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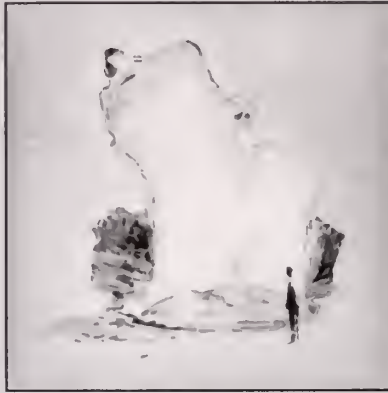
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Issue 24  
January/February 2004



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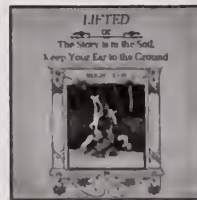
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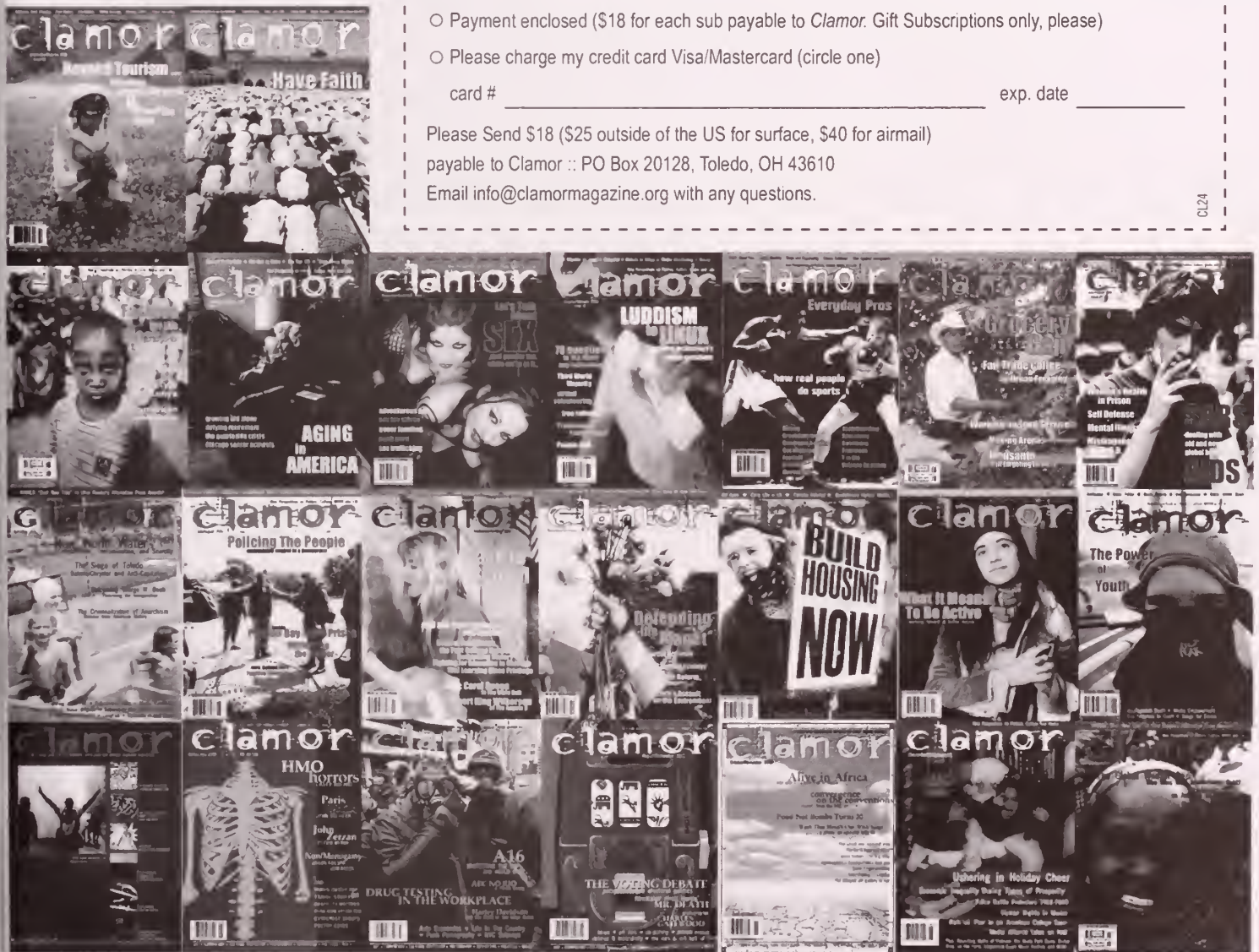
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024



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# from your editors

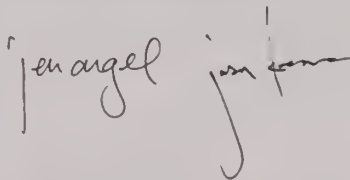
As we put this issue together, our friends and comrades are fighting the good fight: there are tens of thousands protesting the FTAA in Miami, Florida, the School of the Americas in Georgia, and George Bush's visit to Great Britain. It's a little surreal writing this letter right now. We launched Clamor exactly four years ago, and were wrapping up issue one to send to the printer at the same time protests in Seattle had shut down the WTO. And much like four years ago, we're sitting here trying to sort through the dearth of mainstream media coverage of the protests and the wealth of first-hand accounts from Indymedia to figure out what the hell is happening to our friends around the world.

In a way, the subtitle on the cover is a bit misleading. Sure we encourage folks to make art wherever possible. But we also encourage people to wage wars on injustice in the world. Of course the wars we support are geared toward ending the corruption of power and greed, not propagating it. And the wars we encourage are waged to preserve life while redistributing power to people who have been denied it for so long - as opposed to sacrificing innocent lives (U.S. or otherwise) to further polarize the distribution of wealth and power at home and abroad. We decided to focus this issue on art because we believe that it is an integral part of our everyday lives as well as a vital part of the struggles for social justice. We're certain that folks will continue to make art AND wage war, and this issue is proof positive.

This 4th anniversary issue could have been a book. Each of the artists profiled in the politics section could have been the subject of a full feature. Every issue discussed opens up a whole host of related topics that we could have focused an entire magazine on. Each of the prisoners mentioned in the media section represents thousands of others who use art to regain some semblance of humanity and pride in an environment that robs them of it. This issue focuses on individual and collective artists and the motivation, determination, and struggle behind the work that they do to make this world a little more beautiful - or to highlight the ugliness that hides behind power.

We're fortunate to be able to bring you such a broad cross-section of people and projects to highlight this issue's theme, but not as fortunate as we are to welcome seven new section editors who made this issue happen. From here on out, each of Clamor's six sections will be developed and shaped by hard-working volunteer editors that got their hands dirty this issue. See their names to the left and read more about them on the web at [www.clamormagazine.org/about.html](http://www.clamormagazine.org/about.html). They're a remarkable bunch of people who will undoubtedly make the magazine better with their diverse perspectives and unending enthusiasm. They'll also free us up to work on other aspects of Clamor that will help us grow and introduce more readers to this radical approach to the magazine format.

As always, thanks for reading.....



PS. for more information on the FTAA or SOA, as well as other ongoing struggles, visit: [www.indymedia.org](http://www.indymedia.org), and look for our feature on the FTAA in the Mar/Apr 2004 issue.

CLAMOR's mission is to provide a media outlet that reflects the reality of alternative politics and culture in a format that is accessible to people from a variety of backgrounds. CLAMOR exists to fill the voids left by mainstream media. We recognize and celebrate the fact that each of us can and should participate in media, politics, and culture. We publish writing and art that exemplify the value we place on autonomy, creativity, exploration, and cooperation. CLAMOR is an advocate of progressive social change through active creation of political and cultural alternatives.

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**ON THE COVER:**

Miguel Luciano's installation *La Mano Poderosa Racetrack*. Read more about Luciano on page 40.

# letters etc...

Please address letters to [letters@clamormagazine.org](mailto:letters@clamormagazine.org)  
or write us at PO Box 20128 Toledo, OH 43610  
Letters may be edited for length.  
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## TESTIFY!

Here's the interesting thing I noticed: I was thinking of my faith show as a "Faith of the Fringe" kind of show, how religion interacts with people who are social activists (people's temple) and not in it because they're super religious, or a punk who was raised to be itinerant preacher (Bucky Sinister), or transgendered woman who has to come to terms with her god (Julia). But, you take a completely different approach that I also recognize in other Clamor issues. We aren't the fringe, we're normal, it's the rich and elite who are fringe. That's so cool.

Roman Mars,  
San Francisco, CA

*ed. note: Roman is the host/producer/creator of Invisible Ink, one of the best radio programs on the air — featuring stories from the independent press. You can listen to his show online at [www.invisibleinkradio.com](http://www.invisibleinkradio.com)*

## ADDRESSING INVISIBILITY

I am writing to praise Brady McGarry's "If you want to smash imperialism..." (Nov/Dec 2003) I was totally unaware of either the Seattle labor stoppage or the Benton Harbor riot. As an activist of color, I was also glad to see that a white person not only noticed these two events but used them to address the invisibility of people of color-led actions in the white activist/anarchist movement.

After reading the article, I noticed that the article is not accessible on Clamor's web site. I think that what McGarry says about the lack of support for communities of color by white activists is important and should be read not only by those who subscribe to Clamor (or read it in their local radical bookstores, if they're lucky enough to have such things near them), but activists randomly surfing the web. It might open the eyes of white activists in places where communities (and people) are segregated by racial and ethnic differences.

Vikki Law  
New York, NY

## VEGAN FIRESTORM, EXTINGUISHED

I just got done reading the Travel issue (Sept/Oct 2003) — what is up with the whiny vegan infestation? Those terrible, hilarious letters to the editor, and then that interview with the terrible, terrible, Mack "drinking milk is the same thing as rape" Evasion? If I ever meet that guy I am

going to beat him upside the head with a block of government cheese! I am at the point in my feminist consciousness where I can read that Evasion interview and laugh my ass off, but I bet you will get some rage-filled letters to the editor on that one (and justifiably so; that's some pretty fucked up shit to say, all hilarity aside). Just further proof that the road to fascism is paved with vegans.

Sarah M.  
from a bike in N. America

## MORE ON PRAYER

Prayers in school? What a shocking idea! What Matthew Williams is suggesting ("One Nation Under Gods" Nov/Dec 2003) is what is done in many Unitarian-Universalist Sunday schools where faith without dogma reigns. Congregants are theologically diverse because each is free to make up his/her own mind on such matters. Wow: turn public school classes over to the U.U.'s! Fat chance that'll ever happen.

Rev. Laurence G. Wolf  
Cincinnati, OH

## get involved!

Clamor is built from everyday folks like you. Please take some time to contact us if you have any ideas that you would like to see in your magazine.

Clamor accepts submissions of printed work and artwork on an ongoing basis. On our website, [www.clamormagazine.org](http://www.clamormagazine.org), under the heading "participate," there are deadlines and topic suggestions which may help you determine when, and what, to contribute. However, many works are accepted regardless of whether they fit with the cover story, or theme, of an issue.

Drafts should be submitted to [info@clamormagazine.org](mailto:info@clamormagazine.org) (preferred) or to Clamor, PO Box 20128, Toledo, OH 43610. Written works should be less than 2,500 words.

