

THE ORGAN

No. 8 NOVEMBER DECEMBER 2003 FREE *The Film Issue*

REVIEW OF ARTS



DOUBLE VISION
Vanessa Renwick and Bill Daniel track wolves, water squatters and other rebel wanderers in their unflinching films and photographs page 5



REBEL WITHOUT A CAUSE
Distancing itself from its subversive roots, video art has gone commercial—but can it really play by the rules? page 5

Indirect Methods

GUS VAN SANT TALKS ABOUT KIDS KILLING KIDS, HOW TO PROPERLY EDIT AN INTERVIEW AND GOING WITH THE FLOW

Interview by Steve MacDougall

Gus Van Sant is more than a Portland icon; he's almost part of the air. In his earlier films *Malibu Noche*, *Drugstore Cowboy* and *My Own Private Idaho*, Portland's Victorian buildings and gray light infused his stories of lost, hopeful junkies and gay hustlers with a timeless pathos; in return, the stories gave the real streets a different aura of mystery and suspense. Whenever Gus leaves Portland, as he did for a few years recently, we all feel a little less important. But he keeps us in mind, as when he made Elliott Smith's song "Miss Misery" the keynote of *Good Will Hunting*. His most recent film, *Elephant* (shot here at the former Whitaker Middle School), is an imaginative interpretation of the Columbine massacre. The raw, spare, dreamy portrait of an awful day in the life of a community of teenagers won him the Palme d'Or and Best Director awards at this year's Cannes and cohered some of the best elements of his diverse body of work into something new and unsettling. The shots of damp green grounds hugging the midcentury school building (in reality, shut down due to mold contamination) are unmistakably ours.

In October, Gus sat down in his Pearl District loft to talk with Portland-based artist and filmmaker Steve MacDougall, who worked on *Elephant* camera crew. Prompted by Gus' method of using chance to challenge his filmmaking process and generate what the director calls "happy accidents," Steve structured the interview by writing his questions on note cards, arranging them face down on the table and asking Gus to choose from them at random.

A longer version of this interview will appear on the Organ's Web site (www.organarts.org) later this month.—C.R.

If you pick a card, then I'll go ahead and read it. OK.

Oh boy, it's pretty straightforward. What's so great about Harris Savides [the director of photography on *Elephant*, *Gerry* and *Finding Forrester*]? How did you guys prepare for *Elephant*?

Harris is the only person—because of my trust in his judgment—the only one that is actually conspiring to make the movie. You could say Danny [Wolf, *Elephant*'s producer] is, as well, but usually Danny is co-conspiring to save money or something like that. (Laughs.) He has a conflict of interest.

Harris does not think of money. I mean, he knows things cost money, but he doesn't think in those terms. Harris is a luxury. We didn't have a wardrobe [on *Elephant*]; we had the kids wear their own clothes. We didn't have make-up. We knew that movies could be made with, like, three people,

"To have a value system within a community that tells you that you're a loser now and you always will be is dangerous." —Gus Van Sant

and Harris and I would always talk about that.

In preparing for *Elephant*, we'd already shot *Gerry*. *Gerry* had a lot of effect on *Elephant*. [On *Gerry*,] most of the conceptual work was usually done between Matt [Damon] and Casey [Affleck]—then, following through was Harris and then Danny. Harris usually was the last person to comment on the ideas and cement them into place. So, if Casey were thinking, say, "How about if they have visions and they see things?" Like, maybe I see, like, this guy walking toward me, and I'm talking to this other guy next to me, but actually the guy walking toward me is the guy I'm talking to—and the guy next to me isn't even there?" Then we'd tell Harris about the idea, and we'd start setting up the shots and figuring out how it was going to work. Harris is the guy who has to tell us if he thinks it's worth it. I mean, he doesn't officially play that role,

but we always ask.

So Harris becomes...

The editor, or a litmus test. Because he's learned that it's going to be OK if he tells us the truth. He'll say, "Is this working? Is it explaining what we want? Does it really look like the guy's coming?"

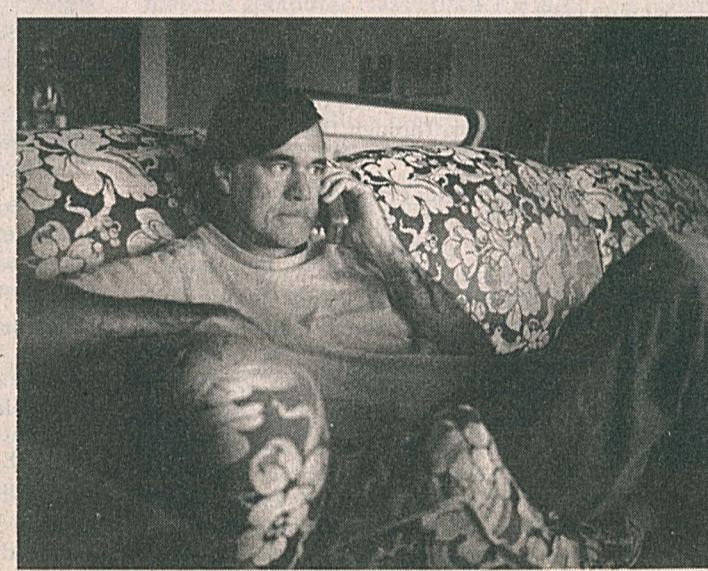


PHOTO BY STEVE MACDOUGALL

Like someone's purged?" Harris will be the guy that decides, for me at least, what it looks like.

[On *Gerry*], I was getting into this whole complicated crane move up on the rock, this really bizarre, Hitchcockian crane move, which was going to be really hard. And Harris just said, "What about just shooting from here?" And I said, "You mean the whole thing? The camera just sits here and looks at the rock?" And Harris said, "Yeah." And it's, like, 128 degrees, and so you're kind of delirious, and I said, "You mean the whole 10-minute scene?" And Harris just said "Yeah, just from right here." So I'm like, "OK, I think you're right." 'Cause I don't even want to deal with the crane, because we're gonna have, like, an accident. And the whole time I'm looking at it, I have no idea if it's going to be good, because it was so static.

So you put a lot of trust in him. Trust into him, yeah, 'cause I didn't know.

So...

So, for *Elephant*, it was almost like we were continuing to do *Gerry*, except they weren't two guys in the desert. They were, like, 10 kids at school. Harris and I knew that we were going to use the same sort of traveling style, where you're hanging with characters going from place to place. But the first thing you conspire about is that anything is possible. You can strike the traveling pictorialization of this day at school. You can make it more like something else—more traditional, or less traditional. We knew that we could have shot it in video.

The NW Film Center: A Coming-of-Age Drama

NOW PAST 30, CAN PORTLAND'S BEHEMOTH OF FILM CULTURE BE TRUSTED? A LOOK BACK AT THE ROAD IT'S TRAVELED

By Zelig Kurland

Just over thirty years since it first took shape, the Northwest Film Center today is to Portland's film culture what the Blazers are to basketball—by far the biggest game in town.

Every year, the NWFC brings us the Portland International Film Festival, the Northwest Film & Video Festival, the Reel Music series and dozens of other programs. Every year, 900 people take NWFC classes, from Underground DIY Cinema to Corporate Scriptwriting.

Eighty thousand tickets sell at the Portland Art Museum's Whitsell Auditorium, the nearby historic Guild Theatre and the scattered sites of the International Film Festival—which accounts for 30,000 tickets alone.

With its broad mission (which includes education, exhibition and "fostering a climate in which the moving image arts may flourish") and \$1.7 million in annual revenues (including ticket sales, memberships and public and private grants), the NWFC claims a high level of public support and confidence. But, adopted at birth by the Portland Art Museum and directed by Bill Foster for the past 22 years, the NWFC has operated for the most part with little public scrutiny.

Is the NWFC playing in the pro leagues? How does it score—indeed, what are the rules of its game? As with many things, history holds some of the answers. Here, the *Organ* looks back at the road the NWFC has traveled—one strewn with the dashed hopes of socially conscious regional film advocates, the rolled heads of two directors and probably a few secrets we will never uncover.



COURTESY NORTHWEST FILM CENTER

The 1960s

The Northwest Film Center was born in 1972, but its roots go back to the '60s when American filmmakers, energized by the French New Wave and artsides innovators like John Cassavetes and Stan Brakhage, experimented with every means imaginable to achieve new cinematic effects and genres. Narrative structure, editing, camera movements and film processing were all up for grabs. Decrying the shallowness and corruption of mainstream cinema, they formed independent distribution cooperatives such as the New American Cinema Group in New York and the Canyon Cinema Cooperative in California.

Here in Portland, Andres Deinum helped create the Center for the Moving Image (CMI) at

Portland State University in 1969. Formerly a film instructor at the University of Southern California, Deinum had come to Portland in the late '50s after being blacklisted for refusing to name names to the House Un-American Activities Committee. He then gained a loyal following for his public lectures on art and film, as well as his Film as Art class at PSU's night school.

"[Deinum] inspired scads of people with the idea that film should be about our lives," recalls D. Brooke Jacobson, who took classes at CMI and chaired the student film exhibition committee (today, she teaches communications at PSU). Designed to teach students from any discipline "to speak for themselves in moving images about matters they know and care about," CMI was Portland's first institutional advocate of local film.

1972-1973: A Center for Regional Film

In the early '70s, the National Endowment for the Arts began funding the development and support of regional media centers within established host institutions. Colleagues of Jacobson and another CMI protégé, Bob Summers, encouraged them to apply for funding to create an artist-run media center for the Northwest. Among their inspirations were Canyon Cinema and the National Film Board of Canada, which had funded and distributed films about Canadian life since 1939. Tom Taylor, then CMI's production instructor, recalls that there was an urgent need to give regional film more visibility. When he asked the coordinators of an arts festival

NW FILM CENTER / continued on page 4

Front Row Micro

GET OFF THE REGAL ROLLER COASTER—WOBBLY CHAIRS, BORROWED SCREENS AND FILM LOVERS MAKE FOR REAL CINEMATIC ADVENTURE

by Kaja Katamay

"Microcinema" means a small theatre, but it also means do-it-yourself ethics, documentaries that wouldn't get made any other way and art films that distort cinematic conventions (and sometimes break projectors). It means gatherings that bring members of the underground film community together and give everybody's work a niche. In Portland, it also means food fights, full moons, threadbare loveseats and work that gets you on the edge of them. And it means business.

Here's a roundup.

Cinema Project Lighthouse Cinema

Space: seats 75 Space: seats 49
Screen: 10 x 10 Screen: 10 x 10
Projector: 16mm Projector: 16mm

Nearly three years and no fewer than 22 experimental film and video programs after the Four Wall Cinema Collective was formed, the group has split up to cover more ground.

Originating as Cinema Next Door, an "underground" theatre in filmmaker Alain LeTourneau's basement, FWCC established itself as a collective endeavor two years ago, screening films from past and contemporary avant-garde heavyweights like Peter Hutton, Nathaniel Dorfsky, Chris Marker and Jill Godmilow in a fourth-floor cinder-block studio (the Oak Street Building, 425 SE Oak St.).

LeTourneau and cofounder Pam Minty have now reinvented this space as Lighthouse Cinema, paring down their season to free up time for personal film projects, while former Four Wall members

Autumn Campbell, Pablo de Ocampo and Jeremy Rossen have re-formed as the Cinema Project.

The Cinema Project is geared toward the same sophisticated sensibilities as FWCC, now operating at a higher speed. Its first season of visiting artist screenings has already commenced, featuring copresentations with PICA, PSU and the Northwest Film Center, along with events at its home base, Million Theater, 120 NE Russell St. (See the full schedule at the end of this article.)

www.lighthousescinema.org

www.cinemaproject.org

Hello! Video

Space: varies, but always has a liquor license
Screen: back walls, borrowed screens
Projector: "Often, I find someone with a projector."

Ray Daniels couldn't afford the viewing fee that most festivals charge for submissions, so the 30-year-old video artist walked down to his local bar and started showing his work. "You get more of a reaction from the audience, which I really like," says Daniels. The shows, which started just over a year ago at Bar of the Gods, became monthly jamborees that remain "collective to the point of near anarchy!" Hello! Video has maintained a break-even income while branching out to other venues including Disjecta, Stumptown (downtown) and Holocene and drawing an average of 20 submissions per month for the 10-minute-maximum, punch-line-mandatory line-up.

www.hello-video.org



LA PALABRA CAFE-PRESS. PHOTO BY MIA NOLTING

The Know

Space: in limbo
Screen: will be bigger on the rebuild
Projector: video, 16mm

The Know has always been good at getting its Alberta Street neighbors to scratch their heads. Jon Van Oast, who has copiloted the microtheatre/lounge with Josh Bovinette for a little over a year, says, "We just started by throwing together the parts we had—projector, screen, a few chairs—and opened the doors!" The parts snowballed to include couches, theatre seating for 40, a pool table, video games, Internet stations, rotating art shows and, of course, film screenings, which included the Pirate Film Festival (a benefit for last summer's Zine Symposium), midnight showings of *The Big Lebowski* and various solo experiments by local mad scientists (e.g., *The Qualified Astropath*, filmed in gibberish, subtitled in English, accompanied by comedian Phantom Hillbill). Last August, the Know temporarily closed its

MICROCINEMA / continued on page 3

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CALENDAR LISTINGS

To be considered for a listing in "A Little Bird Said..." e-mail a press release to calendar@organarts.org or send it by regular mail to the above address. (To notify features editors of your event, please cc: editor@organarts.org.)

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THANK YOU

Many thanks to Jonathan Raymond, Storm Tharp, Tim Appelo, Basil Childers and Rich Jensen.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

To the Editor:

In response to Lawrence Rinder's comment ("The Beaver Has Landed," *Organ* #7) that the Regional Arts & Culture Council should make a counteroffer for him if they're serious about nurturing culture in this town, I would like to inform our readers that we have been in a dialogue with Sam Gould, co-founder of Red76, about the possibility of funding some of his projects since December of last year.

I met with Sam in early January and after seeing his work with Red76, I strongly encouraged him to apply for a RACC Project Grant as well as a Professional Development Grant, but he moved to Chicago before he could apply.

The Regional Arts & Culture Council is very interested in nurturing culture in Portland and has helped fund projects by some of the artists Mr. Rinder mentions in his article—i.e., Harrell Fletcher, Miranda July and Vanessa Renwick. In the past three years, RACC has funded nearly 200 individual artists through our grants and fellowships. Any artists interested in our funding opportunities should visit www.racc.org or contact me directly at 503-823-5408.

Sincerely,
Lorin Schmit Dunlop
Grants Program Officer
Regional Arts & Culture Council

To the Editor:

Referring to Lawrence Rinder's article ("The Beaver Has Landed," *Organ* #7), I couldn't agree with him more that "it doesn't get much better than this." I've heard much flack for expressing the same sentiment. As a historian who specializes in creative scenes like Munich's Phalanx at the turn of the 20th century, I was caught by Portland's wealth of possibility six years ago. Only recently has recognition of this reality caught many longtime Portlanders off guard.

Some had knee-jerk reaction #1, which assumed the ambitious newcomers were trying to emulate New York and ruin Portland; or #2, that some were giving the existing Portland scene too much credit. Rather infamously and incongruously, the editor of *The Organ* accused me of both. I couldn't fault her for caring, and we straightened it out. Kudos to Rinder for picking only #1 in stating "why would you cultivate, as Jeff Jahn advises, the tepid success of a Julie Mehretu..."

In my defense, the point was that artists here should be aware of contemporaries like Julie Mehretu; of course, many already are. It was a general call for contemporary awareness and historical engagement, using her and Pollock as examples, not as ideal models. It was a simple call for knowledge; or is a city full of idiots savants the ironic ideal of a Hunter College grad? Fuck imitating her work; that is a provincial New York-ish assumption that awareness will automatically lead to Portland's genuflection in the direction of existing international stars. Historically, groups like die Brücke did just fine knowing about Parisian trends while working innovatively in Frankfurt. Tellingly, my article in the *Organ* #5, "Shoot-out at the Better-Than-OK Art Corral," never mentioned Matthew Barney. That all happened in Rinder's head.

Lastly, my position of sharing Portland art

with the rest of the world has nothing to do with a "cloying... need to be appreciated by someone out of town." You see, a sizable portion of Portland artists have traveled extensively all of our lives and simply expect our art to do the same. Also, I've noticed there is comparatively excellent work here that should be shared. Why should Portland art be put on a leash and given a chastity belt? To await a petting by Whitney curators? Artists have always traveled to avoid being taken for granted, and I was simply promoting simple commerce and trade. Just forget the sound bytes: Portland is not some monogenic, purely unemployed, DIY scene—instead, it is a rebel base for both brilliant naïves and top art school graduates and every combination in between. Here, artists get to develop before and after they get recognition, and it shows. I can't fault Mr. Rinder for caring about the art scene's well-being; it is a special time.

Jeff Jahn

To the Editor:

I owe an apology. My comments in the last issue of the *Organ* about art at Reed College were not based on firsthand exposure. While I had recently visited Reed to give the annual commencement address, I did not make any studio visits nor speak at length with any staff or students. Having at times been on the receiving end of snide and poorly researched journalism, it is surprising (to me) that I should succumb to this professional malady. I apologize to anyone who I may have offended.

As ever,

Larry Rinder
Whitney Museum of American Art

To the Editor:

I gather from Rob Spillman's response to my article ("Manufacturing Contact," *Organ* #6) that *Tin House* won't be taking my advice about their summer workshop. Too bad. I think sticking with their current model is a mistake. His good news that it "succeeded beyond my wildest hopes" misses the point of my piece. The considerable talent, cash and volunteer labor *Tin House* devoted to replicating the summer workshop model could trigger longer, more productive dialogues if spent differently. To judge from Rob's article, *Tin House's* generosity and good intentions will remain hobbled by a stubborn lack of imagination.

The workshop was no "crime against art," as Rob put it, just a poor investment. Now the summer is over and the faculty has gone home, taking the imprimatur of quality and discernment in which *Tin House* shrouded them. This is important: Despite non-hierarchical dining arrangements, the summer workshop formalized and celebrated the misconception that a few "stars" have some magic the many hopefuls need and should pay a lot for. Students are left, famously, longing for next summer. I don't know how Chris Offutt feels when a student says, "in three days with you I have taken away more than I have learned in my two years of graduate school," but in the face of similar comments I have felt gratitude, astonishment and also a little creeped out. These are not the sorts of relations I want in the world.

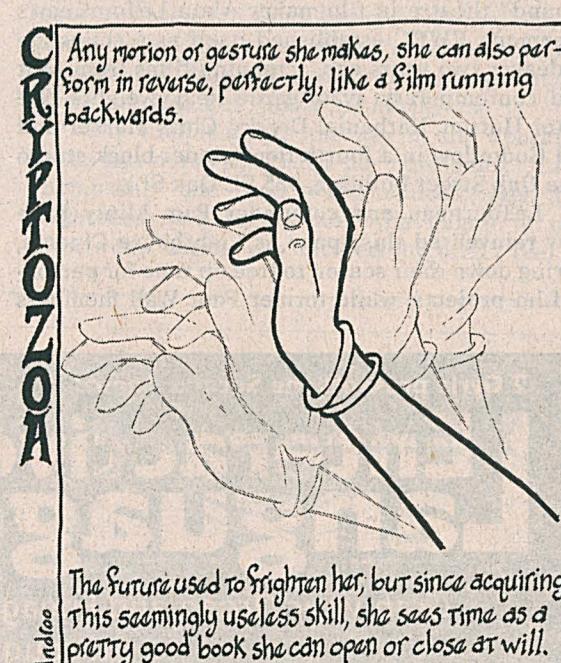
Setting up another stage for these dramas of salvation is not the best way to "engage the community." Look around: Work continues, even after the road show is over. Rob's call for me to dismount my lovely horse and "join the discussion" next year is sort of comically blind. "The discussion" doesn't recommence next summer, as Rob implies, but has been going on since long before *Tin House* set up the cash box to charge admission.

