from a log cabin-sized stack of wood pallets; casting a van in cement in a hole excavated in a parking lot space. Perhaps most touching were his hinged walls. A rectangular slab of wall is braced, cut out, and rotated 90 degrees; an architectural pirouette that gently transforms space.

Same day. The title of Brad Adkins' show at Powell's Basil Hallward Gallery, *Keep Moving, There's Nothing To See Here*, begged for the obvious retorts found in the guest book and set the show's overall tone of self-denigration and denial. Actually, Brad (caveat: a friend and curator of the Organ's back-page gallery) offered a lot to chew on, although he might have apologized more for the one piece I really disliked, a flaccidly cute set of instructions to spectators for documenting and comparing holes (the kind punched in your bedroom wall or your neighbor's) and then telling the holes about each other. The kind of art that gives over the art-making process to the spectator is tricky, I think, especially when it calls on the spectator to perform humiliating tasks (it's a whole genre, for sure). Is the artist playing therapist or misanthrope, or both, and how is this different from trying to trick a child into eating dirt? On the other hand, a piece like *Dennis Oppenheim as a 14-year-old in Kalispell, Montana*, two photographs of a *Spiral Jetty*-like snow sculpture on a suburban lawn, showed Brad's propensity for attending to the negative spaces of everyday reality and coaxing something poignant from them (the caption said it was a stand-in for undocumented sculptures Brad made as a teenager with a mower in his neighbors' overgrown yards). The piece that affected me most (oddly, because it felt like a rough draft, a little sloppy and blunt) was a sort of exploded painting. Sixty square, palm-sized wood blocks were mounted to the wall in a grid with interior margins of about an inch. On the front of each block, loose white circles were painted on blue grounds. The circles broke apart wherever they met an edge, and the sides of each block were painted red. The effect was a butchered view of the sky. I liked it because it worked against expectations. The red was blood, but also the opposite of blood: a seal that repaired and reclaimed something broken. The blue was an exploded archipelago instead of a field. The pattern of circles was systematically disrupted. The whole thing could have been refined, but I liked the impulse to interrogate objecthood

(painting/sculpture/body/view/etc.) and patterning. I always wonder, given the freedom to do what you want to do here in the "provinces," why so many young artists choose to make bad paintings that replay tired old arguments. God, it's annoying. Cheers to Brad for searching wide and deep for meaning and relevance.

FEBRUARY

Sunday the 2nd. Stopped by Lewis and Clark College to see Canadian artist François Morelli's room-encircling print mural, *Carousel*, a looped frieze of layered images and patterns constructed from the artist's rubber stamp and stencil collection, all in blues and blacks. Silhouettes of babies built from hypodermic needles, spiraling suns made from human arms, fountain pens and dollar bills. Like a carousel, a miniature universe of stylized figures set into delightful play; but also a tornado or Pandora's box, a vortex of demonic energies. Accompanied by a fun exhibit of local interest—a series of collaborative prints by Morelli and old friend/PICA Visual Arts Curator Stuart Horodner, aka A Horror Student, aka Star Her Nut Door. Horodner supplied a list of anagrams of their names, which Morelli incorporated into the compositions, along with his signature symbols of chalices, babies, and silhouettes of heads. All wrapped up in a nice catalog with essay by gallery director Linda Tesner and interview of Morelli (aka Scrim Fello No Air) by Horodner.

Then I stopped by SW 3rd and Taylor to wander through Charles Goldman's *EZ Maze*, the second "in situ"

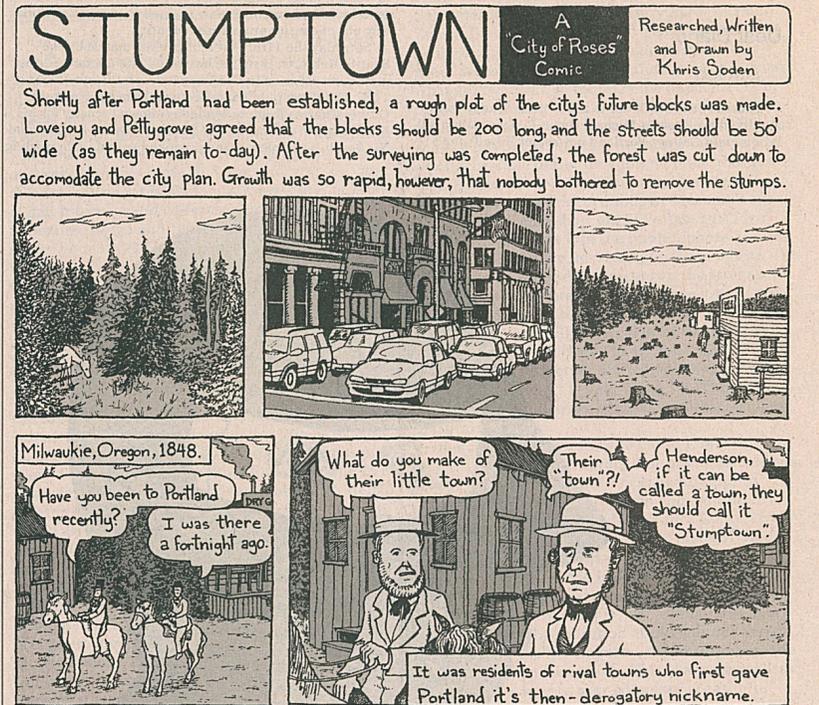
project for the vacant lot commissioned by PICA in partnership with RACC and the PDC. The slim, L-shaped corridor formed by cyclone fencing (about six or seven feet tall) stuffed with artificial grass was, in Goldman's words, "a contemporary maze suited to our hectic urban lives." I thought there was an opening wine and cheese party going on when I saw a collection of feet peeping out from beneath the fencing and heard a babble of music and voices. Turned out to be a crew of punk kids and their pit bull newly arrived in town and taking a respite from the wind. I asked them how they liked the art project and they were like, "What art project? Really? Cool. Cute irony aside, it actually felt great to walk inside, transporting me briefly into a different, green world. They were sort of blocking the way, though, so I came back another day, which was sunny, and the greenery was brought to life in light and shadow, and I wish I could have kept walking back and forth and back and forth for a long time.