## classifieds

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**Calling all Love and Rage women!** Write about your experiences and your work in a vital 1990s revolutionary anarchist project (including Mayday & other pre-LnR formations). What lessons can we share with today's movements and organizations? Contact Suzy Subways at [lasuzy@earthlink.com](mailto:lasuzy@earthlink.com) about submitting essays, memoirs, poems, theoretical criticism and/or being interviewed. Transgender women and men are encouraged to respond.

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# MARATHON

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DEBUT 5 SONG E.P.

# contributors

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**Robert Biswas-Diener** (p. 20) is a frequent contributor to *Clamor*. He lives in Portland, Oregon and can be reached at [jayajedi@comcast.net](mailto:jayajedi@comcast.net).

**Craig Blair** (p. 31) is an artist and Surrealist living in Northwest Ohio. He received his BFA from Edinboro University of Pennsylvania and serves on the Board of Trustees for the Weston Arts Council. You can visit his web site at [www.surrealistic.com](http://www.surrealistic.com).

Too much is known about **Carolyn Chamberlayne** (p. 53) by she herself but not so much is known by others and I think she prefers it stay that way. Nah, she's a blabbermouth! Write her you'll see: [cchambe@hotmail.com](mailto:cchambe@hotmail.com).

**Greg Fuchs** (p. 24) is a photographer and writer living in New York City. He is the author of *Came Like It Went*, *New Orleans Xmas*, and *Uma Temura*. He is columnist-at-large for *Boog City* and a regular contributor to *Unarmed Adventurous Poetry Journal*.

**Sarah Groff-Palermo** (p. 47) is the managing editor at Soft Skull Press. She lives in Brooklyn, New York.

**Nicolas Lampert** (p. 14) lives in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. He is co-organizer of Drawing Resistance—a traveling political art show ([www.drawingresistance.org](http://www.drawingresistance.org)). Examples of his collage art can be seen at [www.machineanimalcollages.com](http://www.machineanimalcollages.com).

**Ken Avidor** is a cartoonist living in Minneapolis. Follow the adventures of Roadkill Bill every week in *Pulse of the Twin Cities* and on the web at [www.roadkillbill.com](http://www.roadkillbill.com). Learn about the "Excess Project" at [www.stride-mn.org](http://www.stride-mn.org).

**Brandon Bauer** is an artist living and working in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. In June 2003 he was included in the exhibition "Art Against War," a New York City poster and multimedia exhibition. His poetry and artwork are included in the book "All the Days After," a collection of artists' and poets' responses to 9/11 compiled by the Upsidedown Culture Collective. His experimental video, "Signaldrift: a day under the city" was released as a DVD by the French independent video company Lowave in May 2003.

**Dave Crosland** handled the drawing duties on *Puffed*, as well as the sequel *Stay Puffed*, released by Image Comics. He's currently working on collaborative projects with Wayne Chinsang (editor of *Tastes Like Chicken* magazine) and Jim Mahfood (funk messiah). Debbie, his paint-spewing counterpart, has done work for *Venus* and *Spin* magazines, and has also exhibited art at the Copro Nason Gallery (Los Angeles) and the Monkey Business Gallery (Chicago). You can see more of this disastrous duo at [www.hiredmeat.com](http://www.hiredmeat.com). They also come from the long line of opinionated fiends responsible for the humor and entertainment hen house, [www.tlchicken.com](http://www.tlchicken.com).

**Dara Greenwald** lives in Chicago, writes, performs, curates and makes videos. **Lauren Cumbia** lives in Chicago and will be a lawyer someday. **Blithe Riley** lives in Pittsburgh, studies, curates and makes art. All three of them have collaborated in their feminist street dance troupe, the **Pink Bloque**. [www.pinkbloque.org](http://www.pinkbloque.org)

**Victoria Law** (p. 34) is a documentary photographer, writer, and prison activist. She is the editor of *Mama Sez No War*, a compilation of mothers' experiences protesting the war on Iraq, and *Tenacious: Art and Writing from Women in Prison*. She is currently documenting the gentrification of the Lower East Side and will be photographing Hong Kong's disappearing fishing villages. She can be reached at [vikkiml@yahoo.com](mailto:vikkiml@yahoo.com).

**Robert Levin** (p. 29) is a former contributor to *The Village Voice* and *Rolling Stone* and the coauthor and coeditor, respectively, of two collections of essays about jazz and rock in the '60s: *Music & Politics* and *Giants of Black Music*. He's also published fiction on the *Absinthe Literary Review* and *Sweet Fancy Moses* web sites.

**Laura A. Lopez** (p. 36) a wife, mom, office manager, poet, freelance writer, photographer, community volunteer, and Unitarian Universalist. In her spare time she is amazed that she landed such a fantastic job with an environmental organization without moving away from her hometown, counts her blessings, and watches the corn grow. Write her at [escritora@uniqueqc.com](mailto:escritora@uniqueqc.com).

**Kari Lydersen** (p. 61) is a Chicago-based journalist writing for *The Washington Post*, *Punk Planet* and some other pubs and an instructor in the Urban Youth International Journalism Program. Reach her at [Karilyde@aol.com](mailto:Karilyde@aol.com).

**Dustin Amery Hostetter** is 26. He lives in Ohio and illustrates for magazines like *Anthem*, *Clamor* and *While You Were Sleeping*. He is also a freelance designer. He sings in a band called *Stylex* ([www.stylexohio.com](http://www.stylexohio.com)) and publishes a magazine once a year called *Faesthetic*.

**Miguel Luciano** is an artist whose work addresses both playful and painful exchanges between the United States and Puerto Rico, questioning a colonial relationship that exists to present day, and problematizing the space between the two cultures. His paintings and installations often examine how colonial subordination is extended through globalization, as communities have shifted gears from a production-based society to one that is grounded in consumption. Luciano currently resides in Brooklyn, and teaches a course in public art at El Puento, a Latino Cultural Center for Human Rights.

**Josh MacPhee** is an artist and activist who lives in Chicago. You can see his art at [www.justseeds.org](http://www.justseeds.org). He also just finished called *Stencil Pirates*, a book about street stenciling that Soft Skull Press will be publishing in March of 2004.

**Richard Mock** has been doing editorial cartoons for the Cartoonists & Writers Syndicate since 1996, his work syndicated under the name Symbolics. His political cartoons appeared in more newspapers nationally before 9/11 when his serious satire of the government encountered fewer cracks to slide into public view. His biggest audience now is outside the United States. To see his work, search for his name at [www.biddingtons.com](http://www.biddingtons.com) or [www.artcamuseum.com](http://www.artcamuseum.com).

**Ricardo Levins Morales** is a Minnesota-based artist/activist/parent and a founding member of the Northland Poster Collective which uses art to support social change.

At a San Francisco State University class in magazine writing, a professor once told **Cameron Macdonald** (p. 13), "The more readers you piss off, the better your story is." While Cameron has not achieved that special glow yet, he did contribute to the *Sacramento News and Review*, *The Natomas Journal*, *Punk Planet*, *The Wire*, *XLR8R*, and the *Golden Gate [X]Press*.

Over the course of the past year **Joyce Orobello** (p. 9) has begun and completed a master's degree at Columbia University's Teachers College, traveled via donkey cart along the Silk Road, taught various classes in a public high school, freelanced when the opportunity arose, and napped in some of the coziest corners the earth has to offer. Contact her at [jmrobello@hotmail.com](mailto:jmrobello@hotmail.com).

**Susan Phillips** (p. 12) is a freelance writer from Philadelphia and served on the board of Books Through Bars from 1995 to 2000. Write her at [smp2018@columbia.edu](mailto:smp2018@columbia.edu).

**Aaron Scott** (p. 32) has been singing and touring in small bands for the past 6 years. When he's not on the road, he lives in Ithaca, NY, where he moonlights as a vegetarian cook and a special education aide. You can read more of his writing and find out more about his band, Marathon, at [www.marathonarmy.org](http://www.marathonarmy.org). Contact him at [aarondelehoya@lycos.com](mailto:aarondelehoya@lycos.com)

## featured artists (page 40)

**Nicole Schulman** was born and raised in New York City and, with any luck, will be stuck there for the rest of her life. Her comics and illustrations have been published in *World War 3 Illustrated* (which she occasionally edits), the *New York Times* and the *Progressive*. Her artwork and comics have been exhibited across the United States, as well as in Italy, Greece and South Korea. She is currently working on a graphic history of the Industrial Workers of the World with Paul Buhle of Brown University. It will be published in time for the union's 100<sup>th</sup> birthday in 2005.

**Susan Simensky Bietila** has been doing 2-D political artwork, drawing, printmaking and photography for publications and shows since 1967. She is co-curator of Drawing Resistance, a do-it-yourself traveling art show and is a frequent contributor to *World War 3 Illustrated* magazine. She is drawing a section of a collaborative art book on the history of the International Workers of the World and travels with a retrospective slide show of her work, "Art As Activism."

**Andy Singer** is a three-headed, six-armed alien from the planet Clipnor. He came to earth in 1965 on a mission to observe human beings and other earth life forms. He has been recording his observations in the form of small pen and ink drawings ever since. His multiple arms have enabled him to be quite prolific and his cartoons regularly appear in over 20 publications, including Boston's *Weekly Dig*, *Ventura County Reporter*, *San Diego CityBeat*, *The Berkeley Voice*, *Funny Times*, *The Utne Reader* and *Z Magazine*.

The **Upsidedown Culture Collective** is a Detroit-area group attempting to fuse creativity and revolution. Check out their website at [www.upsidedownculture.org](http://www.upsidedownculture.org).





# TATS CRU



20 Years of Art in The Bronx





**TATS CRU** was formed in the early '80s by three teenagers from the Bronx who grew up tagging and bombing (basically, graffiti spraying) subway trains. As the trio got older and the responsibilities of adulthood began to creep up on them, they slowly began turning their passion for the art of graffiti into a respectable and lucrative business. Over 20 years later, TATS CRU Inc. is recognized as being a major link between the underground graffiti, hip-hop subculture, and the commercial art sector. The crew has since expanded with six full-time members, including the three founders, BIO, NICER, and BG183. Based out of The Point Community Development Center in the South Bronx, the crew continues to run a successful aerosol art, mural, and advertising business and also leads graffiti classes for neighborhood kids. In this interview, conducted at The Point in April 2003, BIO FELICIANO talks about how TATS went from painting train yards to being commissioned by mainstream corporations like Coca-Cola. Their work can be seen all over New York City or on line at [Tatscru.com](http://Tatscru.com).

*Clamor: Do you think a lot of graffiti is about forming an identity, especially for young boys?*

BIO: Yeah, somewhat. That's what I think it was more so back then [in the '80s]. It was like first of all you did it because you enjoyed art or whatever and that was sort of the artform of our neighborhood. It wasn't like we had formal art classes and stuff like that, so if you wanted art, that was your outlet I guess. In school they taught you to draw apples and boring stuff like that. So you're not interested in that. This [graffiti] is what caught your attention, so you got into that and just started painting on subways.

Now you have a name, you're starting to write, you know you want to make an identity. So the object of the game is now to get your name out there, for people to recognize you. 'Cause now that you're more involved into the graffiti you're starting to notice there's certain names that stand out from the rest of the crowd. You're starting out; you're what's considered a "toy" and you're seeing all these trains painted with full color and you're like wow, you guys have to be like superheroes kinda thing, you know to be pulling off stuff like this.

And in the beginning, again, you're a toy, so nobody really deals with you until you build an identity and you start to get some sort of recognition. That's when you start to become a little accepted and you start meeting other writers — you know graffiti artists call themselves writers — you hook up and learn about different lay-ups — that's

when you lay a train up overnight — and different train yards where you can go to and you start learning the ropes and how things really work.