Don't get me wrong: writers should be paid, but maybe we can find better ways to pay more of them. If *Tin House* wants to sell education, they could offer longer contacts at lower prices. It'll be good for both students and teachers. (Credit is due to Lee Montgomery for setting up an eight-week workshop with Charles D'Ambrosio at *Tin House* headquarters this fall; at \$20/contact hour it'll cost about one-fifth what the summer workshop cost.) If it's access, excitement or attention that's for sale—and why shouldn't it be—call it a party or a private audience and price it accordingly. Cash is just one of the many kinds of capital that power culture. It can be used to irrigate new possibilities, but only if those who control it are willing to question the comforts and successes of past models.

Matthew Stadler

CORRECTION

In *Organ* #7, we neglected to credit Froelick Gallery for providing the image of the etching *Girly*, by Tom Prochaska, which accompanied the article "Teaching with Your Mouth Closed."



Certain historical texts record that the resident was actually William Overton, the first man to claim land at the site of Portland; however, other accounts from the time period indicate that Overton sold his share of the land claim and left before any improvements were done to the land. For comments, corrections, questions, complaints, etcetera, please contact khris@boschs.org.

A Little Bird Said . . .

EXHIBITIONS

The Art Nucleus: Conceptual artist Ehren Adams' *Plushy Huffer* investigates consumer culture via the bricolage of resin-embalmed stuffed animals. Through Nov. 26, 1905 NW 26th Ave.

PNCA: PNCA and the Portland chapter of the American Institute of Graphic Artists sponsor *Roadshow of Dutch Graphic Design (1990-2003)*, the only West Coast stop of this exhibit featuring a cross-section of posters, brochures, Web sites and other design work from the Netherlands. Through Nov. 27, 1241 NW Johnson St.

Lovelake: *The Death of Lewis and Clark* is Kenny Higdon's series of paintings on cardboard that use "the vagueness and instability of history to balance the vagueness and instability of paint." Thursday-Friday, 1-6 p.m. through Nov. 28, 1720 NW Lovejoy St. #107.

Backspace Gallery: Northwest graffiti muralists dug it out on the walls of this gallery-cum-gamers' haven. Through Nov. 29, 115 NW 5th Ave.

Archer Gallery: *The Continuing Thread* presents work by Erin Long, Jasmina Mujic, Mark Newport, Angela Haseltine Pozzi, Shanon Schollan and Peggy Smith-Venturi—six Northwest artists who work with fiber, creating objects from knitted superhero costumes to tufted yarn penises. Through Dec. 5, Clark College, Lower Gaiser Hall, Ft. Vancouver Way, Vancouver, Wash.

Portland Art Museum: *Work by New Means: Recent Digital Photographic Prints* looks at the impact of the digital age on the art of photography, featuring work by Oregon photographers Craig Hickman and Dianne Kornberg along with recent acquisitions to the museum's permanent photography collection. Through Dec. 7, 1219 SW Park Ave.

Marylhurst Art Gym: *Ulterior Motives: Current Northwest Abstraction*, through Dec. 14. See preview on page 7.

Cooley Gallery: Reed College's gallery presents *Conceptual Cartography: New Works*, a series of life-sized topographic canvases by modern master Jennifer Bartlett. Through Dec. 28, 3203 SE Woodstock Blvd.

Visage Artspace: *Critics Critiqued (Portrait of an Art Dealer)* is Willamette University alum Gwenn Seemel's series of portraits of local art dealers, including Charles Froelick, Linda Yoshida, Mark Woolley, Elizabeth Leah and Jane Beebe. Through Dec. 30, 1046 NW Johnson St.

Haze Gallery: In the building that housed this summer's Modern Zoo, the Battle of the Artist Curators is the Haze Gallery's inaugural show, with work by artist/curators Eva Lake, Johnne Eschleman, TJ Norris, Jeff Jahn, Marci McFarlane, Muriel Bartol, Jacqueline Ehli, Todd Johnson, Michael Oman-Reagan, Bryan Suereth, Vicki Lynn Wilson and Justin Oswald. Through Dec. 31, 6635 N. Baltimore St., Suite 211.

Philip Feldman Gallery and Project Space, PNCA: Cricket sounds, mounds of earth, old chairs, bubbling liquid and red balls contribute to Allyn Massey's unsettling site-specific installation. Karyn Olivier's brick and metal *Bench* plays with expectations toward space and functionality. Through Jan. 17, 1241 NW Johnson St.

ORLO: In the Kill Zone, a group of artists explore environmental and political conflicts related to the Umatilla U.S. Army Chemical Weapons Depot in northeastern Oregon. Through Jan. 23 (closed Dec. 20-Jan. 6, following the "Christmas in the Kill Zone" party on Dec. 19), 2516 NW 29th Ave., Building 9.

EVENTS

New Music Mondays: Local and national "jazz expansionists" perform every Monday night in a concert series curated by Tom McNalley. Cappo's Café, NW Broadway at Everett St.

Northwest Film Center: Nov. 14-Dec. 14 brings Rock and Roll Cowboy: The Films of Aki Kaurismaki to the Guild Theatre and the Whitsell Auditorium. See weekly listings for show times.

Lightbox Studio: *The Exception and the Rule* is a three-director collaborative interpretation of Bertolt Brecht's classic tale of the ideals of equality and the evils of capitalism. Ian Greenfield, Bryan Markovitz and Brett Vail explore the trials and tribulations of an oil merchant descending into madness on a trek through the desert. Liminal Space, 403 NW 5th Ave., Nov. 15-23.

Portland Center for the Advancement of Culture: *Process* participants discuss their processes at a roundtable event on Nov. 15, 2 p.m. On Nov. 20 at 6 p.m., catch a screening of *Downside Up*, a film about the birth of MASS MoCA and its impact on the town of North Adams, Mass. On Nov. 29, the *Process* closing party features the gypsy marching band March Fort and a sound piece by Joe Haegge, 7 p.m.-12 a.m. (See exhibit review, page 9.) All events happen at the Holman Building, 49 SE Clay St.

ARTSTAR: Artist/gallerist Eva Lake rekindles her weekly radio program of local artists talking about their work and lives. Nov. 16 brings Joe Thurston, whose oil-on-panel portraits show at Mark Woolley Gallery in November. On Nov. 23, hear Raina Imig, whose watercolor and metallic ink paintings based on the numbers one through 12 show at the Interstate Firehouse Cultural Center in November. Tune in for Jack Shimko and Leah Emkin of the new Haze Gallery on Nov. 30 and Hank Pander on Dec. 7. ARTSTAR broadcasts every Sunday at 1 p.m. on KPSU, 1450 AM.

PNCA: PNCA presents the First Annual Bingo Benefit for the Philip Feldman Gallery & Project Space. \$10 buys you a buffet and drink ticket, with bingo cards starting at \$5. Nov. 22, 7 p.m., 1241 NW Johnson St.

Chiasmus Press: The Northwest literary press presents readings from its second anthology, *Northwest Edge: Fictions of Mass Destruction*, inspired by the "search and seizure antics" of the Bush administration. Writers include Jeanne Hueving, Rita Parrish, Tiffany Lee Brown, Monica Drake, Lance Olsen and others. Nov. 24, 7:30 p.m., Powell's City of Books, 1005 W Burnside.

Ogle Gallery: Ben Moorad, performance poet and cofounder of Write Around Portland, will perform narrative poems for Three Nights of Rhythmic Revival! at the Ogle Gallery, Nov. 25 and Dec. 11-12.

Pacific Switchboard: Various Artists and Pacific Switchboard present an evening with poet Jack Collom, musician-poet Sierra Collom, the sound-poetry collaboration of Lisa Radon and Tim DuRoche and video work by multimedia artist Chris Larson. Nov. 26, 7 p.m., 4637 N Albina Ave.

Enteractive Language Festival: The second annual exposition of regional and global performance art continues through Nov. 29 at various sites (see story on page 7).

Colloquial Quadrivium: Writer and video artist Morgan Currie presents "Forging Scarcity: The History of Commercial Video Art" as part of Colloquial Quadrivium, a new monthly lecture series at La Palabra Café-Press. Dec. 6, 7 p.m., 4810 NE Garfield Ave. (See Currie's article on the subject, page 5.)

Cinema Project: The Visiting Artist Series continues through Dec. 14. See full schedule on page 3.

Lighthouse Cinema: One of two new groups to evolve from the disbanded Four Wall Cinema Collective, Lighthouse Cinema holds a fundraiser for their new film series with a screening of Harun Farocki's *Images of the World and the Inscription of War*. Dec. 17-18, 7:30 p.m., 425 SE 3rd Ave., #400.

PICA: Village Voice critic Jerry Saltz assesses the state of painting in a lecture accompanying PICA's *Unforeseen: Recent Paintings* (see preview on page 7). Jan. 9, time and location TBA, \$10. On Jan. 15, listen in on a discussion about the persistence of painting in the digital age, with local artists and PICA visual arts curator Stuart Horodner. PICA Resource Room, 219 NW 12th Ave., time TBA, free.

ARTIST OPPORTUNITIES

Mark Woolley Gallery: "Every Day is Independence Day" See preview on page 7.

OCAC: Fall and spring residencies are available at the Oregon College of Art and Craft for post-graduate artists working in ceramics, metals, book arts, fibers, photography, drawing and painting. Applications due April 1. Contact Jody Creasman, jcreasman@ocac.edu, for more info.

RACC: 2004 applications and guidelines for general support and professional development grants are available Jan. 5 from the Regional Arts & Culture Council. Orientation for general support grants takes place on Jan. 15, time and location TBA.

Dream of contributing to the Organ?

Don't wait around while your dream festers or shrivels.

Come to the ORGAN 2004 WRITERS AND ARTISTS MEETING

Wednesday, January 21, 7-9 p.m., Pacific Switchboard, 4637 N Albina Ave.

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Reflections on a Committed Cinema

AN E-MAIL DIALOGUE BETWEEN JOHN GIANVITO, PAUL CHAN AND PABLO DE OCAMPO

*Coming up on its 50th year, the Robert Flaherty Film Seminar has established itself as a unique institution in the film community. Every June, more than 100 filmmakers, curators, critics, librarians and students come together for seven days of viewing and discussing contemporary and historical film and video work. The selection of John Gianvito as this year's curator gave me an especially good reason to attend for the first time. His program, "Witnessing the World," addressed this question: In the face of the grave social, environmental and political challenges that beset the world, "what is a filmmaker to do?" Works included ranged from Robert Flaherty's *The Land* (1942), a film essay commissioned by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, to *Now Let Us Praise American Leftists*, new media work by Paul Chan that uses FACE, a computer application that creates composite pictures of criminals and suspects for wanted posters, to address the homogeneity of radical movements in America.*

When I returned from the seminar, the question of what to do receded before the more perplexing question of how to do it. Is it possible for filmmakers to effect real change? I asked John and Paul if they would discuss this question with me via e-mail.

—Pablo de Ocampo

DE OCAMPO: In many ways, the Flaherty Seminar left me feeling I need to reevaluate how I define art and politics, so as to better understand how the two work together. At the same time, I'm struck with Paul Chan's oft-cited statement from early that week that politics and art have nothing to do with each other.

GIANVITO: My recollection is that Paul was referring to his personal choice to split his direct political activity from his art practice. In any event, I know that I greeted folks on the first evening sporting Brecht's quote on my lapel: "Art is not a mirror held up to reality but a hammer with which to shape it," clearly laying out my own conviction that art can indeed have a direct and tangible impact on the world around us. Of course, the difficulty sets in when one seeks to quantify this impact.

Film critic Jonathan Rosenbaum cited few examples, including *Rosetta*, by Luc & Jean-Pierre Dardenne, which inspired a law that raised the minimum wage for teenagers in Belgium, specifically known as the Rosetta law. I can also mention Jorge Sanjines' explosive *The Blood of the Condor*, which effectively prompted the removal of the Peace Corps from Bolivia, or Errol Morris' *The Thin Blue Line*, which led to the acquittal of Randall Adams for murder. Certainly many other instances exist.

Less quantifiable are those works of art that "plough and harrow the soul" as Tarkovsky put it and under whose influence change unfolds. The profound humanism in the work of this year's senior guest filmmakers, Tran Van Thuy and Noriaki Tsuchimoto, affects me practically on a molecular level. The unique sensitivity with which these directors approached their subjects succeeded in breaking through my own layers of defense, reawakening an appreciation for people's capacity to retain their humanity in the face of indescribable injustice.

Obviously, art and politics can maintain sepa-

rate tracks, with separate agendas. But art can be imbued with a political dimension, with a desire to be of service to one's neighbors. And within the arena of politics, forms of artistic expression can be entwined. Wasn't Abbie Hoffman often as inspiring as a theatrical performer as he was a political instigator? And, as Robert Flaherty marveled, what is Picasso's *Guernica* if not an expression of confronting the harshest realities of one's time with the piercing weaponry of art?

DE OCAMPO: Yes, Paul's comment was the point of much misinterpretation (myself included!), but I felt it was very well said, and much like his two videos screened at the seminar, *RE: THE_OPERATION* and

for two years, I know what I thought about wasn't whether or not our videos and Web sites could complicate the views on globalization or racism so the forms themselves would embody the paradoxes and tensions and in doing so give people space to think about them. It was to get the message out about this demo or that workshop—empowering people to use media to communicate, consolidate constituencies and forge social power. Again, to quote Adorno, "Just as art cannot be, and never was, a language of pure feeling, not a language of the affirmation of the soul, neither is it for art to pursue the results of ordinary knowledge, as, for instance, in the form of social documentaries that are to function as down payments on empirical research yet to be done."

"Art's role is not the messenger for social movements. Art is the dream (or the nightmare) that haunts those movements. And if it is any good, it is both." —Paul Chan

Now Let Us Praise American Leftists, that statement pushes me to ask questions just as much as it answers them. Paul describes his own work as having "excessive form" and perhaps that is why, as a filmmaker working in the avant-garde tradition, I am drawn to it. Noriaki Tsuchimoto's films have that same appeal in his simple and elegant camera-work but also in this sense of humanity that you mentioned—he holds it so close and treats it so delicately. His interactions with subjects struck me as some of the most profound and memorable moments of filmmaking that I saw at the seminar. His sheer commitment to the subject of Minamata disease, 16 films made over 35 years, spoke of his dedication both as an artist and an activist.

The question that I come up against is the case of the filmmaker having a lack of form, where the camera becomes only a tool and the maker gives little regard to the way in which s/he uses it. For me, this work inevitably suffers and the message is frequently lost. As much as I greatly admire the idea of Indymedia and Free Speech TV, a good deal of the work that comes out of it leaves me with very little. But does that make it ineffective?

CHAN: Two quick things:

1. We have to be careful about the idea of tools and transparent form. There is no media(ated) form that does not posit a "particular" reality. Indymedia and Free Speech TV practice a particular form that has to do with the history and aesthetic (I think) of testimony. This binds their form (whether it's video, audio or Web) to a kind of "literacy," which, if practiced correctly, would reveal a kind of truth through its fidelity to the telling of history. But, as we all know, in Adorno's words "the literal is barbaric."

2. On the other hand, the value of political use in groups like Indymedia and FSTV does not come from the exploration of form. It's in education and organizing. So it's a bit unfair (but well-founded) to ask them to be more like artists and less like activists. Having been in the trenches of Indymedia NYC

Art's role is not the messenger for social movements. Art is the dream (or the nightmare) that haunts those movements. And if it is any good, it is both.

GIANVITO: Does disinterest in form, in camera-work, in "artistry," make political film less effective? Among the work screened at the Flaherty were two works by British filmmaker Franny Armstrong, *McLibel: Two Worlds Collide* and *Drowned Out*. While each piece no doubt had its admirers, I heard critical comments in regards to Franny's conventionality of form, to which she responded, "It is not what happens during a film that matters but what happens after it's over." She spoke of the enormous exposure *McLibel* has had (still available freely streaming on the Web) and felt it played its own humble role in the worldwide efforts to curb McDonald's business practices, citing the news that this was the first year in their history that their profit share declined. She said she aimed to have her work reach as wide an audience as possible and stated, with regard to the style of *Drowned Out*, that given the gravity of the situation, the limited time she had to shoot and this overarching aim to get the word out, she did not feel comfortable playing around with the form.

While it's easier for me perhaps to imagine a different aesthetic approach to the subject of the Narmada Dam project, I myself was struggling to envision an approach to the telling of the *McLibel* trial that might raise the film to the level of art. I thought as well about Joseph Strick's powerful and straightforward *Interviews with My Lai Veterans*. Could there be subject matter that does not lend itself to the approach of the artist? Would the mere presence of the aesthetic take something away from the power (political and otherwise) of such noble acts of bearing witness (an intention and a question confronted by every Indymedia documentarian as they record each rally, speech, riot)? As I pondered these questions, the answer came to me from out of the work itself, in the figure of Arundhati Roy (who appears intermittently in *Drowned Out*). In recent

years Roy has emerged as one of the most eloquent and impassioned critics of globalization and of the abuses of power. Through her writings and her talks, her distinct voice gives ample evidence that journalistic prose (just as journalistic filmmaking) can aspire to and attain the level of poetry and, what's more, that such poetry can reach and resonate within the spirits of thousands of people throughout the world. I love Paul's statement that art is no messenger but rather a disquieting and inspiring dream to prod and pummel us, to shoulder and embolden us, that we may keep our heads up on the struggle forward. Such accomplishment is, to my thinking, art at its most utilitarian.

DE OCAMPO: I think the point I find myself more concerned with is, does interest in form, camera-work and "artistry" make a film and video politically ineffective? Travis Wilkerson's *An Injury to One* creates a historical analysis of unions, labor, corporate mining and environmental catastrophe; Wilkerson takes this material and puts it into a carefully thought-out and artfully executed form. My general perception of the piece among Flaherty participants was quite positive. On the other hand, in screening this piece to a Portland audience of activists (as opposed to film enthusiasts), I overheard more than a few grumblings on the way out of the theatre about it being too stuffy and "arty." The age-old question of the audience is one that will never go away, I suppose.

