REVIEW

December 2007 - Free

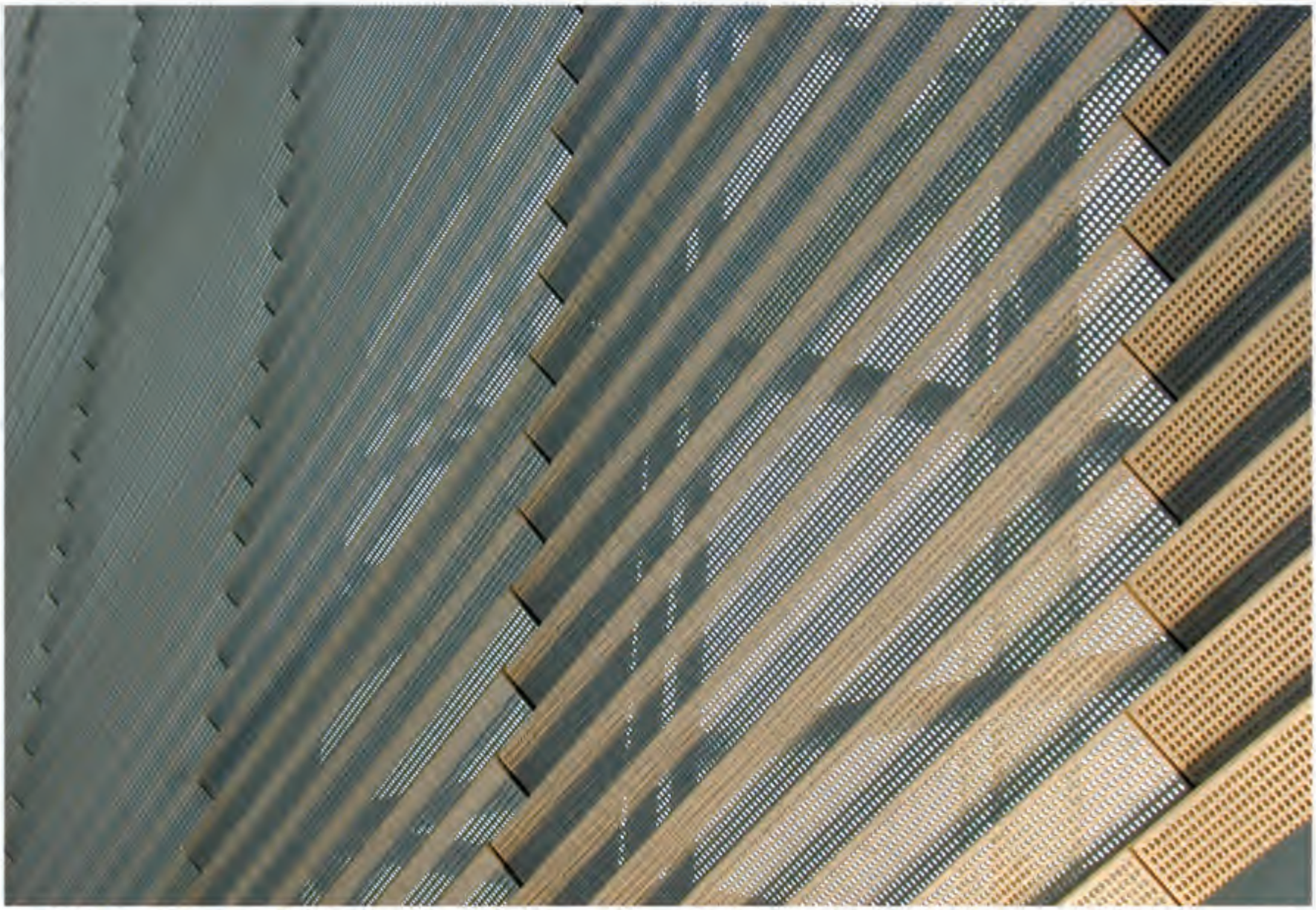
Apocalypse Blues

Escape to Create:
Harveyville, Art Farm &
Women's Studio Workshop

J. Bird Studios builds
a nest in Armourdale

Local Artists Draw
the Future

ZAHNER
architectural metal
1400 E. 9th Street
Kansas City, MO 64106



The Nerman Museum of Contemporary Art - Kyu Sung Woo, Archtitects.
Custom, perforated and pleated aluminum louver sun screen system.

Nerman Museum of Contemporary Art
Johnson County Community College

Opening October 27, 2007 • 12345 College Blvd. • Overland Park, KS

Photo: Timothy Hursley, The Arkansas Office

M P R E S S

1715 BALTIMORE
KANSAS CITY, MO 64108
816 221 7434

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1708 Campbell
Kansas City, Missouri 64108

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#96, Vol. 10, No. 2

ABOUT *REVIEW*

Review assigns and publishes reviews, interviews, essays and other articles related to the visual arts in Kansas City and the Midwest. *Review* publishes solicited and unsolicited materials and welcomes feedback. Contact *Review* at editor@ereview.org if you are interested in writing; be prepared to submit samples. Do not send valuable originals, as materials will not be returned. For unsolicited essays, contact the editor for a copy of *Review*'s style guide and editorial policy. *Review* publishes a calendar of art exhibition receptions, lectures, and symposia. Contact *Review* at editor@ereview.org for *Review*'s publishing schedule. Mail, fax, or email information that you wish to publicize. Information by phone will not be accepted; space may limit publication of submitted material. *Review* welcomes letters to the editor of up to 250 words. Mail, fax, or email letter, including your name, address, and daytime telephone number.

TABLE OF CONTENTS


16


20


32


24


38

COVER ART
Michelle Dreher (Two Tone Press), *Retro Evolution*, 2007, linocut, 10.5" x 12".

Review Inc. is now
accepting applications for...

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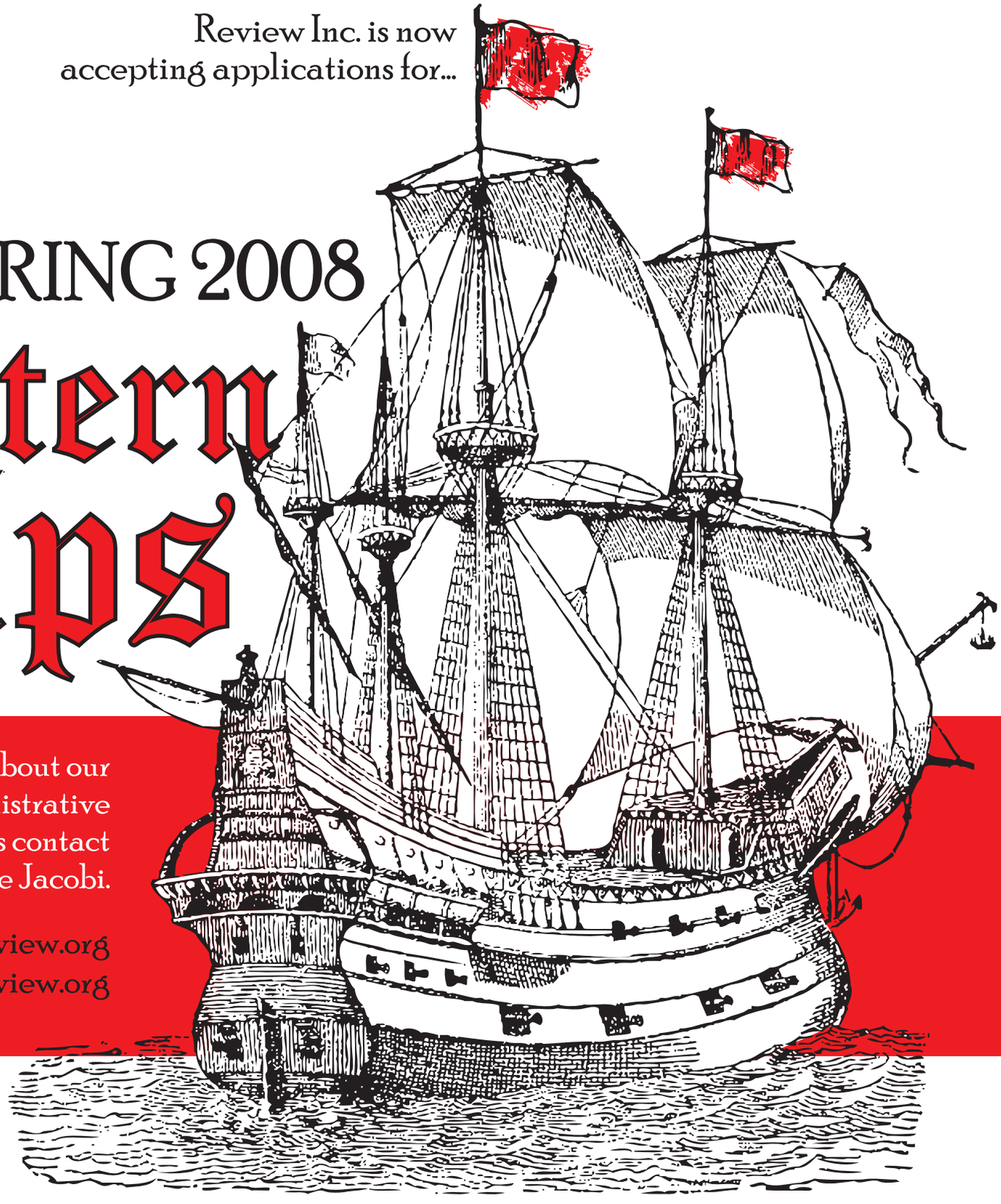


For information about our
editorial, design and administrative
internship opportunities contact
executive director Dodie Jacobi.

executivedirector@ereview.org
www.ereview.org

OPENING

Left: Yoshida Hiroshi, 1876-1950, born Kurume; died Tokyo; active Japan, *Bamboo Wood*, 1939, Showa period (1926-1989), color woodcut. Bequest of R.C. Moore, 1974.

Right: Kawase Hasui 1883-1957, born Tokyo; died Tokyo; active Japan, *Kyoto, Chion-in, August 1937*, Showa period (1926-1989), color woodcut. Museum purchase: Lucy Shaw Schultz Fund, 1993.

(Spencer Museum of Art, see this page)

DECEMBER 1

Campanella Art Gallery
Park University
8700 Northwest River Park Drive
Parkville, Missouri
816-741-2000
www.park.edu

Nano Nore's Norway: Paintings and Prints

Through December 14

Lawrence Arts Center
940 New Hampshire Street
Lawrence, Kansas
785-843-2787
www.lawrenceartscenter.com

Lawrence Art Guild Holiday Art Fair

Spencer Museum of Art
1301 Mississippi Street
Lawrence, Kansas
785-864-4710
www.spencerart.ku.edu

An Idyllic Vision: The Modern Japanese Landscape

DECEMBER 5

Lawrence Arts Center
940 New Hampshire Street
Lawrence, Kansas
785-843-2787
www.lawrenceartscenter.com

Lawrence Photo-Alliance Members Show and Print Sale

Opening reception: Dec. 8, 7 - 9 p.m.

Through December 20

DECEMBER 6

Johnson County Central Resource Library
9875 West 87th Street
Overland Park, Kansas
913-495-2400
www.jocolibrary.org

Michaela Groeblacher — sculpture

Through January 31, 2008

Lawrence Arts Center
940 New Hampshire Street
Lawrence, Kansas
785-843-2787
www.lawrenceartscenter.com

Sustaining Power: Portraits of Musicians by Paul Hotvedt

Reception and concert: 7p.m.

Through December 20

DECEMBER 7

Bruno David Gallery
3721 Washington Boulevard
St. Louis, Missouri
314-531-3030
www.brunodavidgallery.com

Thomas Sleet: Traces

Ingo Baugarten: Untitled (Unberitelt)

Island Press: Selected Prints

Ella Gant: Recent Videos

Dolphin Gallery
1901 Baltimore
Kansas City, Missouri
816-842-5877
www.thedolphingallery.com

Jon Scott Anderson: re-setting a place

Opening reception: 6 - 9 p.m.

Through December 29th

H&R Block Artspace
16 East 43rd Street
Kansas City, Missouri
www.kcai.edu/artspace

The Noon Thing

Gallery talk: 12:00p.m.
It is free and open to the public.

Artspace staff will present a gallery talk relating to the current exhibition *Past, Present Future Perfect: Selections from the Ovitz Family Collection*, which is on view through Feb. 2.

DECEMBER 7 - 9

Dirk Soulis Auctions
KCI Expo Center
11730 North Ambassador Drive
Kansas City, Missouri
816-697-3830

Art At Auction: American Art from the Stuart Wyeth Campbell Estate

Kansas City Art Institute
4415 Warwick Boulevard
Kansas City, Missouri
800-522-5224
http://www.kcai.edu/

End of Semester Exhibition and Sale

DECEMBER 12

Kemper Museum of Contemporary Art
4420 Warwick Boulevard
Kansas City, Missouri
816-753-5784
www.kemperart.org

Slideshow at the Kemper Museum:
Jess Moffit, Michael Schonhoff, Larry Schwarm

5:30 - 6:30 p.m.

DECEMBER 17

Campanella Art Gallery
Park University
8700 Northwest River Park Drive
Parkville, Missouri
816-741-2000
www.park.edu

Senior Art Exhibition: Aaron Ennis

Through December 31

DECEMBER 21

Sheldon Memorial Art Gallery
University of Nebraska - Lincoln
12 & R Streets
Lincoln, Nebraska
402-472-2461
www.sheldon.unl.edu

Winter Wonderland: Prints from the Collection of Norman and Judy Zlotsky

Through March 23, 2008

CURRENT

Hicham Benohoud, *La Salle de Classe* (detail), 2003, gelatin silver print. Photo courtesy Galerie VU, Paris. (Faulconer Gallery, see page 12)

THROUGH DECEMBER 1

Red Star Studios Ceramic Center
821 West 17th Street
Kansas City, Missouri
816-474-7316
www.redstarstudios.org

Linda Christianson: Solo Exhibition

THROUGH DECEMBER 2

Sheldon Memorial Art Gallery
University of Nebraska - Lincoln
12 & R Streets
Lincoln, Nebraska
402-472-2461
www.sheldon.unl.edu

Wanda Ewing: Bougie

Spencer Museum of Art
1301 Mississippi Street
Lawrence, Kansas
785-864-4710
www.spencerart.ku.edu

Aaron Douglas:
African American Modernist

Juanita K. Hammons Hall for the Performing Arts
525 S. John Q. Hammons Parkway
Springfield, Missouri
417-836-7678
www.hammonshall.com

WinterFest 2007

THROUGH DECEMBER 7

The Carter Art Center Gallery at MCC - Penn Valley
3201 Southwest Trafficway
Kansas City, Missouri
816-759-4ART
http://mcckc.edu/pvart/

Jose Fause - The Rite of Spring

THROUGH DECEMBER 8

Ellen Curlee Gallery
1308-A Washington Avenue
Saint Louis, Missouri
314-241-1299
www.ellencurleegallery.com

Mickey Smith

Dean Kessmann

The Green Door Gallery
1229 1/2 Union Ave
Kansas City, Missouri
816-421-6889
www.thegreendoorgallery.com
www.myspace.com/greendoorgallery

You'll Never Get Away with This
Eve Englezos + Josh Moutray

Greenlease Gallery Rockhurst University
54th and Troost
Kansas City, Missouri
816-501-4407
www.rockhurst.edu/artsandletters

Doing the Work Other
Americans Won't Do: Chris Weaver

THROUGH DECEMBER 9

Sheldon Memorial Art Gallery
University of Nebraska - Lincoln
12 & R Streets
Lincoln, Nebraska
402-472-2461
www.sheldon.unl.edu

Daily Rituals, Seasonal Celebrations:
Photographs by Graciela Iturbide

THROUGH DECEMBER 12

The Carter Art Center Gallery at MCC - Penn Valley
3201 Southwest Trafficway
Kansas City, Missouri
816-759-4ART
http://mcckc.edu/pvart/

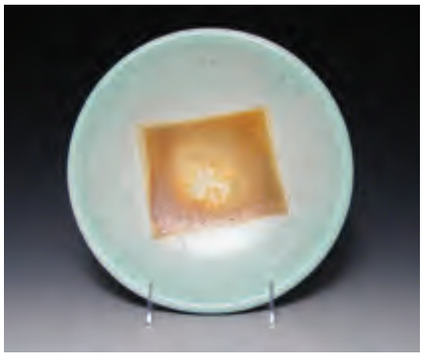
Bonnye Brown:Paintings

Davis Art Gallery
Corner of Walnut and Ripley streets
Stephens College
Columbia, Missouri
573-876-7175
www.stephens.edu

Visions for our Time

CURRENT



From left to right: Jeff Aeling, *Sunset After Rain near Junction City, Kansas*, 2007, 48" x 72", oil on panel (Sherry Leedy Contemporary Art, see page 11); Avery Danziger, *Venus Rising, Jockey's Ridge, North Carolina*, 2007, 32" x 48", color photograph (Sherry Leedy Contemporary Art, see page 11); China Marks' sewn drawing (Marianna Kistler Beach Museum of Art, see this page); Linda Christianson, wood fired stoneware (Red Star Studios Ceramic Center, see page 11).