*How did you guys go from that to the Tats Cru that you are now?*

We painted subways until 1985 or so. Actually 1987. New York City already had been cracking down a little bit more on graffiti. By that time we had already been painting subways for several years and we got a little bit older, no longer living at home. So just real life combined with other things going on, and kinda died out from the subways, but we still enjoyed painting so we would paint outdoors in the street; we would still paint illegally. We would find walls and go there at night and just go and paint. We did that for a couple of years.

By us painting out in the open, people could connect the face to the name. So now we were identified with the work. Now landowners and people who owned businesses would see the work that we would do would go untouched — it was nice; it was colorful, it was attractive, whatever — They would come to us and be like, "Why is it that when you guys paint, nobody touches it; when I paint my wall clean, the next day I have graffiti or tags all over it?" It's because these guys know who we are. It's a big community, an underground community, but everyone knows everyone's position.

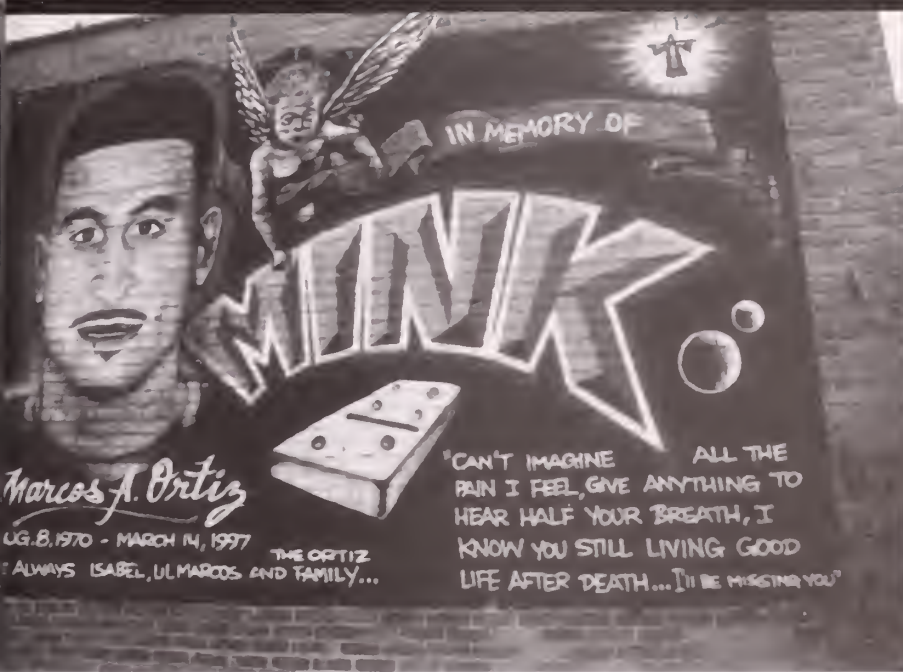
*Like a hierarchy?*

Right, so that's the reason. That's how we sorta got into the business side of it — You know, being commissioned to do work.

*Commissioned by small businesses?*

By small businesses, local neighborhoods, stuff like that. And then we also started doing things in the neighborhood we live in. You know it's the reality, there's drugs, there's violence. So we started doing memorial walls. That started in a different way.

We were painting our personal work, you know just our names, and someone would come by, "Listen, my brother was killed, shot, can you just put his name and rest in piece up on the side?" Nothing major, just a tag. And it sort of built from that. We did those a couple of times and one time we decided to do a heart and a ribbon like a tattoo. So we did something like that with the guy's name and the year he was born and the year he died. That was our first memorial



wall. At the time we weren't aware of what was going on. That sort of caught someone else's eye. Then we did a wall with a portrait of someone.

So now there started to be a sort of format. The typical memorial format includes a face, words from the family, maybe the dates, a hobby, something you could quickly identify the person by. Martha Cooper and Joseph Sciorra created a book on it and it started to get more and more attention.

At the time we were working full time. We all had regular jobs, you know, we were going to work 9-5, then we would paint from like six 'til four in the morning, take a shower, get an hour, two hours sleep, then repeat it. So we were like, I don't know what made us decide, sort of forced into it somewhat, just said alright and gave up the day job and decided to pursue the painting full time. It's crazy, but (laughing), you know thinking back, what were you thinking? There was no guarantee of any paychecks. There was nothing. It was just like we literally sat in a park, looking at each other, talking

**... we were going to work 9-5,  
take a shower,  
then we would paint from like six 'til four in the morning,  
get an hour, two hours sleep, then repeat it.**

about damn, we're broke. Our budget was maybe like two dollars a day between the two of us.

*So you guys went from that, two dollars a day, to doing ads for Coke.*

(Laughing) It wasn't that simple. Ciko, who painted on the Lower East Side, was doing some work for them. We met him at Martha Cooper and Joseph Sciorra's book release party. It all ties together. It's funny how when you think back, how it all makes sense. He turned out to be a cool guy and whatever. He was like, "Hey listen, I'm doing work with Coke, and they need more artists. Are you guys interested?"

We were like, "Sure whatever," so we met with the ad agency and we started to do work with them and when we did walls, they loved it. So we worked with them for a couple of years.

*Do you consider what you do now to be graffiti per say?*

A lot of it is and a lot of it isn't. A lot of it is just basic like ad agency stuff or basic signs for companies. But in order for the business to survive we had to sort of reach out into areas that you would not consider to be graffiti. But what separates us from an average ad agency or an average sign company is the element of hip-hop or graffiti we bring to it. We don't do just the average sign. It reaches different people, different audiences. Certain corporations are trying to reach certain demographics. This is the artwork that speaks to these young people or whatever, so we're that link between the streets and the people they are trying to reach.

*In a way do you consider it to be a mainstreaming of hip-hop?*

Yeah, there's no question about that. That's the direction it's going, the music, the clothing, you know everything was headed in that direction. It was happening anyway, even before we stepped into it. That was part of the reason why we started the company. We were like, "look at all these commercial graphic artists trying to do graffiti and it's fake, you can obviously tell: it has no style and who are they fooling with it? If anybody should be making money, it should be us. We've lived this our whole lives."

So we created this company to fill that void. So now when you do need it, there's no excuse because it does exist. If you need it for a movie, for a play, for a backdrop, whatever it is, it exists. You can look in the yellow pages, you can call 411, you can look in those ad agency books (we take out ads in those books now), so we're making ourselves more visible. ☆

# Creativity in Confinement



Esther M. Klein Art Gallery photo by Andrew Pinkham

In the polished lobby of a West Philadelphia corporate headquarters, 116 pieces of art hang amidst the comings and goings of suits and ties. None of this would be unusual except all of these works were created within the confines of U.S. prisons. A woman in scrubs stops to look, calling over to her friends. "Look at these," she says. "When my step-father was in prison, he had one of these handkerchiefs painted for my mother."

Handkerchiefs, envelopes, toothpaste, coffee grinds, shoe polish, Kool-Aid, potato chip bags. These items comprise the prison artist's pallet. And with more than two million people now incarcerated in the U.S., it's no surprise that a good portion of the workers walking through the Esther M. Klein Art Gallery in the lobby of Philadelphia's University City Science Center has a friend or family member in prison, suit or no suit.

The exhibit, subtitled "Creativity in Confinement," has demonstrated one thing if nothing else: where three strikes rules, drug laws, mandatory minimums, and all the other tag words of the commonly defined prison-industrial complex get lost in the haze of daily life, art demands to be seen and heard.

"Art is much more engaging than statistics," says Barbara Hirshkowitz, a Philadelphia Books through Bars Collective member who provided the artwork for the show. "You can tell people endlessly about the prison system, and I don't think it has much meaning. Art is powerful in a way that information is not."

Books through Bars, a books-to-prisoners program that has been operating for more than 10 years, started accumulating a collection of prisoner art as soon as they started sending books inside prisons. Artwork on envelopes and handkerchiefs, the few canvasses available to prisoners, came flooding into the Books through Bars office as appreciation for free books (another rare commodity in most prisons).

After accumulating boxes of artwork, Hirshkowitz decided that sharing this artwork with the public served as a better activist tool than simply telling people "prisons suck." Volunteers eventually framed their favorite pieces and sought gallery exposure, creating a series of "Con-Texts" art exhibits.

"My goal is to get people to think about who's in prison and what it means to have thrown so many people into this experience and then totally ignore the results of that," Hirshkowitz says.

The guest book comments from the latest exhibit indicate that Books through Bars has hit its target. One popular piece by Texas prisoner E.W. Florez features a collage of a '50s era couple in an embrace. "Are you human?" asks the man in a cartoon bubble. "No, I'm a prison guard," replies the supplicant woman.

"I laughed out loud," wrote one gallery patron in the comment book.

Daily prison life is something that most of us would not want to spend much time thinking about. But if we did, the stereotypical images that might come to mind are bad food, abusive guards, and sexual assault in the shower stalls. But these artists take us beyond the clichés and into a world where some of the simplest tasks involve not brutality necessarily, but constant humiliation. Sherry Ann Vincent's "Strip Shack" portrays a trip to the showers. A pencil sketch details shame in the women's faces as they hold their prison uniforms close to the chests of their naked bodies. In the center of it all, a prison guard stands with a look of disdain.

## The Beat Within

There are times when incarceration cannot impede the creative spirit of prisoners, as *The Beat Within* proves. It is a weekly magazine with a simple premise: visit several juvenile halls every Tuesday, conduct writing workshops for inmates, collect artwork that inmates mail, and then publish their work for the contributors and their fellow prisoners to read the following week. That is why *The Beat* arose in the past seven years as a prominent entity among a few thousand teens imprisoned in the San Francisco Bay Area, and now at other juvenile halls in New York, Virginia, and Rhode Island.

"As writers (and artists) ... you do have an answer, when someone asks your opinion on a matter," remarked *The Beat's* co-founder and editor-in-chief, David Inocencio. "You do count, you're not just a number, you're not just a stereotype that the System's placed on you." He felt a calling to devise a publication that allows the incarcerated to be known not by their appearances and legal punishments, but for their minds. "They fell into these painful traps, because of where they live... and then into the criminal justice system. I decided to go beyond the call, and just let them ask me questions," explained Inocencio.

One contributor who was enlightened by *The Beat* is Jason Treas, an artist who mailed over 300 paintings to Inocencio during his six years at the Pelican Bay State Penitentiary in Crescent City, CA. During his interview, his skin was still pale from living inside a 28 by 12-foot Solitary Housing Unit or "SHU" cell, where he taught himself how to paint with a ballpoint pen. Treas created a ballpoint brush by first removing the ink shaft, then decapitating its ballpoint tip and tightly wrapping the leaking end with thick paper, where the thicker the covering, the lighter the color. He would then gently dap the tip on a sheet of paper like a Pointillist painter. His photorealistic artwork is often filled with Latino revolutionaries and Aztec icons, coming from the political education he received through the biographies of leaders like Che Guevara and Black Panther George Jones. Radical politics seemed natural to him as someone raised in a Latino working-class barrio in Richmond, CA. "When you grow up in that environment, you don't have to be taught in an academic sense that you're repressed," he remarked.

Treas is now *The Beat's* art director and youth mentor. He aims to guide prison youth toward being more conscious about the state prison system. "I'm interested in telling them about the dead-end path in the System, and how they're in the likelihood of getting there," he commented. "I mean, it took me ten years to realize that I was at a dead-end."