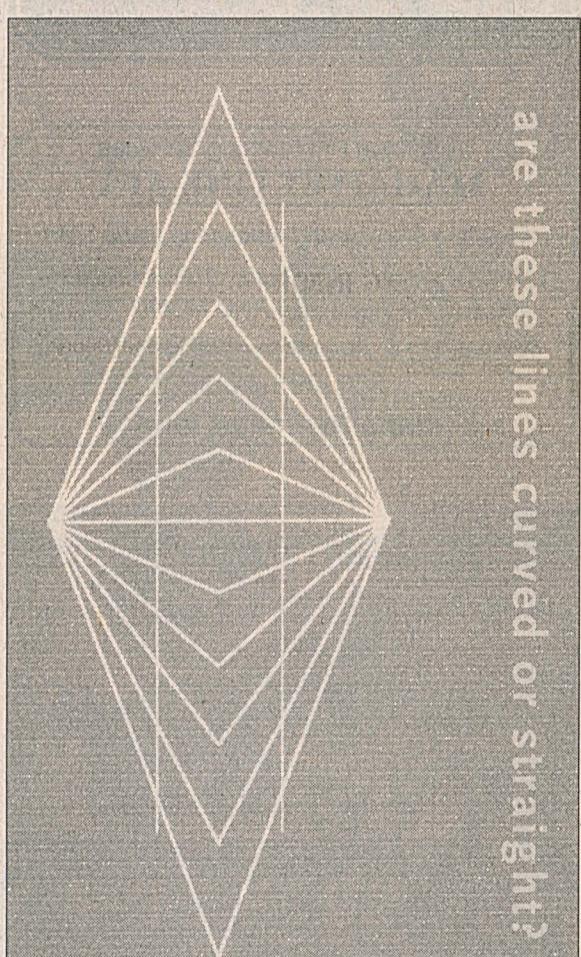
GIANVITO: Personally, I always say that there is no such thing as an audience. For me it's an abstraction. It always comes down to a room full of people with their individual likes and dislikes. And the moment filmmakers make a move in the direction of an imagined audience response, they misstep, and are apt to get lost. I believe the only reliable guide is to attempt to make the kind of film that you yourself would like to sit down and view. And the very nature of that process demands that you "speak" in a way that is natural to you alone. Robert Bresson could no more frame like Glauber Rocha than James Joyce could pen a phrase like Lou Reed.

One is given a voice. One can modulate it. If one chooses, one can coach aspects of its effectiveness. It remains one's voice. One might pitch it differently to one's friends, an audience, a constituency. The grain and character of the voice cannot be escaped. One can, however, lose—sometimes even consciously choose to lose—the connection between the sound that speaks and one's proper self. Regardless, whether disembodied or soulful, calculating or inchoate, there are severe limits on one's capacity to control how one's voice is received. It would appear that no one has the power to reach everyone. In the pursuit of making a difference it seems to me that one's best and only hope is to encourage the continual discovering/uncovering of each unique and solitary voice, allowing them to be the conductors of all that must out. I'm convinced most listeners can hear the difference.

John Gianvito is a filmmaker, teacher and curator based in Boston. Paul Chan is a media artist based in New York City. Pablo de Ocampo is director of the Independent Publishing Resource Center and a member of the Cinema Project in Portland. Pablo would like to extend special thanks to the Cultural Economy Initiative and WorkSystems Inc., who supported his attendance at the Flaherty Seminar.



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RAY DANIELS (HELLO! VIDEO); AUTUMN CAMPBELL, PABLO DE OCAMPO, JEREMY ROSEN (CINEMA PROJECT); KRISTA MARSHALL ARIAS (LA PALABRA CAFE-PRESS); LISA WELLS, CHRIS BENNETT, PETER BAUER (MYTH MEDIA AND NEWSPACE); MATT MCCORMICK (PERIPHERAL PRODUCE). PHOTOGRAPHS BY MIA NOLTING

MICROCINEMA / continued from page 1

doors "due to the whims of real estate and property issues," but Oast and Bovinet plan to reboot soon in a new, larger location. Oast says fans have been supportive, except for "when that dude took our cashbox with all of \$11 and some change. Lame."

www.thewhoknow.info

La Palabra Café-Press

Space: 150 standing capacity
Screen: 8 x 8
Projector: 8mm, 16mm, video, digital

In addition to the darkroom, letterpress, typewriters, philosophy library, newsstand, computers and wireless Internet access at La Palabra, you'll find an editing suite for Super 8 developing and transfer. Open since August 1 of this year, Krista Marshall Arias' creative space-cum-café—a 1500-square-foot former theatre wardrobe space on NE Garfield Street with a café service trailer out front—has already started a "cine à manu" Tuesday night film salon for works-in-progress and novices; hosted film gatherings with cycling, hitchhiker and immediatist themes; brought internationally screened experimental filmmakers to the space; and started planning a Poetics of Film series for next summer. Arias is accepting submissions of film pieces with poetry as audio through March. She is also screening cartoons on Saturday mornings.

Shows take place at La Palabra Café-Press, 4810 NE Garfield St.
www.lapalabracafepress.org, 503.493.0333

Myth Media

Space: Newspace Gallery classrooms
Screen: basement walls, borrowed screens
Projector: rented from the Lake Oswego library

At Myth Media's first Broadcast showing, the turnout was only about six people. "They were probably cops," says Lisa Wells, who helped found Peter Bauer take Portland's first and only "open-mic for filmmakers" from a basement on E Burnside to a basement on SE Belmont Street to a gallery on SE 10th Avenue. Above ground, Broadcast has become a forum for film- and mischief-makers to share their

projects under cover of the full moon every month. Bauer established Myth Media as a nonprofit three years ago with his sights set on "cultural and environmental change." Currently, the group is adding schools to its roster of lecture venues. Local students treated to a Myth Media movie day are asked to examine how their culture's myths are created. Bauer might ask if they can identify edible plants from their region, smells that indicate dangerous wildlife, or the trees and shrubs in front of their houses. Then he'll ask if they know who J. Lo is.

Newspace Gallery

Space: studio portion of gallery
Screen: the back wall
Projector: borrowed from next door

In Gordon Winiemko's mockumentary *Enjoy*, two San Franciscans become so infatuated with the Coca-Cola emblem they resort to wandering the streets naked save for swirls of red and white paint. In Chris Bennett's 580-square-foot studio, Portlanders can run photo shoots, acting classes or workshops, or see innovative work by filmmakers who are passing through (as Winiemko was). They can also join local directors sharing works-in-progress at the monthly Broadcast gathering (see above) and catch the short films of directors from around the world through the Independent Exposure Screening Series, curated by San Francisco-spawned Microcinema International. Bennett says, "I consider myself a facilitator" who wants locals and out-of-towners to know the space is available for their projects, even if nobody gets painted.

Shows take place at Newspace Gallery, 1632 SE 10th St.
www.newspacephoto.com, 503.963.1935

Peripheral Produce

Space, screen, projector: roving sites have included the Hollywood Theatre, Cinema 21 and the Guild Theater.

In the foreground of Portland's contemporary microcinema is Matt McCormick's Peripheral Produce. After acting as a renegade screening conduit around town for roughly five years, Peripheral's

production efforts were honed into the Portland Documentary and Experimental Film Festival, now in its second year of soliciting "quirky and challenging work" from around the world. Under virtually nonexistent overhead and "a couple small grants," PP also maintains a microcinema distribution label that is nationally recognized. McCormick, who makes his own films as the Rodeo Film Company and is an alumnus of the Sundance Film Festival, among others, wants the PDX Film Fest to continue bringing underground film heroes and "scouted talent" to town, saying of Portland, "the film and arts community here is more supportive than anywhere I have ever been."

www.rodeofilmco.com/peripheralproduce

Tiny Picture Club

Space: nomadic
Screen: theatres, PVC pipe and canvas, sides of buildings
Projector: 8mm

For the Tiny Picture Club's sixth show, the group divided the packed Guild Theater audience in half and passed out labels marked "Hero" and "Villain."

A spokesman from each side was elected, snack food was cocked and the show Heroes and Villains rolled 8. "The hero would walk on screen and the villains would yell, 'Kill him!'" remembers Reed Harkness, who started the club with a group of friends. Since the fall of 2000, seven themed shows (e.g., Secret Places and Car Chases) have screened with spontaneously assembled bands at venues and campuses up and down the West Coast. Audiences have gotten the chance to draw on film, join group bike-rides to venues and take workshops at Harkness' house when it becomes the "Tiny Picture Lab." A core membership of about six has remained constant since the beginning, while handfuls of others fluctuate as time and enthusiasm allow. Jeremy Sedita helps organize shows, Emily Halderman is credited with the group's moniker, Devin Harkness with the idea to make their logo a Superman symbol with an "S" replacing the "S," and Chad Essley with drawing the perfect sketch of it "in, like, five seconds."

www.tinypictureclub.org

Kaja Katamay is a writer who lives in Portland.

The Cinema Project's 2003 Visiting Artist Series continues to bring champions of experimental cinema to Portland through Dec. 14. If you missed Betzy Bromberg, David Gatten and Trinh T. Minh-Ha, don't forget to catch the rest of the series. Here's your guide.

DEBORAH STRATMAN

Nov. 18-19, 7:30 pm
Cinema Project, 120 NE Russell St.
Stratman's Portland audience will get to see what the audiences at this year's Sundance Film Festival and Rotterdam International Film Festival didn't: the work that preceded her multiple-award winning short *In Order Not to Be Here* (2002), "a new genre of horror movie" that explores America's culture of surveillance in suburban car parks and elsewhere. On Nov. 18, Stratman will screen the shorts *From Hetty to Nancy* (1997), *On the Various Nature of Things* (1995), and *Untied* (2001). IONBH shows the following night alongside new work by Chicago filmmakers, which Stratman selected.

THE MATTER WITH FILM

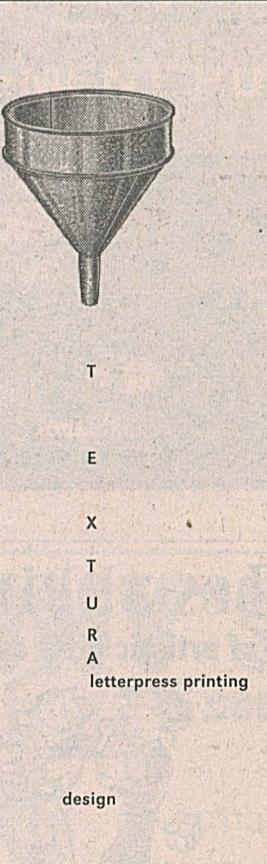
The Matter With Film
Dec. 8, 7:30 pm
Cinema Project, 120 NE Russell St.
Liminal Lumen Cycle

Date, time, location: TBA

On Dec. 8, Sandra Gibson and Luis Recoder guest curate a program of hand-manipulated works by filmmakers from around the country, including Brian Frye, Devon Damonte, Jeanne Liotta, Cade Bursell, Bruce McClure and Jennifer Reeves. Tactics include hot iron ink transfer from a plastic tablecloth onto film and developing negative prints by burying them in contaminated soil. "The objectification of film as matter and the matter of objectifying go hand in hand," says Gibson. On Dec. 9 or thereabout, Recoder, whose work has been referred to as "projection performance," will screen his latest opus of light and illusion, *Liminal Lumen Cycle*.

CONSTRUCTING HISTORY, WALID RAAD

The Loudest Muttering Is Over
Dec. 12, 7:00 pm
City Council Chambers, Portland City Hall,
1221 SW 4th Ave.
(Cosponsored by PICA)
Civilizationally, We Do Not Dig Holes to Burry Ourselves
Dec. 13, 7:30 pm
Cinema Project, 120 NE Russell St.
Between 1983 and 1993, Souheil Bachar was the only Arab among six men to have been taken hostage in Beirut. In 1999, he collaborated with cultural research foundation the Atlas Group, based in Lebanon, to produce 53 videotapes about his imprisonment. Only #17 and #31 are available outside of Lebanon. Oh, and Bachar doesn't actually exist. He's the fictional creation of Walid Raad, the Lebanon-born artist whose work has been featured in festivals worldwide and was selected for the 2002 Whitney Biennial. At a PICA-sponsored lecture on Dec. 12, Raad will present slides from the Atlas Group files. The following night, he'll screen *Hostage: The Bachar Tapes* and read from interviews with Bachar, discussing his collaboration with the Atlas Group.



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707 SE 12th Ave. in Portland

NW FILM CENTER / continued from page 1

in Salem whether they were going to show regional films, they responded, "Can you show Oregon films on a regular projector?"

In 1972, Jacobson and Summers won a grant from the NEA to establish the Northwest Film Study Center. Their plans were ambitious: a film magazine penned by local writers, an archive and depository for in-house study and for use in public schools, lectures and seminars, consultation to other groups on organizing film screenings, package programs for film courses and more. Taylor joined the board.

Other recipients of the NEA's media funding were housed either within universities, such as the Pacific Film Archives at Berkeley, or museums, such as the Museum of Modern Art's Film and Video Department. PSU wanted a big cut of the grant money, so Jacobson and Summers chose PAM as their host; it was a fateful decision.

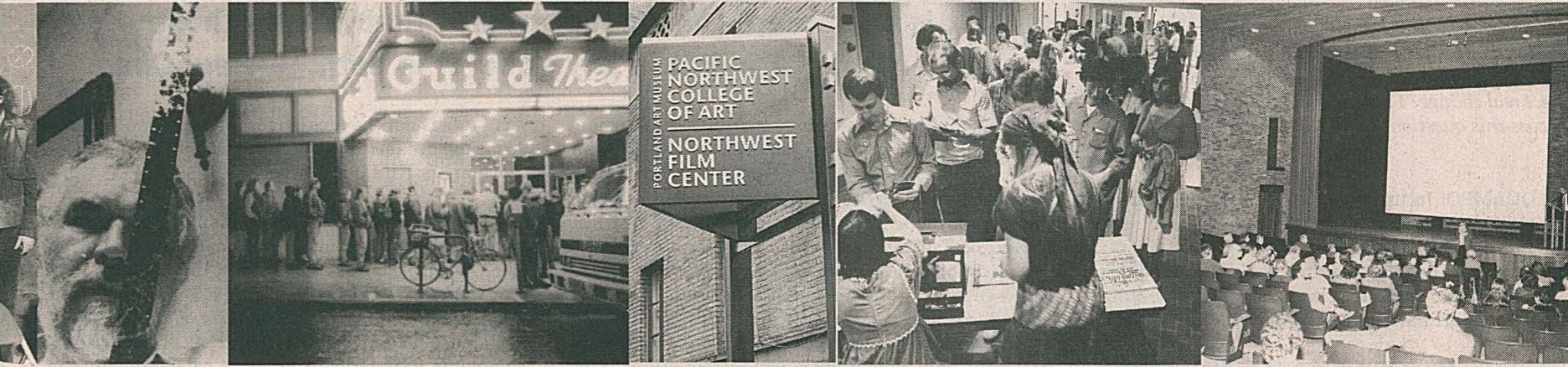
Founded in 1892, the museum was just the sort of stale institution that cooperative organi-

zation program, a circulating film library." But his focus on exhibition rather than regional filmmaking put him at odds with the center's original constituency.

Though he didn't dismiss the documentary films that Deinum had advocated, Sitton admired other genres, as well: "If you limit yourself to films like that, you'll never look at *Singing in the Rain*, you'll never look at abstract film, you won't have a clue what *L'Age d'Or* is about. The art form is bigger than that." And while the Northwest Film & Video Festival continued and the center's quarterly publication, *The Animator*, covered the local scene, Sitton made it clear that he wasn't interested in running "a pure film co-op" with filmmakers producing and selecting the programming.

To Taylor, this lack of emphasis on local filmmakers "destroyed a dream of what the Film Study Center could have become."

Jacobson worked under Sitton for a year, coordinating traveling film programs and in-school education, until the clash of ideologies finally drove her out the door. In 1974, her departure sparked



PHOTOGRAPHS COURTESY THE NORTHWEST FILM CENTER

zations like Canyon Cinema had been created to circumvent. Yet the hosting arrangement gave the museum control over the center's leadership. Within a year, according to Taylor, the museum saw the center as an arm of its own operations, "and the job of the arm is to feed the face."

"We weren't getting enough audience to satisfy them, so they got really mad and fired Bob Summers without even consulting the center's board."

1973-1981: Growth and the Aftermath of the First Coup

In June 1973, the museum hired Robert Sitton—a highly credentialed curator and critic teaching at UC Berkeley's Center for Filmmaking Studies—as the center's new director. Sitton, whose intellectual enthusiasm for film is immediately apparent, now teaches film at Marylhurst University in Lake Oswego.

He recalls his excitement over the opportunity to run a center with such a broad mandate. "[It] was absolutely irresistible ... I mean, I would have gone to the Mojave Desert." He set about curating a series of idea-driven film programs geared to the museum's mission of public education.

"I'd pick 12 fascinating and very different musicals, so you could see what Busby Berkeley did with it and what Stanley Donen did with it. If I were still programming, I'd show what Lars von Trier did with it in *Dancer in the Dark*." The approach gave audiences the chance to "understand what this art and all arts are about; they are dialogues among artists on the nature of the art itself."

Sitton struggled to build the Film Study Center, using exhibition proceeds for capital acquisitions, until, by 1980, "I felt it was built. I had an exhibition program going, a very viable film education program, a regional film festival, a children's film festival, an international film festival, a good

group of Film Study Center exiles to found the Northwest Media Project, a nonprofit that would provide the regional support originally envisioned for the center. In the late '70s, the Northwest Media Project enjoyed a series of accomplishments: monthly screenings of independent work, a nationally attended seminar on fund-raising, workshops, a selective rental catalog of 72 Northwest films and the *Oregon Guide to Media Services*.

Martha Gies, director of the Media Project from 1977 to 1980, recalled that for filmmakers who felt sold out by the art museum "it was an angry deal, it really was ... Things were really polarized." One source of animosity was the perception that the NEA gravy, still flowing to the Film Study Center, belonged to the community that had initially won the grant.

In 1980, Sitton took a yearlong sabbatical and worked part-time organizing the center's exhibition series. In his absence, the Portland Art Association—the umbrella organization for the museum, the Film Study Center and the Pacific Northwest College of Art—hired a new executive director. Sitton came home to face a hostile environment, and in April 1981 he sent the art association's board a letter of protest and resignation charging that the new director had systematically harassed him and usurped his authority without notifying the board. The day after his grievances were aired in *The Oregonian*, he was given until 5 p.m. to clear out his desk and office. Bill Foster, the center's associate director, became his successor.

Sitton asserts that he was pushed out by a business-minded regime that wanted to hire one of its own. According to Foster, "it's complicated, but when he came back there was a new structure ... and they didn't really get along. I think it was more personal, and not a philosophic wrangling over the program of the Film Center." Sitton would not be the last to

VAN SANT / continued from page 1

the superstition that hats placed on beds cause bad luck.]

Two down, 14 to go.

Want me to choose it?

Yeah. [Gus chooses a card.] This is an *Elephant* card. What did you get out of using nonactors as the leads?

When I first started making movies I didn't really know any actors. I had more success working with nonactors in my films at school [Rhode Island School of Design]. They were people that were really brave. They were good characters, but they were really unsure about doing it in the first place. The actors had too many requirements psychologically—how to build a character psychologically. I guess I'm willing to let them offer their own expertise. The way they were used to working in theatre was rigorous enough that someone like me saying, "Well, just try it any old way" would be not respecting their craft ...

Nowadays, you can shoot with your home video camera, so I think some of the kids in *Elephant* have actually been in front of a camera. So they might have actually had more experience than you think. But also, we were looking for people who don't have a wall between them and the camera. You find that out by just putting them in front of the camera and asking them questions; it's really easy. There are what I call one out of 10 people that just naturally exposes well for whatever reason. 'Cause they don't have any guards, or are not self-conscious, or they're able to function in front of the camera.

Are you an antiperfectionist? No, I'm a perfectionist. Well, it depends on what kind of perfection you're looking for. I'm antiperfection if it involves useless energy put into a direction that thinks it's going to get to where you're supposed to get.

If what you want is something to feel what you might call "natural" on screen, for an actor sometimes that means doing 60 takes. For some directors, it means getting there by doing 60 takes, until it becomes like a song in that the emotions and the rhythms and the words are so "done" that they're like lyrics, and you won't forget them, and you don't have to worry about trying to remember the lines. The movements become like a dance.