THROUGH DECEMBER 14

Review Studios Exhibition Space
1708 Campbell
Kansas City, Missouri
816-471-2343
www.ereview.org

Lonnie Powell

THROUGH DECEMBER 15

Fisch Haus
524 South Commerce
Wichita, Kansas
316-200-5200
www.fischhaus.com

Not to Scale: (or) The Construction of Two Rooms: Patrick Duegaw

UMKC Gallery of Art
205C Fine Arts Building
University of Missouri - Kansas City
5100 Rockhill Road
816-235-1502
http://cas.umkc.edu/art/gallery.cfm

M.A. Thesis Exhibition:
Deon Hauser and Eric Sweet

THROUGH DECEMBER 16

Faulconer Gallery
Grinnell College
1108 Park Street
Grinnell, Iowa
641-269-4642
www.grinnell.edu/faulconergallery

Installations by Seven International Artists with Roots in Morocco

Marianna Kistler Beach Museum of Art
701 Beach Lane
Manhattan, Kansas
785-532-7718

China Marks: Sewn Drawings

Salina Art Center
242 South Santa Fe
Salina, Kansas
785-827-1431
www.salinaartcenter.org

Jon Rappleye: Strange World

Ulrich Museum of Art
Wichita State University
1845 Fairmount Street
Wichita, Kansas
www.ulrich.wichita.edu/branded

Branded and On DIsplay

THROUGH DECEMBER 17

Mildred Lane Kemper Art Museum Washington University
One Brookings Drive
Saint Louis, Missouri
314-935-4523
http://kemperartmuseum.wustl.edu/

Korean Comics:
A Society through Small Frames

THROUGH DECEMBER 21

Ulrich Museum of Art
Wichita State University
1845 Fairmount Street
Wichita, Kansas
www.ulrich.wichita.edu/

Ulrich Project Series:
Christoph Ruckhäberle

THROUGH DECEMBER 23

Center of Creative Arts (COCA)
524 Trinity Avenue
St. Louis, Missouri
314-725-6555
www.cocastl.org

Carmon Colangelo, Joan Hall, Peter Marcus

THROUGH DECEMBER 26

Leawood Pioneer Library
4700 Town Center Drive
Leawood, Kansas
913-344-0250
www.jocolibrary.org

John Leifer: photography

THROUGH DECEMBER 30

Byron Cohen Gallery
2020 Baltimore Avenue
Kansas City, Missouri
816-421-5665

Allie Rex and Lawrence Gipe

Contemporary Art Museum St. Louis
3750 Washington Boulevard
St. Louis, Missouri
314-535-4660
www.contemporarystl.org

Maya Lin: Systematic Landscapes

Des Moines Art Center
4700 Grand Avenue
Des Moines, Iowa
515-277-4405
www.desmoinesartcenter.org

A House of Cards: Picasso & Cubism

CURRENT




From left to right: Three wood fired stoneware pieces by Linda Christianson (Red Star Studios Ceramic Center, see page 11); Frida Kahlo, *Henry Ford Hospital,* 1932, oil on metal 12-13/16" x 15-13/16" unframed. Collection Museo Dolores Olmedo Patiño, Mexico City © 2007 Banco de México Diego Rivera & Frida Kahlo Museums Trust. Av., Cinco de Mayo No. 2, Col. Centro, Del. Cuauhtémoc 06059, México, D.F. (Walker Art Center, see page 14).

Kemper Museum of Contemporary Art
4420 Warwick Boulevard
Kansas City, Missouri
816-753-5784
www.kemperart.org

Michael Vasquez: Authority Figures

The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art
The Bloch Building
4525 Oak Street
Kansas City, Missouri
816-751-1ART (1278)
www.nelson-atkins.org

Developing Greatness: The Origins of American Photography, 1839–1885

Lecture Series:
Photography at the Auction House: Every Picture Tells a Story
6 – 7 p.m., Thursday, December 6

Spencer Museum of Art
1301 Mississippi Street
Lawrence, Kansas
785-864-4710
www.spencerart.ku.edu

Stop / Look / Listen: An installation by Janet Davidson-Hues & Maria Velasco

THROUGH DECEMBER 31

Duane Reed Gallery
7513 Forsyth Boulevard
St. Louis, Missouri
314-862-2333
www.rduanereedgallery.com

Ross Richmond

Nancy Rice

THROUGH JAN. 5, 2008

Paragraph
(an Urban Culture Project space)
23 East 12th Street
Kansas City, Missouri
816-221-5115

As Loud as the Sky and Pasture: Jules Hearne and Brendan Meara

The Sheldon Art Galleries
3648 Washington Boulevard
St. Louis, Missouri
314-533-9900
www.thesheldon.org

My American History in Flashbulb Memories: Prints by Lisa Bulawsky

Sherry Leedy Contemporary Art
2004 Baltimore Avenue
Kansas City, Missouri
816-221-2626

Jeff Aeling - Land, Light and Water

Avery Danziger - In the Shadow of the Moon

Urban Culture Project Space
21 East 12th Street
Kansas City, Missouri
816-221-5115

UCP Studio Focus I: Emerald City
Dane Bonner, Robert Glinn, Amanda Gehin, Ted Kaldis

THROUGH JAN. 6, 2008

Sheldon Memorial Art Gallery
University of Nebraska - Lincoln
12 & R Streets
Lincoln, Nebraska
402-472-2461
www.sheldon.unl.edu

Sheldon Survey: An Invitational

Springfield Art Museum
1111 East Brookside Drive
Springfield, Missouri
417-837-5700
www.springfieldmogov.org/egov/art

Prints U.S.A. 2007
A national juried exhibition of printmaking.

Weisman Art Museum
333 East River Road
Minneapolis, Minnesota
612-626-5241
www.weisman.umn.edu

Changing Hands: Art Without Reservation

Wichita Art Museum
1400 West Museum Boulevard
Wichita, Kansas
316-268-4921
www.wichitaartmuseum,org

Heritage of the West : A Romance Gone

Forever: The M.C. Naftzer Collection of Paintings, Sculptures and Drawings by Charles M. Russell
Contemporary Native North American Art from the West, Northwest, and Pacific

Xen Gallery
401 North Euclid Avenue
St. Louis, Missouri
314-454-9561
www.xengallery.com

Jill Hackney, Richard Wehrs, Geoff Wheeler

CURRENT

Mark Klett, American, b. 1952 and Byron Wolfe, American, b. 1967. *Four Views from Four Times and One Shoreline, Lake Tenaya, Yosemite National Park*, 2002. Archival pigmented inkjet print, 2005 (The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, see page 15)

THROUGH JAN. 12, 2008

The Sheldon Art Galleries
3648 Washington Boulevard
St. Louis, Missouri
314-533-9900
www.TheSheldon.org

Unraveled: Crossing the Line Between Fashion and Art

THROUGH JAN. 13, 2008

Albrecht-Kemper Museum of Art
2818 Frederick Avenue
Saint Joseph, Missouri
816-233-7003
www.albrect-kemper.org

James Cantrell: A Painter's Odyssey

Richard Lethem: The Compass of Desire

Laumeier Sculpture Park
12580 Rott Road
Saint Louis, Missouri
314-821-1209
www.laumeier.org

Tony Tasset

THROUGH JAN. 19, 2008

The Sheldon Art Galleries
3648 Washington Boulevard
St. Louis, Missouri
314-533-9900
www.thesheldon.org

Anthony Hernandez: The Seventies and Eighties

THROUGH JAN. 20, 2008

Epsten Gallery
Village Shalom
5500 West 123rd Street
Overland Park, Kansas
913-266-8413
www.epstengallery.org

Andrew Schell

Walker Art Center
1750 Hennepin Avenue
Minneapolis, Minnesota
612-375-7600
www.walkerart.org

Frida Kahlo

THROUGH JAN. 26, 2008

The Sheldon Art Galleries
3648 Washington Boulevard
St. Louis, Missouri
314-533-9900
www.thesheldon.org

Architecture for Humanity: Gulf Coast Reconstruction Projects

THROUGH JAN. 27, 2008

Wichita Art Museum
1400 West Museum Boulevard
Wichita, Kansas
316-268-4921
www.wichitaartmuseum,org

Prairie Earth: A Collaboration by Marguerite Perret, Bruce Scherting, Glenda Taylor, Betsy Knabe Roe, and Marydorsey Wanless

CURRENT

Mark Klett, b. 1952 and Byron Wolfe, b. 196. *Panorama from Sentinel Dome Connecting Three Views by Carleton Watkins*, 2003. Archival pigmented inkjet print, 2007 (The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, see this page).

THROUGH FEB. 1, 2008

Belger Arts Center
2100 Walnut Street
Kansas City, Missouri
816-474-3250
www.belgerartscenter.org

Looking West
(curated by Evelyn Craft)

THROUGH FEB. 2, 2008

The Sheldon Art Galleries
3648 Washington Boulevard
St. Louis, Missouri
314-533-9900
www.thesheldon.org

Katrina's Kids Project: Art of the Storm

THROUGH FEB. 3, 2008

Joslyn Art Museum
2200 Dodge Street
Omaha, Nebraska
402-342-3300
www.joslyn.org

Karl Bodmer's Animals

Kemper Museum of Contemporary Art
4420 Warwick Boulevard
Kansas City, Missouri
816-753-5784
www.kemperart.org

Life After Death: New Leipzig Paintings from the Rubell Family Collection

THROUGH FEBRUARY 9

The Sheldon Art Galleries
3648 Washington Boulevard
St. Louis, Missouri
314-533-9900
www.thesheldon.org

Jam Session: Photographs from the MAXJAZZ Collection

THROUGH FEBRUARY 10

The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art
4525 Oak Street
Kansas City, Missouri
816-751-1278
www.nelson-atkins.org

Rising Dragon: Ancient Treasures from China

THROUGH FEBRUARY 17

Walker Art Center
1750 Hennepin Avenue
Minneapolis, Minnesota
612-375-7600
www.walkerart.org

Brave New Worlds

THROUGH MARCH 1

Roeland Park City Hall
4600 West 51st Street
Roeland Park, Kansas
816-457-6147

Art in R Park
Eight sculptures that are located on or along Roe Boulevard.

THROUGH MARCH 2

The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art
4525 Oak Street
Kansas City, Missouri
816-751-1278
www.nelson-atkins.org

Time in the West: Photographs by Mark Klett & Byron Wolfe and Mark Ruwedel

re-setting places: creek leaves, 2007, archival pigment print, 86.6" x 23.3", ED. 7,

Going Out and Coming In:

Jon Scott Anderson's Man-Made Nature Photographs

Steve Shapiro

Photography is overexposed at present. Museums are building new additions to house collections like developers breaking ground on dream homes. The Metropolitan Museum of Art has just opened a wing devoted to a private collectors' extensive donation, and The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art is preparing to feast on its fortune as the beneficiary of Hallmark's longtime holdings of classic photographers. Photographic images, even those less-than-iconic, are being auctioned at record high prices. The notion of the amateur photographer is also quickly being reestablished — the advent of Flickr, the photo-sharing website, and the ubiquitous cell phone camera both inspire and threaten to turn us into a nation of Diane Arbuses and Lee Friedlanders. If photography has come full circle, from big art to big business, it is still, like most of the fine arts, an act of solitary complicity between the artist and the viewer. The romanticism of the creative artist may have rubbed off at least as long ago as Andy Warhol, but there is a Warhol (or an Arbus or a Serra) out there, waiting to transform the day into a painting, a photograph, or an installation.

re-setting places: pond, 2007, archival pigment print, ED. 7, 16 " x 94".

In Scott Anderson's large-scale photographs of nature, the wait is a pretext. He begins his work outside, taking photographs of things that either stand out or need to be teased out of some pattern of indistinguishable making; then, he reworks the images in PhotoShop — a process invaluable to many contemporary photographers — to arrive at a new place that is more memory than landscape. In a series of conversations held at his West Side studio and at the Dolphin Gallery, prior to his new show, *re-setting a place* (November 23rd through December 29th), Anderson revealed an easy discipline toward his work. The digital manipulation is not his goal but rather a way to thinking through the photographs. Each lengthy

photograph consists of perhaps a half a dozen shots fitted together, not so the eye can see but such that it *knows*.

"My work is attached to the landscape tradition," he explained to me early on. Indeed, his images of grasslands, rocks, skies, and ponds resonate, at first glance, with the built-in unconscious connection we have to seeing so many photographic still lifes, whether of the Ansel Adams, Minor White variety, where nothing is out of place and even the clouds feel *posed*, or the modernist inclusive aesthetic of the snapshot kids of the sixties, who did not seem to know how to take a photograph. For Anderson, the manipulation begins when he is out looking for things or shapes which catch his eye; it is a modern reverberation of photography's stock in trade for manipulating images from the medium's beginning. He has traveled and shot around the world from Mexico to Minnesota to Japan. For the new show, he worked in an eighty-acre private woodlands outside Louisburg, Kansas, going in all seasons and at all times of the day. Though his output is spare, each photograph achieves an iconic reach; he does not need to keep making over the same image. (Repetition is one of photography's greatest blessings and its curse, particularly in the landscape field that Anderson works in.)