Inocencio remarked, "Some eventually move beyond the street block and see the world through a different set of eyes. And when that happens, that's a payday."

For more info, visit [www.thebeatwithin.org](http://www.thebeatwithin.org).  
-Cameron Macdonald



Willie Winston



Scott Servis

Christopher S. Sohnly's illustrated poem "Morning Yard" uses a similar matter-of-factness to illustrate another day in the life of a prisoner-artist.

*Little birds  
In the razor wire  
The clink of lifting weights  
Raucous voices playing cards  
A guard teasing me about my drawing  
Long shadows in mud print like footsteps on the moon  
Gift of a white feather found  
Our shadows reach through the fences  
Toward freedom  
Morning yard*

Producing art while in prison is no easy task. Aside from the lack of materials, in some units the prison administration considers a decorated envelope or handkerchief contraband, and prisoners can find themselves in the hole if caught with one. Nevertheless, Book through Bars has accumulated enough art to have produced 12 shows over the past four years. The shows have a practical element; they raise money for the organization, as well as spread a message.

"This has been our best outreach tool," says Hirshkowitz. "We raise money, recruit volunteers, get book donations, and we have access to a much larger public."

But when Hirshkowitz organized a conference for other books-to-prisoners programs this past fall, she found it hard to engage volunteers from other programs to commit to new art exhibits. "They were overwhelmed by the amount of books they had to send and couldn't think of taking on another project," says Hirshkowitz. But by keeping those envelopes and handkerchiefs sealed up in boxes, they may be missing the opportunity to become more effective activists.

"I see art as very life affirming," says Hirshkowitz. "Even if the art is oppressive or hard to look at, the act of creating is affirming of the human spirit. I think sustained activists and deeply committed artists have a similar place inside themselves where they draw their courage. Artists and activists tap the same source. It keeps you going, gets you through difficulties, lets you do something new and untried."

One refreshing and disarming aspect of "Creativity in Confinement" is that one rarely gets the impression that any of these artists sat down and tried to create a piece that would change someone's mind. They have in common a careful attention to detail borne out of long hours of endless time. They simply reflect their environment, both external and internal, without any hint of pretension, ingeniously using whatever materials they have. In this way they are effective, their images provocative and believable.

"I don't know if anyone in the show is making art to change the world," says Hirshkowitz. "But they're certainly trying to change their own lives."

And in doing so, they have power to change ours. ☆



rad.art

## Creating and Nurturing a Culture of Resistance

In the higher education sphere, colleges and universities have undergone a major transformation over the last 20 years. The Reagan/Bush years, 1980 on, kicked in the hyper-privatization (corporatization) of American society that left few public bastions untouched. As public funding and support for affordable public education have slowly dwindled (notice the education cuts — not the military or corporate welfare cuts), schools have become more reliant on private funding to make ends meet. This partnership of higher education with large corporations comes with built-in conditions. Just like in politics, those who give money to higher education expect something back in return. It should come as no surprise that the profit industries (business schools, law, engineering, and medical schools) have flourished while the liberal arts, humanities, and the fine arts have decreased significantly. In this case, many educational institutions often appear as factories that turn out products and workers for corporate America. Beyond the blandness of corporate culture, the partnership can be more troublesome. In many of the research departments at public and private universities, the technologies that arm the military and corporate power are developed and funded by taxes and tuition. The Vietnam War era saw many schools come to a near halt due to students protesting the development of military weapons in university labs. More recently, the branding of university clothing apparel by Nike has been countered with an equally ambitious anti-sweatshop student movement. As with any case, public pressure and activism can bring the goods.

In a small but significant example, a student group at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor has created a structure to instigate social change in their community by combining art with activism. The group rad.art began in the fall of 2002 and was founded by Jenny Lee, Colin Matthes, Max Sussman, and Mike Medow. In an interview the members stated that “rad.art hopes to facilitate the creation of a ‘culture of resistance’ in Ann Arbor and at the University of Michigan. There is a fairly strong and dynamic community of progressive and radical activists in Ann Arbor and at the University. We consider ourselves a part of this community and we hope that rad.art contributes to the strengthening of our community by providing it with spaces in which radical politics can be affirmed through art. Getting involved in activism can be an alienating experience for those who aren’t used to or necessarily interested in activist rhetoric and long meetings. Rad.art events engage political issues in a more casual setting, providing newer activists with a more accessible entry point through which they can confront new political issues. In this sense, rad.art contributes to the creation of a more sustainable radical political culture. Rad.art, as an official student group, also allows us to use the resources available to us as students to support radical artists. We do this by setting up events and, when possible, providing funding for artists on tour.”

During the first year as a group, rad.art organized events in Ann Arbor with Sue Coe (author of *Dead Meat*), Seth Tobocman, The Upside Down Culture Collective, The Beehive Design Collective, Alfredo Jaar, the film

“Hot and Bothered” (a documentary on feminist pornography by Becky Goldberg), the Stencil Pirates all-stencil art show, Drawing Resistance (a traveling political art show), The Lost Film Festival, David Rees (author of *Get Your War On*), David Rovics, The Long Hairz Collective and MC Invincible (for a “Folk the War” show), Robert Blake, “Drop Bass Not Bombs” (house/techno party at a local club in order to raise money for an antiwar conference at U of M).

To date, there have been no incidents of censorship. The Ann Arbor community has rallied around the monthly events, a true testament to the impact that a small group of people can have on the artistic and political culture of a town. University administrators have left rad.art alone and in truth probably don’t know that they exist, considering that they are one of 800 student groups at UM. This begs the question — if four students at the University of Michigan can set up this remarkable program on their campus — can similar organizations be easily started on other campuses by student activists?

Rad.art advises others, “If you’re an activist, you should realize that your activism will not be attractive to many unless there is a strong, positive, and open culture that surrounds it. We can make our campus activist scenes more durable if we root them in the lives and cultures of the students that participate in them. Art events are a great way of affirming that your activism is about more than politics, that it is about life and living. They can also provide a more accessible entry point into radical politics for newer activists. If you host events such as those done

by rad.art, you should get your friends onto whatever funding committees exist at your school so that you can get money for artists. And this is something that rad.art has done to some extent, but could do better: work in conjunction with other student organizations whenever possible. This is a good way of introducing new student populations into the culture you are creating through hosting radical art events. In terms of getting turnout for events, we put a big emphasis on creating excitement about upcoming rad.art events through extensive flyering, email lists, and word of mouth. Talking to people one-on-one has been invaluable in getting large turnouts at rad.art events."

After a year of reflection on past events, rad.art was able to critique their strengths and weaknesses over the summer break, and to set an agenda for the fall semester. They noted, "we would like to add a focus on local work by having rad.art curate an exhibition of works by local political artists. Another idea that has been tossed around is an exhibition of recent political flyers from our area, looking at these flyers as works of art. By doing more locally-oriented events, as opposed to always relying on touring, non-local artists, we hope to create events that are more empowering for local artists. Noticing that last year's lineup was predominately men, and not wanting to replicate the under-representation of women

and minorities in mainstream art, we plan on featuring more radical female talent and artists of color next year. Also on the agenda are more participatory events, such as a stencil-making skill share that we have planned for this fall."

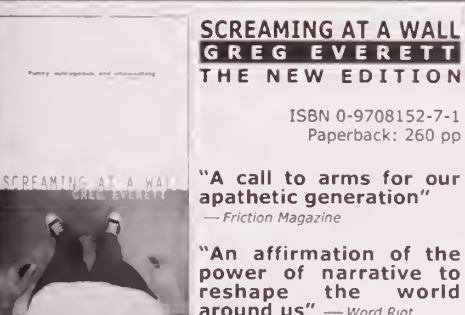
True to their word, rad.art initiated the changes and the group has been at a fever pitch since the start of the semester. Expanding from four members to over 25, the schedule of events for the month of October 2003 alone speaks of the renewed energy and optimism. Events include: "Project (Stop the) Mayhem," an evening with Clamor Magazine and Rooftop Films; a screening of "Afropunk: the Rock n Roll Nigger Experience," a documentary that explores race identity and racism within the punk scene, followed by a discussion with the director, James Spooner; Open Thought Music, political hip hop from NYC, which, in addition to performing, leads a discussion around the politics of hip hop and the problems of cultural appropriation: "Uniting the State of the Americas" — a multimedia spoken word performance by Climbing Poetree (Naima Penniman and Alixa Garcia). To close out the month, rad.art will be hosting Daphne Gottlieb, a performance poet recently published by Soft Skull Press who will read from her new book, *The Final Girl*. The fall session for rad.art will also include an art workshop series called "rad.skills." The workshops include stenciling, pinhole

photography, radical street dance (by the *Pink Bloque* of Chicago), flyer-making, and puppet-making. Rad.art has also been collaborating with other student groups, which has made the community that attends the events more diverse and vital.

The vast spectrum of events and workshops by rad.art makes one wonder if they are a student group or their own art school! Yet, tapping into funds and creating dynamic events should not be limited to students alone. Teachers have the ability, as well, to use class funds and other sources to bring compelling people and events to a campus. As an art history teacher in Milwaukee, I drew upon class funds to bring Howard Zinn, *@rtmark*, Terese Agnew, *Clamor Magazine/Rooftop Films*, Josh Macphee, and the film screening of the *Yes Men*, directed by Sarah Price and Chris Smith (*American Movie*), to the college that I work at during the 2002-2003 school year. The process of inviting people to speak is very easy: in many cases a simple invitation by email was all that was needed to set up an engagement. The important decision, though, is made inside — a decision to make it happen.

To learn more about rad.art or set up an event in Ann Arbor, contact: [radart@umich.edu](mailto:radart@umich.edu) or [www.umich.edu/~radart](http://www.umich.edu/~radart) write: rad.art at: P.O. Box 4253 Ann Arbor, MI 48106

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**W**ill Power is an actor, an MC, a dancer, a writer, and a teacher. And he combines all of these talents in his plays, which are pushing the form of hip hop theater to new levels. Using the languages of hip hop — rhyiming, popping, DJing — Will can reach people that don't usually check out the theater. With a dynamic stage presence and compelling characters, he can also reach the people that do. His most recent work, *Flow*, is about seven storytellers trying to pass on their knowledge before a storm wipes them out. That's Will — writing plays, holding workshops, speaking to young people — facing down the challenges of delivering an intelligent message in a harsh world. Clamor Consulting Editor Joshua Breitbart caught him on the phone just after the close of *Flow*'s second run in New York City.

# WILL POWER

on hip hop theater,  
storytelling,  
and bridging culture gaps

*Clamor: How'd you get started with theater and rhyming?*

Will: I got into theater when I was 10 and I started rhyming officially when I was 14. We got hip hop a little bit, we kind of got it on the West Coast, when *Rappers Delight* came out. That was kind of our introduction. So we started growing up in the culture. The big thing in the neighborhood at first was breakdancing or what we called struttin' or popping. That was the big thing in '82, '83, '84. So I tried my hand at that, but I was really weak. That wasn't really my calling at the time. I'm a better popper and a strutter now than I was then. I tried to pop, I used to get taken out, so I said, well me and my boy Sam were like, we got to change our trade. So we switched over to rhyming and we had already been taking theater classes and, you know, I'm a lot more on the vocals so it was almost more of a natural fit. So that's kind of how it started, it was almost like survival of the fittest.