If that's what you have to do every take, you can also do it by putting people in those same char-

acters that can't be anything but those characters. So if you have a plumber sitting across from his son who dropped out of high school, you find a plumber that has a son who dropped out of high school, and you cast both of them and just let it go. And you don't have to go through 60 takes. You might have to go through some other things—I don't know if it lightens up on the workload or not—but it's just a different way of presenting something, and you get to the same place.

What I like about anonymity—I don't necessarily like you to view the characters in relationship to their other movies, so that if you're watching Dennis Hopper play the plumber, you're going, like, "Yeah, I always loved Dennis Hopper; he's always so great." I want them to really love the plumber, not necessarily like Dennis Hopper. So if you get rid of Dennis Hopper, you can get to the plumber faster.

[Gus and Steve discuss the limits of planning and the way that people sometimes confuse the means of achieving an objective with the objective itself. Then they discuss happy accidents, such as the emotionally rich campfire scene that River Phoenix wrote on the fly for My Own Private Idaho.]

I do want to touch on *Elephant* a little bit more—When you transcribe it, do you transcribe every word?

Can you believe it? And then it'll get edited down.

Oh, then you edit it?

Somewhat, yeah.

It's too bad, because in the old *Interview* magazine, they used to just ...

Let it just flow.

Yeah, it was, like, whatever it was. And you could really tell. I mean, you could tell it was a real conver-

sation. Whenever people edit things, it just changes it.

I did an interview with David Foster Wallace, and it was over the phone. And I put together the different—you know, I copied the Warhol deal, and so it was like he would say something, and then if he paused, he'd write "Pause," or "Cough," or "Dog barks in the background"—and that all got in. And then it looked really great. You read it, and it was like, "Wow," just like it really happened.

And then the editors went through and instead of putting "Dog barks in background," they

face disappointment—while the '70s had been rough on Deinum's legacy, the early '80s would practically finish it off.

1982-2003: A Community Model

In 1982, the Center for the Moving Image—which had continued to produce documentaries and serve as a professional production company for nonprofits—was mixed by budget cuts at Portland State. "But they kept golf," Taylor notes. Around the same time, the Media Project withered. "It was always a pretty dicey thing," says Melissa Marsland, who served as assistant director from 1978 through 1982. "There would be periods of no money ... it took a really passionate visionary to keep it afloat."

In 1985, in the wake of a new strategic plan for the art association's holdings, the Northwest Film Study Center became the Northwest Film & Video Center. ("Video" was dropped later.) The name change was intended to make the center seem less academic, and reflects the predominant theme of the center's last two decades: involvement with the

bad things, but they're practical—they're things you are impelled to do to keep your sponsorship and ticket sales going so you can subsidize those other things. We need endowment."

This expediency leaves many film buffs disheartened or irritated. Complaints about the NWFC from film enthusiasts with whom I spoke include, "They don't care about film." The programs are the same year after year. The booking caters to the conservative and nostalgic tastes of retirees in the Silver Screen club. The international festival is too big and cumbersome. The programming is, in a word, boring. The good films get lost in the mix of films that aren't carefully selected.

Ultimately, the NWFC's constituents are not filmmakers but the people who fund them. For exhibition support, constituents include ticket-buyers, Silver Screeners, private donors and institutions that put together affordable touring film packages. Government exhibition support is limited; the NEA chipped in \$40,000 this year for the Northwest Film & Video Festival. For education and outreach, constituents include the Oregon Arts Commission,

community-at-large.

According to Foster, "The idea has been to keep the Film Center responsive to what the community needs." He cites the Portland International Film Festival, the Jewish Film Festival, Reel Music, ethnically based programs and the Human Rights Watch series as exhibition programs that engage different communities. And he says he's committed to simply "showing great films that other people aren't going to show—not necessarily trying to make it part of some big series or some big idea, but just giving people the chance to see them."

As for local film, the NWFC has begun partnerships with DIY exhibitors like Peripheral Produce and the Cinema Project. Next April, the center will host Peripheral Produce's Portland Documentary and Experimental Film Festival. To Foster, this will fill a void in the center's programming while Peripheral Produce benefits from the NWFC's facilities and administrative expertise.

The center's education director, Ellen Thomas, estimates that 600 to 800 kids are served by in-school programs, community-based programs and classes held at the center. The center has recently embarked on longer-term, more intensive projects like the Oregon Latino Youth Video Project. Thomas notes that the center's classes and in-school programs also benefit the local filmmakers who are hired to run them. "The organizations that have survived and thrived," she says, "use the community model rather than the academic model."

How to Survive in Today's Funding Climate

Foster cites the balance between popularity and innovation in the center's programming as "a tension every arts organization faces: the ballet is going to dance *The Nutcracker*, the symphony is going to do Beethoven's Fifth and the art museum is going to show dead French painters. Those are not

partner organizations like Saturday Academy and private foundations that see arts education as a public good. According to Foster, the NWFC has grown to do everything everybody always wanted it to—with the exception of actively producing and distributing films. He says that in the absence of the sort of subsidies that the Film Board of Canada enjoys, a regional film cooperative simply isn't sustainable in our culture.

Have filmmakers been left stranded? Local filmmaker Andrew Dickson, whose work has shown at the New York and Chicago Underground Film Festivals, as well as the Northwest Film Festival, says that despite the paucity of local grant resources, "I would argue that Portland is a lot more conducive to filmmaking than other cities" because of a grassroots community that does out labor and equipment based on trust and a track record of follow-through. "Once you get to know people," he says, "it's a pretty nurturing place."

Still, without institutional support like the Start-to-Finish program at Seattle's Northwest Film Forum or the industry mechanisms of larger cities, there may be limits to what you can do here. "There's a lot of action at the ground level," notes artist Bill Daniel, "but not much midlevel infrastructure." Does Portland's filmmaking collective unconscious, decades after the acrimony between the Film Study Center and the Northwest Media Project has faded, still yearn for an institution to promote their interests? Or is grassroots-level favor-banking enough? For now, at least, filmmakers who want to take the leap from labor of love to filmmaking career—and take their films to a wider audience—are making a go of it on their own.

Zelig Kurland is a freelance photographer and writer who lives in Portland. His photographs of facilities affected by Oregon's budget travails can be seen online at www.measure28.org.

the ultimate... extreme outsiders. Although I'm not sure, in their minds, [that] they were extreme outsiders. I think they were made to feel that they were outsiders; that they basically did become insane by something that they were told—or something that they were led to believe—which was, if they didn't have anything going at their young age of 16, that when they became 26 they still wouldn't have anything going. It would be the same; they would be living the same life 10 years later.

I think that's just something that's easy to

"If you have a plumber sitting across from his son who dropped out of high school, you find a plumber that has a son who dropped out of high school, and you cast both of them and just let it go."—Gus Van Sant

changed those things to, like, "Chair squeaks on floor" and—for no reason—"Car honks outside window." Instead of, you know, "Coughs again." They changed it, and it actually ruined it all. They made it so that it wasn't, like, real anymore.

You've made some movies about young people who don't fit in, but they use that in a creative way, and invariably they do something heroic. Is *Elephant* a part of that investigation? You know, these kids take the situation of being outsiders, but instead do something really negative with it. How do you come to make a movie about kids who turn on other kids and kill them?

Well, I think that the kids that were the perpetrators of the massacre in Columbine were—they were

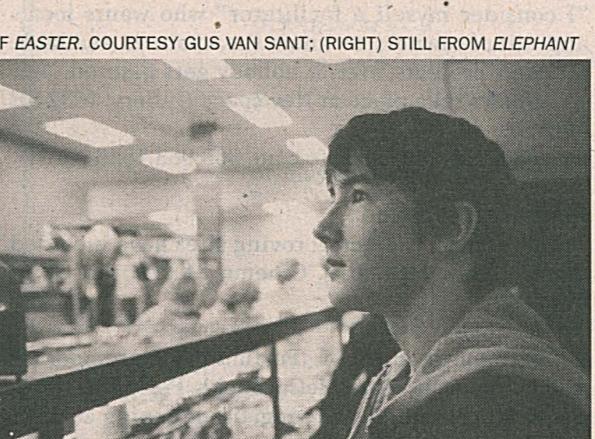
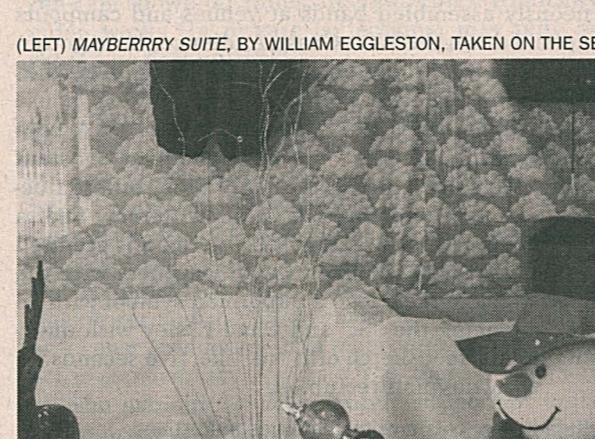
inflict on somebody in high school. They actually do not know how the future is going to come about. And to have a value system within a community that tells you that you're a loser now and you always will be is dangerous. For the ones that are already having mental difficulties, to really feel that there is nothing beyond high school, that life is just more high school—something like that could make them go kill themselves.

But once they got to that point, then they've created this project. It's like, well, if we're going to die anyway, why don't we just do the thing that we'd love to do, which is to kill 'em all? Which is what we always say we wanna do.

I made the film because of the media reaction. I thought, right off the bat, because of the strong reaction from journalists, that a dramatist should get in there and make a TV movie. And it should be on in, like, six weeks and be part of that dialogue that was happening, and not just leave it to journalists. That was the original idea: to have Columbine happen and have TV be one of the suspects, along with music and video games ...

... The idea was put forward that it wasn't specifically addressing the issue head-on, [that it could resemble] a film called *Elephant*, which was an Alan Clarke film made in Britain in 1989 as a BBC film—that there could be a dialogue about high school violence. Three years went by, there was a screenplay written, and we made *Gerry*, and we started working without a screenplay. We

VAN SANT / continued on page 10



Two for the Road

VANESSA RENWICK AND BILL DANIEL FOLLOW THE TRACKS OF WOLVES, TRAINS, AND MORE, THEN TAKE THEIR BORDERCROSSING ART TO THE HIGHWAYS

by Camela Raymond

Vanessa Renwick and Bill Daniel have spent most of their lives looking at the things that most of us won't. In their films, videos, photographs and installations, key subjects include prostitutes, Satanists, wild animals, hobo artists, squatters, people who are crazy, in the process of giving birth, dying and mocking abortion protesters with cruel accordion songs.

In recent years Vanessa and Bill have become companions in life and work. Since 2001 they've toured their art like a couple of folk singers, reaching audiences in colleges, basements and museums around the country. When they come home, and the money from selling tapes and T-shirts stops and so does the road, they feel blue. Then, despite their professed exhaustion with it all, they get back to work.

At a recent dinner party, the talk turned, pruriently, to firemen. Vanessa Renwick's voice is strong and sing-songy and tends to slow down and curl at

I'd hop a freighter and go work with Fassbinder." That didn't work out (he died shortly thereafter), so after a jaunt to Germany to work under one of his colleagues ("the film sucked"), she came back to the States and made 20 movies in 20 years.

The first was *Toxic Shock*, a semi-narrative collage of women's hands, needles drawing blood and tampon-and-gasoline Molotov cocktails arcing and exploding. One of the latest, *Rich Art*, was a documentary about a Centralia, Wash., artist who upon release from a psychiatric ward turned his home into a crazed fortress of sculpture. (It has shown at the Hirshhorn and Andy Warhol museums and won numerous awards.) The 18 films in between range from *Crow Dog*, a chronicle of Vanessa's nine-month, barefoot hitchhiking trip across the U.S., during which she investigated the FBI's terror campaign against the American Indian Movement, to *The Ugly Movie*, which tracks William T. Vollmann in a dirty,

tions they evoke in people, especially when they cross imaginary borders. For the past five years she's tracked the conflict from sheep farms that market "predator-friendly wool" to public parks where tourists hunt wolves with binoculars to the poor man who lamented his daughter's Easter morning when she woke to find her 4-H project "reduced to a ball of red fleece." She's gone to every meeting of the Wolf Information Group, formed to facilitate dialogue among the various factions. "You'd see the ranchers wearing their shirts with steers on them and environmentalists wearing their shirts with wolves on them. Some people think the wolves are being secretly airlifted here. Or they call them 'those Canadian wolves.'"

Most recently, Vanessa attended the World Wolf Conference in Banff, Canada, the largest-ever gathering of wolf biologists, where an ethicist brought down the house by arguing that scientists' emotions toward their subjects affect their conclusions, using neurological studies as evidence. "He used the 'love' word. It was a groundbreaking moment in science."

But for Vanessa, whose films expose and wrench at ethical dilemmas—compassion vs. self-preservation, individual will vs. cooperation and so on—even love and unity have their dark sides. "I noticed that

can West (appropriate to someone who grew up in the Dallas suburbs). In works that mine the rich cultures of hobos, hippies and other real and imagined outlaws and wanderers, mythic struggles play out—between idealism and doom, home and wanderlust, freedom and interdependence, and humans and the land.

Bill began making images while a business major, of all things, at University of Texas in the late '70s. He photographed fraternity and sorority parties for 10 cents a shot, cranking out 14 rolls of ralphing frat boys on a good night. And he documented Austin's burgeoning punk scene because it was "the funnest thing since BMX," his 28mm lens and hand-held flash recording images as raw, exuberant and in-your-face as the music itself. His corporate plans disintegrated, needless to say.

In the early '80s, Bill discovered the 100-year tradition among tramps and rail workers of "chalking up" their monikers and images on the sides of boxcars. "I'm fascinated by the evidence of outlaw culture," he says, "so when I saw that tramps had graffiti, it was a huge revelation." Shooting footage of hobo graffiti became an obsession and turned into a series of films (including the magnum opus documentary *Who Is Bozo Texino?*, now 21 years in the works and slated for completion at the Headlands Institute this winter) and "custom-built viewing environments." An example of the latter is *The Girl on the Train in the Moon*, which showed last winter in a Northwest Portland warehouse as part of *Beamsplitters*, an exhibition of film-based installation works that Bill and Vanessa organized. In the massive, darkened space, viewers crouched in a simulated hobo camp, gazing at footage of boxcar artists and their "steel canvases" rear-projected on two screens, one campfirelike on the floor and the other moonlike on a pole, with banjo music and voices in the background. The effect was transporting (pardon the pun).

In 1999, Bill shot a photographic survey of the Mission Bay area of San Francisco, soon to be a biotech campus for the University of California system, but then a scene of derelict shipyards where people lived in boats and vehicles "just a 10-minute bike ride or shopping-cart push from downtown." Using a forgotten process of shooting directly onto eight-by-ten photo paper and printing direct positives, Bill created high-resolution, one-of-a-kind images that have a timeless, folksy pathos. At his upcoming Wattis Foundation residency at Yerba Buena Center for the Arts, he'll continue this investigation, exhuming and re-presenting Saul Rouda's *Last Free Ride*, a 1971 documentary shot in Sausalito's Richardson Bay that shows an earlier regiment of hippie water squatters reenacting a police raid on their quasi-utopian community. "It's terrifically corny," Bill explains. "It's like a bad community play. But as a window on a time, it has so much depth and resonance."

As we go to press, Bill is back in town to move out of the unheated, cinderblock studio on SE Belmont Street where he's lived and worked for the past two years. Rent is going up, and he's going to be on the road for a while anyway. He'll pack his necessities into his van—his Toyota, not the graffiti-covered '65 Chevy that last month, rigged with sails, formed the centerpiece of a humorously admonitory installation for *Core Sample* (see page 8).

"The world is going to hell and everything is getting worse," Bill says matter-of-factly. "I get consolation from the fact that we're over the initial shock and our awareness of our doom is coming on. What will hit us first? The sea rising, crop failure, super diseases, nuclear war?"

Whatever the case, his art continues to respond with a measure of hope. "The gesture of putting sails on a van is ultimately an optimistic image. If you have any romance about sailing, then you can make the connection."

Vanessa Renwick will screen *Best of DeComposer*, featuring forgotten films with rethemed soundtracks by various composers, in the Northwest Film Center's Reel Music series in January. For information on other events or to purchase videotapes of Vanessa's work, visit www.odoka.org.

Bill Daniel's installation *Souls Harbor* will be on view at the Yerba Buena Center for the Arts Dec. 18-Jan. 4 as part of their 10th anniversary exhibition. An RV with a hull built around one side and videos projected on the other, it was developed around an imaginary street preacher who believes the end of the world is coming with the drying up of petroleum reserves.



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: BILL DANIEL, PHOTOGRAPH BY CAMELA RAYMOND; OUT ON TOUR; VANESSA RENWICK, PHOTOGRAPH BY CAMELA RAYMOND; VANESSA RENWICK'S INSTALLATION AT CORE SAMPLE, HUNTING REQUIRES OPTIMISM, PHOTOGRAPH BY BASIL CHILDERS; WATER SQUATTER'S DWELLING IN MISSION BAY, SAN FRANCISCO, PHOTOGRAPH BY BILL DANIEL

the end of a phrase.

"I was walking down the street in Chicago, probably 20 years ago, and my hair was really short. I walked by the fire station, and this fireman calls out to me, 'Hey dyke, where's your fucking mustache?'"

There went the collective reverie.

"So I pull down my pants and yell, 'Right here, ya wanna try it on?!?!"'

For Vanessa, speaking truth to power is a reflex, and she'll expose her moff to the wind if that's what it takes. For most of us, that would be enough. A few years later, Vanessa delivered a zine to the station with the advice, "There's a story about you guys in here. I want you to put it in your break room."

If fact isn't one of Vanessa's virtues, persistence is. The 42-year-old Chicago native has been making movies her own way since a short stint at film school at age 22. "I refused to take tests. I thought

unfurnished room as he draws and half-heartedly cuddles a nodding-out whore.

Vanessa's current film project, *Critter*, revisits an old passion. As a child she dreamt of becoming a wolf biologist and would cut school to look at the wolves at the Chicago Zoo. Now she is following the ongoing political battles among ranchers, environmentalists, hunters and others in the aftermath of the federal government's 1995 decision to reintroduce endangered gray wolves to Idaho, Wyoming and Montana.

As she explains it, "Wolves were exterminated in the United States, along with Native Americans and bison, to make room for cows." The nonnative cows became an environmental blight, while the wolves that occasionally picked one off for dinner were demonized as intruders.

This helps explain Vanessa's decision to make a film that's less about wolves than the strong emo-

up in Canada everyone is nice. I thought maybe I should start being nice. Then I thought, someone has to open their mouth."

At the same dinner party, we explained the rule: Anyone who said "Core Sample" had to drink a shot of tequila.

"Oh dear," said someone who had already broken the rule.

"Oh," said Bill Daniel, who hadn't, and downed a shot.