Sunday the 9th. David Eckard, costumed in something like a swaddling gown that tapered to a single, giant-sized leather boot attached to a metal wheel, lugged himself like a mermaid-wheelbarrow across the grounds of Marylhurst University. His ever-reddening face prompted mumbled fears of an impending heart attack, but his will triumphed. Up the stairs he inched (finally unbinding his body from the contraption when progress halted), making his way finally to the third-floor exhibition space. There, helpers from PNCA raised a welcome signal of thrumming noises and body twitches; one contingent lowered a harness attached to ropes while another helped the shaky, Paul Bunyan-proportioned artist to his feet (the sudden revelation of muscle tone opening an unfortunate seam in the production). Eckard was then raised over one of his giant, flower-morphic sculptures and lowered into its center. It was what I imagine watching a birth is like—gory and weird and yet worthy of ovation.

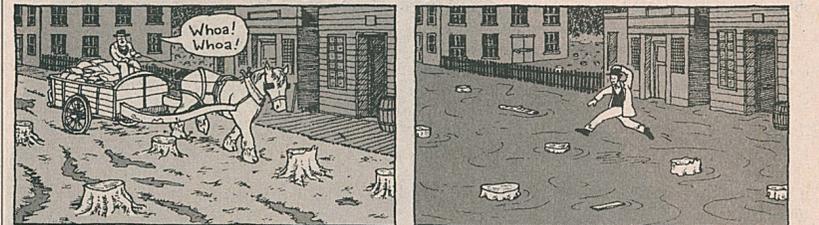
On the 19th, this email from my brother in N.Y.... "So—was doing some copy editing at *Artforum* the other day and sat down at the desk of the main reviews editor, and what should be sitting on his desk but a copy of the *Organ*."

Saturday the 28th. Rode my bike in the cold rain to the Interstate Firehouse Cultural Center (my car died, by the way—I need help with paper distribution) to see Bill Rutherford's *Hung Out to Dry*, an installation of objects and paintings on paper that told the story of the post-Civil War Reconstruction period, which Rutherford interpreted as an historic epoch that hasn't ended. The basic theme: freed Blacks got a shitty deal, whether as sharecroppers paid in scrip, petitioners for assistance from the corrupt Freedman's Bureau, or as the victims of church burnings that continue to plague the South. The paintings—folksy, poster-like collages of images and text hung on a clothesline that circled the gallery—were unevenly successful as visual objects (a couple were stunning, though), but the message was cogent.

I've reached my word limit now, so I can't talk about any of this stuff that I would have liked to: Christopher Buckingham's annotated installation of his mother's coffee cup collection at Basil Hallward; Amos Latteier's and Andrew Dickson's *PowerPointism* lecture-performances at Central Library; the Su-En Wong and Heidi Cody show at Savage; PICA's Argentinian dance-theatre performance *Secreto y Malibu*, in which a beautiful, melancholy woman peed down her own bare leg; Soundvision's *100x100* show; Neon's scientific *Plant Therapy* show; Salvador Perdomo at Zeitgeist; Elizabeth Leach's excellent *Stitch By Stitch* and *Components* shows; Bill Will's politically charged American flag installation at Nine Gallery; the Water Street dance studio's opening party; Hildur Bjarnadottir's interesting but ultimately disappointing show at Pulliam-Deffenbaugh (where I saw Gus Van Sandt walking out with a Tim Bavington); and Erin Long's startling break-out *Pom Pom* installation in the PDX Window Project. It's sad, so sad. Maybe I'll post something to the new Web site: www.organarts.org. - C.R.



As the city grew, the stumps were painted white as a caution to wagons. This proved beneficial to pedestrians as well, as they could easily spot the stumps to hop back and forth on during times that the Willamette flooded the young city. Several years went by before the stumps were removed.



Notes:

Panel 2 is a view of the northwest corner of SW 3rd and Washington Streets; the Dekum Building is in the center. Panels 4 and 5 depict Henderson Luelling and Lot Whitcomb, key players in the founding of Milwaukie, Oregon. This conversation probably never took place between them. Panels 6 and 7 reference a photo of SW Front and Oak Streets taken in 1851, at which time the stumps had already been removed. Chris Soden's website can be found at http://khris.boschs.org.

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CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4

ANTHEM.....

own poetry, held readings mostly for one another, and then, forty years down the road, wound up in all the poetry anthologies as mainstream, historical benchmark figures of a certain era. Their legacy endures through the strength of the work, though, not the vehicle it drove up in. And did Waldman tell Penguin Publishers that she needed to stay underground when they offered to publish her collected poems? Obviously not. It is undeniable, though, that her involvement with the underground movement at the time and participation within her artistically marginalized peer community were formative in her artistic development and readied her for a successful solo career, one that will be

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