Looking at Anderson's photographs, one comes to understand that they represent a multiplicity of references: the *pure* classicism of Adams and Edward Weston; Anderson's interest in the idea of travel as storytelling, as evinced in the unwinding pictorial narratives of Chinese scrolls and the pithy haikus of the medieval wandering poet Basho; his background in film and his academic education framed by the Field painters and the Abstract Expressionists. Images such as *creekbed* (2006) or *vines #4* (2006) yield the full range of Anderson's pursuits. Vibrant in color, the pictures trigger associations to movies and to paintings. I am reminded of Werner Herzog's films, such as *Aguirre*, whenever I look at *vines #4* and his masterful *grasslands* casts a joyful reflection onto Pollock's swirling all-over works, in which space and place combine into a texture of emotions. The recent *grasslands 2*, bleached out and reminiscent of Anselm Keifer's large constructions of straw, exerts a strange pull on the viewer to explain why the scene is so haunting and yet comforting somehow, too. The manipulation comes into play when Anderson adds to an image's naturalness; in *creekbed*, he moved a long branch to make it tell a story and digitally repeated a tiny red leaf as decoration. Anything is possible in nature — like a two-headed calf — but it is Anderson's prerequisite to create a natural world that is surreptitiously man-made and then re-made. Man cannot help but have a point-of-view; nature is just itself. To forge a connection between the two opposites, Anderson will stretch a photograph, printing an impossible view of too much at once, like a crane shot from far overhead in a movie. As a final touch of whimsey, some photographs even show a hint of the horizon and the sky. Tracking these pictures from side to side, corner to corner, creates new photographs within themselves.

Anderson is pleased by the multifarious interpretations of his photographs, but for him the process takes precedence. He speaks about "the process of going out and coming in, even just going out into the backyard." In conversation, he repeatedly goes back to the Japanese aesthetic of the rock garden, where rocks and other items are placed so as to appear organic, yet the placement favors a spiritual sensibility that nature necessarily leaves out.

"Form is how memory works," the critic Peter Schjeldahl has noted; in Scott Anderson's man-made nature photographs, the contradiction is necessary to following the art. One need not have traveled where Anderson did to shoot his photographs to find something in them, or to care what he applied to them. Form creates its own memories, its own tensions, its own joys; the photograph is an excuse, almost, for the photographer to find himself going over old ground, in more ways than one. •

Steve Shapiro is a longtime film and book critic and one of this publication's original contributing writers. Shapiro's essays on art, artists, and the world in between appear regularly in *Review*.

re-setting places: grassland 2, 2007, archival pigment print, ED. 1/7, 27-3/4" x 86".

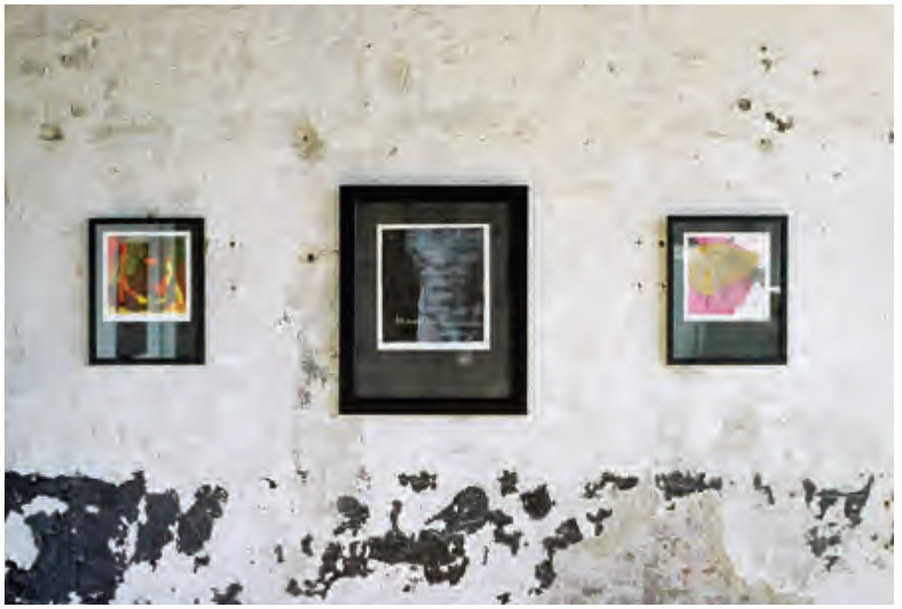
ANYTHING BUT

J. BIRD STUDIOS BUILDS A NEST IN ARMOURDALE

Sonya Andrews

Ceramic tiles by Mo Weberg resting against the wall of J. Bird Studios. Photo: Paul Andrews

Kansas City, Kansas is completely underrated. It's Kansas' Independence, Missouri — but better because it avoids any association with an apocalyptic Second Coming. Of course, I doubt that comparison will propel Johnson or Jackson County residents down 7th Street Trafficway to spend some quality time in the Quindaro neighborhood. That's ok. Maybe they can at least make it as far as Armourdale.



Above left and right: Overland Park artist Julia Stroud's work on display in the gallery at J. Bird Studios. Photos: Paul Andrews

One would have to be familiar with the Armourdale area to know when you have arrived at the intersection of 7th Street Trafficway and Kansas Avenue. Massive road construction efforts coupled with the complete lack of street signs make the area seem like more of an obstacle course than a destination. By any stretch of the imagination, it does not look like a place you would expect to find an art gallery. Pay no mind to that spooky, narrow bridge in front of you, though. Take a right down Kansas Avenue. Drive just a block or so towards the West Bottoms. Look to your left. See that two-story building that is being repaired? Yeah, no, it's not that one. It's the smaller one next to it. That's J. Bird Studios.

I had the pleasure of visiting J. Bird Studios this past October and speaking with artist and studios owner Jori Hebert. Hebert is a ceramics artist who graduated from the Kansas City Art Institute in 2004. After graduating, she was faced with the same question that so many artists ask themselves upon being booted out into the post-academic world: "What do I do now?" Each new batch of BFA recipients answers this question in their own way, in their own time. While they may be able to spend a few years in that pursuit, the landlord waits for no one. So like many young artists, she got a job in retail.

Some artists get mired in the day job that they never thought they would have, but not Hebert. She jumped back into the creative world when she began teaching children's art classes at Swangstu-Ferguson Studios. Later, when Holly Swangstu-Ferguson became the director at Leedy-Voulkos Gallery in the Crossroads, Hebert was asked to be her assistant. It was there that she learned about the business of running a studio and gallery.

It wasn't long before Hebert began thinking of starting her own artist studios and gallery. She and a few artist friends had long bemoaned the lack of artistic community they felt after having left the collaborative and communal spaces of the KCAI workrooms. It was frustrating trying to tackle the creative process in what felt like a vacuum. In addition to the doldrums of creation in solitude, renting studio space was just not economically viable and applying for gallery shows was time consuming and frustrating. Hebert decided she should purchase a building that was affordable, still close to the West Bottoms and Crossroads, in an area that had potential to grow, where she and other artists could create and display their work.

In September of 2006, Hebert and her husband bought a storage building at 516 Kansas Avenue to restore and convert into a studios and gallery space. The building was in poor condition and the four-month remodeling project stretched out to eight. A new floor, roof, wiring, plumbing, and a back patio later they had a six-person studio with a small gallery space in front.

Above left: The kilns at J. Bird Studios. Above right: Work by Brooke Guardado in her space at J. Bird Studios. Photos: Paul Andrews

She had her space. She had her artists. She had kilns and supplies and surfaces on which to work. Now all she needed was publicity. Of course, there would be a challenge in directing traffic to her space. Each area of town has their own first, second, or third Friday events so the competition for new venues is stiff. With some help from Swangstu-Ferguson, she began sending out email press releases on a regular basis.

She didn't really know what to expect, but on their grand opening night their attendance was around 300 people. So far, all of their opening receptions have been well attended and they have been receiving plenty of publicity. They have only been open to the public since July of 2007 and thus far have been featured as a great gallery for affordable art in *Kansas City Homes and Gardens*, an up-and-coming new business in *The Kansas City Star*, and had their latest exhibition of Overland Park artist Julia Stroud's work reviewed in *The Pitch*.

Visibility in the art community can now be crossed off the checklist for J. Bird Studios, but what about the community of Armourdale? Hebert expressed that, so far, all of her neighbors have been very welcoming. In fact, Bob Gutierrez, president of Art's Mexican Foods (just across the street from J. Bird), is a big supporter of what Hebert is bringing to the area. Like a monthly welcome basket, Gutierrez supplies Art's chips and salsa for their opening receptions. Moda, a restaurant just down the road from J. Bird Studios, plans to display artwork by J. Bird Studios artists and is working with Hebert on cross-promotional marketing strategies for their opening receptions.

In addition to trading promotional efforts with local businesses, Hebert also shops locally. She purchases supplies at the friendly local hardware store down the street and in turn, the shop employees have come to her place to lend a hand or give advice about various building projects.

Hebert's community involvement extends beyond these business relationships. Her presence in the neighborhood has given her

the opportunity to meet several artists from the area. For instance, an older gentleman artist named Arturo stops in once a week. In 2003 he had a stroke and lost some movement on one side of his body. He began pursuing art as a hobby and is now beginning to show his work. He has exhibited at the Guadalupe Center and now three of his pieces are in in the J. Bird Studios holiday sale. According to Hebert, "For being self taught he has some amazing work." Hebert hopes to meet more local artists and help them promote their work.

During our interview I asked how she saw J. Bird Studios fitting in or involving itself in the community. Initially, she been focused primarily on the studios and her own hand-made tile business. Her business plan, however, was patterned after Leedy-Volkous'. According to Hebert, focusing on local artists and community involvement is a significant part of Leedy-Volkous' mission, so it was only natural that her scope would quickly encompass more than just her own artwork produced by the studios' artists. Reflecting now on all that she has accomplished in less than six months of operation, that question seems rather silly. She isn't going to have to think about how J. Bird Studios is going to fit in — it already does. The resident artists, media interest, community support, and high attendance say great things not only for the studios and gallery she has built, but also for the visual arts in Kansas City, Kansas.

Just when it seemed like Kansas City was getting saturated with galleries and artist studios, it turns out that maybe there aren't enough — or at least not enough where they are needed most. Right now J. Bird Studios can claim that they are the *only* artist studios/gallery space in Kansas City, Kansas. Hopefully the ink will not have dried on this page before they can say instead that they are the *first*. •

J. BIRD STUDIOS ARTISTS

J. Bird Studios * 516 Kansas Avenue
(913)207-1971 * www.jbirdstudio.com
Wednesday - Friday 12 - 5 p.m.
Saturdays by appointment only.

Brooke Guardado

Brooke Guardado is a 2003 graduate of the Kansas City Art Institute Ceramics Department. She is in her second year teaching art at Christ the King School. Brooke's figural sculptures and paintings are inspired by life experiences with messages of hope and faith.

Image: Brooke Guardado, *Untitled 1*, Acrylic

Lisa Iovine

Lisa Iovine began working with clay in Syracuse, NY in 2000. In 2001 she transferred to the Kansas City Art Institute Ceramics Department. Lisa has been a practicing artist for seven years making functional pottery. The most important aspect of her work is her utilization of texture and color.

Image: Lisa Iovine, *Blue Stamped Vase*, ceramic

Erika Hamlett

Erika Hamlett graduated from the Kansas City Art Institute with a double major in Ceramics and Art History. She is currently teaching at Mattie Rhoades Art Center and plans to attend graduate school next Fall. Erika's work is influenced by the temporary, traveling, and her twin sister, Erin.

Image: Erika Hamlett, *Holding Two*, Ceramic and Plexiglass

Cara Long

Cara Long graduated from the Kansas City Art Institute in 2004. In 2006, Cara started a business called Sweet Mud Clay Works, selling her decorative and functional pottery, sassy magnets, and quasi-uncouth-kitschy tiles. In an attempt to cope with the varied chaotic and mundane ordeals in life, Cara Long also creates translucent porcelain installations depicting fleshy, docile females suspended within blank, non-descript, and potentially perilous environments. This makes her feel better. For more information visit www.caralong.com.

Image: Cara Long, *Panel 15*, translucent porcelain, underglaze, light

Jori Hebert

Jori Cheville Hebert graduated from the Kansas City Art Institute Ceramics Department in 2004 and resides in Olathe, Kansas. She is currently working full time on her artwork — ceramic tile design, mixed media paintings, and public commissions — and running J. Bird Studios. In her spare time, she also volunteers at the Leedy Voulkos Art Center helping to install new shows.

Image: Jori Cheville Hebert, *Birds*, mixed media

Mo Weberg

Mo Weberg attended KCAI from 2001 to 2003, studying ceramics. His work consists mostly of blind contour drawings and small figure sculptures. His goal is to translate the 2-dimensional, whimsical drawings into a 3 - dimensional context, capturing and retaining the simplistic lines and discombobulated form of the original drawings.

Image: Mo Weberg, *Elephant*, paper and pen

Too Cool for School?

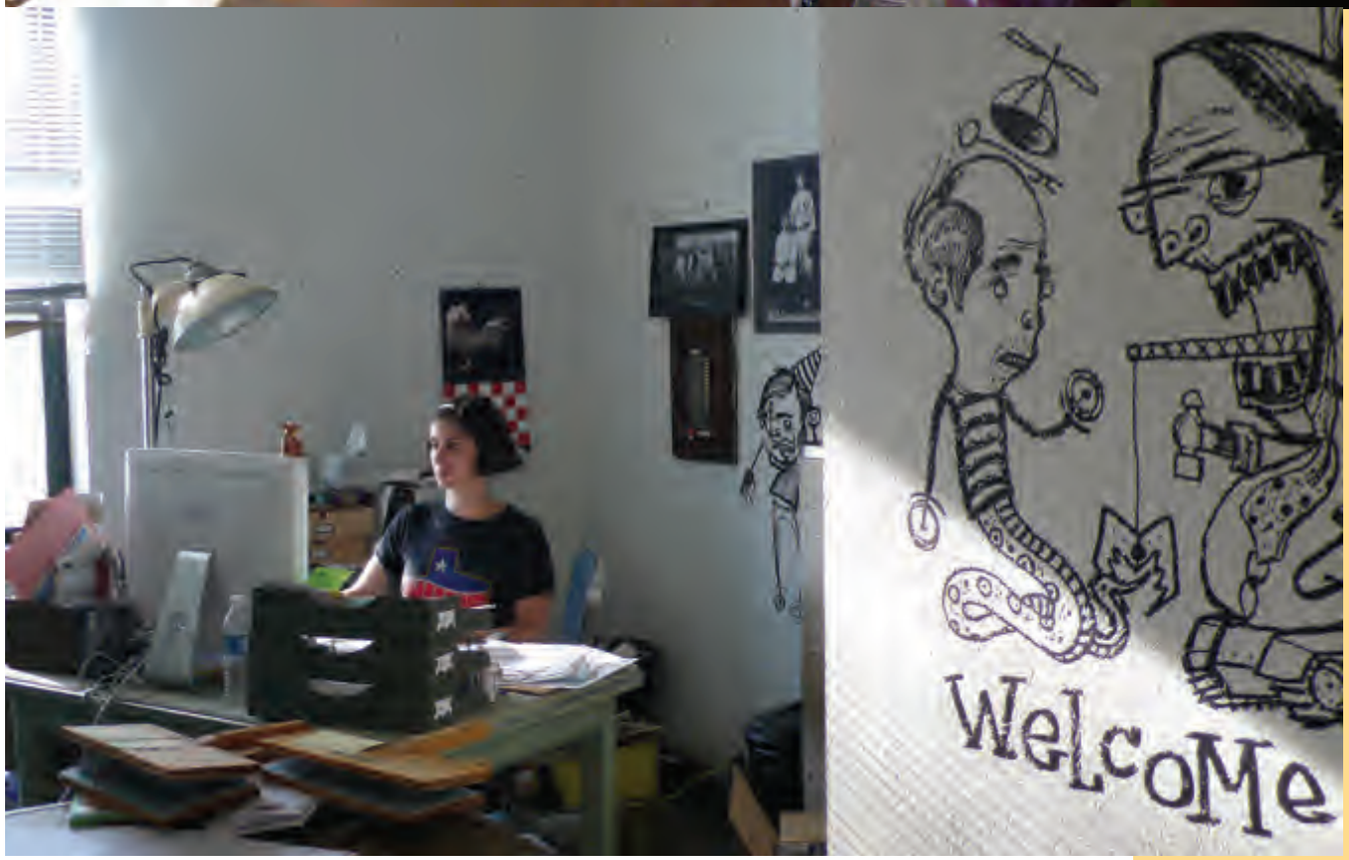
Words and Photography by Susi Lulaki

It sounded like a zany – even crazy – idea when Nikol Lohr and Ron Miller decided to purchase school buildings in Harveyville, Kansas (population 252). They repurposed the buildings — abandoned in 2004 because of rural flight and school consolidation — for use as their home and "a creative residence, retreat, and workshop getaway, surrounded by the distance and alarming beauty of Eastern Kansas."[1] Nikol's effusive wording on the Harveyville Project website continues:

"Enjoy the solid, reassuring institutional architecture of the early 20th century amidst fresh air, breathtaking stars and moonlight, rolling hills, weather you can watch from miles away, and quiet you can actually hear.