Bill is strictly a no-bullshit guy, unless you count the word itself, which often drops from his mouth steaming and redolent—like most of his convictions, strong, earthy and silly to argue with. Not to imply that Bill's ideas or his art are in any way simple. If anything, the 44-year-old filmmaker and photographer is inspired by contradictions, especially those that define and bedevil the Ameri-

The revolution will not be sold on limited-edition DVD

AS VIDEO GAINS ACCEPTANCE IN GALLERIES, IS IT FORGETTING ITS ROOTS?

by Morgan Currie

In the spring of 1969, in the thick of the Vietnam War and a general air of radical dissent, Howard Wise wrangled together a handful of independent artists experimenting with a bold new artistic medium: video.

In his New York gallery, Wise presented *Television as a Creative Medium*, the first real exhibition of video art. It featured works now routinely seen in every history book on 20th century art, from Nam Jun Paik and Charlotte Moorman's *TV Bra for Living Sculpture*, a performance in which Moorman played the cello wearing a TV on each breast, to Frank Gillette and Ira Schneider's *Wipe Cycle*, where a hidden camera recorded the entering audience, replaying the image at 8- and 16-second intervals on nine monitors.

The exhibit caused a critical stir, pro and con; everyone agreed that something important had happened. But something also didn't happen. Despite the hubbub, Wise soon found that video did not sell; only a handful of adventurous collectors bought the work in his gallery, and in 1971 he closed shop in order to pursue other means of funneling money to artists.

In present-day New York, video has found a niche, but in many places, Portland included, collectors still eye it as wary as Wise's customers did in 1969. Only one major Portland gallery—Elizabeth Leach—sells video artwork. In its most recent Oregon Biennial, the Portland Art Museum failed to show a single video piece. And in the past year, in spite of sophisticated, powerful and, often, crowd-



(ABOVE) NAM JUN PAIK, TV CELLO PREMIERE (1971)

(BELOW) ANT FARM, MEDIA BURN (1975)

STILLS COURTESY ELECTRONIC ARTS INTERMIX (EAI), NEW YORK



pleasing video art in exhibits such as *Core Sample*, the Cooley Gallery's *Bibliocosmos*, Jeff Jahn's *The Best Coast* and Bill Daniel and Vanessa Renwick's *Beamsplitters*, collectors, patrons and institutions have not stepped forward to buy the artworks or fund future projects (with minor exceptions such as Cooley Gallery, whose budget is modest, and the private collector Bob Wilcox).

Thirty years after *TV Bra*, video's quest for acceptance as a collectible art medium remains an uphill journey.

So, where's the hang-up?

Politics is a good place to start. Consider *Media Burn* (1975), a comic spectacle of protest by the art collective Ant Farm. Before a wall of TV sets built in an open field, an actor playing John F. Kennedy declared, "Mass media monopolies control people

you" to ruling mores in political discourse, popular culture and art. Early video artists touted video as a "democratic" medium that could and should be used—and shared freely—to provide alternatives to corporate media, if not blow it up entirely. This political pedigree, which continues to inform and influence video artists, has undoubtedly limited the medium's commercial advancement.

Of course, politics can be renounced, which makes it less of an obstacle than technology. Early on, video technology dovetailed with artists' early, democratic ideals because video was so cheap and easy to mechanically copy. The early VHS dubs weren't perfect, but image quality was low enough on original tapes that worries over loss of quality were trumped by the urgency artists felt about getting their messages out. Durability wasn't an issue. "One of the supreme joys of videotapes is that they

"One of the supreme joys of videotapes is that they self-destruct." —Robert Stefanotti, 1978

by their control of information." An assistant doused the TVs with kerosene and flicked a match at the heap, and a 1959 Cadillac pummeled into the burning pile.

As *Media Burn* showed, video—perhaps more than any other medium—was baptized as an art form in the fires of anti-establishment sentiment, emerging in its gritty, blurry immediacy as a "fuck

self-destruct," video art dealer Robert Stefanotti wrote in 1978, arguing that the elevation of a video into a unique object was "perverse."

But if video's early Prometheans just wanted to spread the fire, their heirs are more divided about the matter. Plenty of video artists today wouldn't mind turning a buck, but technology has continued

VIDEO / continued on page 6

La Palabra Café-Press

11/04 Camera Operations
11/05 Lighting
11/18 Interviewing / Ethics
11/25 Incorporating found footage

12/02 Super 8 film processing
12/09 Archives Rights Releases
Final Cut

12/16 Set-up
12/23 key functions
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TONIGHT 6-8 SAT 8-8 SUN 8-5
E 1 2th @ Hawthorne



Roger Hayes left Detroit in 1988 and moved to Astoria, taking a room downtown at the Siddall Apartments. Astoria, then nearing the end of forty years of economic contraction, was a cheap place to live. The small studio cost Hayes \$50 each month, but that didn't last long. The landlord kicked him out when he saw his paintings. Hayes paints in relaxed, expressive strokes of bright, clashing colors. He prefers to paint on found materials that have texture—embroidered drapery, burlap, pressboard, pressed tin, linoleum. At that time, he was painting large acrylics of George Bush Sr's corpse getting fisted, dismembered and injected with drugs, and these caught the landlord's eye.

The Siddall occupies the upper stories of the M.H. Smith building, the handsome centerpiece of the 1200 block of Commercial Street, but inside it's a wreck. This disparity is a familiar condition in Astoria today, a signature kind of ruin. The restored Liberty Theater frames a gap-toothed row of storefronts, half vacant, half filled. In empty apartments next door to a new restaurant opened by Peter Roscoe (formerly of Portland's Cozze), great islands of plaster break from damaged ceilings. The plate-glass storefront of what was once the city's most elegant haberdashery presents a killing field of starved, poisoned pigeons. Amidst booming residential sales, downtown remains a patchwork of decay and renovation.

Hayes recalls a decade ago when the city occupied its run-down buildings without money or interest in renovation. Those were hard times. From the Siddall he moved into a second-floor office farther down Commercial Street, a cluster of small rooms behind frosted glass windows that are still marked "Oregon Department of Parole." He spent most of the '90s taking psychedelic mushrooms and painting. Across the street, music and drug deals, police busts and bar fights spilled out the door of the Recreation Tavern, a bar that Hayes recalls as a kind of cultural heart for the city. "Astoria was an open port," he remembers. "There were a lot of drugs. No one was downtown except crackheads and these bewildered people standing in the rain tweaking or trying to get money." The last ten years here have largely been an aggressive attempt to erase that condition.

Hayes has stretched fabrics from floor to ceiling in two rooms of the old parole office. Splattered with the residue of a decade of work, they resemble wall coverings from a French chateau, circa 1700, when fabric on the walls kept the minimal heat of indoor fires from disappearing too quickly. A more traditional painting—a 27-inch by 79-inch abstraction done in crayon, acrylic and oil on paper and board—was included in the liveliest art event of the summer, the reopening of the artists' cooperative gallery AVA.

AVA is a ten-year-old initiative spearheaded by a painter who calls herself Agnes Field. It comprises a minimal organizational apparatus plus the shared gallery space where this group of about three dozen artists pursues AVA's stated mission to "explore the intersections of art and commerce by expanding the reach and visibility of art in the economy of the city and beyond." The gallery opening in August, at the end of a disturbingly perfect summer day, marked AVA's relocation into

a bright, west-facing storefront that the artists had refinished and built out. Scores of sand-infested, sun-bleary locals spilled onto the sidewalk of Tenth Street, drinking and buying art, which, like everything else in Astoria, was unusually cheap.

Field's beguiling abstract gouaches on paper—pale colored circles floating on an empty white ground—offered relief beside the exertions of the more expressive painters whose large canvases dominated the walls. Also working in gouache (and tempura) on paper, a young painter named Brandon Hoffman showed four small pieces, rectangular fields of densely layered blues and grays across which sharp lines had been drawn in black and incised. These masterfully simple pieces recall Richard Diebenkorn's genius for space and composition, but with a kind of confidence and modesty that is rare.

Hoffman left Bellingham, Washington, in 2000, along with two other painters, Darren Orange and Kyle Matthews. The three had graduated from college and found an abandoned school building in Rosburg, just across the river from Astoria, where they filled most of a summer painting and



NICK KNAPTON, UNTITLED

sleeping in the large empty rooms. A few months into their residence, Bill Ittmann, the seventy-something director of the Clatsop County Community College gallery, made the drive over and organized a show for the trio. Ittmann was at the August AVA opening, ushering the painfully shy Hoffman through the crowd. In a colorful Hawaiian shirt with an oversized lacquer necklace of bright blue baubles, Ittmann looked both exhausted and, somehow, inexhaustible. As dusk settled, we went up the street with newcomer Rich Jensen, a writer and publisher who recently moved from Seattle,

and his wife, writer Emily White, for a cocktail at downtown's Voodoo Lounge.

Ittmann and his boyfriend, Andy Kerr, have taken it upon themselves to broaden the world that painters in Astoria witness and work in. Whether bringing visitors to see their own collection—which includes Mark Tobey, Morris Graves, Kenneth Callahan, Jay Steensma, Wes Wehr and Helmi Juvonen, many of whom they knew as friends—ferrying a carload of painters to Seattle or Portland for gallery and museum shows, or curating shows at the community college's Art Center Gallery, Ittmann in particular is an essential ingredient in Astoria's cultural stew. Over scotch at the Voodoo he retold the story of finding the three boys in Rosburg, and this became a moving testimony to the current moment in the city and the vitality and promise he sees among a half dozen or so painters whose work he especially admires, such as Nick Knapton, Darren Orange and Brandon Hoffman. Partway through his litany, White, who edited the Seattle weekly newspaper *The Stranger*, interrupted to ask, "Aren't there any cool women in Astoria?" Ittmann looked at her from heavy-lidded eyes and drawled, "I wouldn't know."

Nick Knapton grew up here but moved to Berlin, where he's lived on and off for the last nine years. In June he came back to Astoria and found studio space at Alderbrook Station, a 100-year old net shed on piers over the river. The three-story structure, built by fisherman to hang, dry and repair gill nets, was bought last spring by two architects in Seattle who saw the property on a realtor's Web site. Knapton works in oils and tempura on portraits and still lifes that suspend the pictorial in a frank, blocky sort of structural abstraction that recalls the work of Max Beckman. At the net shed he occupies the back corner of a vast, airy, barn-like space. The building's owners, Darren Doss and Lisa Chadbourne, split their time between Seattle and here.

Doss spent most of the summer in Astoria, managing Alderbrook Station as a gallery and studio space and working on the house and guest cottage that came along with the property. The smaller buildings, and to some extent the net shed, have become laboratories for Doss and Chadbourne's design work. Alderbrook Station enjoyed a busy summer, hosting two large exhibitions, one of local pottery and the other a vast show of gouache and oil paintings by Portland's Michael Brophy.

Openings at Alderbrook—in a neighborhood once called "Hindoo Alley" for the hundreds of Sikhs who lived and worked there during the decades before World War I—are a heady mix of beach party, lounge act and gallery show. They draw hundreds and are usually held at dusk. At the Brophy show, Adrian Orange, of the Portland group Thanksgiving, wailed a pained recollection of a recent accident in which hot wax gave him burns over most of his face. It was astonishing—sublime, really—but the puzzled crowd, which had spent the previous half hour listening to a staged discussion between Brophy and *Oregonian* architecture critic Randy Gragg, mostly turned away to look at the sunset—glorious across eleven miles of river that stretched west from under the piers of the building—or to drink more.

Doss and Chadbourne have taken a relaxed approach to the renovation of the old structure. Rather than sealing it off, the wind is allowed to blow through, an amenity that might grow tiresome with the onset of winter storms. Sunken couches and empty booze bottles belonging to the previous tenants have been left beside mountains of twisted netting and the tools to mend it. This might be all Doss and Chadbourne can afford to do, but it is also refreshing—a promising throwback that runs counter to the sharply divided life now transpiring downtown.

VIDEO / continued from page 5

to thwart them. As media activists like to point out and the music industry has famously discovered, today's digital formats are inherently inhospitable to property claims—even more so than earlier video technology. DVD technology allows digital artworks to be reproduced perfectly, which makes them about as valuable to collectors looking to preserve their financial investments as counterfeit money.

Finally, besides politics and technology, there's the question of form. Going back to *Media Burn*: Building and destroying a temporary, ugly outdoor monument was as much an attack on the

tions of actual, talking faces. Only one collector at a time can own an installation, but they sell for five-digit prices.

Single-channel video can also be modified to boost economic value. The "limited-edition" video creates scarcity much like that attached to limited-edition photograph prints, giving the video value as a refashioned video-object. Matthew Barney has set new price levels for video art by auctioning his limited-edition DVDs of the *Cremaster Cycle* to a collector for \$387,500 ("When Fans of Precy Video Art Can Get It Free," *The New York Times*, August 17, 2003).

In addition to these formal innovations, two

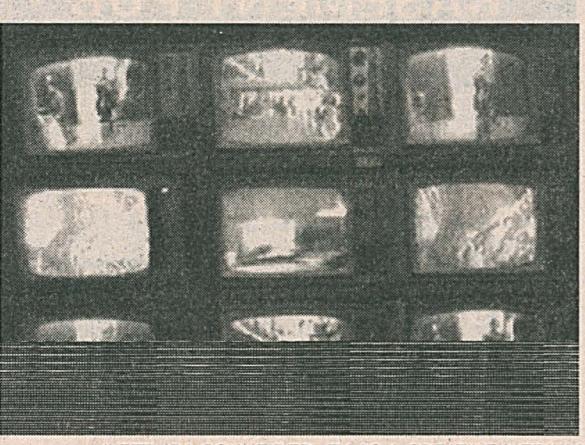
can project without the need of a dark room, and plasma screens hang flat against the wall, rendering video a moving painting. An even more fundamental shift in the market for video art came with the advent of DVDs in 1997. DVDs enable galleries to offer a high-quality product that doesn't self-destruct in a decade.

In Portland, Elizabeth Leach Gallery is the only major gallery that exhibits and sells video art. Leach represents M.K. Guth and, more recently, Kristy Edmunds, whose videos sold in editions of three priced at \$1,800. Leach makes sure that each limited edition is well-documented and a certificate of authenticity is available to the buyer. The edition is marked as limited on the cover of the DVD packaging, the DVD's jacket and on the DVD itself. "We are careful about where we let our DVDs go," she explains. DVDs remain limited so long as people are "monitoring and documenting inventory and have ethics" in order to keep the DVD protected.

Many video artists and presenters continue to hold fast to video's democratically minded roots. After closing his gallery, Howard Wise began the Electronic Arts Intermix (EAI) for artists "seeking imaginative ways of utilizing modern technology to humanize people instead of for commercial or destructive purposes." One of the first media centers, EAI is still funding and distributing video.

Lori Zippay, current executive director of EAI, complains that galleries dealing in limited editions keep the art out of circulation, preventing its use, for example, in educational classrooms. "Video can't be shown on slides, like paintings. Ironically, video works [in private collections] may only be shared by description."

Like Zippay, Hill thinks nonprofit media centers should be preserved. Unlike galleries, she says, the media centers were "not about profit but discussion." Early video art not only broadcast alternative messages (prompted at the time by politically skewed and sensationalist TV coverage of the Vietnam War and the Civil Rights movement), but also countered the passive relationship between the viewer and the TV by revealing the techniques of its own production. Hill maintains that this project is as necessary now as it was then, if not more so. She hankers for more public support of video art so artists can worry less about profit and more about fostering a dialogue on media production.



(LEFT) IRA SCHNEIDER, TV AS A CREATIVE MEDIUM (1969-84), COURTESY ELECTRONIC ARTS INTERMIX (EAI), NEW YORK; (RIGHT) JON ROUTSON'S "BOOTLEG" OF CREMASTER 4, COURTESY TEAM GALLERY

conventions of the commercial art market as it was an attack on the commercial media. Furthermore, it was a demonstration of an exuberant, new hybrid art form. Video showed that it could function as a combination of performance art, film and sculpture to push aesthetic boundaries in profound ways. All of which is great for the advancement of culture, but not for getting video invited into galleries' pristine white cubes.

To surmount these problems, artists and gallerists have come up with creative solutions. A clever, but limiting, solution has been to turn to sculpture, a more commodifiable art form, by creating installations and multichannel works that project onto multiple screens. Take, for example, Tony Oursler's pieces that consist of dolls with disproportionately large, egg-colored heads reflecting video projec-

Portfolio: Daniel Duford



Goldhuber Standing and *Goldhuber Sitting*, from a series of drawings of big men.

But a mix of pragmatic and ideological factors impacts most artists' decisions about where to show their work. Like most people, artists go where the money is, which can mean mixing and matching venues. Miranda July, for example, who has been extremely successful on the festival circuit, was recently represented by Seattle's Tom Landowski Gallery, which included DVDs of her newest video, *Haysha Royko*, in a solo exhibit.

In Portland, the best way to catch video art is to visit a small-venue or independent theatre. Few galleries exhibit video art (the Field Gallery and Leach are two exceptions), but there is a strong tradition among local artists of exhibiting in local screenings and participating in festivals—the Northwest Film Festival, Peripheral Produce, the Orlo Festival and the PISS Fest, to name a few—as well as selling their VHS tapes and DVDs over the Web and at independently organized touring exhibitions. Lack of adventurism in the current collecting market, as well as artists' long-held affiliations with do-it-yourself tradition, drive many local video artists toward these alternatives.

Leaving politics aside, the question remains of whether collectors' lavish faith in the value of a small plastic disk is supportable. When you consider the rampant machinery for easy bootlegging, it seems possible that digital technology will always remain too wiley for collectors and artists to adequately control.

Local film- and video-maker Bill Daniel questions why collectors would pay large sums for pieces of digital information that ultimately degrade. That kind of purchase, Daniel says, shows that "the art world is absolutely and completely full of bullshit."

"Art patrons can put money into good ideas that improve the human spirit," he says, supporting works in whatever forms they take because they believe in them, not because they're "real estate" investments that will grow in value over time.

Against the backdrop of Daniel's ideal of patronage, it's useful to consider how video art supports itself in comparison to its estranged cousin, TV. Artist Jon Routson famously fused these two distant cultures by making a VHS bootleg copy of Matthew Barney's six-digit-priced edition of *Cremaster 4*, editing it down to 20 minutes and splicing in commercials to create a "made-for-TV" version.

Though shown, ironically, in a gallery in New York, Routson wasn't able to sell his piece due to issues concerning copyright infringement.

Morgan Currie is a video artist and writer. She lives in Portland.

Sick Person's Car

sick person's car
is a car parked where there's no parking tuesday
& it's thursday & the ticket is still on the windshield

or maybe it's a dead person's car

—Richard Meltzer

From *Autumn Rhythm: Musings on Time, Tide, Aging, Dying, and Such Biz* (Da Capo Press, 2003)

The self-described "father of rock criticism as we know it," Richard Meltzer is the author of 13 books including the novel *The Night (Alone)* and the music anthology *A Whore Just Like the Rest*. He's written lyrics for Blue Oyster Cult, fronted the punk band Vom and is currently the vocalist for Smegma.

HOLIDAY FUN GUIDE

Do you speak flying birthday cake?

Llewlyn Máire and Lisa Newman of 2Gyrlz Performative Arts have corralled a stunningly wide collection of fringe performers for Portland's second annual Enteractive Language Festival, where, as they put it, "Art = Language." The monthlong chain of 23 events, which opened Oct. 30 and continues through Nov. 29, features collaborative projects by more than 75 regional and international artists.

Ambitious? That's an understatement. While still a fledgling operation, the EL Fest's sheer density of artistic content gives it the potential to become the Daisy Cutter of all North American "fringe" arts festivals.