*But the things have always been linked for you.*

Pretty much, yeah. Even before there was really a hip hop theater, I've always been kind of exploring those two things in some way, whether that be, we're doing a talent show or a little basement party or something like that and we start one song off with a skit or something. I started a long time ago. And you know this guy Sun Ra?

*Yeah*

One of Sun Ra's dancers left the group, and she came into the neighborhood where I was living and she started teaching drama classes for kids. So that's where I got my theater start. She would write these plays and direct them, it was a real like grassroots kind of thing. We would sell cupcakes and homemade cookies on the weekend to raise money for costumes. And these plays were like, afro-centric-science-fiction-educational-children's-theater plays. And they were like real fantastical, and surreal, and abstract - like animals might talk

and characters might fly through the sky, you know? And I feel like I've kept that kind of vibe in me ever since.

*Let me jump ahead to Flow and maybe you can explain how you got it started and how you hooked up with Danny Hoch [the director] and DJ Reborn [the accompanist].*

I'm from the West coast, but at this time I was living in Harlem, this was about five years ago and I was walking down the street in Harlem and I got this vision of these storytellers. I assume it was West Africa, but I never been to West Africa, so I don't know. I got this vision, these storytellers were kind of running around real urgently, and they were trying to pass on these stories because it was during a storm. It was the Atlantic slave trade, which was like a storm, and so they were trying to pass these stories on to as many people in their village or in the areas that they could because people were getting killed, people were getting snatched up, people were turning on other people, betraying other people. And these stories had the keys to the culture's history and the secrets of how to survive in life and all that kind of stuff, so they were running around telling these kinds of stories.

So I started getting these visions for [their] stories. But I couldn't tell them in West Africa because I've never been to West Africa and I wanted to modernize them for the hip hop vibe so I brought 'em up to date. But they're still these ancient stories.

Then I was like, "Wow, I really need to find a director that understands theater but really understands hip-hop culture for this show. And I really couldn't think of [who], and then I had another vision, in the shower of all places: Danny Hoch!

So I asked Danny if he wanted to direct it and he was like, "I've directed some stuff but not on this level," but he was like, "I'm down," and we hooked up, and he really helped bring so much stuff out of me. It was his idea to [say], "let's take this collection of stories and let's take this one story you've got about these three storytellers on the run and let's make that the premise for all the storytellers, like the whole show. And each story that you've got, let's assign it to a different

storyteller." I was like, "Oh shit, that's a dope idea." So that's what we spent a year, two years working on, really, like rewriting, rewriting. That's how we really started to work and I can't even describe how amazing it's been to work, the two of us, I mean, we could go places, amazing, I mean we could talk about Stella Adler and then we could bounce over to Rakim or Nas and bounce back to Stanislavsky, in relation to the second line on the fourth page?

*I think Flow did this amazing thing of appealing to people who are used to different traditions as well. Bigger fans of Rakim and bigger fans of Stella Adler show up.*

That's cool, that's cool. I'm glad you got that and I felt that was a real blessed thing that that was the case. So yeah, so that was really cool. That was that, and then we ended up doing, before I started working with Danny, I had got together with a friend of mine, Will Hammond, and we together composed all the music for the stories, all the beats or whatnot, and then we started working, and then we pressed it to vinyl, because I wanted to have a DJ, but I wanted to have original beats. I think this is the first time it's ever been done, at least in theater — it's done obviously in hip hop music, but in theater where the music is original music but it's pressed on vinyl that a DJ is manipulating — we

this point reflects a lot of the attitudes of hip hop culture in terms of, like, do-it-yourself. And I'm from the Bay Area and hip-hop music, hip hop artists in the Bay Area, we've really had a tradition of do-it-yourself.

*I've seen Flow and your previous show, The Gathering, and in both you really foreground storytelling, not just as an act, but as a subject. Why do you think that's an important thing to be talking about?*

It's funny because I didn't realize this but it's almost like The Gathering is almost like the prequel to Flow in some ways, you know like I didn't really realize that when I was writing Flow, but The Gathering is about the meeting place of black men. It's dealing with this circle, these magical meeting places. And the Gathering is talking about, when you're having a hard time, go to these meeting places for healing, inspiration, then go back out in the world. And every culture has them. For black men, I highlighted a few of them — barber shop, jazz club, and other places. But all cultures have these different meeting places where they go and you get healed.

But in Flow, it starts off with a meeting place, but then the meeting place gets blown to hell. So the message in Flow is, what happens if the meeting place gets eliminated, like physically? Well, you gotta



wanted to really give her [DJ Reborn] the possibility to really be an instrumentalist.

Let's say we had a song, like one of the stories, "Blind Betty;" right? We put the whole track on vinyl, the whole song, and then we put each instrument by itself on a different track for like 30, 45 seconds. Then we put combinations of tracks, kind of like just bass and drums, just the guitar and the bass, just the guitar and the drums. And so each song has like five to ten tracks on, the album. And so it really allowed her and I and Danny, when we got into rehearsal to really have more flexibility with it. Like a lot of times we were like, "Well damn we want this character to speak before the song comes out, so let's play just the shakerays or this for 30 seconds and then spin it backwards and play it slow." It really gave her more flexibility to be an instrumentalist as opposed to, she had to be confined to just the way the song broke down, the full song on the track.

This is one of the first times I had pretty serious production values behind the show. In my previous shows, the production was minimal, or like hip hop theater a lot of times for the most part up to

flow. You gotta use all the stuff you've learned in the meeting places, all those stories and those experiences and stuff like that to flow. Then you'll realize that the meeting place was never really eliminated. It was physically, but it never was really eliminated spiritually.

And it's the same neighborhood. I didn't really realize that. In the Gathering, I just go to the meeting places of Black men within that neighborhood, but it's a multicultural neighborhood. In Flow it's the same kind of surrealistic neighborhood, it's just that you get to meet more of the people, more of the cultures, more of the neighborhood.

*One obvious contrast between The Gathering and Flow is that in Flow you take on female characters. I'm sure that was a special challenge. On the other hand, it liberated you to talk about a wider range of spaces in the community.*

Yeah, definitely, I mean, it was a challenge. I have never done it to that extent. I've written for female characters. I can't really remember playing too many, maybe some sketch comedy stuff, but I've never

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really performed female characters and trying to do it in a real way of integrity, not just a this-is-a-joke type thing. And some of the other characters are not necessarily African American and in some ways that was a challenge for me, too. In other ways, once I got past the initial fear it was cool because I grew up around a lot of different cultures in San Francisco. So it wasn't like I didn't necessarily know those people, I had to just get into it and really be comfortable. A lot of people's favorite character is Sweet Pea. I'm like, wow, that's like a 15-year-old girl, and it's cool that I can get into that and they can dig that and stuff like that. The whole show was challenging, man, it was a hard show to do. I ain't gonna lie to you, be here all easy. This shit was real difficult.

*More generally, you have the primary elements of hip hop present in the production of Flow — your MCing and dancing or breaking, Reborn's DJing, and the graffiti that's incorporated into the set design. For people who maybe haven't heard of hip hop theater before, is it simply the presence of those elements that make it hip hop theater?*

Yep. That's it, man. Hip hop theater is theater that uses one of those elements to tell a story. One of those elements as the basis for language. So if you've got some cat up there doing monologues about some kid in Chicago, some hip hop story, but he's just using conventional language, that's not hip hop theater. If you're 35 or 25 and African American and you're in a play, it's not hip hop theater just because you're 25, you know what I mean? It's about the form, the aesthetic. There's a couple different opinions about this in the hip hop theater community but that's what it is, basically.

Def Poetry Jam is not hip hop theater. There's nothing about that that makes it hip hop theater. It's good. But I think people are always wanting to group it together. In all honesty, sometimes a lot of critics are older and they really don't know. This one dude, this magazine interviewed me, he [wrote], "hip-hop theater came out of the spoken word scene in New York in the mid-'90s." I'm like, "I didn't say that." Or, [critics say] "Danny Hoch is the father of hip-hop theater." I'm like, really? But they don't know. So I encourage more young folks to be journalists in the vibe, in the movement. The ones in our scene that have a little bit more pulse on what's going on as opposed to people making these broad statements.

*Yeah, it clearly — even just looking at your own experience, going back to when you were a kid — it clearly comes out of a movement with broad participation. But now with Flow, it's at a whole other level*

*for you. You've gotten a lot of positive reviews and you're reaching a broad audience, including older white people as well as the hip hop generation. Is that having an impact on your art?*

I can't really say 'cause it's kind of happening now, so I don't know what effect if any it's going to have on my art and who I'm trying to reach. I know that I'm really focused on young folks and also families. But if someone older can get something from my story, then that's good too. The thing that I really want to try to do is to bring my audience with me. In other words, I'm trying to broaden the base, the audience that goes to theater, and try to make them more young folks. And that's the challenge.

*You're a youth organizer, in a way.*

Yeah, definitely. And a lot of us [in hip hop theater] also are teachers or like teach workshops. So a lot of times when we go to a place, like I know when I go somewhere, there's a heavy workshop component. My wife, who's also my manager, she sets up a lot of workshops and so I'm teaching workshops in the community and then a lot of young folks come to the show. So we're trying to expand it. The challenge though is I'm only one person. So that's another reason, on an organizational level I'm really excited about this new piece I'm working on because I'm not even in it. It's a group piece. And it's going to be 14 people, so my idea is that they each go out and do one workshop in the community.

*Tell me a little more about that new project.*

Man, this one is sick. It's called The Seven. It's an adaptation of The Seven Against Thebes by Aeschylus. You know Aeschylus? It deals with these two brothers that love each other but then they start bickering. They're cursed by their father, Oedipus, and they start to wage war on each other. And I'm really trying to draw parallels from that time to today. A lot of things that go on in this ancient text, even though this piece was written thousands of years ago, a lot of the stuff is still going on, where these ordinary people get stuck in the middle. And it talks about the rape and the pillaging, and that's going on now in Iraq and Afghanistan. There's even drama in the United States. Hella security, lockdown. All those things you can find in this ancient text. So, it's kind of sad in a way. But I'm working on it to try to really draw those parallels and to hopefully leave it on a more optimistic note, although I don't know if that's going to be possible. ☆

## REVIEW PEOPLE'S RADIO

### Various Artists

*Begin Live Transmission: Radio CPR Benefit Compilation*  
Dischord Records, 2003  
[www.dischord.com](http://www.dischord.com)

I've always admired Dischord's steadfast dedication to their community. They have always been firmly rooted in the D.C. area, releasing area music, and adding to their community in numerous ways. With this release, a benefit for Radio CPR (Community Powered Radio, also a nice double entendre), a small-scale, volunteer-run community station in the multi-ethnic Mt. Pleasant/Columbia Heights area, Dischord continues and extends that commitment. Truly an example of "becoming the media," the station was started by community members in 1999 as a venue for marginalized voices, to resist increasing commercialization of the airwaves, and resist efforts by the wealthy in the area to control aspects of these neighborhoods.

This unique compilation plays like a radio show, including station ID's (one is from El Vez) and excerpts from interviews with community members.



Although some of the music is the usual Dischord/DC indie rock fare, such as El Guapo, Deep Lust, Pigeons (with Guy from Fugazi and Kathy Wilcox of Bikini Kill), this also includes hip hop, r&b, rockabilly, punk, indie pop, go-go, mariachi (apparently there used to be roving mariachi bands, but no longer thanks to a local civic association that forced live music out of neighborhood venues).