Conveniently located at the corner of No and Where. Nary a McDonalds nor Starbucks as far as the eye can see, but still a comfy drive from civilization. 50 minutes to Lawrence, 35 to Topeka, and less than two hours to Kansas City."

[1] www.harveyvilleproject.com



I first heard of the Harveyville Project from western Kansas resident Emily Hunter who on the school steps in early spring with Nikol, "…a blinky-eyed ingénue wearing a fabulous red serape that she had made herself, and who was very excited that her first book *Naughty Needles* had just been published." Emily tut-tutted that we who live here don't see what we have and cooed with delight that Nikol and Ron had found their way to Kansas from Texas and Seattle, respectively, "like a new wave of immigrants who understood what was here. They recognized what is left of the pre-industrialized agricultural world when community was most important and schools were built to last because of a deep and abiding faith in education."

Nikol and Ron bought the two sturdy Kansas brick schoolhouses on nine acres at the edge of Harveyville and moved in March 2005. They began painting walls, refinishing floors, and lightly furnishing some 18 classrooms as living

spaces and art studios. In search of kitchen equipment, they went to the school auction in Eskridge, a town 13 miles to the northwest, and ended up buying two more school buildings.

Perhaps it was the gorgeous art deco lamp just inside the high school's front door, but something about the Kansas schoolhouses entranced Nikol and Ron. There was enough space for their lives, collecting habits, studio and office needs, workshop schedules, and a gym to jam in when musician friends visited. Nikol is a writer, a crafter, and early blogger. Ron is a musician, painter, and tattoo artist. With such diverse endeavors, they have their fingers in lots of creative pies. Their ties to cool trends nationwide have enticed people from New York to Hawaii to come by plane, car, or train to workshops like *Yarn School* and *Felt School*, special events like Spring Prom (a suitable party to throw if you have a school gymnasium in your home), or to stay longer for creative work. Lawrence poet Chantel Guidry spent the month of August completing over 50 new poems. She accomplished her writing not only in her bedroom (formerly the science classroom), but also in the gym, cafeteria, and outside on the swings and front steps. Other guests have included a photographer, computer programmer, knitwear designer, and a pair of filmmakers.

Townspeople still walk in as they always did, forgetting it is now a private home. There are clues to the changes though. Big metal sculptures dot the front lawn, vintage pink chairs flank the front door, and two cats roam freely. Inside the high school entryway, the gutsy Anatomical Man greets, hip wall paintings in the former principal's office welcome, and classic wooden school chairs lounge under the glow of art deco lighting. The schoolish sense of humor picks up speed in the old trophy case where globes that escaped from classrooms and men and women on the lam from science labs commune with merry yarn creatures.

Maybe it's the nonchalant spaciousness or the huge jump-on things in the gym. I want to get out of Dodge, and get to Harveyville. I want a warm bed, Blake's food, 100 hours without the usual responsibilities and distractions, and conviviality with some creative fellow travelers. I want to finally — in this lifetime — love being in school. •

Susan Lulaki is an artist, educator, and longtime contributer to *Review.* She splits her time between Kansasw City, Missouri, and the Flint Hills in Kansas.

It's easy to picture Goldilocks wandering through this curious home deciding which bed to sleep in. Classrooms have morphed into cozy studio and living spaces. There is the dormitory-like row of beds in the grade school building with huge wall maps and inviting chalkboards. Munchkin-reachable cubbies, coat hooks, and sinks graduate in height as the grade levels go up. Light streams in through generous windows with a view of swing sets, jungle gym equipment, and Harveyville's elfin water tower.

Such a sunny building with charming schoolroom details and nostalgic appeal could well be the school out of Mayberry, except for the television and pool table in the cafeteria, ping pong table by the teachers' mailboxes, guitars and amps on stage, booze in the kitchen, comfy beds in classrooms, and — strangest of all — really good food. Blake Brokaw, resident chef and proponent of slow food, left behind St. Louis and the hip restaurants he once owned —Tangerine, Hungry Buddha, The Chocolate Bar, and Lo — to find peace and quiet in rural Kansas with organic gardening, chicken, and goat rearing.

Running Away To Your Problems

An Emerging Artist's Residency and Internship Experiences

Amanda Thatch

The hardest part of making art is getting started.

Once that first line is on the paper, others can be trusted to follow, but that first step can be a labyrinth of pressure and self-conscious reproach. You occasionally have to stop, take a moment to get some mental (and sometimes physical) distance, and then make the leap that allows you to begin. Contrary to conventional wisdom, my experience has been that when things get tough, it *helps* to run away for a while.

Opposite page:
Ayako Aramaki (Japan), *Circulation*, 2007, an interactive sculpture/ performance about waste recycling, grass, bricks, clay, 18" x 12' Dia.

Above, top to bottom:
The recently arrived Red Barn will become the gallery and public access point to Art Farm. Photo courtesy Art Farm.

The main complex of buildings on Art Farm (left side of photo). The white house on the right is being renovated as accommodation for writers. Photo courtesy Art Farm.

Sonja Hinrichsen (Germany), *Nebraska Map*, 2000, video/sculpture installation marking the many pioneer trails across Nebraska. A video loop of distant thunder, night clouds and quotes from Willa Cather's novels plays over the map. Photo courtesy Art Farm.

Like many of my peers, I discovered artist residencies[1] through the publication *Artists Communities*. This book (and website) offers an alphabetical listing of residency opportunities in the United States, cross referenced by region and discipline. When I was nearing graduation in 2004, I began searching the pages of *Artists Communities* in earnest, hoping to find a purpose for my life after school.

[1] Artist residency programs allow dedicated time and space for artists to focus on artistic production, although each program has unique requirements and expectations.

Louisa Conrad (New York), *Braided Grass*, 2005, prairie grass at Art Farm pulled together into a French braid. Dimensions vary from 3' to 30'. Photo courtesy Art Farm.

Christopher Robbins (New Jersey) *My Albatross House*, 2007, sculpture/performance of physically pushing and pulling a birdhouse structure down a road.

It was a scary time, one where I questioned my ability to make art and my right to be at a residency.

The variety of residencies available is actually quite staggering, so it helps to develop personal criteria for where to apply. Of primary concern for me were my lack of experience and funds. First, I looked for places that accepted emerging artists and that provided at least living and studio space free of charge. Finally, I looked for a good fit. Applying for a residency is like applying for a job. You have to convince a panel of strangers that you would be better suited than the next applicant, and you must draw a very specific line of relevance between your work and the opportunities available at a given program.

In 2004, I was very lucky to be accepted for a 10-week residency at Art Farm in Nebraska. My portfolio at the time was made up of paintings and sculptures of Midwest farm buildings. Art Farm's owners/directors, Ed Dadey and Janet Williams, collected such buildings, often transporting them for miles across rural Nebraska to repurpose them in the context of their residency program. Ed and Janet's home on Art Farm is made of five wooden barns that had been moved to the property and mashed together, affectionately called the "little mutant house on the prairie." Other pieces of their building collection include a one-room school house, grain bin, and pig shed all used as artist studios, and the enormous Victorian house called, simply, Victoria. Since 2004, they have moved another barn to the property, to be used as a gallery and gift shop.

In exchange for lodging and studio space, Art Farm asks its residents for three hours of work each day four days a week, to help maintain the farm. Much of this work is focused on the restoration and renovation of Victoria. A sense of inspiration is evident all over the property: previous artists had embarked on extremely ambitious and experimental projects — from giant brick cardinals to a partially submerged yurt — many of which were still on display in the vast sculpture field during my time

there. As I later learned, Art Farm selects artists and proposals that are "sometimes impractical, obscure, or outside conventional venues … the possibility of failure is welcomed as much as success."[2] Janet told me that although artists are required to make a proposal in their initial application, most change their ideas or formulate entirely new ones once they arrive and are made fully aware of the enormity of the space and the wealth of materials available.

My primary project at Art Farm was a long, low barn-shaped sculpture that would follow the contour of a small hill near Victoria. Ed and Janet were very helpful and enthusiastic, offering suggestions and mowing the tall grass from the site. Once all the pieces were in place, I proceeded to hunker down into a combination of procrastination, guilt, and fear. I did nothing but draw, read, and drive around the Nebraskan countryside for almost five weeks.

It was a scary time, one where I questioned my ability to make art and my right to be at a residency. This was the biggest project I had ever attempted, and as time wore on, the difficulty of making that fist move intensified. My release from this anxiety was my daily drive – a long, luxurious drive during which I experienced the opposite of agoraphobia. I felt like my whole being expanded out across the flat world – I was relaxed and unshakeable. I stopped at mom and pop diners, used-book shops, went to farm auctions, and visited Willa Cather's hometown.

In retrospect, these drives were what Julia Cameron in the Artist's Way calls "filling the well." They were, in the convoluted and mysterious way that art works, the necessary step toward starting. One day, I simply got up, picked up a hammer and got to work. The amazing thing was that as I worked on one project, others spontaneously arose. As I cut and hammered planks into place for my long barn, I also started cutting fabric for a costume and soldering wire for smaller sculptures. A lesson that I already knew but has to be rediscovered each time one emerges from the pit of not working, is that working begets more work; making one thing is the fuel for making the next. Soon I was barely leaving the farm, and as the days got shorter

Art Farm studio garden. Photo courtesy Art Farm.

I accumulated three major works from my Art Farm experience, along with several dozen drawings.

As with school or work, the experience of a residency depends hugely on the people with whom you share it. At Art Farm, the hundred-year-old clapboard farmhouse where residents stay can accommodate up to three artists at a time. I shared it with a an artist named Beili who was originally from China but lived in Michigan and a Dutchman named Jerone who had flown in from Amsterdam. Both were extremely hard working, but they disliked each other, which made for some tense moments. Beili and I got along extremely well and have kept in contact — we live only an hour apart in Michigan.

Ed and Janet were excellent and interesting hosts, although the span between their two personalities never ceased to amaze me.

Ed and Janet were excellent and interesting hosts, although the span between their two personalities never ceased to amaze me. Janet, originally from the U.K. and a successful ceramic artist, was very quick and wryly funny. Although she obviously enjoyed her life on Art Farm, she was also easily put out by the small grievances of living in the country. I remember her getting especially exasperated over the mower. One day after trying unsuccessfully to get it started, she recruited Ed to take a look at it. He walked slowly, as he always did, with his long gangly gait, and simply turned the key. The mower started up immediately which of course made Janet furious.

Ed, on the other hand, was absolutely imperturbable. He spoke low and slow, when he spoke at all. I remember once asking if he knew where I could find a drill. He looked at me blankly and walked away. I was confused until he returned two minutes later with the drill and held it out for my use. I don't think there is a skill he has not acquired in his lifetime. Adept at everything from woodworking to building computers, he was an endlessly valuable resource for all of the artists as we scrambled to find the right tools and techniques to bring our projects to fruition.

[2] From Art Farm's mission statement on their website, www.artfarmnebraska.org.

Artist in Residence Jamie Powell working in WSW's silkscreening studio. Photo courtesy WSW.

I left Art Farm in mid September of 2004, both sad and relieved for the residency to end. I moved to Detroit, Michigan, where my partner Andrew had just started graduate school, and where I stayed working administrative jobs for almost two years, until he graduated. When I sent out a new round of applications, my criteria were slightly revised – I was looking to get away for a long period, possibly several months, and also looking for a program with a pedagogical aspect. I seemed to be stuck in the same materials and subjects, so I wanted a place that could introduce me to new approaches. Money was still an issue, but I at least had the experience of Art Farm and several exhibitions to validate my capabilities.

Out of four applications, I was accepted to two internships for emerging artists. I chose to attend the longer of the two, a six-month internship at the Women's Studio Workshop. WSW focuses on printmaking, papermaking, and publishing limited-edition artist books, as well as supporting work in their clay studio. They offer grants and residencies to women artists from around the world. As an intern, my job was to help maintain the studios and support the residents and staff, which translated into a lot of sweeping floors and making lunches. In return, we interns were given use of the studios for our personal work and a show in the WSW gallery at the end of our stay.

Once again, I spent almost half of my time in misanthropic doubt. I was slow to grasp the printmaking mindset: the capability for multiples and the sequential process of layering. Through the tutelage of my fellow intern, who had earned her degree in printmaking and papermaking, I eventually found my footing and discovered a special interest in letterpress. I designed a small book and, as had happened before, the mere act of spending time in the studio led to other projects. I also *adored* the women who populated the studio. The other interns, staff, original founders of WSW, and the residents, continually inspired and supported me. I dearly hope to return to WSW as a resident in the coming years and have the advantage of familiarity with the studios when I prepare my application.

I still find it difficult to both fulfill my daily responsibilities and dedicate time to making art, but

Women's Studio Workshop. Photo courtesy WSW.

Canadian Artists in Residence, Kathryn Immonen working with local school in WSW's Hands-On-Art program. Photo courtesy WSW.

The other interns, staff, original founders of WSW, and the residents, continually inspired and supported me.

Art Farm and WSW both occurred at critical times to jar me out of stultification in the face of ordinary obligations. Spending time away from my normal environment stimulated both grandiose feelings of inadequacy and the humility needed to step out of my own way. In each case, I had to allow time to freak out and to calm down before I could make something happen. I experience a mini version of this scenario every time I step into the studio. Making art is not easy, but it becomes more so with practice, just as it becomes more difficult with avoidance. My residency and internship reminded me of the importance of artistic community and of the fact that – even when you feel you have nothing to offer – the only cure is to put in the time and get to work. •

Amanda Thatch is an artist in Detroit, Michigan, originally from Kansas City, Missouri. You can contact her at amandathatch@sbcglobal.net. For more information about the resources mentioned in this article, please visit artistcommunities.org, artfarmnebraska.org and wsworkshop.org.