Events include a performance by New York-based gender outlaw Kate Bornstein (Language of Paradox, Nov. 21-22); an evening of experimental film and video with live musical orchestrations (Lang-



KATE BORNSTEIN, COURTESY 2GYRLZ PERFORMATIVE ARTS

guage of the Senses, Nov. 19); and a remembrance of transgendered victims of violent murders featuring local trans-activist Lori Buckwalter (Language of Silence (= death), Nov. 20).

Through film/video installations, indoor/outdoor performances, circus arts, noise, legerdemain and physical arts, EL Fest will also explore the "languages" of terror, ancestors, youth, violence and absurdity, the body, dissent, survival, slumber, print, "porno-social ritual" and more.

As an example of what one might experience at EL Fest, Newman recounts how last year, visiting artist Jamie McMurray did a conceptual street performance wielding a blowtorch, shooting glass jars with a BB gun and freely flinging birthday cake.

"What was really a potentially dangerous situation was also an incredible release for the audience. About 150 people actually moved into the performance, screamed as the glass broke and 'ewwww' as they were pelted with cake. It was like being part of a sanctioned riot."

Last year's inaugural festival happened at an auspicious time, Newman says. "The country was on the verge of war with Iraq, our civil liberties were being threatened and many of our friends were being arrested for no clear reason."

"This year the country is in an even more extreme state," Máire notes. "Hence, people seem more open to extreme voices and radical change. It is critical now that people are given an outlet for creative expression and critical exploration."

Admission ranges from free to \$15. A complete calendar is online at www.2gyrlz.org. —John Dooley

Fantasy eye-land

PICA's first visual art exhibit in months, *Unforeseen* will bring a little bit of Chelsea to Stumptown, with new work by New Yorkers Dana Schutz, Hilary Harkness and Steve DiBenedetto and Portland's Henk Pander, aka "four generations of radical picture-makers who each combine realistic facts with troubling fantasies." Four generations is a stretch, but the youngest is Schutz, whose paintings depicting a fictional man and his island habitat were compared by the *Village Voice's* Jerry Saltz to Jorg Immendorf and Spongebob. A few years older is 31-year-old Harkness, who paints evil, sexy, Darger-like scenes of women living, working and dressing together aboard battleships and in drawing rooms. DiBenedetto is in his early 40s and his trippy, gooey worlds of paint were described by Dike Blair as "Apocalypse Now" directed by Terence McKenna or "Something Wicked This Way Comes" by Jacques Cousteau. The senior of the bunch is Portland's own Dutch master Pander, whose still lives of wired-together cow skeletons literally pull back the curtain on pastoral painting, while his portraits of wrecked passenger planes and ships infuse industrial calamities with the grandeur of war. And he can

Classics rock

Some of Sarah Dougher's most compelling work to date, the poignant pop ballads and hard-rocking anthems of *Harper's Arrow* make up a 24-song cycle created in response to Homer's *Odyssey*. The nationally acclaimed singer/songwriter—whose daunting resume includes the bands the Crabs, Cadallaca and the Lookers, a doctorate in classics, and teaching gigs in ancient history and classics at Reed, Evergreen and Linfield College—debuted her newest material at PCAC's Modern Zoo and PICA's TBA Festival in late summer. Dougher will perform segments of the RACC-funded project Dec. 11 at Pacific Switchboard (4637 N Albina Ave.) and Dec. 19 at Mississippi Pizza Pub (3552 N Mississippi Ave.).

When I first heard your project, I was really surprised that the songs were essentially pop songs—you chose to use popular diction and a modern context. One song's chorus is, "Turn the radio off."

Part of my "translation," which is what this is for me, is to make it possible to talk about ideas of *The Odyssey* in language that is relevant or makes sense to people. When people hear the language of *The Odyssey*, even a good, colloquial translation sounds foreign. It's a high level of diction. I don't want to deal in that language because it's not mine. Something like "Turn the radio off"—there's a part of *The Odyssey* where Odysseus is crying because he's hearing the story of his life being retold and he doesn't want to hear it, so he says, "harper, stop." I'm not going to say, "Oh harper, stop singing!" I want to be able to play the songs for people who don't have a background with *The Odyssey*, and

have them like them just as songs. Why are you doing this now? You've been teaching and studying this text for many years, and you've been writing songs for many years . . .

Because we're in a time of war—in a very, very difficult time of nationalist fervor and violence—these themes are much more pertinent to me than they have been at other times.

Do you see the performance as a natural extension of the history of the work, the oral tradition of it? Well, *The Odyssey* and *The Iliad* were both works that were in the oral tradition; it's thought that they weren't written down until around 700 B.C. In the oral tradition, you might have gotten an evening where you hear about Odysseus and the Cyclops, but as a Greek person you would already have the whole context into which you'd place this particular singer's version. Now, most people encounter it as a text, a very difficult one at that. As a teacher, I try to explain the connections, explain why I feel strongly about certain passages, to be a guide. But as a songwriter, I sometimes feel so strongly about how a particular point might resonate with another idea that it comes out as a song.

What do you think *The Odyssey* is really about?

I think it's a story about a man who is part of an army, part of a family, part of a community, and he has been at war and he's coming home. The story is his homeward journey from the war. He's coming back from a war he's "won," but it takes him 10 years. Every encounter he has makes him reassess, renegotiate what he's done. He's in transition from past to future. It's a veteran's story.

—Heather Larimer

Don't just look, do something

At La Palabra Café-Press, opportunities abound for making art and sharing ideas. At the multipurpose salon's Learning Collaborative, artists get together with mentors and share ideas about film- and video-making (cine A mano, Tuesdays), bookmaking (bound BOOKs, Wednesdays) and photography (photoform, Thursdays). All happenings are from 7 to 9 p.m., and we don't know what's up with the funny names.

La Palabra hosts all kinds of other cool things, too, including the first public reading by Scrivener Street, a new Web-based resource center for Portland writers, on Dec. 7 at 7 p.m. The subject is "faith."

Sign up early for a 13-week "facilitated journey" through Book I of Euclid's *Elements* with a smidgen of Lobachevsky's work in geometry thrown in. The journey starts in January meets Mondays and Wednesdays, 2 to 4 p.m., and costs \$250.

For information on more outstanding collaborative learning opportunities, stop by 4810 NE Garfield Ave., visit www.lapalabra-cafe.com, or call 503-493-0333.

Admission ranges from free to \$15. A complete calendar is online at www.2gyrlz.org. —John Dooley



DANA SCHUTZ, FRANK AS PROBOSCIS MONKEY

probably still teach the younguns a lesson or two.

Dec. 3-Jan. 24, 12 to 6 p.m., Wednesday-Saturday, 219 NW 12th Ave.

Local Girl Flies the Coop

Video and performance artist Miranda July, the pencil-limbed prodigy and former Portland resident, moved last month to Los Angeles, where she'll shoot her first feature-length film, *Me and You and Everyone We Know*.

With a \$600,000 budget that dwarfs any of her previous endeavors, the film—and her move to the big city—represents a new phase of July's career. And although she plans to continue collaborating with Portland colleagues—including musician Zac Love and artist Harrel Fletcher, her partner on the Web project *Learning to Love You More*—the community that she credits with giving her a secure space to grow has shifted its role from incubator to satellite.

Me and You's synopsis suggests a meeting of Spike Jonze, Lars von Trier and *The Simpsons* (though July claims it will be "less weird than *Adaptation*"). The main characters form a nuclear family. Nine-year-old Sylvie wants to spend her entire childhood building a dowry, teenaged Heather believes in her constitutional right to peer into men's fantasies about her, seven-year-old Rory is engaged in an Internet romance that involves intricate fantasies about "poop passing between buttholes forever" and their father prays for a miracle that will allow his family to be reborn as a "more convincing family." July will play an artist much like herself, whose day job is to drive nursing home residents to their appointments.

"It's a bunch of intersecting stories about children and adults who have these impossible desires and tortured pasts involving each other," July says. "They yearn in a self-defeating way."

As if to herald the end of an era, July donated her zine collection to the Independent Publishing Resource Center and bequeathed

Joanie 4 Jackie, her video chain letter project that has inspired girls around the world to make movies, to Bard College, where it will be run as an ongoing independent study class.

But July appears intent on maintaining her distinctively disarming voice in her first film project aimed at a mass audience. She has vetted funding prospects by setting up cardboard animals, cut out from the back of a cereal box, on the conference table—then refusing to offer an explanation. "If they weren't going to have any of it, I could tell that it wasn't going to work," she says.

And as she left our farewell interview at Pambiche to finish packing, she hoped to persuade the movers, whom she'd hired off Craig's List, to audition for the film.

"Investors say, 'I know you don't want Tom Cruise, but how about Steve Buscemi?'" Actually, the guy who Steve Buscemi's playing—I want that guy."

July has yet to assemble her cast, crew and financing, which sound like big tasks, but July outranks most of this year's crop of first-time filmmakers competing for talent and dough, having already made it through the prestigious Sundance Filmmakers Lab and No Borders financing forum. Already onboard is producer Gina Kwon, who coproduced *The Good Girl* (2002), which starred Jennifer Aniston and Jake Gyllenhaal and was directed by July's current beau, Miguel Arteta (also known for his 2000 indie hit *Chuck and Buck*).

Auspiciously or not, July arrived in her new home just in time for the fires. In a recent e-mail message she wrote, "It's a wonderful time, kind of dreamy, but a dream where there is a lot of smoke in the air."



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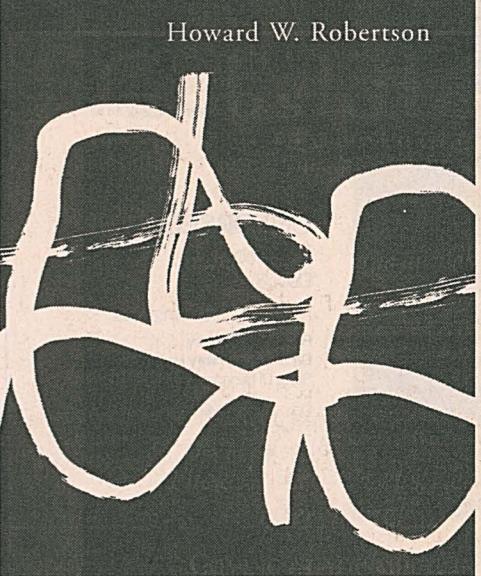
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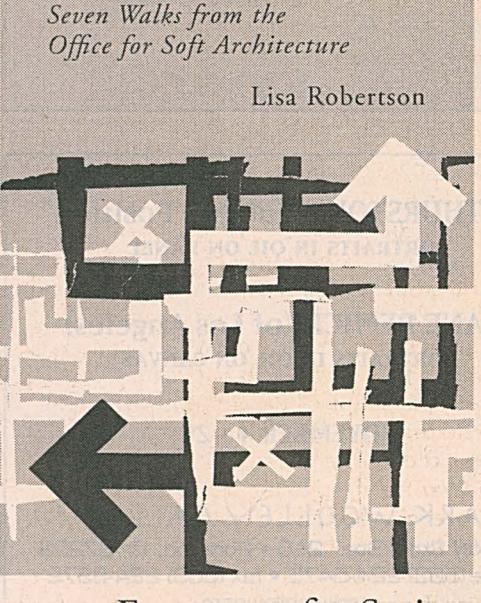
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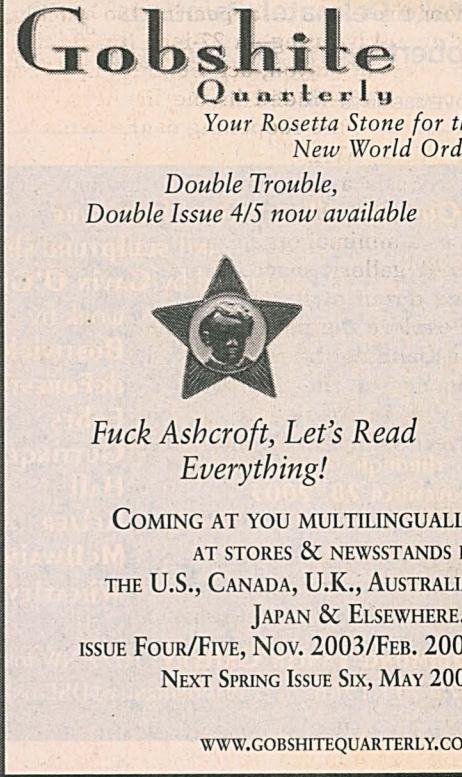
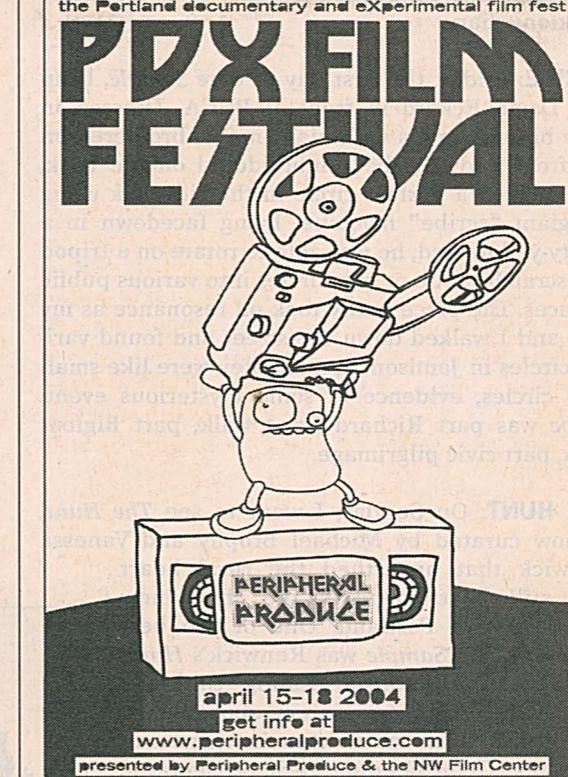
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What do Lucy Lippard, Basque Sheepherders and Keiko the whale have in common?



They are all in The Bear Deluxe Magazine's special Double issue:

Art and the Environment

Featuring stories, interviews and original art from: Lucy Lippard, Mel Chin, the Portland Grid Project, Michael Brophy, the Beehive Collective, Alex Hirsch, Alexis Rockman, Matt Wuerker, Susan Crile, Robert Gamblin, Terry Toedtemeyer, Rapid Response, Thomas Cole, City Repair, Basque Sheepherders, Erin Brockovich, Jason Landis, Gary Braasch, Chandra Boccia, Brian Borello, Spurious George, Keiko, the White Picket Fence Project and more.

The Bear Deluxe Magazine is published by Orlo, a nonprofit organization using the creative arts to explore environmental issues. Besides publishing The Bear Deluxe, Orlo operates the Orlo Exhibition Space in Industrial Northwest Portland.

The Bear Deluxe Magazine #20 is made possible in part by the Regional Arts and Culture Council, Literary Arts, the PG Foundation and the Tides Foundation.

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EXHIBITIONS

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FIRST THURSDAY OPENING NOV 6, 6-9PM

PHILIP FELDMAN PROJECT SPACE
Karyn Olivier Video Installation
EXHIBITION RUNS NOVEMBER 6, 2003-JANUARY 17, 2004
FIRST THURSDAY OPENING NOV 6, 6-9PM

SWIGERT COMMONS
Roadshow Dutch Design Exhibition
PRESENTED BY PNCA GRAPHIC DESIGN DEPARTMENT, THE PORTLAND CHAPTER OF THE AIGA AND WILLAMETTE WEEK
EXHIBITION RUNS NOVEMBER 6-2
FIRST THURSDAY OPENING NOV 6, 6-9PM, SPEAKER at 7PM

III MANUEL IZQUIERDO SCULPTURE GALLERY
BFA Sculpture Department Juried Show
EXHIBITION RUNS NOVEMBER 18-JANUARY 25, 2004
OPENING FIRST THURSDAY, DECEMBER 4, 6-9PM

CHARLES VOORHIES FINE ART LIBRARY
Alumni Salon: Landscapes
EXHIBITION RUNS NOVEMBER 13-27
OPENING THURSDAY, NOV 13, 6-9PM

EVENTS
SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 8, 7:30PM DOORS
2 Gyrlz' 2nd Annual Enteractive Language Festival: The Language of Dissent
Performances including 14 Un-Natural Acts by Roberto Sifuentes and Handgun: A Passive Hero by Pete Kuzov
PRESENTED BY THE PNCA SCULPTURE DEPARTMENT, PHILIP FELDMAN GALLERY AND 2 GYRLZ PERFORMATIVE ARTS
\$5-\$15 at the door - ALL AGES, BAR W/D - www.2gyrlz.org/festival

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 10, 7PM
Who Now of All Dancers Sports Most Playfully: A Lecture by Barry Sanders
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Portfolio: Todd Haynes



Filmmaker Todd Haynes (*Far from Heaven*, *Velvet Goldmine*, *Safe*) made these drawings of Rainer Werner Fassbinder as he watched a documentary about him on DVD. He wasn't looking at the paper when he made the drawing on the right.

The Nature of Place

by Daniel Duford

In *Sunshine Muse*, Peter Plagens wrote that artists in the Northwest didn't produce significant work because the nature here is too beautiful. In other words, artists don't need to mediate anything because the view outside the door is 100 times more interesting than what can be found in a gallery. So, 25 years or so later comes *Core Sample*. Portland artists are ready to show the nation that we do produce work that transcends the region, art that's important and worth looking at—along with plenty that's half-baked. I looked at six shows that demonstrate that nature—from lawns to forests to Sasquatch—still fully occupies the minds of artists in Portland. It can't be helped. Mt. Hood looms over the city every clear day, and Forest Park still gives the illusion of untouched wilderness. Here is my weeklong diary.

SCRIBE: Friday, the first day of *Core Sample*, I ran into David Eckard in front of PNCA. Dressed in navy blue coveralls with his name embroidered on the front and "Scribe" embroidered on the back, he scrubbed a perfect circle in the sidewalk using his giant "scribe" machine. Lying facedown in a safety-yellow sled, he was able to rotate on a tripod and scratch, scrub or clip circles into various public surfaces. The piece really took on resonance as my wife and I walked down the street and found various circles in Jamison Square. They were like small crop circles, evidence of some mysterious event. *Scribe* was part Richard Long walk, part Bigfoot hoax, part civic pilgrimage.

THE HUNT: On Sunday, I went to see *The Hunt*, a show curated by Michael Brophy and Vanessa Renwick that unearthed the rural heart that still beats beneath the shiny new floorboards of Portland. One of the best pieces in *Core Sample* was Renwick's *Hunting Requires Optimism*. Lining the wall were several old refrigerators, above which the piece's title was written in twigs and branches. Upon opening each refrigerator, you were confronted with a monitor playing a grainy video of wolves hunting in the snow. Reduced to a television screen inside a fridge, the wolves were both diminished as a memory is diminished, and distilled in a chilling way. It was a work that seemed simple until meanings ricocheted off each other and created multiple layers, from our disconnection from the violence of food production to the connection between easy food and passive television.

Brophy's own forlorn painting of a PBR can surrounded by shotgun shells gave another side of hunting culture, while collected historic photographs by Jenny Ankeny, Scott Gregory, Brandi Gregory and Tom Robinson depicted hunters standing in front of their kill with pride. In a *déjà vu* of *Crafty*, another *Core Sample* show, Malia Jensen showed her *Double Deer* (a hunting trophy in red vinyl) and Rauschenbergesque *Mascot*. Cynthia Lahti had drawings, a found and manipulated children's book and small freestanding reliefs.