Like the radio, the music is hit or miss...some of the highlights are El Guapo, the hip hop, go-go, and the mariachi. It is a brilliant compilation, however, in its representation of a culturally and artistically vibrant community, as a commentary on the need for, and value in community-based broadcast over corporate commercial drivel, and as a fundraiser for an important part of the D.C. community. Buy it and support cross-cultural community based radio. Better yet, buy it and get inspired to start your own local station.

- j powers

# Documenting Justice



## Andrew Stern's photography is making revolution irresistible

by Robert Biswas-Diener

The most admirable thing about Andrew Stern is not his photography, which is powerful. It is, instead, his determination. Andrew gave up a promising career as a celebrity photographer in New York City to turn his lenses on the issues of social and economic justice he had so long valued. It was a substantial sacrifice — foregoing large pay raises, high-powered connections in the photography world, access to the rich and famous, and potential publication in large distribution magazines. Taking an enormous professional risk, he quit his job and traveled Europe, where he lived and worked with squatter communities, buskers, circus performers, and political activists.

His experiences overseas, ranging from living in a cave in Spain to protesting against the WTO in Prague, helped coalesce Andrew's passion for culture and global justice into a singular artistic vision. In the last few years, Andrew has documented the popular uprising that came in the wake of the economic collapse of Argentina, the Westernization of tribal East Africans, cocoleros struggles in Bolivia, Greenlandic native rights activists, sex workers in Calcutta, the Israeli/Palestinian conflict, the humanitarian issues associated with the reconstruction efforts of post-war Iraq, and the recent protests against the World Trade Organization in Cancun. His striking images of poverty, struggle, and humanity have appeared in *Clamor*, as well as the *New Internationalist*, *Adbusters*, *Z*, *Yes!*, *Sic*, the German newspaper *Die Welt*, and *The Guardian*. Recently, Andrew acted as photo editor on the essential activist companion, *We Are Everywhere: The Irresistible Rise of Global Anti-Capitalism* published by Verso.

Despite the feeling that he is participating in important projects, Andrew struggles with that familiar artistic narrative: acceptance. The irony is that many of the publications that pay the most, such as women's magazines and corporate-owned newspapers, are the precise media outlets he wants to avoid. "I am interested in documenting the stories we don't normally hear about," he said, during an interview in his Portland apartment. "But the toughest part of documentary photography, for me, is the balance of wanting to work for publications that I respect with the fact that those types of publications often don't pay much, if they pay anything at all. It's been an on-going struggle."

Is artistic success to be defined in dollar amounts, then? "Absolutely not," says Andrew. "I see my success as building a name for myself, which will make me a more successful tool for reporting on global justice issues. The more successful I am, the better I can reach a wider audience with important stories. Getting the stories out

there is what gives me the greatest satisfaction." Andrew points to the example of his long-time photography hero, Sebastiao Salgado. "His photography is beautiful and powerful," says Stern. "Salgado is committed to documenting the lesser known stories around the world. In fact, when we were seeking images of peasant movements in Brazil for the book *We Are Everywhere*, Salgado let us use his images for free — pictures that he could have sold to magazines for 500 or a thousand dollars."

Based on the recent success of *We Are Everywhere*, and his rapidly growing list of publication credits, it appears that Andrew is on his way the kind of success he hopes for. When viewing his photography, most people seem to agree that he has a knack for capturing the human face of conflict, oppression, and struggle. This talent likely stems from his approach to his art. "Whenever I work, I think of this Toni Cade Bambara quote I love: 'The role of the revolutionary artist is to make revolution irresistible.'"

Andrew is firmly committed to the idea that good documentary photography can be produced only if enough time is spent with the subjects. "To get good photos you have to spend the time and connect with the people. That's the only way to tell meaningful stories. If you look at my work from Palestine this summer, it is incomplete — I just didn't have enough time with the people. But in Argentina, it was a very cohesive project." Indeed, Andy's photos from Argentina can be seen around the world. Activists John Jordan and Jennifer Whitney wrote and self-published a single-issue newspaper on the Argentine popular uprising called *Que Se Vayan Todos: Argentina's Popular Rebellion*. The newspaper was a mix of written reportage and Stern's vivid images. The members of the band Chumbawamba liked the paper so much that they funded a second printing of 15 thousand copies, which have been distributed in nearly 50 countries.

In the end, it appears that Andrew's gamble is paying off — his artistic vision combined with a commitment to global justice has provided a sense of meaning for him, and his professional career is developing nicely. Although his images speak for themselves, it is noteworthy that he aspires to a kind of success defined by the ability to give away, rather than sell, photos for the right artistic and political causes. It is just one of the many things about his work that makes the revolution irresistible.

Information on *We Are Everywhere* and *Que Se Vayan Todos* is available at [www.WeAreEverywhere.org](http://www.WeAreEverywhere.org).

above: Andrew Stern photographs a young member of Kenya's Massai tribe. The photo graced the cover of *Clamor's* Fashion issue (July/August 2002) and accompanied Biswas-Diener's article on the tribe's perspectives on physical attractiveness and aesthetics



# FABRIC ADDICTS

**Courtney Becks talks with  
three independent designers  
about their art.**

This past year it occurred to me there was a limited scene for independent fashion. Flipping through zines, I would see advertisements for shoestring record companies or interviews with indie musicians. It was easy to get the sense that a network or community for other underground art and expression existed.

Not so with fashion. No cultural mandate exists for clothing that is under the radar. There's no parallel in the fashion world to the film-maker who paid for a movie on a credit card, no discourse of the clothing designer as a hero who "keeps it real" with radical politics like in punk. In short, we don't have the Sleater-Kinney of sweaters.

On one hand, famous designers like Donna Karan and Fendi sell their business to huge conglomerates, which is obviously not the best environment for originality or creativity. Through glossy print ads and star-studded runway openings, designer fashion relies on escalating desire by attaching a product to a celebrity. On the other hand, the mainstream fashion available in stores like Express copy what famous designers are doing every season. No wonder everything on the racks today looks the same.

For me, clothes are very immediate and very personal. They are tangible and they come in intimate contact with my body. Wearing clothes that aren't interesting or don't feel right physically or emotionally can absolutely ruin my day because I don't feel at ease and happy to be me. After these realizations I decided to begin a quest of sorts for independent designers. The designers featured here are by no means an exhaustive representation of the people out there working to get interesting, original clothes out into the world — and because one connection leads to another and another, the quest for a truly independent fashion scene is only beginning.

*continued next page*

## Fashion Ninja

Arcka Ikeler runs a showroom in Milwaukee, selling her line Fashion Ninja. She studied fashion at Mount Mary, a local college, for two years. Ikeler later quit school to work on her own and start Fashion Ninja.

Ikeler's dedication to urban design is apparent. "I would like to see my label being sold nationally in boutiques that support independent fashion designers." Additionally, she has also been teaching others to sew since January 2003. "I work with people on production through offering apprenticeships and internships at Fashion Ninja. It's a great opportunity for individuals to learn fashion production construction, and gain a rich experience in fashion on the independent side of things versus corporate or commercial fashion."

Ikeler's splendid designs are on view at [www.fashionninja.com](http://www.fashionninja.com). She also offers Ninja Sewing Classes. Get in touch for more information!



bradleymeinz.com

**"I want to end up where it's good."**

## Lekkner

Lekkner is Detroit-based Melissa Dettloff's label. Dettloff, who has a BFA in photography and a BA in English, has been selling her designs via her web site since May 2003. She was a vendor at the Renegade Craft Fair in Chicago this past September.

"Style-wise, I think I'm fairly influenced by fashions of the early to mid 1970s," she said. Dettloff creates fun, sweet handmade limited editions that are made of "recycled/vintage/fine fabrics and materials."

Though her mom and grandmother sew and Dettloff started sewing dolls and pillows by hand as a child, she didn't really start getting serious about machine sewing until her college years. She started selling her pieces via her web site after graduation. Working in a local independent fabric store exposed her to a great store of knowledge, as well as some awesome textiles. Dettloff adds: "I admired a lot of other girls' DIY websites and thought, 'Maybe I can do that.' So I learned some HTML, built my site and here we are."

Dettloff admits that she doesn't really think of herself as a designer. "Clothes are fun to make because you get to wear them," she commented, comparing fashion to art she made in college. "I'm also interested in making clothes because 99.9 percent of what's in the stores is really homogenized and boring, not to mention most of it doesn't fit right and isn't made all that well. I think some people are tired of everything looking like everything else."

Lekkner makes an effort to do the right thing. Besides donating 10 percent of sales to charities, Dettloff gives her fabric scraps to Arts & Scraps, a Detroit non-profit that uses recycled scraps in educational programming for children. "I'm also against sweatshop labor, which is where most of our mainstream stuff comes from," Dettloff said. "I have a good size vintage pattern collection. I use a lot of vintage fabric or remnants from the store or I'll turn a T-shirt into something else. I try to use what's been there when I can. I like the idea of something being one-of-a-kind." Lekkner also ships orders using minimal packaging and partially recycled or reused packaging.

"If I could continue to sew fun things and be able to pay the bills, I'd be happy. To be able to escape the rat race would be a wonderful thing. I can't imagine I'll be doing this forever, but for now I'm having fun with it."



**"I just like to make things. I'm a fabric addict and I usually let the fabric tell me what to make out of it."**



# Andrea Loest

After earning her BFA in art, Iowa native Andrea Loest moved to New Orleans. There she works in a boutique and continues to produce her one-of-a-kind dresses.

Loest's dresses are based on individual personas, with names such as "Dirty Debutante" or "Art Tart," and are explicated with images and texts. The personas are heavily based on societal stereotypes of women. "I think a lot about whether my art is fashion or whether the dresses can function as an art object," she said.

Loest has employed both the gallery and runway as venues for her work, which does include an element of performance. "I think the path I am taking right now can be seen as what you do in the music industry," she said. "I do press, PR, and shows in club venues to get my work seen by lots of different people who wouldn't necessarily go see it in a gallery."

Loest has experienced first-hand the lure of going over to the corporate side. She tells of being "approached by a mainstream teen mag to do an article on my work." At first, she explained, it seemed like a golden opportunity. She talked with a friend working at the magazine, though, who pointed out "they are in the business to sell stuff to young women, and I may hate the way my work is portrayed or the way I am portrayed to make it sellable." In the end, she decided to pass. "The press I have received has been in mostly underground mags. I prefer that because their readers are smart and often artists themselves." Loest's work has been featured in *Venus* and in *Chick Factor* events.

She recognizes the absence of an indie fashion scene. "There isn't an underground fashion house that goes out there looking for talent and then allows them to develop it with their funding and resources the way a record label does," Loest commented. "Maybe the way to be an indie designer is to not worry about selling and just worry about people wearing your work and seeing that."

Currently Loest is influenced by graphic design, as well as her background as a painter. Using programs like Photoshop and Illustrator, she creates screenprints for her new dresses. "It's taking my collage aesthetic and making it more sophisticated."

For dolls, dresses, and sewing lessons, visit: [www.andreaforever.com](http://www.andreaforever.com).



"I have been sewing since I was six years old. I always thought it was great to be able to make anything you imagine."