Apocalypse Blues

Steve Shapiro

Suppose they caused the apocalypse and no one died? Like a host who counts the absent guests only when his party winds down, the various psychics, millennialists, and believers who routinely announce the end of the world rarely think about the no-shows. This Baudelairean glorification of death plays out in television, movies, both serious and tabloid magazines, and especially on the Internet. Rarely does the scenario seriously extend to the day after the day the world ends. Of visions of fiery fury and doom machines, on the other hand, there is no lack of imagination, as if imagination will be sufficient to protect us all. As evidenced by the apocalyptic tone of so much high and Pop art these days — the mad political caricaturing, the rise of zombie culture in films and fashion, the mutant or futuristic presence in *anime* and *manga*, songs like "Thunder on the Mountain" on Bob Dylan's *Modern Times*, Alfonso Cuarón's bleak movie *Children of Men*, the Cormac McCarthy wasteland novel *The Road* — we are into another apocalyptic cycle where worse is better. The dour, doomed milieu combined with the often exhilarating reach of invention[1] reveals the deeply conflicted need we must have to speculate about our own deaths: dying as the last entertainment. Ideally, apocalyptic art ought to be spectacular, like *Guernica* or Dürer's *Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse*, rather than the Hollywood absurdism of *Planet of the Apes* and *The Day After Tomorrow* or the Christian anti-Semitic *Left Behind* series. It seems that we never can get the apocalypse right, so every so often it returns in some form to haunt (and inspire) us. Why not? It is the greatest show on earth.

The apocalypse is the ultimate in cool. It brings out the uncensored inhibitions in individuals, like Mardi Gras. No one can prove how the end is likely to occur, thus no one can be wrong. We hold exceptions, though, for those fuzzy shamans — like TV weathermen predicting snow in July — who announce a specific date. Edgar Cayce[2], once a staple of New Age culture, shot for the year 2000, and though the much-publicized year brought an abundance of art seeking to tie one century to the next, as a religious event, Y2K was a disappointment. The Mayan calendar runs out in 2012; Muslims believe the year 2076 will be the appointed time; and the sign for the Jews is not until 2240, when the seventh millennium kicks off. At one point, 1500 was considered the magical date. Though the year came and passed, it is notable for Albrecht Dürer's achievement: the woodcut series *Apocalypse*, published in 1498. Fifteen oversized prints depicting the last days as described in the Revelation of St. John the Divine, they still issue forth with a vividness and a slight chill, not unlike Francisco Goya's orgiastic print series, the *Caprichos*, with their monsters and dream creatures. Add the Dutch master Hieronymous Bosch's surrealist allegories and there is the foundation for generations of apocalyptic art: flames whipping upwards, tormented souls in agony, Lucifer's minions in grotesque, usually animalistic, form — perdition as an episode of *The Simpsons*.

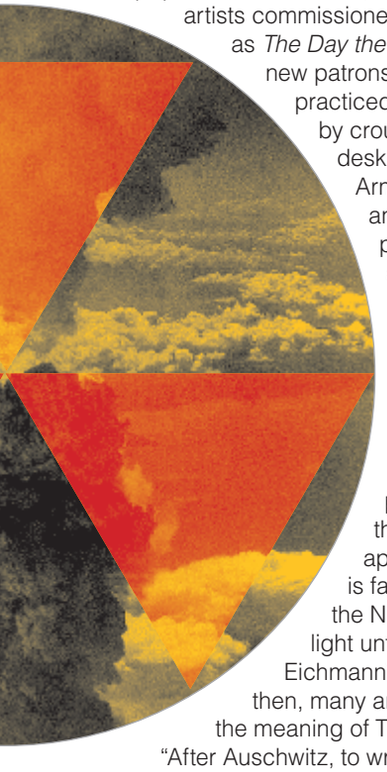
Religion has never disappeared from visions of the apocalypse, but as art in the twentieth century broke down the hierarchies between craft and culture and between the secular and the spiritual what was once thought of as the *holy terror* succumbed to, well, *Godzilla*: giant creatures formed from a nuclear aftermath. Mass terror became mass art. Each time a catastrophic event occurs, artists seem to need to interpret the cause or effect; and for all the shock and shlock, we need them to draw out the poison. The First World War evoked a propagandized side of the fantasy with soldiers dying in roughly drawn compositions or with the sheen of formal abstraction balancing out the partisanship. Otto Dix, Max Beckmann, George Grosz, and others drew from personal experience. Their work is not apocalyptic in the signature way of artists from centuries before or of those in the decades to come; but their intentions are clear. Beckmann's hellish *The Night* (1918-19) — its numerous figures bent like broken matches — portrays a few in bandages and two slumped, hanged; a dead woman's gown is open in the back, exposing the indignity of her naked buttocks. Compared to Bosch's eternal-damnation tableaux, *The Night* signifies *an* end but not *the* end: some small victory.

By the next war, serious artists were still responding, but so much art history had interrupted world history that Nazism could not keep up with Futurism or Constructivism, much less Dadaism and the children of Marcel Duchamp. It could be said that, with European Modernism, artists turned their backs on the world, though through their varied "isms" they in fact tried to organize the revolution. To them, the Eiffel Tower was technologically superior to the Cathedral of Chartres[3], and a Bauhaus-designed chair was more ideal than an altarpiece: standing apart in their workshops, the mood was utopian rather than dystopian. This was not true for *all* artists. The Japanese painter Tsuguharu Foujita's *Last Stand at Attu* (1943), depicts a nightmarish mass-suicide march of soldiers against a brackish black background. Some soldiers' faces resemble skulls, as if they are already dead. In its rotting panorama the painting adumbrates the large-scale battle *mises en scène* in *The Lord of the Rings* movies, where the screen is filled by a *horror vacui* — but painterly, so as not to cause the viewer to upset his popcorn.

The detonation of atomic bombs over Japan brought more than the end of the War or even the end of civilization: it set off the beginnings of a modern interpretation of the apocalypse. Like theatre productions of Shakespeare that are updated, the apocalypse,

[1] The spiritual Russian *nostalghia* of Andrei Tarkovsky's 1982 film, *Stalker*, that has crept into Western movies is one example.
[2] Edgar Cayce (1877–1945), was an American self-proclaimed psychic and member of The Disciples of Christ. Cayce lived before the emergence of the New Age movement but his work remains a major influence on its teachings. Among his various inaccurate prophecies was the prediction that 1933 would be a "good year".
[3] The Cathedral of Our Lady of Chartres is located in Chartres, France (about 50 miles from Paris) and is considered one of France's finest examples of the Gothic style of architecture.

returning in the new populist age of television and the movies, was quickly absorbed as a great night out for the entire family. The religious element that once inspired William Blake was replaced by a shinier, faster, louder doomsday — Charles Baudelaire's nineteenth-century Romanticism produced on Detroit's assembly line via Hollywood's script doctors. Warner Bros. gave us *Them!* in 1954, the startling story of Brobdingnagian[4] ants, supersized after nuclear testing gone awry. Mutant movies, replete with gawky special effects, were the modern equivalent of Renaissance artists' offerings to popes. The difference, of course, was that now artists commissioned mass masterpieces such as *The Day the Earth Stood Still* for their new patrons, whose schoolchildren practiced surviving a nuclear attack by crouching under their wooden desks. The long evolution of Armageddon in the movies and in print[5] constituted a post-war America poised for a replay of Orson Welles' 1938 radio version of *The War of the Worlds* or something else coming in the night from space. The contrast between the over-the-top art that emerged from the growing Cold War paranoia and fantasies of the fifties and that other real apocalypse, the Holocaust, is fascinating; the full picture of the Nazi horror did not come to light until the early sixties, after Adolf Eichmann's capture and trial. Even then, many artists seemed intent to honor the meaning of Theodor Adorno's axiom, "After Auschwitz, to write poetry is barbaric." That thought, however debatable, can be traced to a line of Holocaust art — of modern art, really — from Paul Celan's poetry to the opaque novels of the late W.G. Sebald, both of whom wrote about the immense tragedy without putting it in words directly.



The sixties *were* the apocalypse, or perhaps it just seemed that way. Vietnam and the Doors, Ginsberg's nirvana, May '68 in Paris, the riots at Chicago's Democratic Convention[6], the march on the Pentagon, the Soviet invasion of Prague, that last long chord at the end of *Sgt. Pepper's* — the apocalypse in real life was often greater than anything artists could summon up. Like then, the response by both high and low artists to the September 11 attacks and the growing fear of all-out annihilation has diverged between the thoughtful and the theatrical. The sixties saw both the super-sober movie *Fail-Safe* and Kubrick's parody, *Dr. Strangelove* (which was both high and low). In the aftermath of the New York terrorism, American movies have taken the more spectacular route, exploding planets routinely; with audience numbers in mind, TV has gone back to its old standbys of aliens and lost survivors and super-patriots[7]. It is art, after a fashion; but to what end, if not *the* end? Happy endings, like the network evening news broadcasts that close with a heart-tugging story about penguins, are a convention. American entertainment, whether it is sports or drama, makes a big point of endings. The apocalypse may come, but it will certainly end when the lights go up or the last page is turned or the goal line is reached; it has become catnip to kitsch. The incomprehensibility of the event is turned into a movie pitch, far more shocking for its jadedness than the way that Jean-Luc Godard ended his legendary *Weekend* (1967): after a pleasant couple's trip to the country turns into a surrealistic nightmare of rape, murder, and cannibalism, the final title card reads, "*Le fin*," which is followed a beat later by: "*du cinéma*." Indeed, the end of cinema, when it ceases to be a form for humanity and only a medium for fantasy, might as well be the end of community feeling that the arts represent at their best.

So now, wholesale death arriving daily in the newspaper must fight for space in our over-exhausted hearts and heads with the possibility of the ultimate last act. Yet certain serious artists absorbing the zeitgeist of fear and lies and dread, though their work often gathers dark clouds, have begun to come around to art's healing uniqueness. Fine artists continue to largely refrain from taking art as their weapon in the style of Pablo Picasso or Robert Motherwell; but novelists, trusting time to be on their sides, have begun to give shape to events where shapelessness had become a kind of non-art, a void. A few years ago, authors like Margaret Atwood in her dystopian novel *Orynx and Crake* were publishing hopeless novels of a non-future. In the past months, several brilliant novels of even limited grace have appeared: Cormac McCarthy's *The Road* is the story of an unnamed man and his young son's journey through "the ashes of the late world"; Jim Crace's *The Pesthouse* is set in an America leveled by plague; Matthew Sharpe's *Jamestown*, is a retelling of the John Smith-Pocahontas history in modern times: "Today has been an awful day in a run of awful days as long as life so far," the fictional real John Rolfe begins. "The thirty of us climbed aboard this bus in haste, fled down the tunnel, and came up on the river's far bank in time to see the Chrysler Building plunge into the earth." However audacious its opening, by novel's end its theme of persistence carries its own silence, far from the whoopin' 'n' hollerin' Slim Pickens makes riding a nuke at the en d of *Dr. Strangelove*.

Art trades the future for the now. Political paintings like Édouard Manet's *The Execution of Emperor Maximilian* and Francisco Goya's *The Third of May* were dangerous in the nineteenth century. They represented the historical rather than the hypothetical. They remain vital whether or not the painters are reporting what happened, Robert Hughes has written, because we see what they want us to see. The recycling of apocalypse art moves us further apart from the reason it scared us originally; it has become a sequel unto itself. Anselm Keifer, a true apocalyptic artist, works like a scavenger from the future with no past: his use of wire, straw, sand, horse hair, and other substances of the earth assault the viewer, irritate him, make nothing easy. Who said the apocalypse is supposed to be easy? The novelists, thinking harder than contemporary artists, feel closer to the world, both as it is and as it might be. Even in a popular medium like cinema, when the occasional serious picture slips through, the director's imagination reverberates beyond the showy material. During a battle scene in his *Children of Men*, Cuarón throws flecks of blood onto the camera lens, as though to deny even the safety of the movie screen the way that filmmakers have sometimes washed water up against the camera when shooting from the surface of an ocean; it accentuates the immediacy and added sense of despair. However thrilling the experience, apocalyptic art is an inevitable cultural reflection of the times. It is the ultimate subject for art, but when we play at it, the apocalypse comes off as so much a*pop*alypse — when the time comes, it will no doubt be available online at Amazon.com, at a discount. •

Steve Shapiro is a longtime film and book critic and one of this publication's original contributing writers. Shapiro's essays on art, artists, and the world in between appear regularly in *Review*.

[4] Editor's Note: The author is referencing Brobdingnag, a fictional land in Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* which is occupied by giants. Its usage here is probably extrinsic, but the decision to replace it with a more pedestrian word was outweighed by "Brobdingnagian" being really fun to say.

[5] *On the Beach*; Pat Frank's *Alas, Babylon*, an apocalyptic pre-*Gulliver's Island*

[6] Norman Mailer wrote about several police who chased a demonstrator into a restaurant and beat him in front of the diners.

[7] The fascistic *24*, for example, urges torture as a reasonable method when the world's fate hangs in the balance between commercials.