NORTHWEST INHABITATION LOG: On Sunday night, I went to Holocene to see Alicia Cohen's performance, *Northwest Inhabitation Log*. The piece explored the mythic and geologic sense of place in the Northwest. It had a very promising start and went disastrously downhill. The piece began with the sound of howling wolves and a video projection of a shaky view of someone walking through the woods. Then, four indie-rock cowboys walked on stage clicking loudly, taps on their boot soles. Then, someone in a bear suit entered. By the time a private eye and moll, characters out of some old noir flick, started stammering overwrought, convoluted lines, the piece was a shambles. Gary Snyder did this idea better in his poem "The Way West Underground." The anticraft, low-rent technology and bad delivery obscured any content.

Core Sampler

TWO PERSPECTIVES ON OCTOBER'S CORE SAMPLE, THIS YEAR'S BIGGEST, BADDEST INDEPENDENT SURVEY OF "PORTLAND ART NOW"

PAINTING PORTLAND: On Tuesday, I made it out to the Marylhurst Art Gym for *Painting Portland*, curated by Prudence Roberts and Robert Gambin. This was the very opposite of the "anything the kids do is fine" aesthetic that permeated the other shows in *Core Sample*, and, so, was a breath of fresh air. It was a handsome, truly curated (as opposed to just inviting your drinking buddies) history of landscape painting in Portland. No breaking news, just the staid, frosty tradition of depicting landscape in a fairly romantic way. There were a few knockout pieces—Roll Hardy's *Cathedral* and Henk Pander's *The Wave*. There was a quiet Barry Pelzman landscape with trees and reflected water. Amanda Snyder's *Old Apple Tree in Winter* gave me the rare sensation that she really cared about that apple tree in that winter of 1947, that the painting was an important thing and that the tree elucidated something not only about the tree but about life. That earnestness, like a phantom limb, seemed to come from some other time.

SASQUATCH FENG SHUI: On Wednesday, I went to the Portland Building to see Bruce Conkle's homage to Bigfoot. Conkle's imagined Sasquatch parlor was hilarious. It was more than just cheeky, though; the craft was impeccable—from the mounted Pooh head with fangs and tongue to the howler monkey hanging from a revolving chandelier decorated with gold-painted sock squirrels. Underneath all the goofiness, there was a sense of why we are attracted to the idea

gloominess, Michael Paul Oman-Reagan's *They Grow Here*, a collection of acetate strips pinned to a wall, was insulting in its lack of formal consideration, and Jahn's own work was barely a sketch. Bruce Conkle's digital stills from a video game (another of the many *déjà vu*s) were quite beautiful, Dianne Kornberg's photographs elegant and disturbing and Laura Fritz's *Indication 3* an affecting piece in the midst of an otherwise anemic installation.

Daniel Duford is an artist and writer who lives in Portland. His writing has appeared in *ARTNews* and the *Bear Deluxe*.

BY DANIEL DUFDORF

The view from Seattle

by Emily Hall

You don't need me to tell you what's good and what's not. Or do you? This is the essential tension of *Core Sample*, the push and pull between insider and outsider, the watershed moment: the meeting of the inland river with the ocean. Here is where a scene that has developed internally—like punk rock, like grunge, developed for the pleasure of its participants rather than for the consumption of others—

work? Why are none of them represented in galleries? These very questions were raised last year in Seattle when a group of artists put together a big and very good show called *Lava* (also with a really good-looking catalogue). Certainly *Lava*, for all the surprised critical acclaim—outside, it must be said, of those of us who had been writing about those artists for years—for all the sudden attention from SAM and Henry and BAM curators, did not result in a majority of those artists being snatched up by galleries, or even in many private sales of the work. Renwick's reply refers rather uncomfortably to the kind of condescension that appears whenever artists plan and execute something big: how lovely, how thrilling, how clever. (How urbanites love to have artists around doing their urban thing, spicing up the place. How little urbanites like to pay for it.)

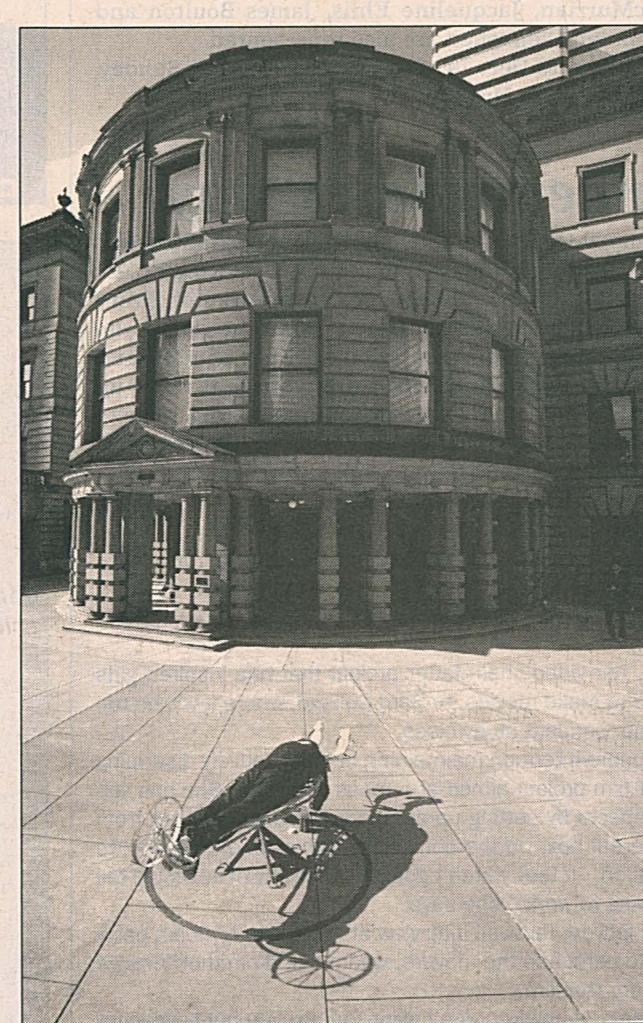
I wonder if Renwick had this in mind when making her refrigerator/video piece, *Hunting Requires Optimism*, which also deals with a sort of denial, a happiness to enjoy the benefits of something without engaging its roots. Her work requires the viewer to enact that denial: you must close the door in order to make the image go away.

Much in the same way that *Lava* seemed to me to be about the condition of readiness, *Core Sample* seemed to be about the condition of exhaustion. I don't mean exhaustion as in used-up and tired, but as in the end of an old language, a frustration with the known. After all, punk rock—which was nasty and unassimilable by design—has now been assimilated, meaning that its usefulness as a protest is pretty much over, which makes some of us wonder whether it was worth making a protest in the first place. And so there was David Eckard, engaged in the profitless task of scrubbing circles on the city sidewalks on an apparatus that looked more conducive to torture than to civic gestures. (The more I see of Eckard's performance, the more I think someone ought to step in and offer to help—an ethics to respond to the exhaustion of performance art.) There was Charm Bracelet's *Elephant*, the droopy vinyl repository of collective memory, filled bit by bit with ephemera from Portland art shows of the past five years, entire worlds of effort reduced to shredded fill. There was Malia Jensen's big canvas bunny, soiled and slumped. There were Ryan Boyle's weirdly precise drawings of little Company Chode people, still beating each other to death. There was Bill Daniel's punk-rock getaway van (for fleeing the eyes of the world you've rejected, or courted). There was Lee Kristoff's installation of light being beamed indiscriminately at loose film, all that work and nothing to see.

But perhaps seeing isn't the point. Perhaps this is too dour a survey—and it certainly doesn't convey how much of the work (including and especially what I mentioned above) I really liked. Perhaps the right word is *effort*, rather than *exhaustion*, and I am only projecting my own exhaustion onto *Core Sample* (although it might be a mistake to ignore the critic's exhaustion). And then there is this: perhaps exhaustion is the best possible place to start—the end of an old language, after all, is often the beginning of a new one. It has been my experience that artists, especially those who don't hold out great hopes for sales, make objects that they think ought to exist in the world but don't. *Core Sample* made me wonder what sorts of objects we make at the end of our rope.

Is there a difference between work made away from the eyes of the world and work made for the world? Will we know that difference when we see it? Can you elevate and institutionalize the rough and tired aesthetic of these Portland shows, and what happens when you do? If *Core Sample* does not reveal anything so obvious as readiness, if it does not show us what will be the terms of Portland's difference before and after, it does work—even where the work fails—by giving body to the transition between the two, murky, prickly, hard-to-glimpse zone between inside and outside. This only happens once. Pay attention.

Emily Hall is the art critic for *The Stranger* in Seattle.



(LEFT) DAVID ECKARD PERFORMING SCRIBE; (RIGHT) CHARM BRACELET'S ELEPHANT. PHOTOGRAPHS BY BASIL CHILDERS

of a primitive humanoid that lurks in the shadow of the woods. On a chair with an ottoman was Giovanni Garcia-French's book of sepia drawings with nice, mysterious depictions of Northwest Coast masks, hunters and references to Alf and others.

SYMBIOT/SYNTHETIC: On Thursday, I went to *Symbiot/Synthetic*, curated by Jeff Jahn. The show dealt with the way we fake and ape nature. I know I was supposed to wink along with the intentional glibness of the work, but the truth is, most of it felt ad hoc and tossed off. Jesse Hayward's pod sculptures weren't big enough to overcome their ham-handed

finally presents itself to the world. Few art scenes achieve a clear divide between before and after: a formal announcement of readiness, the world cooperating with a catalogue, a big institutional show by way of contrast and a trainload of smarty-pants from Seattle. Does *Core Sample* work? More to the point, what does it mean for it to work?

Does it necessarily work because the artists are ready? In adolescence, irrational longing is enough to convince us we're ready for the world, but for an art scene readiness also depends on a delicate and fickle combination of other, less predictable factors. These include, but are not limited to, economy, collectors, critics, curators and that weird appearance at certain times of exactly what the world wants in exactly the place it would never occur to the world to look. It seems to me that the Portland art scene has done what Dave Hickey recommended in his essay "Romancing the Looky-loos," which is to make art for your own kind (however loose, however anarchic your constituency) and then see who shows up—rather than courting the institutions who will probably kill (or borrow, or adapt, or steal) whatever momentum you've put into play.

Does it work because the art world is ready? That was a question Vanessa Renwick answered when I asked her what Lawrence Rinder meant when he said he couldn't understand her exhaustion with the Portland art scene [*Organ #7*], and she responded, with great energy, with a story I hear over and over again: If this scene is so vital, so vibrant, then why can't these artists sell any

REVIEWS

CHUNKATHLON

Portland, September 6

With chopper bikes, whirling tires and flying beer cans, the second annual Chunkathlon resembled the Apocalypse as much as it did a sporting event.

Over 400 fans and 40-odd participants clogged SE 21st Avenue as members of CHUNK 666, Portland's premier extended-fork and welded "tall-bike" frame riders club, battled rival teams in five scored events.

All contests involved chopper bikes, bizarre and dangerous constructions of welded metal. Fans were encouraged to hurl objects at will. Passing trains were hailed with cheers.

Silker the Red Hat won the title with 12 points. Megulon-5, runner-up for the second straight year, scored 11 points. Defending champion Rino finished in an eight-way tie for 14th place.

In the opening race, the 16 Oz. Run, the entire field of competitors drained their beverages and circled the block. Racers also competed in a timed beer run and delivered cans to an ice-filled bathtub throughout the night.

In the Baby Rescue, two riders sped toward a doll in a carriage near the finish line; one attempted to save the plastic infant while the other tried to prevent this from happening, usually via collisions or pummeling. The performance of a drum corps closed the rescue.

In the Derby, fans encircled a nearby park-



PHOTOGRAPH BY JON WILLETT

ing lot and watched as riders attempted through assault or subterfuge to stay on their bikes as long as possible. The crowd was instructed to close in on the narrowing posse of survivors and shower them with garbage and debris.

Tallbike jousting pitted competitors in a PVC-lance duel on unwieldy frames, some over five feet tall. Controversial decisions occurred and judges were pelted with aluminum and other debris.

The evening ended with the Historical Reenactment, a forest fire-cum-artillery exhibition on wheels. The remainder of the night devolved into melees on skateboards and bicycles over bonfires that dotted the street.—James K. Yu

FISCHERSPOONER

Crystal Ballroom, September 14

At the first sight of man-made mist, the Fischer-spooner audience, which included a high-haired cross-dresser and a slew of girls with pointy-toed shoes and tiny ponytails, silenced itself. While the crowd of hipsters and eccentrics waited in anticipation, my imagination fled to a \$300,000 production, like the ones funded by Jeffrey Deitch and frequently staged at his New York City gallery, with a troupe of 50 dancers and back-up singers dressed to the nines in designer duds—flash and feathers. Consider, then, my disappointment when the smoke cleared, revealing five figures in blue tank tops and track pants.

Fischerspooner is the creative meeting of performance artist Casey Spooner and Warren Fischer,

TBA FESTIVAL
PICA, September 12-21

Artists and Cultural Organizers in Central Europe: Opportunities and Challenges

The talent show at Machineworks was, for me, a dreary point of entry to the TBA festival. To its credit, PICA seems to have impeccably staged what was probably the biggest office party in Oregon that month, but the talent itself was best appreciated from the patio, where you couldn't see or hear it. Thus I hoped the workshop "Artists and Cultural Organizers in Central Europe: Opportunities and Challenges" would serve as a corrective to my hangover the following morning. Who better than a bunch of earnest, raccoon-eyed Romanians to provide a glimpse of "cultural organization," free from the charge of corporate entities like Nike, Full Sail or Miranda July?

As it turns out, money is on everyone's minds. Some get it from the state, some don't, and there is always some jerk who gets more than s/he deserves. In Europe, as in America, corporations play their role, and it is easier to fund a fashion show than a performance art piece, which explains why fashion and art are becoming less distinct. Norwegian dancer Brynjar Bandlien said that European sponsors expect less return for their investments than American sponsors do and that there exists "a general agreement that art does not bring in money... it pays out." Choreographer Manuel Pelmus suggested that reliance on public funding, for better or worse, encouraged long-term development of art and culture instead of forcing production to "fit the market." Pelmus' performance on Friday night, *Punct Fix*, was a daffy and tedious piece that featured three dancers idly popping bubble wrap and wringing dishrags for 45 minutes. I enjoyed it completely, even as the audience was groaning and exiting, since it afforded the chance to zone out and recover from the previous evening of all beer and no joy. According to PICA, the piece was "a mirror through which to explore ideas of heritage and history and how embedded points-of-view inform action and reaction." For me, though, it provoked thoughts like, "If I could have sex with the dancers, would I like PICA more?" a question to which there is no simple answer. By the end of the piece I was so fully recovered that I was genuinely (if irrationally) blithe about TBA and extolled to all who would listen the rewards of staging such a world-

class festival in our city.

It was a bad idea, then, to return to Machineworks on closing night. There I was informed that my VIP ticket was no longer valid and I would have to pay \$25. I went instead to Mary's Club, where at least the "art" was free.—Dan Frazier

ROS WARBY
Swift

As a performer myself in PICA's TBA festival, I had no time to make it to any other presentations until my last night in Portland, when I saw *Swift*, a collaborative work between Australian choreographer Ros Warby, composer and cellist Helen Mountfort (who also played standard and adapted cellos on stage) and set designer/filmmaker Margie Medin. The latter's brief films, which included footage of Warby's dancing, interacted with the stage as well as with Warby herself, the only dancer in the performance. Stationed in various positions on and in front of the stage, the spinning sprockets and reels of the film projectors transported me, filling the hall with the sound of my childhood's family home movie nights. Some of Warby's movements were echoed in the films, which took small details such as a hand and gave them monumental scale. I lost track of time; Warby and her cohorts created a perfect place that swept me away, dropping me back in my seat all too soon—"swift" might well describe the transition back to reality. Framing the performance was the walk to Lincoln Hall and back to the Mark Spencer Hotel along the rain-dappled sidewalks of Park Avenue, the temperature just right for a light jacket. I capped the night off with a gelato from the shop I'd walked past every day at 11th and Burnside. At 4:30 a.m. I was in a cab heading to the airport. Since it was still dark out, the usual cleaning of the slate with the rising of the sun didn't happen, and it still felt like part of the same, dream-suffused night.—David Greenberger

DANIEL BERNARD ROUMAIN
Never Felt Better

Roumain is a Harlem-based composer and multi-instrumentalist whose work incorporates sampled percussion, synths and excerpted interviews. His Web site compares him to Prince, Mozart and Andrew Lloyd Webber for his prodigious talent and performative flair, which is actually quite apt—the guy is just sick on the fiddle. (Although more than one person in attendance compared him

to Yanni after seeing him jam on the piano.) Roumain showed curatorial acumen by wrangling up a random but gifted group of locals to back him up. Bruce Cawdon, a local percussionist, buttressed the first third of the show by conjuring harmonies on marimba and glockenspiel and then keeping a tight syncopated time on a nice-looking drum kit as Roumain's violin got plaintive. Later, rock drummer James Yu thrillingly beat the crap out of a tired-looking drum kit as local poets Vania Kady and Pelé Demarco Thomas delivered some Roumain-commissioned verse. These were the best parts of the show. Roumain is a fluid accompanist and cannily drew on the skills of his shanghaied talent. On the day of the show he threw together a duet with Agnes Varanyi, who sang a Hungarian song that jerked more than one tear out of the audience. This inclusive knack is admirable and made the show worthwhile. But Roumain's solo parts were way too syrupy, almost soundtricky—kind of like when Ken Burns throws an Irish fiddle melody in the scene when a baseball team is down on its luck or Lewis and Clark are lost in the mountain morning. I wanted more of the rock-out poetics. I also wished he'd used the snippets of Harlem interviews more engagingly. They were chopped up and inaudible under the lilting violin tracks. The final section where Roumain switched to the piano and jammed with the sustain pedal down started to feel a little too "time based." Maybe the rare occasion when more rock and more talk would have been desirable.—Mark Hansen

CIE FELIX RUCKERT
Deluxe Joy Pilot

You walk into a low-light environment comprised of bright blue inflatable chairs and narrow elevated beds. The set of *Deluxe Joy Pilot* resembles a well-financed Berlin night club, the kind that you'd only get into by knowing someone cool who knows someone more cool. Primary colors from nearly 150 perimeter lights bathe the crowd in mood lighting, and a DJ fills the space with minimalist sounds devoid of a time signature. It's sunset in a mechanized forest.

Gradually, without any discernable introduction, the performance starts. Willing patrons are led to the beds, where the dancers cuddle them, spin them and then bounce them (sometimes quite aggressively); it's like an orgiastic chiropractic conference. Meanwhile, the other dancers work

days. These two women were the most successful pairing, not so much for their complementary visual display but for their understanding of each other.

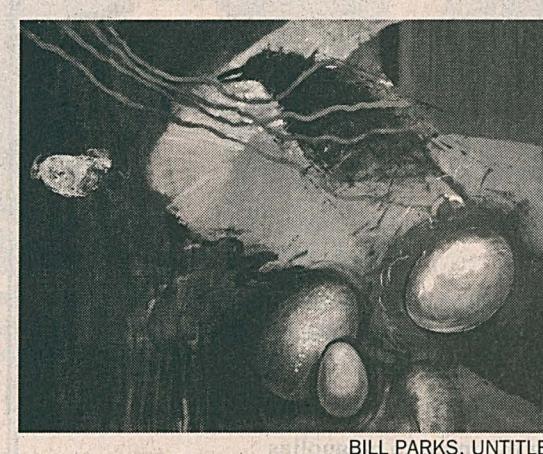
The Penicillin Corset by Liz Obert explored the threats of modern medicine and the fashion establishment by way of an hourglass corset made from gel transfers of digital prints of penicillin. The *Fleshstone Series* was the result of damali ayo's experiment asking paint mixers to match colors to the skin tone of different parts of her body. Unfortunately, Obert's and ayo's onlookers failed to truly document their artists' creative processes, and their pieces lacked the conceptual depth of the original works.