## The Wage of Sin

*A Mistaken Belief in Forever*

The Wage of Sin is a four-woman band that brings a big, aluminum bat to the game to smash a few heads and bust down inflated egos. Speed, power, and sheer volume serve notice that The Wage of Sin means business. Melissa Fornabale's vocals — deep growls sounding like a heavy smoker with a trake ring and a Napalm Death/Sore Throat sing-along fan — evidence the band's anger. Complete with harsh guitars and a double-bass-playing drummer, this is a band that simply would not be invited to the Liliith Festival. But they probably should be at the forefront of the revolution — the message is their strength. On "Defeating the Purpose," Melissa and Rachel, the guitar player, write, "We're not part of your movement!," railing against hypocrisy, fear, and segregation. It's difficult to say if they're speaking about Republicans, neo-fascists, corporate powers, or mainstream liberal interest groups, but it works for all of them and more. "Obsessive Impulse" is about the need to take action against oppression, but lacking the support and positivity to take down the Leviathan — "Doomed to fail alone."

The band slows down on the sixth track for a cover of "Separate Ways" by Journey. As on several other tracks, Melissa's vocals are backed by members of MPB, AFN, and the Buick, bringing a sort of snarling, male cheerleader, fist-pumping-and-



Wage of Sin

## REVIEWS IMMIGRANT SUN RECORDS

shouting-at-the-demo background. As a bonus track, the band plays a straight-up cover of Joan Jett's anthem, "I Hate Myself for Loving You," and yet another version of "Separate Ways," but with intentionally bad vocals. The band is serious as a natural disaster but still knows how to have fun.

### Various Artists

*Immigrant Sun Records Summer 2003 Sample*

This summer's releases from Immigrant Sun Records rock hard. There's a lot of passion and, probably, a lot of wild, sweaty hair-flips from The Wage of Sin, Nakatomi Plaza, With Resistance, and Elad Love Affair. Undoubtedly, Alan Rickman's bad-guy character in *Die Hard* was hearing Nakatomi Plaza's "Meanwhile in Greenpoint" as he fell to his bloody doom. The singer from Elad Love Affair sounds like Bjork fronting a rock band. The Wage of Sin contribute a throaty, thrash-heavy rush, "Forgetting Forever." For balance, the sampler includes the dramatic piano-driven opus "My Golden Thread" by siren-voiced Amanda Rogers. The sampler concludes with "Subject Matter" by With Resistance, a fast-paced rock song featuring a double-bass drummer and a serene lullaby-like bridge.

Both available from Immigrant Sun Records at [www.immigrantsun.com](http://www.immigrantsun.com)

-Matthew L.M. Fletcher

# Avant-Garde Fires Still Burn on the Lower East Side

The Poetry Project at St. Mark's Church in-the-Bowery in New York City, legendary for nurturing many radical American voices — among whom include Kathy Acker, Richard Hell, Ed Sanders, and Patti Smith, has a new artistic director. Quietly this summer, Anselm Berrigan accepted the duties from Ed Friedman, who announced in February that he would step down so that he could spend more time with his family and to provide the next generation its opportunity to direct the Project. Following a search that lasted throughout the winter, Berrigan was offered the job by the Project's board of directors in April.

This appointment is logical and refreshing. Keeping with the history of the Project's directors, Berrigan is a charming, iconoclastic, and sophisticated poet. After studying with Allen Ginsberg at Brooklyn College in the 1990s, Berrigan worked as program assistant and coordinated the Monday night reading series at the Project. His readings in New York City have become increasingly popular, and he's published three volumes of poetry with Edge Books of Washington, D.C.

Berrigan literally grew up on, in, and around the Project premises. His folks — Ted Berrigan, Alice Notley, and Douglas Oliver — were active participants in the lower east side poetry community as well as influential on the development of the Project as a safe place for young writers to experiment. Anselm Berrigan's brother, Edmund, did his first poetry reading there before his ninth birthday.

Yet, at the age of 31, Berrigan is seven years younger than the Project, situating him in a radically different milieu than his predecessors. While war continues to rage, there is much less money to support alternative art institutions. Hopefully Berrigan will be able to tap into some of the youthful idealism that has recently spawned movements like the independent media renaissance to keep the Project vital for another four decades.

I met Berrigan, an old friend of mine, at the Grass Roots Tavern, a comfortable old dive on St. Mark's Place that has become a regular post-Poetry Project reading meeting place, to ask him what he thinks about this community.

*Clamor: Give me the short history of the Poetry Project.*

Berrigan: In the early 1960s there were a couple of reading series on the Lower East Side -- one at the 10th Street Café and the other at Les Deux Megots -- which attracted lots of younger writers, some associated with various groups — Beats, New York School, Black Mountain, Umbra — as well as other more independent and unaligned poets.

For whatever reason, these reading series came to an end. One then started at Café Le Metro, I think where the Telephone Bar is now, hosted by Paul Blackburn (poet, host, and documentarian.) After about three or four years, Le Metro's ownership put an end to the readings. According to David Henderson (poet, biographer, editor) the poets would come, order one cup of coffee, then fill their cups with wine that they had smuggled into the cafe. It just wasn't profitable.

I guess this is becoming the long history. A lot of this information can be found in Daniel Kane's *All Poets Welcome The Lower*

## The New Director of The Poetry Project Talks About Its Community



interview and photos Greg Fuchs

East Side Poetry Scene of the 1960s (University of California, Berkeley, 2003).

*Long is fine but let's focus on the Poetry Project.*

There weren't a lot of readings at the time, at least not in New York. Michael Allen, the pastor at St. Mark's church, was supportive of the artist community of the Lower East Side. The church was made up of people that understood those involved in the Factory and the hippies. There were already readings occasionally held in the church but no regularly organized series.

Allen believed that there was a spiritual basis to the art that was happening, not in a generalized metaphysical way but in a specific aesthetic way. The church at the time saw social critique as their mission.

Through certain machinations, a government grant of \$200,000 was established to help expose disadvantaged youths to art. This loosely written grant was supposed to set up what we'd now call youth programs.

In the fall of 1966, the Poetry Project officially opened. The culmination of six to seven years of readings in the neighborhood instigated an increasing interest in poetry.

*Who was the first director?*

Paul Blackburn is given credit as the founder; he never administered or hosted. He did record a lot of readings. Joel Oppenheimer was the first director.

*Who else has directed the project?*

Anne Waldman for 10 years, then she became increasingly involved with establishing the Jack Kerouac School of Disembodied Poetics at Naropa University in Boulder, CO. Then Ron Padgett, Bernadette Mayer, and Eileen Myles — each for a couple of years. Ed Friedman took it over in 1987.

In the early days the Project was a more loosely run organization. It was an experiment living from grant to grant and year to year. The community was small. It became associated with the New York School aesthetic although that wasn't initially intended. It just developed that way.

In the 1980s, it became a not-for-profit corporation with a board of directors and by-laws. Fundraising and membership building became more strategic because the money ran out. Initially it was a Great Society program, but as federal money for arts programs diminished in the Reagan years, the Project had to look for other sources of funding.

*How do you see yourself fitting into a tradition of Project directors?*

I don't. I see it as I've got a job to do — to keep the place going, to extend its good parts, to adapt to the 21st century, and to figure out exactly what the Poetry Project community is right now.

It's certainly not what it was in 1966. I recognize and respect its tradition but I don't feel beholden to it.

It used to be that in the early days most people associated with the Project lived in the neighborhood. It was cheap, not a predictably safe pedestrian nightlife spot.

The project still has ties to local businesses and artists in the neighborhood, but many members now live in Brooklyn, actually all around the city. Some don't even live in the city.

*What is your curatorial philosophy?*

To put on good readings. Host poets that will fill the room. Bring an audience that will listen to one another.

I'm interested in cross-aesthetic, -cultural, and -generational pairings not for the sake of juxtaposition but because there is so much writing going on, I think it's important for us to experience it. We shouldn't just go to readings because we like the artist.

It's important artistically and politically, not in the sense of poetry politics but in the sense of how people negotiate their lives. And it's practical, because as George Steinbrenner would say, "I've got to put fannies in the seats."

*Are you excited about your new job?*

Yes. Once you cut through all the bullshit it's exciting. It's a real challenge to figure out how to help a non-profit poetry organization survive in this day and age.

Because it's the Project it's enjoyable, because I know it so well. It's challenging because it exists as an alternative to conventional American poetry. It's not that easy for a conventional organization to survive. To present oneself as an opposition makes it a little harder.

*Is the Project still opposed to conventional poetry?*

In terms of the poetry it presents, yes.

It is less important to be an alternative than to complement other organizations around town. We share a similar spirit with the Bowery Poetry Club, Gathering of the Tribes, Nuyorican Poets Café, Segueway Foundation, or Teachers and Writers.

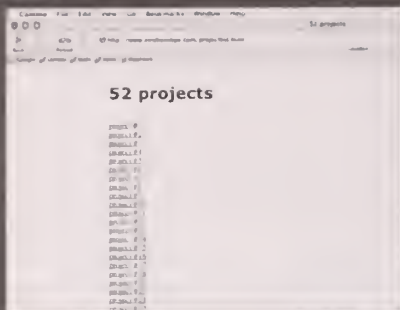
On the most basic level the Project offers a place for people to speak. It is a creative and social space, a place where people can meet and share information or even organize. It's up to those that attend the project to help define it.

Often, the poetry heard at the Project takes on the kind of political and global issues that indie media covers. One can agree or disagree on the effectiveness of this but the fact remains that the work being heard at the Project is increasingly aware of political issues on a local, national, and global level especially savvy about the ways in which the U.S. is directly involved. \*



52projects.com

Jeffrey Yamaguchi, prolific media maker, has made another contribution to the world. You may know him from things such as his booklet, "Get The Word Out," or his zine Stroposcope, or his site Bookmouth.com, ...you get the picture.



Jeffrey has started 52projects.com as, he says, a reminder to get moving on what's kicking around in your head. Promoting creativity is a good thing. What I've found with this site is that it's kind of a cross between Martha Stewart for cool people and "do something nice for a friend" day — both of which are good things.

My favorite of the former is Project #37: Track down a picture of every place you have ever lived.

"Not the geographical location, but the physical structure that you called your home. From the house or apartment you grew up in, to your dorm room freshman year, to all the apartments in various cities and countries you've lived in over the years (for which you may or may not have actually been on the lease), all the way up to the place you live now.

Some of the pictures will be from parties that you threw. One will be a picture of the family in front of the house. Another will be an image of the cat sleeping on the bed. One will be of you, standing near the door and dressed to the nines, holding a beer. There may be one of a person you can't even recall knowing sitting in a chair in your living room. There will be one place for which you won't be able to find a single photographic record. One will be a picture of the hallway, probably taken just to use up the last picture on the roll. One will be of you and an ex, just hanging out on a lazy Sunday afternoon, taking pictures of each other because you're still in the phase of being in awe of your mutual attraction for each other. And one will be just of the place, because you are so happy with how it looks and proud to call it yours."

The make-your-friend's-day type projects are just as great — send an envelope to one of your down-and-out friends containing a pair of chopsticks, \$25, and a chinese take out menu — anonymously. Print out all the emails you've saved to and from a friend for a year and bind them in a book as a present.

Doing projects is good to "get the creative juices flowing," but it's important and inspiring to remember the little things in life and to make friends happy. I found a lot of these projects were about remembering which is a good thing.