FUTURE-TENSE:

VISIONS, WISHES & PREDICTIONS FOR A NEW WORLD

Six Kansas City Artists Draw the Future

curated by Marcus Cain

SETH JOHNSON • CODY CRITCHELOE • SUSI LULAKI • MARCUS CAIN • LYNUS YOUNG • PEREGRINE HONIG

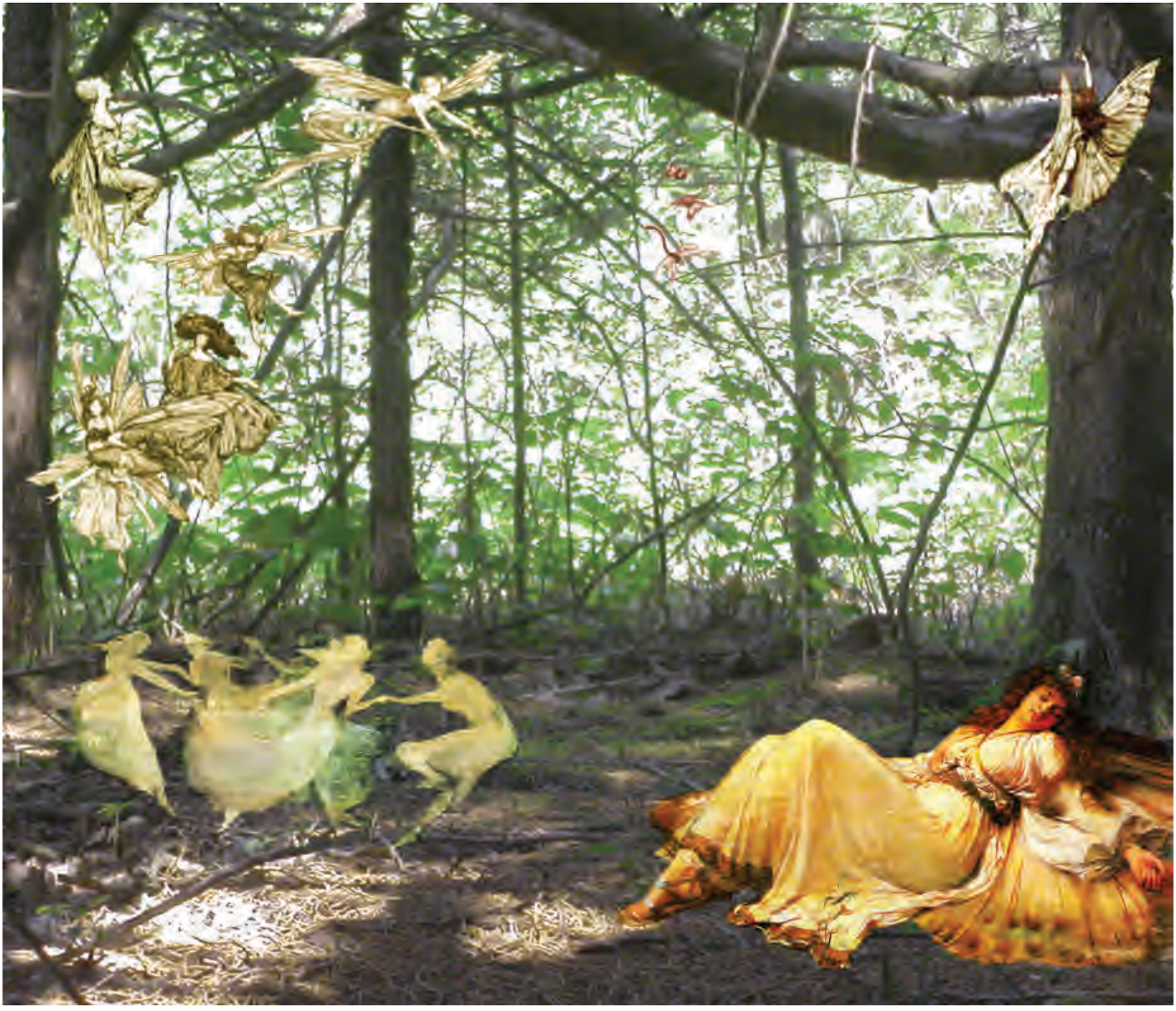
Future-thought is always provocative and rarely accurate. As someone who has been a longtime fan of the science fiction genre, I find pop-culture's representation of life in the future fascinating. Through its ideological extrapolations and scientific exaggerations, it struggles to show us a trajectory of what life will be like at the end of our present course (*Planet of the Apes* is a personal favorite). Whether contemporary culture's obsession with the future focuses on the tales of the 16th century prophet Nostradamus, the End of Days as described by any number of religions and cultures, or the end-quotient of global warming, the result is always a potent mix of fear and metaphor.

Before leaving Review, I conceived of a curatorial project within the December issue *Future-tense: Visions, Wishes & Predictions for a New World* that would offer a selection of artists the opportunity to submit images inspired by this theme. Artists were invited to participate by submitting or creating an image that depicts their concept of the future. The parameters of the assignment were open-ended with the only stipulation given that the image(s) should be responsive to the terms: "wishes, visions & predictions."

In some cases, artists were asked to submit specific preexisting images, while others preferred to create new works based on these guidelines. Each artist was also given the opportunity to write a brief description of his/her image or simply offer a title that might allow readers to come to their own conclusions about what the future may hold.

Seth Johnson, *cubomancy*, 2006, digital file, infinitely scalable

Cody Critcheloe, *the fear*, 2007, graphite on paper



Susi Lulaki, *Fairyland of Kansas*

Marcus Cain, *Rapture as Pastel Obelisk*, 2007, latex, acrylic and graphite on wood panel, 12" x 12".

Lynus Young, *In the Lurch at Holographic History Camp,* 2007, etched glass, ink. 96' x 99". Photo: E.G. Shempf.

when my drawings
grow old,
they will not
wear red hats.

Peregrine Honig, *Red Hat,* 2007, ink, gouache on paper.

Importer Exporter? David Ford's *Maximón* at Jack the Pelican Presents

Matt Wycoff

Maximón
Jack The Pelican Presents
Williamsburg, Brooklyn, New York
September 14, 2007

On Friday, September 14th Kansas City based artist David Ford brought his annual performance extravaganza *Maximón* to Jack the Pelican Presents, a smallish gallery just off the strip in Williamsburg, Brooklyn. The importation of *Maximón* to New York was billed as "an all-out presentation of one of the most gorgeous and decadent, debaucherous spectacles to ever grow out of the American Midwest."[1] A tall order considering the Midwest is a place where decadence and debauchery can describe activities as diverse and nonsensical as smoking methamphetamines and bull riding. Whether or not the importation of bohemian culture from the Midwest can actually bolster the crumbling credibility of Williamsburg's authenticity is anybody's guess.

Ford is an ambitious mid-career artist with a long history as an instigator in the Kansas City art scene. His artistic and business endeavors over the past 20 years have helped to cultivate a coherent scene out of an otherwise scattered section of the bohemian population which thrives happily on cheap rent, perpetual delinquency, laid back lifestyles, loads of free parking, and a refreshing lack of self-awareness

David Ford, *Maximón,* 2007 Installation detail

and posturing. Ford is also an avid world traveler. Through his travels he adapted the culture and mysticism of southern Mexico and Guatemala into his lifestyle, painting, and performance.

In the late 90's Ford began an annual weeklong performance in Kansas City based on the veneration of Pre-Columbian Mayan god Maximón that he witnessed during his travels. Maximón, also known as San Simón, is often thought of as the patron saint of vices. The effigy of the saint takes on many forms but is generally veiled, with a dark suit, hat, and glasses and adorned with various wreaths, face paint, beads, and flowers. Cigarettes, cigars, pornography, alcohol, and photographs of illicit lovers are among the standardized offerings exchanged for good health and other blessings.

Ford's importation of Maximón to Kansas City includes a yearly pilgrimage to the highlands of Guatemala in which he closes down his restaurant (YJ's) and encourages his employees, friends, and others in the community to join him. His annual trips to Guatemala and the weeklong festival each year have transformed the ritual from ancient Mayan tradition to Midwestern chic. In Kansas City the event's sensibility is spared of too much irony and is actually pleasantly sincere. The sprawling, yearly celebration of Maximón in Kansas City is a naïve, possibly misguided, but heart-felt jumble that strives unselfconsciously to celebrate authentic community.

The mythology surrounding the Kansas City version of the ritual is that each year a saint for the weeklong festival is chosen from among the group who has been to Guatemala with Ford and experienced the tradition from its source. This is a flourish that utilizes the intimation of exclusivity to mine the truly profound transformative power of mythology and collective experience. Once selected the saint must endure a week of consuming other people's vices and being carried around on a throne/shrine bearing witness to a kind of traveling gypsy festival where the specter of alcoholism is the unseemly but nevertheless real undercurrent. This festival can

David Ford, *Maximón,* 2007 Installation detail, Photo credit: Elena Dahl

be found in local bars or house parties throughout the week. The tradition in Kansas City mines what has recently been called "a pedigreed bohemian settlement as old as anyone can remember."[2] The energy of the event invariably radiates out from its core of costumed participants, to a ring of head nodding or otherwise interested enthusiasts, to an outer ring of bystanders and passersby who appear to be, or actually are, indifferent.

On the night of the performance in Williamsburg the air had recently turned crisp with the arrival of fall. A

[1] Jack The Pelican Presents, September 2007 press release.
[2] Peter von Ziegesar, 10 Charlotte St. Foundation, 2007

David Ford, *Maximón,* 2007 Installation detail

pleasantly disheveled, Mardi Gras inspired troop known as the Dirty Force Brass Knuckle Street Band and Soul Revue warmed up behind a U-Haul truck down the street from the gallery preparing for a short parade down the block. Their costumes were complete with musty feathered boas, beads, face paint, and other sequined flourishes over ill-fitting thrift store suits, unitards, or colorful alpaca sweaters carted back from Guatemala or Mexico. Their instruments phumphed and squeaked in a disorderly clatter. Purple and gold feathers settled gently onto the street before tumbling in the breeze toward McCarren Park, or into the vortex created by the bottoms of chain link fences.

Soon the band was making its way toward the front of the gallery squalling a spirited version of *Shake Your Booty* that later slipped appropriately into a version of *When The Saints Go Marching In*. The gallery was thick with eye-watering incense and candle smoke. Pans of frying bacon fat on the floor sent thick clouds of oily muck up into the atmosphere. Once inside the gallery the marching band collided with the Kansas City based trio Snuff Jazz already playing inside. The saint sat costumed and deadpan behind red velvet curtains on a high alter in the back of the gallery surrounded by flickering candles, crepe paper streamers, and the thick, acrid air that had risen to the ceiling.

In between screaming along with whacked-out brass band covers, attending to the saint, and spitting mists of vodka over the dense crowd, Ford also had to take pains to politely corral revelers and alcoholic beverages off the sidewalk in an effort to avoid police intervention. This, as it turns out, was an extremely calculated sort of debauchery. Going from zero to sixty among a mostly sober crowd with no gradual evolution of intensity the event felt constrained, forced, almost schizophrenic. Despite the shamanistic evocations of its creator what was most striking about the performance was the way the importation of the event to New York illuminated certain realities about place, history, and authenticity.

Beyond its original displacement from the Mayan ritual Ford's event is an amalgamation of any number of diverse influences from Mardi Gras and Halloween to 1960's style "happenings," protest marches, acid tests, even the sad sack spectacle of professional wrestling. Ford himself was keenly aware of the scenes on the Lower East Side and SOHO during the 70s and 80s in New York. Ford's reputation as an instigator in Kansas City and his wide-ranging activities there since have been at least partially a result of this influence.

The transplantation of Maximón from the highlands of Guatemala, to Kansas City, and finally to Williamsburg reads as a bizarre alchemical experiment utilizing a strange and pervasive global symbology. The combination of cigarettes, drugs, alcohol, the implication of poverty, liberal sexuality, and the lurking potential of violence have a lasting, almost undeniable allure. Their magnetism persists regardless of radical differences in geography and culture. Despite some twenty or thirty years of being tactlessly packaged and commodified in galleries, boutiques, music, television programming, and T-shirt design in America the intimation that the correct equation of these tropes of authenticity somehow add up to cultural redemption or personal salvation continues to enthrall and elicit reaction.

Part of *Maximón*'s failing in New York is to point out what artists in New York have been told a million times already; that New York has become too commercialized, expensive, and anesthetized to support the activities and lifestyles of a bona fide bohemian population. Like so many attempts to capitalize on authenticity *Maximón* treads far too close to inane egotism and self-glorification. The wonderful salience of Ford's re-importation of these ideas however, is that they come back to New York via an obscure ritual of the Guatemalan highlands. This twist re-animates New York's increasingly complicated love affair with its own storied bohemian past as an innate, deep-rooted bacchanalian aspect of genuine human culture rather than a crass and increasingly ungainly marketing ploy. •

Matt Wycoff holds a B.F.A. from the Kansas City Art Institute. He is an artist, writer, freelance journalist, and musician who currently lives and works in Brooklyn, New York.

David Ford, *Maximón,* 2007 Installation detail

Unsocial: The Bully Series

Steve Walker

Duane I. Johnson: *Unsocial: The Bully Series*
The Carter Art Center Gallery
Metropolitan Community College - Penn Valley
Kansas City, Missouri
September 7 - October 19, 2007

Sharp is the sting of the postmodern American bully. Every playground and school cafeteria in the country has probably been the site of some act of humiliation or harassment so painful it is a wonder the victims do not leave chalk outlines of their pummeled egos on the ground. While schools adopt anti-bullying programs into their curricula, the bullies just get savvier. With the explosion of social networking sites like MySpace, today's bully does not even have to leave his bedroom to wreak havoc on the one thing that is unique and holy to every child or teenager: the sense of self.

This fall, at the Carter Art Center Gallery on the Penn Valley campus of the Metropolitan Community College system, artist Duane I. Johnson tackled the subject of bullying. Johnson installed a number of his works and collated them under the moniker *Unsocial: The Bully Series*. The show was a hard-hitting punch to the solar plexus that made up in relevance - and, depending on the viewer, private angst - what it may have lacked in subtlety.

That assessment may not be completely fair. Only one piece in the exhibition jumped the breach into obviousness. In *A Bully's Life*, Johnson depicts a graphic novel-like male figure, shorn of identifiable features, sitting morosely in a beat-up chair. He nurses a bottle of what the viewer might readily assume to be cheap bourbon. Panels to his right show a triptych of benchmark incidents comprising his psychic unraveling, like a run-in with the law. Though it communicated in spades the idea that bullies are lonely and pathetic, the sequence is more wishful than true. After all, some would say that boardrooms, locker rooms, and the halls of Congress are full of reformed bullies who are doing just fine.

The bulk of the show, though - mostly rendered in mixed media on canvas or wood - provoked more emotions than shoulder shrugs. The biggest piece in the gallery, *5 Bullies*, places its title characters front and center. Five screen-printed Caucasians — four male, one female, a couple with clenched fists — stand almost eye-to-eye and to scale with viewers, mutely inviting some desired provocation. Dozens of postcard-sized images composed of various acts of bullying form parenthesis around the center of the piece. Some of these images are hand-sketched and others are photo-shopped visages of such people as former Federal Reserve Chairman Alan Greenspan and the late actor Lee Marvin, whose careers were defined by machismo.

Pour Nerd, mixed media, on canvas, 60" x 72"

Johnson has said that the pieces reflect one or more viewpoints within the familiar shape he might tag *The Bullying Triangle*: the bully, the victim, and the onlooker. "Every person has been in each position at some point in their life," he says of his "exploration of all variables of these relationships." In *5 Bullies*, for example, the antagonists are surrounded by amorphous, ghostlike figures pointing fingers. They register like those impish devils and angels hovering over every villain in an old Warner Brothers cartoon undergoing a crisis of conscience.

In other pieces, the onlookers possess real facial features with the help of old yearbook photographs. At the vortex of *Class Bully-Dunce* is a student whose body, pushed face-first into the corner of a typical classroom, is surrounded by the consequences of his punishment: the sentence *I Will Not Hurt My Classmates* is written hundreds of times, as if repetition could quell cruelty. Affixed around the perpetrator are those aforementioned yearbook photos — a mix of smiling, innocent-until-proven-guilty faces (circa the Kennedy era, if not earlier). This theatrically staged tableaux is not unlike the guy and gal posing next to a vintage car over the caption *Most Courteous*. Because viewers

5 Bullies, mixed media on wood, 72" x 168"

Dance, mixed media on wood and canvas

could not have known the personalities of the kids pictured, the piece both trumpets and whispers irony.

Despite Tina Fey's wickedly astute screenplay for the film *Mean Girls*, bullying in Johnson's show was almost exclusively crafted of raging testosterone. Anyone capable of brushing off bullying as boys being boys should consider the barbaric tone of Johnson's *Swirly Time*. For those few who remain uninitiated to the world of physical, frat-rat toilet humor, a *swirly*[1] is the act of plunging one's victim head-first into a toilet bowl while flushing.

The same prank depicted in the gallery wasn't quite so madcap, however. On and around the toilet were splatters of paint conspicuously tinted more toward oxblood than fire engine-red — the color of something recent and horrible — and contextually, one does not know exactly what to make of the photo in the lower right corner of a smirking George W. Bush with a bloody nose.