Suzanne Twining's documentation of Bill Park's self-described "drive-by-shooting" style of painting was brilliantly and frustratingly meticulous—the stop-motion animator forced Park to pause after every brush stroke for a still photo—and led the audience to Park's head while, according to his artist's statement, forcing him out, resulting in an unexpected self-examination.

PCAC has now taken us from an amusement park maze of art installations back to the basics of the individual creative process. Eagerly, I await the advancement of culture to continue.

—Erin Rackelman

Process is open Saturdays and Sundays, 12-8 p.m. at PCAC's temporary exhibition space, 49 SE Clay St.



BILL PARKS, UNTITLED

Five of the six artists created paintings or projects involving paint, and this lack of diversity was disappointing. However, the show was saved by the onlookers' surprisingly different ways of documenting the work.

The Fate of the Hairless Ape was a standout. Zefrey Throwell's piece chronicled a car accident at the notoriously dangerous intersection of E Burnside, 12th Avenue and Sandy Boulevard. Joe Haegg acted more as collaborator than documenter by recording music for each painting. Four of the compositions mixed ambulance sirens and hospital respirators with instrumental sounds for an emotionally resonant effect, while the other two struck me as overdone indie-rock ballads, explaining too much. Nevertheless, when these two artists found the right balance, the harmony between the paintings and the music replicated the deafening moment of a horrific crash.

Painter Kim Hamblin and Tracey Olson's partnership had the exceptional success of two

a family man, commercial video producer and electronic music mixer. Whether or not you believe the stories about their artistic beginnings (e.g., they met in a computer class at M.I.T.), their first collaboration took place while they were students at the Art Institute of Chicago in the early '90s. With the help of glitter machines, pyrotechnics, silver-white wigs and a \$2 million record contract with the UK's Ministry of Sound, FS has since become the poster band for the Electroclash movement.

If Portland rock purists were bemused by the FS Electroclash convergence of glitz, glamour, electronica and punk aesthetic, they were particularly confounded when Fischer, located somewhere off-stage, dutifully responded to Spooner's call, "Press play, Warren." At which point Spooner, clenched fist moving up, down, left, right, began to lip-sync a track off the FS debut CD, #1. Exposing the machinery behind the entertainment world is a favorite FS stunt, as is spectacle that reaches for shock and absurdity—the sudden stage entrance of a man in a white doctor's smock, shaking violently, blood streaming from his nose; an elaborate stage dive that resembles an Esther Williams water ballet. FS sets itself apart from the Kyles and Britneys by way of these deconstructive tropes and often befuddling audience interaction, as when Spooner gave his reason for the evening's sport look: "We're bringing hip-hop back to its white roots?" What?

In the end, while the performance did not meet my \$20 expectations, I am from Portland, I don't mind things "rough and fucked up," as Spooner called it, and I sang as loud as FS didn't: "Sounds good, looks good, feels good too." Uh-huh, that's right.—Sophie Ragsdale

DAMALI AYO
playback

Mark Woolley Gallery, September

damali ayo's work is concerned with what iconographer W. J. T. Mitchell calls "the bad objects of empire": idols, fetishes and totems that seem to

tuosic *Bamboozled*, some images can't be put down. Like the golden calf, they seem to go before us.

The Web plays a big role, both as an art medium and as a source for objectionable raw material. The Web-based work *rent-a-negro.com* offers "black opinions" for \$75; for a bit more dough (\$1500), ayo will vouch that you are not a racist. In the same vein as www.blackpeopleloves.com (where a fictional white, preppie, Williamsburg-based couple, Sally and Johnny, boost their hip-factor with the black budy scheme), *rent-a-negro.com* comments on the

widespread use of multiculturalism as valuable (and profitable) social currency. Verbal content in *rent-a-negro.com*—drawn from racially insensitive comments made by friends and acquaintances—has particular relevance in Portland, where "tolerance" and "diversity" are more often buzzwords than actualities, and where ayo occupies a lonely role as public black intellectual/tour guide for liberal (yet clueless) white people.

rent-a-negro.com and *Othello*

(which reiterates the instructions for playing a seemingly benign board game that uses black and white game pieces) are both conceptually rich, satirical and shocking.

But other works could have used greater attention to craftsmanship and therefore lack bite.

ayo's golliwog dolls, purchased on eBay and sewn into keepsake boxes and cage-like structures (one of which evokes Duchamp's bottle rack) have a precious quality and seem to beg for more violent alteration.

In *day in the life of a little girl*, ayo has inserted the golliwog into prints based on Norman Rockwell paintings. In each one, the golliwog takes the place of one of Rockwell's supposedly quintessential American characters, the rest of

the painting replaced by white space and dialogue bubbles. While conceptually sophisticated, the images are difficult to read, and ayo had to later attach reproductions of the Rockwells to make the connection more explicit. Slick and mechanical, the prints (poorly mounted under warped Plexiglas), are a poor match to ayo's complexity and wit.

In order to inhabit these racist stereotypes, ayo needs to somehow animate and disable them simultaneously, and I think she's up to the task.

—Laurel Gitlen

DAMALI AYO, LOVE OUANGA. DIGITAL PRINT

conflict/resolution scenarios on the center floor.

At first Ruckert's piece seems to be a sweet

reminder of the importance of touch in a society

where people are scared of their own shadows. But as the performance progresses, it turns into a study of Ruckert's aggressive methods of sexual seduction.

("Trust me now? Let's go for a ride, baby.")

In complicated sparring matches at center stage, intimacy becomes increasingly a matter of force.

Audience interactions follow suit, unnerving some

of the participants. The ride gets hotter, baby. Some

of the participants are willingly seduced, perhaps

craving to be part of a steamy utopian society

that couldn't exist in ordinary life, where the inevitable

result of intimacy is hot sex, and beauty is a harlot.

Sadly, Ruckert exploits the trust he's earned, turning a performance that might have been about the

human condition into a fetid one-night stand, one choreographer pimping his own sexual fantasies. Bummer.—Stiv J. Wilson

SALIA NI SEYDOU
Figninto, the torn eye

The Burkina Faso-based dance troupe Salia ni Seydou's *Figninto* was the swan song of the TBA Festival, overfilling the seats at PSU's Lincoln Hall, lit by dim lanterns on the stage floor. Choreographers Seydou Boro and Salia Sanou blended traditional African movement and modern French dance vocabulary in their interpretation of a West African folk tale about a character who is spiritually blind (*Figninto* means "he who does not see"). Accompanied by traditional African percussion, flute and sans (a mouth-driven musical arch), the three male performers enacted a narrative of futile labor and miscommunication, recalling Beckett in its mix of comedic absurdity and sadness.

The dancers moved erratically, starting in sync,

then quickly unraveling, one toppling to the floor

like a wooden plank, another engaging in a tangled acrobatics with his T-shirt—then, lapsing into beau-

tiful, metered motion, nimble arms strewning the air with symmetrical arcs and pliant stomachs writhing in unison. The show concluded with one dancer anchored to the floor, while another dancer, poised above him, emptied a jar, sending a torrent of sand streaming down his face. As the auditorium became coated with the whispered sound of the falling grains, the lanterns were extinguished, the house lights restored and pensive festival-goers filed off to the last raucous party of the week.—Ashley Edwards

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Mark Woolley Turns 10

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— Randy Gragg, The Oregonian, August 4, 1994
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From It's go in quiet illumined grass lands

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sun there that is outside and outside
itself
one's
walking rose only and there outside
rose O
at side of sky on its vertical space
separates

comparing the mind to magnolias
or to sky, because one sees.
but comparing people's actions to sky
or to war to moon outside? is in that space
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behavior-evening — ferocity even
from just one — where there was no reason
bewildering — doesn't seem
'bewildering' if it's huge in multitude.
indentation so that they're even
one to evening — is no behavior-evening
any event a random space

—Leslie Scalapino

From the poem *It's go in quiet illumined grass lands*, published in a chapbook by the same name (The Post-Apollo Press, 2002)

Leslie Scalapino graduated from Reed College and lives in Oakland, California. She has published over 20 books of poetry, fiction, plays and essays. Recently published works include *R-Hu* (Atelos Press), and *Zither & Autobiography* (Wesleyan University Press). She teaches at Bard College.

VAN SANT / continued from page 4

wanted to not use the script at all and cast local high school kids. And I got rid of the idea of trying to make something that was accurate. I wanted to be emotionally accurate and sort of inspirationally accurate, but not, like, note by note, trying to recreate an event that really happened. Because I don't think that you really can. And so we kind of contrived it in a whole other way. A way to look at some of the things that are within the story, but using it as more of a song about it or a dirge or a poem about it. Or a remembrance about it.

Huh. That's nice. The title—

The movie began—really—in a different way. The movie began as a character study of the two guys.

It would've been an investigation.

Yeah, I would've tried to find information. What I ended up with was a film about a reaction by the media. It wasn't really anything about the real event. It was more like I absorbed so much information about it—like *Newsweek*, the *New York Times*, CNN—that it was a really different concept.

You said something about memory in there. And when we talked on the set about the movie, you put forward the idea of the elephant in the room that nobody will talk about. There's also the saying, "An elephant never forgets."

Yeah, I like that one. And it is sort of like a memory of an event that is inspired by a Columbine-like event. It focuses on, actually, mortality itself—the mortality and the innocence of the victims. I mean you're pretty much watching the victims for two-

thirds of the movie, and then you watch the perpetrators. And you see these two sides, but you really just watch them. It was like capturing all the moments related to the event within that time period. Rather than dialing back a whole year earlier, we only showed tiny increments of the causes or the reasons or the thoughts about the event. So something like Alex getting a spitball thrown at him was what you might call the "tincture" that represents whatever other bullying might've happened during that year.

"Tincture" is a good word to describe it.

Yeah, it's sort of like a tincture. What is that? That's a, um . . .

A concentration.

It's like, a chemical.

Like orange juice out of a can.

Yeah, but even less. A tincture is, like, one-millionth of a little drop in a 60-gallon drum. It's so diluted that it's like a concoction, like a remedy that you pour on something. It's just like a tiny little thought that brings your own experiences into play, too. Because pretty much all of the viewers went through some kind of high school or know high schools. So when reviewing the original Columbine massacre, their own events, their own examples play into that.

OK, I'm gonna pick a card, new rules.

OK, you're the director.

Right, so this comes from the personal category: Are you a Buddhist?

Uh, no. I think there's another term for it . . . Um, agnostic.

Agnostic? OK.

"When I was in grade school me and my brothers would mix drinks in our mouths," he said.

"Were you poor?"

"No," he said. "I was joking."

"Oh," she said. She pulled the bottle out from under his arm and smelled the rum. It smelled like what it was—something harmful. "I'm going to use my mouth as a cup," she said, holding the bottle above her head and pouring in a thin stream. It splashed against her teeth and lips. She swallowed and dabbed her mouth with the back of her hand. She laughed.

He laughed too, he slapped his knee; she spilled some of the rum. They were looking away from each other, the fence behind them shaking, and they were laughing.

She felt herself growing stonelike and alien. She was aware of how she was laughing, the fence, the ground beneath her feet, how the day was above and around and beyond her, but she didn't feel inside it. It was from the drinking, sometimes that happened.

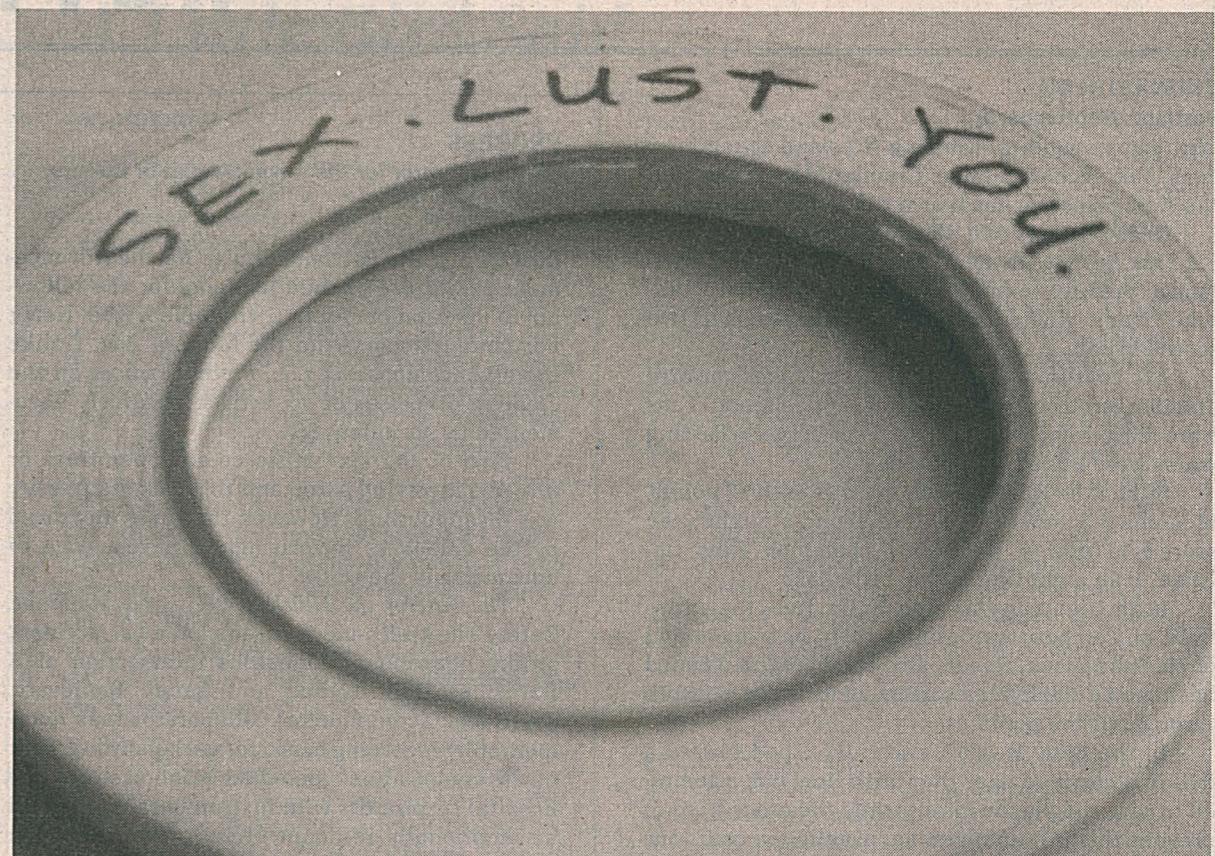
"Let's go to your motel and get naked," he said.

"I wish I liked myself better," she said, "but why not?" She pushed herself from the fence and watched the ground as she walked, how it looked like it was rolling away past her, as if she were standing still and it was moving. *This is a dream*, she thought. *This is not happening*.

She fumbled with the key in the doorknob. Inside her purse she found her harmonica. "Libby Thompson," she said. "Harmonica." Her face brightened and sagged and she began to play.

After a few chords she decided she didn't feel the

make do



Gretchen Bennett
Sex. Lust. You.
Sharpie pen on acid-free tape, 2003

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a character is presenting something that I wasn't expecting—like if Matt Dillon played Bob Hughes as a comedian, which he kind of did—I'll actually react to what he's doing and encourage it or try to go with it. It's like going with the flow, which is sort of a Buddhist idea.

It's a very Buddhist thing.

Sometimes characters, they'll show up and they'll have a really crazy idea. Sometimes they'll just want to see how far they can get before you tell them to cut it out. But sometimes they're just doing it because—An actor might do something like this [*walks across the room*] and they'll put their arm on their head. And they'll do the scene like this and you'll finally go, "Why are you putting that on your head?" And they'll say, "Oh, you know, doesn't it look OK?"

In my case, I'll say, "Oh, that's great." You know, "Whenever you walk into this room, always put it on your head." If I liked it. If I don't like it I wouldn't say anything. They kind of go way out, and so if I actually see why it's good for the character or for the movie, I want it to happen.

It's different every time. Every scene has a different thing that just starts to show up. I just start to latch onto it. It's probably what other directors do as well. It starts to become its own thing. It's new because you've never seen the scene three dimensionally, and all of a sudden you're, first of all, in shock, because it looks nothing like you thought it was gonna look like. All the films have been like that. [With] *Elephant*, you're in the hallway or in the car with John, and it just isn't anything like you thought it was going to be. Even though you planned it out, you cast it, you chose the car and street and everything like that, somehow when you're there, there's something else going on. And so it's taking advantage of that something else and not trying to bend it out of the picture. Got it. That sounds about right. Thanks, Gus.

sailboat, cream carpet and wedding-cake plaster on the ceiling. A nightlight.

Kenneth flushed but he still hadn't come out. Libby hated it when men came out of the bathroom completely naked. Instead he came out smiling and clothed. He was a nice man who had dirt on his mind, but who didn't?

"I don't want to have sex with you," she said

His smile stayed. "Then what are you doing?" He walked to the bed and started tugging at the straps of her platform shoe.

"I don't know," she said.

He tapped her painted toenails.

"I'd leave if I didn't think you were lying," he said.

"You can leave, you can stay. If you leave tomorrow or you leave today it doesn't matter," she said, lying down with her arms over her head.

"You're so pretty," he said.

"I think you should leave," she said.

He sat with her foot in his lap for a while. She fell asleep and he watched her. He stroked her large leg, and she turned away.

He stood up angrily, blowing. "I'm leaving."

She moaned and punched the pillow up under her head.

"I'm leaving," he said again.

She wasn't quite asleep again yet, watching the twin trunks of his legs standing at the foot of the bed. She didn't look up at his face, just the trunks, waiting until they bent.

Haley Carrollhach is a fiction writer who lives in Portland.

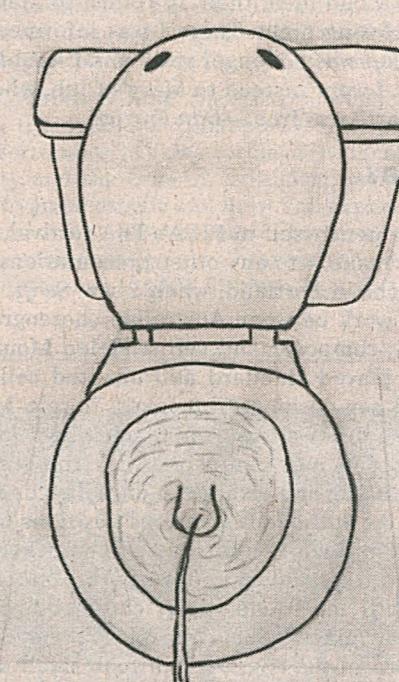


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harmonica, didn't feel music at all, and maybe she hated it.

Kenneth had gone into the bathroom. He peed in the toilet and it sounded rich and full and mysterious, a man's piss.

She sat on the bed with her legs splayed and surveyed the room, huge splotches of flower print on the bedspread, plum- and blond-colored petals, cream walls, two identical framed photographs of a

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