Bernadette Torres, the director of Carter Art Center, said in September that, when Johnson was in Kansas City to hang the show, he pointed to *Hero Within:In My Room* as being the most autobiographical piece in the exhibition. Upon a background of McCall's shirt patterns and the lyrics to Brian Wilson's *In My Room*, stands a frequent subject of bullies everywhere: the studious, bespectacled young man who tends to wear more pencils than pretenses. Running along the westernmost edge are cells from a comic book featuring a caped superhero, no doubt an invention that came from the sketchbook of the figure in question. Most resonant is the way Johnson has asserted the ultimate script of many victims of bullies — a tale of masked omnipotence where kids always triumph over adversity. •

Steve Walker's work has appeared previously in *Review*. *The Pitch Weekly*, *Kansas City Magazine* and *The Advocate*. He is currently and arts reporter for KCUR 89.3 FM and teaches creative writing at the Kansas City Art Institute.

[1] According to *Wikipedia* (as this vernacular is not to be found in *Webster's Dictionary*): Swirly or Swirlie (n.) — The act of holding the victim upside down with his or her head in the toilet bowl while flushing. Typically perpetrated by two or more older, larger individuals. Can result in injury and charges being filed. More commonly known as bogwashing in the U.K, or dunnyflushing in Australia.

Window | Interface

Elizabeth Wolfson

Window | Interface
Mildred Lane Kemper Art Museum
Washington University
St. Louis, Missouri
August 31 - November 5, 2007

The Mildred Lane Kemper Art Museum is poised to celebrate its first birthday in its spacious new home, but already the museum has emerged as the guiding institutional light for the St. Louis art community. Its current exhibition, *Window | Interface*, curated by Sabine Eckmann, director and chief curator, and Lutz Koepnick, curator of new media, is typical of the Kemper's commitment to showing work that is timely, intellectually fascinating, and beautiful to look at. The show is the second installment in the museum's *Screen Arts and New Media Aesthetics* series, which is meant to "stimulate discussion about the aesthetics of the digital and the location of new media art in current research, discourse, and artistic practice." This is a refreshing goal in a city where video art is still regarded with fear and distrust, and any work not on paper or canvas is generally relegated to the proverbial back seat.

Eckmann and Koepnick are clearly conscious of their audience's potential lack of familiarity with digital and electronic media, and do an excellent job of easing visitors into the more conceptually and aesthetically challenging work. The exhibition begins in the museum's atrium with several large photographs, reminding us that photography, now so quotidian and integrated into daily life, was once as new and strange as video installation. Upon turning into the exhibition's main space, the viewer is immediately confronted with an Olafur Eliasson piece, *Seeing Yourself Seeing*, a piece of clear glass about three feet by three feet, framed and evenly stripped with narrow pieces of mirrored tape. The effect of unexpectedly turning into this piece is disconcerting – it is difficult to process what is going on inside the frame. Both the viewer's reflected image and the view through the frame are broken up and combined inside the frame, resulting in a disjointed depiction of the piece's contextual reality. This one work neatly embodies many of the show's themes: art as a window into both present and other realities; the politics of viewing; the myth of objectivity; and the interaction between art object and audience.

Within the exhibition's same introductory space, one also finds a work of a completely different nature, nearly five hundred years older, which nonetheless echoes many of these themes: *Man Drawing a Reclining Woman*, an Albrecht Dürer woodcut of an artist sketching a voluptuous, reclining nude by an open window. The artist views his model through a window grid typically used to accomplish Renaissance-style perspective, seemingly unaffected by the nudity of the woman mere feet from him. These two works, separated by centuries and technique, convey that though the works which lie ahead may seem strangely new and disconnected from the art traditions we are used to, the ideas engaged are as traditional as three-point perspective itself.

The remainder of the exhibition space is divided into two large sections: one devoted to aesthetic explorations of windows, the other devoted to interfaces. There are three additional smaller spaces, each containing a single, videographic work. Within the "window" section, Jeff Wall's *Blind Window* series of large, lit photographs (technically cibachrome transparencies backed by aluminum light boxes)

Cerith Wyn Evans (Welsh, b. 1958), *Think of this as a Window*, 2005, neon mounted on Plexiglas, 5 1/2 x 57 5/16 x 2". Courtesy of Galerie Neu, Berlin.

Doug Aitken, *screens*, 2005, C-print, ed. 1/6, 48" x 60 1/2". Courtesy of the artist and Regen Projects, Los Angeles

dominate the space. Their luminous glow brings grace to the weathered, dilapidated details of Wall's windows, cracked and covered as they are by cobwebs, plywood, and peeling paint. Combined with the neon light of Cerith Wyn Evans' *Think of this as a Window*, a Plexiglas-mounted wall sculpture of the title spelled out in neon lights, these two pieces overwhelm the space's remaining work. Think of this as a Window is a lovely meditation on artistic intent and the evolution of meaning; a contemporary re-imagining of Rene Magritte's *The Treachery of Images*.

The second of the two large spaces, or the "interface" room, is filled almost exclusively with digital and video works. In various visits to the exhibition, I was fortunate to witness visitors, including several children, enthusiastically interacting with the works in this room. Of particular fascination was Jeffrey Shaw's *The Golden Calf*, a computergraphic installation comprised of a handheld LCD monitor resting upon an otherwise empty pedestal. When picked up and pointed at the pedestal, a digital image of a golden statue of a cow, the proverbial golden calf, appears atop the pedestal. One can circle the pedestal, holding the LCD monitor, and view the virtual statue from all angles, even seeing the objects hanging on the walls around the pedestal mirrored in the gold statue's reflective sides. Kirsten Geisler's *Dream of Beauty — Touch Me*, Singo Inao's *Sho-sui-kin*, and Peter Campus' *Prototype for Interface* are similarly interactive. The artwork is static until a viewer touches it, eliciting brief new sounds and, in the case of *Dream of Beauty*, movement. Although some might accuse these artists of playing to the crowd, I would argue that these works function similarly to Eliasson's *Seeing Yourself Seeing*, raising similar questions about the act of viewing and the roles of artist and audience in the creation of art and meaning. Further, these works follow in modern art's tradition of questioning the art world's rules and hierarchies by inviting the audience to cross the invisible line on the floor which, when crossed, usually results in a scolding from a security guard or gallery attendant.

Unfortunately, the remainder of the work in the "interface" room is almost all videos playing on flat screens, six works in relatively close proximity to each other. It is a little daunting and difficult to watch one without being distracted by what is going on in another. Of these works, the collaborative piece by Charlotte Moorman, Nam June Paik, and Jud Yalkut, *TV Cello Premier*, and Valie Export's *Touch Cinema* are the most engaging. The two works are similar in their alternative employment of televisions. In *TV Cello Premier*, Moorman, seated, plays a cello-like object constructed of three televisions playing different videos by drawing a bow across it like an actual cello. In *Touch Cinema*, Export wears a television constructed of cardboard over her naked torso. The television has two holes cut in the front which men are invited to reach into in order to touch her naked chest. Like Cerith Wyn Evans' *Think of this as Window*, these works question objects' predetermined use and ways in which art can subvert those assigned meanings. In recontextualizing the television, a host of additional issues are raised, such as the relationship between body and screen, notions of voyeurism, and the difference between passive viewing and tactile experience.

It is refreshing to finally see an art institution in St. Louis willing to devote substantial resources to educating its audience not just about the past, but about its present as well. *Window / Interface* is an inspiring demonstration of what can result when curators refuse to assume their audience desires to be shown the same artists, styles, and artifacts they have seen so many times before. One can only look forward to the future installments of this series with faith that Eckmann and Koepnick will continue to raise the bar for themselves and the St. Louis art community. •

Elizabeth Wolfson is a graduate of Washington University living in St. Louis, Missouri. She works as a gallery associate at the Craft Alliance Gallery and interns at White Flag Projects.

American Pastoral

Ascot J. Smith

American Pastoral
Kemper Museum Of Contemporary Art
Kansas City, Missouri
July 13 - September 30, 2007

As a Midwesterner, I find myself very curious about work that defines itself through a similar rural identity. It was this curiosity that brought me to Robin Bernat's American Pastoral. This five-part video triptych is an ode to Bernat's true love, who died in a camping accident a month after she had a nightmarish premonition about his death.

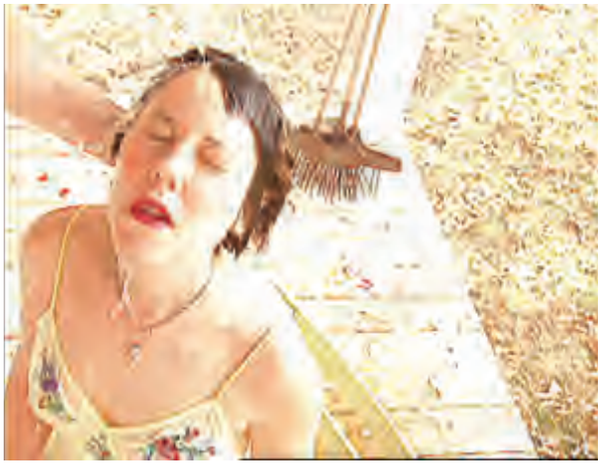
The opening of the piece begins with a bang - literally with fireworks - but only after the introductory text appears: "Chapter One TENDER BUTTONS". The single image of colorful explosions against the night sky blur with the purplish black video image that, at times, is so grainy it causes an illusionary effect. This is the only instance when the imagery's low resolution is effective.

Part two, "JUST A CLOSER WALK WITH THEE", opens with an ethereal Southern hymn as three images come into focus. The right image depicts white sheets blowing in the wind. The middle image is from a traveler's point of view down a river. The left image shows a woman being drenched with water. This action of baptism is slightly erotic as the woman sits, staring up in a summer dress. Comparing the three images, Bernat presents an allegory of passing, as the baptism releases her sorrow through a nostalgic memory. Unfortunately, all meaning derived from this moment in the narrative is defeated when the woman dries off with a towel and begins to chat casually with the drencher off-screen. This moment, like others (the Videographer hand is seen pointing at a barn and later touching a flower), becomes contrived and loses its metaphorical power in a way similar to seeing a boom mic drop down into a scene in a commercial film. Bernat's technique is questionable, although consistent – zooming in and out of the scenery causing the auto exposure to make the imagery look blown-out. This is occasionally disorienting as all three images repeat this blinking effect. The technique conceptually tries to fade an image, giving it a nostalgic and ethereal resonance but ultimately seems ridiculous.

As the hymn comes to a close, it also signals the beginning of the next chapter; "WATER COMES TOGETHER WITH OTHER WATER". The music is convincingly solemn and old-fashioned, but the imagery of blinking river beds is as visually redundant as the title infers. Part four and five, titled "THE OLD SHEEP DONE KNOW THE ROAD; THE YOUNG LAMB MUST FIND THE WAY", and "MY BARN HAVING BURNED DOWN, NOW I SEE THE MOON" finish the narrative as a man carrying a saddle wanders down a dirt road.

Bernat's sentiment is complex, as American Pastoral is a catharsis for her despair, and an expression of hope after such fatalistic torment. Her personal attachment to each layer of the narrative is clear, but her redundancy of images, lethargic editing, and general lack of interest in execution only results in banality. It is also perplexing that with so many horizontal landscapes, American Pastoral is completely un-cinematic. That might not be her intention – Bernat does favor a more abstract and non-linear approach to storytelling – but she identifies the narrative conventionally by dividing and labeling it into chapters. It makes her entire approach seem arbitrary.

Robin Bernat, *American Pastoral* (video still), 2001; video installation, edition of 20, dimensions variable; Collection of the Kemper Museum of Contemporary Art, Gift of the artist, 2003.7. Photo: Mark Ramsey



Robin Bernat, *American Pastoral* (video still), 2001; video installation, edition of 20, dimensions variable; Collection of the Kemper Museum of Contemporary Art, Gift of the artist, 2003.7. Photo: Mark Ramsey

American Pastoral is disappointingly uncommunicative and without reading the over-sized plaque you might miss her sentiment altogether. A "multi-sensory experience… to affect emotions such as compassion, kindness, or empathy" ends up not affecting at all. What is strangely interesting in the piece is its ability to share the many negative connotations that are commonly identified with the Midwest: drabness, monotony, and lack of sophistication. •

Ascot J. Smith is a Kansas City-based artist and writer with B.F.A. from the Kansas City Ar Institute, Kansas City, Missouri.

George Lowe (American, born 1954), *Three Pitchers*, 2006, glazed ceramic, dimensions variable. Courtesy of the artist.

Iowa Artists 2007

Susan Watts

Iowa Artists 2007 took the form of three solo exhibitions featuring Charlotte Cain, George Lowe, and Susan Chrysler White.

Eastern thought is inherent in the work of Charlotte Cain. She recently spent 11 months in India and Nepal through the Council for International Exchange of Scholars, and her permanent residence is in Fairfield, Iowa, an international community with the Maharishi University of Management at its center.

Cain's work could be called a combination of calligraphy and color field painting. She employs gouache as her main medium with some watercolor, graphite, and mineral pigments applied onto silk or thin paper. There are several series in the exhibition, and each seems to tell a story, laid out neatly in squares and grids. Arabic script appears incidental in some and more integral in others. The exhibition shows a progression of Cain's work over five years, and it is a pleasure to follow her progress.

The ceramic work of George Lowe calls for quiet contemplation and appreciation of simplicity. Function is clearly the focus of this potter, and the tradition of the craft is also a prominent attribute. In the exhibition essay, Des Moines Art Center Director Jeff Fleming notes several traditions referenced by Lowe: Asian teapots and cups, Jugtown and Seagrove pottery, and Native American clay creations.

Lowe's exhibition is broken up into four categories: pitchers, lidded jars, oval-shape vessels, and textured bowls and platters. The glazes range from neutral to the green-blue of the lidded jars and oval vessels. Lowe uses a Native American technique of pressing straw or twisted rope into wet clay to create his textured bowls and platters. Lowe lives in rural northeast Iowa, an ideal environment to fuel his contemplative artwork.

University of Iowa professor Susan Chrysler White's work seems jarring at first glance. Op Art and psychedelic are terms that come to mind quickly as one sees layer upon layer of saturated colors and dizzying patterns. It is initially an overwhelming experience, but as shapes emerge and recede in a kaleidoscopic fashion on each canvas, the senses are relaxed almost into hypnosis.

The star of the show is Im-Migration, which is affixed onto a wall and has the effect of a swarm of large moths trying to get out of the gallery through a corner. The moths are painted on Plexiglas pieces that are angled out from the wall. This treatment gives the work dimension and provides a perfect imitation of the surface of an insect's wings. Im-Migration also decodes the other works in White's show. Moths pop out where they were hidden in the initial viewing of her paintings.

The three shows, though separated by temporary walls, share the same exhibition space. A mix of subtlety, boldness and distinctive concepts and tradtions comes through in the trio of exhibitions. Although it may seem like a disjointed installation, the shows actually complement one another. •

Iowa Artists 2007
Des Moines Art Center Downtown
Des Moines, Iowa
April 27 - August 3, 2007

Charlotte Cain (American, born 1942), *Kautilya #4*, 2007, gouache and mineral pigments on antique paper, 13" x 19". Courtesy of the artist and Kriti Gallery, Varanasi , India. Photo: Sanders Photographics, West Des Moines , Iowa.

Susan Watts is the manager of Olson-Larsen Galleries in West Des Moines, Iowa. Watts has been freelance writing about artists and exhibitions for eight years. Her articles have appeared in *Art Papers*, *Dialogue* and *Catalyst*, a monthly publication out of Salt Lake City. Susan holds a B.A. in art history and journalism from the University of Iowa, Iowa City, Iowa.

Bougie: Wanda Ewing Explores Issues of Femininity from Black Perspective

Michael J. Krainak

"*Bougie*" Exhibition
Sheldon Memorial Art Gallery
Lincoln, Nebraska
August 28 - December 2, 2007

Looking back at 2007 one could argue that at least two significant national exhibits contributed to the causes of feminist art. *WACK! Art and the Feminist Revolution* at Los Angeles' Museum of Contemporary Art offered an historical focus on 60's and 70's work prior to the canonical 1974-79 *The Dinner Party* by Judy Chicago. 2007 also saw *Global Feminisms* at the Brooklyn Museum in New York, which was the first exhibit exclusively dedicated to feminist art from 1990 to the present. The Brooklyn Museum is now the new permanent home of *The Dinner Party.* As to the success of these two shows, one could look no further than the combined review of each by Princeton art professor Carol Armstrong in the May issue of *Artforum*. Simply put, Armstrong praised *WACK!* for making "us remember what a vibrant and forward-looking time those decades were." Conversely, she laments *Global Feminisms*' "degeneration into woundedness, dour whining, and dystopic weak-mindedness. What happened," she asks, "between The *Dinner Party* and now?"

The 80s happened, Armstrong says, and along with it backlash and middle age. All the creative zeal went dormant or became academic and doctrine. Feminism became post-feminism. Armstrong longs for a return to a time when artists questioned everything, when the personal was political, and the political was personal. Regrettably, she saw little in *Global Feminisms* that lived up to the rallying cry of 2007 as "year of the woman artist."

Though *Global Feminisms* may not have reflected it, compelling feminist art has been made in this region. Examine Wanda Ewing's oeuvre over the past decade or so, and you will find that her considerable body of work boasts several labels: Wanda Ewing, black artist — feminist artist — edgy artist. Ewing, a native Omahan and art professor at the University of Nebraska Omaha, is an accomplished artist whose provocative prints, drawings, and paintings have been exhibited throughout the region: Iowa City,IA, Kansas City, MO, Omaha,NE, Denver, CO, and Jackson Hole,WY, among others. Upcoming exhibits include a group effort, The Girly Show, at the Chaffey College Wignall Museum in Rancho Cucamonga, CA. With titles like *Growing Up Black*, *Growing Up Wanda*, and *Black as Pitch*, *Hot as Hell Pin-Ups*, it is easy to trace these label origins. Ewing readily admits in her artist statement that at the very least her work has a socio-political interest. "I illustrate what life is like … from the perspective of a black, single woman," she says. "I am extremely interested in the issue of beauty and self image. I constantly ask myself, 'what is my contribution as a contemporary Black artist to the conversation of what Black is and what it ain't?'"

Images courtesy The Sheldon Memorial Art Gallery.

As narrow as that focus may at first appear, Ewing's latest exhibit, *Bougie*, reveals that her new work has an even broader context without losing its personal perspective. *Bougie* continues her exploration of Black women and pop culture through her trendy and erotic caricatures of Black figures and half torsos. Yet, even as this exhibition is auto-biographical, its social commentary connects it to the Feminist Art Movement which began as both an exploration and a celebration of the total feminine experience, often in similarly shocking imagery. Later feminists rejected this and sought to reveal the origins of ideas of femininity and womanhood. They

often pursued femininity as a masquerade — poses adapted by women to conform to social expectations. In *Bougie*, Ewing manages both approaches with an emphasis as much on race as on gender. In that regard, her work acknowledges the influence of two of her contemporaries, Kara Walker and Ellen Gallagher. Ewing emulates Walker's use of silhouetted Black forms minus both their delicate nature and harsh historical portrayals of slavery and the Antebellum South. Ewing's images are largely slaves to fashion and sensuality. Thematically, they mirror Gallagher's repetition of retro images that reference the changing tides of Afro-fashion, especially hairstyles. Ewing's work profits on similar borrowed stereotypes: beauty, fashion, print advertising, even Andy Warhol.

Take, for instance, her set of fashion magazine covers entitled *Bougie*. The series of fashion magazine covers highlight the show's title and satirize the industry via such rags as *Cosmopolitan*, *Ebony* and *Vogue*. Ewing chose her magazine's name based on the slang term for the French word bourgeois. Because she didn't talk slang growing up, Ewing was called bougie for thinking she was high class when she knew she was not. Her magazine covers mock similar issues in fashion terms.Though these nine designs are the least edgy of her work, they are also highly sophisticated explorations of popular culture and issues of beauty and self image. They portray Black women as subject, but their messages cross over racial lines. Especially evocative is her Halle Berry cover in an off-the-shoulder gown that shouts headlines *Marriage — Why It's Not the End All* and *Hit and Run: How to love 'em and leave 'em first*. Though Ewing cleverly satirizes the fashion industry and the impact of the runway lifestyle on its adoring public, her fetching designs, combined with her creative, diminished color schemes, reveal her love-hate relationship with glamour and style. Ewing, in fact, is duplicitous in her exposé, acknowledging — virtually relishing — the culpability of the victim who searches for her self image in such glamorous role models. It is her version of the masquerade — poses willingly adapted to conform to social expectations of womanhood.

In a similar vein, *Hairdressing Dummy* offers another humanistic commentary. Four busts of Black women sport hairdos titled *Bald*, *Afroed*, *Shaggy*, and *Dreadlocks*, which Ewing says are a response to growing up with "Straight-hair Barbie." The series also satirizes Black women whose self image is predicated on make-up, fashion trends, and popularity, though some may balk at the label, dummy. Nevertheless, Ewing identifies with her models rather than scorning their dilemma. As caricatures, these are not flattering images. As vain and self-centered as they appear, they belie a certain insecurity with their fixed smiles and wary eyes.

Image courtesy The Sheldon Memorial Art Gallery.

Also ambiguous are Ewing's *Half Dolls*, six acrylic and latex nude half torsos, which on the surface are seductive, voluptuous, and erotic. The figures are a hybrid of a porcelain German half-doll and a ceramic Mammy figurine the artist found at a thrift store. These seem more natural and playful than her *Hairdo* series, but they too seem a bit insecure, incomplete, as if they may fail to please their intended audience. They imply a certain "I will try anything to connect." Even as they express their sexuality they come up a bit short.

The single most controversial as well as abstract piece in *Bougie* is *Cornucopia*, an acrylic and latex painting that also depicts a nude half torso, this time the bottom half. Aptly titled, this open-legged figure boasts a blossom of spring flowers flowing from her vagina. Despite its provocation, this too conveys a certain dichotomy. The torso is fertile, a bountiful harvest of joy, sensuality, and fecundity. But as a half woman, is her climax complete? Conceptually, as in much of Ewing's work, the question is never entirely answered. Are her figures half empty or half full? One suspects both — a message which may raise the hackles of some, even more than her imagery. As to issues of ambiguity, even stereotyping, in her work, Ewing says "Some of the images I've made are very cliché, but iconic. Is it exploiting or reclaiming?" Again, probably both, as in the case of her *Half Dolls*, where idealized sexual beauty — the German figurine — meets desexualized beauty — the ceramic Mammy.

Armstrong regrets that Ellen Gallagher and others did not make the cut for *Global Feminisms*, in part because their work is "formally challenging without illustrating negative stereotypes and victimhood." Judging from her work in *Bougie*, Ewing wouldn't have made the cut either. As a Black woman artist still "growing up Wanda," this seems to put her in good company. •

Michael J. Krainak is the senior arts contributor for the *Omaha City Weekly*. In addition to his freelance writing in film and the arts for *Review* and other publications such as the *Journal on Religion and Film*, Krainak is an adjunct professor in film and the humanities at the University of Nebraska, Omaha, Nebraska.

Raised in Craftivity

Nick Malewski

Raised In Craftivity
Greenlease Gallery
Kansas City, MO
September 7 - 29, 2007

The exhibition *Raised in Craftivity* at Greenlease Gallery put a fresh new spin on an older idea. In 1988, Rozsika Parker's *The Subversive Stitch: Embroidery and the Making of the Feminine* inspired a show of textile works by women artists that explored the idea of women's ambivalence about needlework because it has been a medium of constraint as well as one of resistance. *Raised in Craftivity*, curated by Maria Buszek, assistant professor of art history at the Kansas City Art Institute, included a wi der variety of media and works by both female and male artists. The show presented works addressing the concept of artists being similar to animals raised in captivity, but the craft that threatens to domesticate them is the same that promises to set them free. The artists interpreted this theme in a variety of ways, using traditional materials to tackle contemporary issues and unexpected materials to reference traditional ones.

Orly Cogan's stretched and hung vintage table linen, entitled *Samson*, dualistically presented woman as a potential savior and undoer of men, conflating two biblical characters — Christ and Delilah — within a single figure. Cogan embroidered a nude woman at the center of the cloth, bleeding from her hands, feet and vagina — perhaps a feminine interpretation of stigmata — encircled and adorned by a small congregation of people. The title also evokes the woman who weakened Samson simply by giving him a haircut. The fact that the composition is arranged on a cloth intended for plates of food adds yet another level of symbolism to this work.

Laura Splan's *Zoloft, Prozac and Thorazine* pillows are visually attractive for their bright color combinations and soft texture, but are not as conceptually layered and complex as Cogan's linen. These latch-hooked rugs, filled with polyester and shaped like oversized pills, bespeak two kinds of comfort: the physical support of something fluffy pillows and the medicinal support of antidepressants. The show also featured a chromogenic print diptych by Splan called *Blood Scarf*, which presented an inventive use of materials but lacked the immediacy of her 3-D pills. The piece photgraphically displays the sort of blood, sweat or tears that might go into making a winter accessory; the artist knit vinyl tubing, filled with what appears to be blood, into a scarf and then photographed it wrapped around a woman's neck.

Ben Schachter demonstrates amazing aesthetic sensibility with *Industrial Folk*. Schachter used flexible metal conduit — the kind through which electric wires might run — and orange, green and blue cable ties to craft an oval-shaped rug. It was one of the few pieces in the show that makes no apparent social commentary — it does, however, express that any medium can become beautiful.

Elaine Bradford, *Dominant Male of the Blue-Striped Variety*, 2005, mounted deer heads, crocheted yarn, buttons, 73" x 53" x 16". Collection of Justin Boyd, San Antonio, TX.

Elaine Bradford's *Dominant Male of the Blue-Striped Variety* seems humorous and surreal, but it also has serious feminist overtones. When the artist assumes the role of huntress, hanging the heads of two deer bucks on the gallery wall and covering them with black and blue striped, crocheted sweaters, male dominance is certainly called into question. There is also a sense of gentle mockery in completely covering the faces, making the trophies look like ridiculous animals from another planet.

This judiciously installed exhibition included other notable pieces by artists working with earthenware, glitter, and found objects. The art in this show reflects the sensibility of Buszek's other projects, such as an anthology she is editing called *Extra/ordinary: Craft Culture and Contemporary Art*. •

Nick Malewski has a B.A. in studio art is completing an M.A. in art history from Savannah College of Art and Design, Savannah, Georgia. In addition to writing for *Review*, he has written for other publications such as *District*, *Drain*, and *The Pitch*.

Laura Splan, *Blood Scarf,* diptych, 2002, C-prints, 24"H x 20"W each (diptych dimensions 24"H x 42"W).

Ben Schachter, *Industrial Folk* (detail), 2003, flexible conduit and cable ties, 30" x 40"

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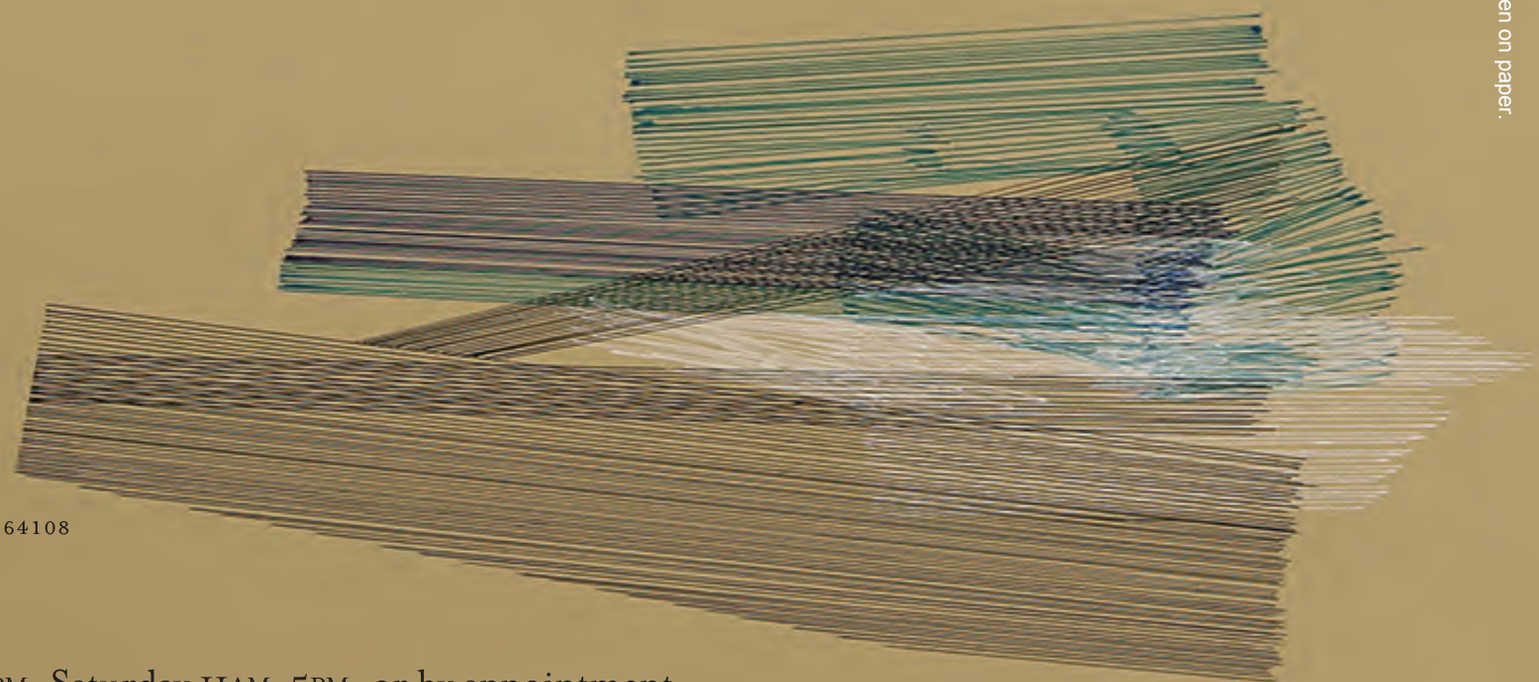

Emily Sall. *The Strip and the Box.* 2006. 22in. x 30in. Gel pen on paper.

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