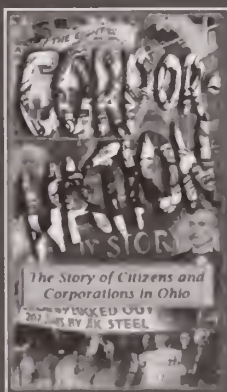
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-Jen Angel

**CorpOrNation: The Story of Citizens and Corporations in Ohio**

AFSC 2003  
[www.afsc.net](http://www.afsc.net)

If asked, most people would not realize, and would be angered, that under current laws, corporations have the same, if not more, rights than common citizens. In fact, the Supreme Court ruling of *Santa Clara vs. Southern Pacific Railroad* designated that corporations are "persons" according to the 14th Amendment. This is not a condemnation of the average citizen's knowledge of our government. In modern politics it is almost assumed that corporate entities have significant influence on government. The documentary *CorpOrNation: The Story of Citizens and Corporations in Ohio* looks at how corporations have gained these rights, how corporations of today differ from the intentions of our nation's founders, and how things can be changed in the microcosm of Ohio. *CorpOrNation* should be looked at more as an educational tool rather than an artistic tour de force. It might remind many viewers of civics class with its narrations over still-pictures and interviews of scholars and activists-on-the-streets. But this is what the Northeast Ohio American Friends Service Committee sought in creating *CorpOrNation*- promoting active citizenship. The documentary is broken into two major strands. First, the history of corporation rights in Ohio and beyond and second, case studies and examples. Under early laws in Ohio, — laws meant to insure that the "created was not greater than the creator" — corporations existed under revocable charters and all financial records were public domain. But a trend started after the Civil War and continuing today finds corporations have decreased citizen authority and gained rights such the right to make political contributions and unlimited life spans.

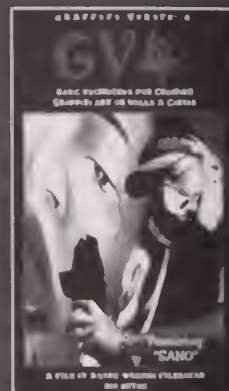


Three recent examples of corporate citizenship are looked at in Ohio: a three year lock-out at AK Steel in Mansfield, the corporate control of the Ohio Farm Bureau, and a "Veggie Libel" lawsuit (illegal to criticize perishable items) by Buckeye Egg against consumer activist Amy Simpson for her reporting on the reuse of discharged eggs. These cases all point to situations where under current laws corporations have more rights than average citizens. Finally, international corporate rights legitimized in agreements such as NAFTA and the WTO parallel the political gains by corporations in Ohio. Under these agreements corporations are given greater influence; influence which can supercede and dictate international laws. While the subject matter of this documentary is bleak and depressing, there is hope. A grassroots push was involved in the creation of *CorpOrNation* by NOAFSC. It goes beyond Ohio. It is the same mentality found in Seattle. If citizens educate themselves (by at least watching this video) and get together, then as the closing words say, democracy can be formed with all power to the people, the natural people not the corporate people!

-James Nickras

**Graffiti Verite 4**

Bryan World Productions  
[www.graffitiverite.com](http://www.graffitiverite.com)



Good news for all you artists craving to vandalize your city walls with aerosol art — the new installment of *Graffiti Verite 4*, by award-winning filmmaker Bob Bryan, captures the genius of spray art known as Sano. Sano informs us that all art is a personal experience — and that through his art he wants the general community to understand him. There seems to be quite a philosophy beyond aerosol paint (cough). He favors freestylin' graphics, which is just painting what you feel at the moment (you feel it?). Move over Michelangelo, Sano dishes out tips and techniques step-by-step, so even the average Joe can find his artistic seed planted in a spray can.

Sano starts with the basics, like sketching an overview of what he is going to paint, and then goes straight to his mural (wall in the Graffiti Pit at the legal Graffiti yard in Los Angeles, California). He briefs us with safety tips, and what kind of paint and caps to use on certain projects (more basic techniques are included on *Graffiti Verite 2*, and 3). He points out techniques like can control and shadowing while artfully designing his first piece (his name in block letters). 3-D lettering tips are also included as well as how to display motion and 'energy' between pieces. He explains wildstyle (indecipherable) street writings, and how to destroy the alphabet to bring a more abstract, artistic view to your work. Adding eye candy and other schnazz is what makes the piece hot. Not only a master at wildstyle gangsta art, he mellows down and next shows us how to paint an ebony beauty — with exquisite detail. He refers to Da Vinci as someone who has influenced him in art form, as well as street writers in Cali. Straight outta Compton. He displays dazzling highlighting and shadowing techniques as he adds different colors to the mix, looking for the perfect tone. Highlighting brings out the overall character when Sano takes into account the skin tones and shadowing of the face. As he fades the two pieces together, intertwining their energy, it occurs to me how much downtime there is in the video. It kind of drags — with many quiet times while Sano is painting. Also, Sano is ad-libbing almost everything he is saying, complete with awkward pauses, to provide filler in dialogue.

It is a good thing that Sano's art is visual proof that he actually knows what he is talking about. After making his rendition of a gangsta mushroom cloud (atomic bomb), and adding some rose pink (fabulous) to his block Letters for some 'snap and poppy', he heads over to conclude the lesson with a look at canvas art. He chooses only black and white paint for his canvas piece, on 2Pac (Gangstas for life). He used only two colors to bring out the detail, contrast and midtones. He takes into account color blending, and highlighting, and introduces new spray caps for very fine detail. A pep talk about using real photos as your inspiration (photorealistic stylin') is also provided at the conclusion. Sano reminds you to keep it real, and express yourself, enjoy it, and teach the kid because the next generation is what it is all about. Sure. But that's not all, boys and girls, everplaying in the background of the entire video was DJ-jamming-street graffiti beats Represent! — all contributed from lesser-known, kickin' DJs. After Sano signs off, the contact numbers, e-mail and CD information of more than 20 DJs involved in the film are displayed, each with a streaming example of their work so you can pick your own unique graffiti-jamming beat! Pick from gangsta DJs and artists such as DJ Jaaz, Shame, and Big Pimp Joe. Off the hook, yo. Yet another reason to indulge in the complete aerosol art and musically jive spray art experience, brought to you by Sano. Hook up with *Graffiti Verite 4* for a good time!

-Melissa Leuschel

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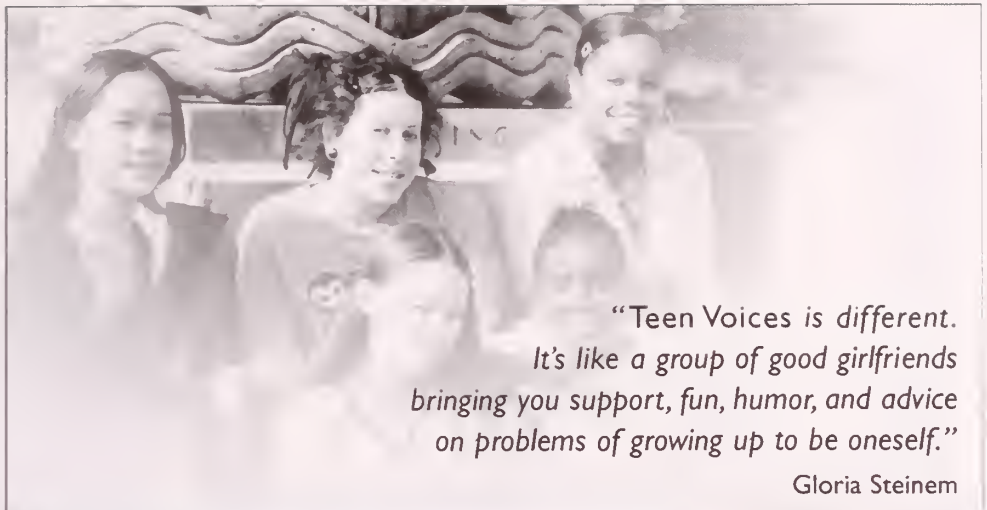
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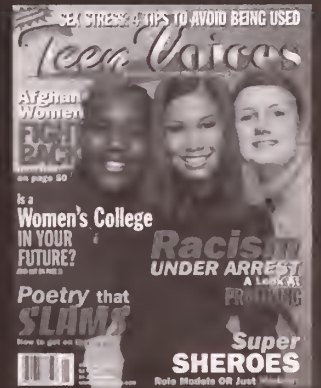
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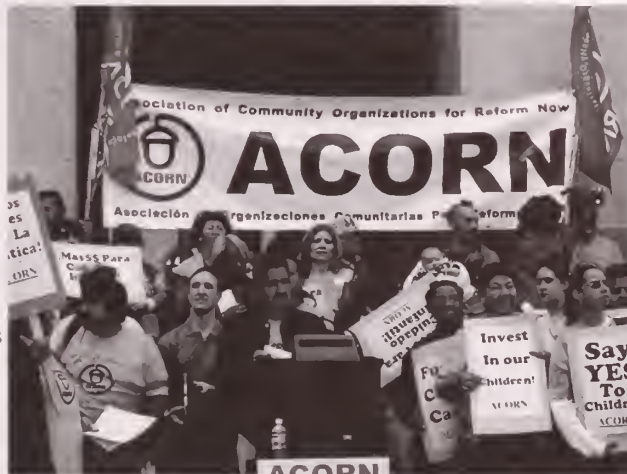
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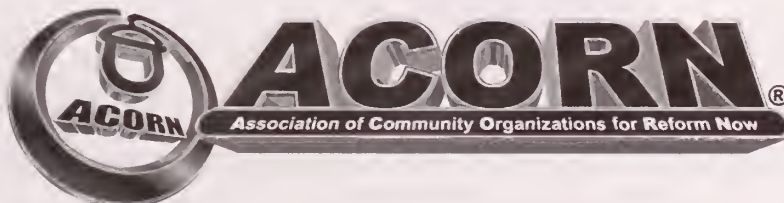


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FREE

Ornette Coleman  
October 9, 1959



"Free Jazz" by Brandon Bauer

# Free jazz

A Brief Reminiscence of Jazz in the '60s

by Robert Levin

**More or less officially unveiled** with the first New York appearance of the Ornette Coleman Quartet at the Five Spot Cafe in the fall of 1959, free jazz (or new black music, space music, new thing, anti-jazz, or abstract jazz as it would variously be labeled) gave new dimension to the perennial "where's the melody?" complaint against jazz.

For most of the uninitiated, what the Coleman group presented on its opening night was in fact sheer cacophony.

Four musicians (a saxophonist, trumpeter, bassist, and drummer) abruptly began to play — with an apoplectic intensity and at a bone-rattling volume — four simultaneous solos that had no perceptible shared references or point of departure. Even unto themselves, the solos, to the extent that they could be isolated as such in the density of sound that was being produced, were without any fixed melodic or rhythmic structure. Consisting, by turns, of short, jagged bursts and long meandering lines unmindful of bar divisions and chorus measures, they were, moreover, laced with squeaks, squeals, bleats, and strident honks. A number ended and another began — or was it the same one again? How were you to tell? No. No way this madness could possibly have a method.

But, umbilically connected to the emergent black cultural nationalism movement, the madness did indeed have a method. The avowed objective of the dramatic innovations that musicians like Ornette and Cecil Taylor — and, in their footsteps, Sunny Murray, Andrew

Cyrille, Archie Shepp, Bill Dixon, Albert Ayler, Jimmy Lyons, Eric Dolphy, and John Coltrane (in his later period), among hundreds of others — initiated and practiced from the late '50s into the early '70s, was to restore black music to its original identity as a medium of spiritual utility. When these men abandoned an adherence to chord progressions, the 32-bar song form, the fixed beat, and the soloist/accompanist format, and began to employ, among other things, simultaneous improvisations, fragmented tempos, and voice-like timbres, they were very deliberately replacing, with ancient black methodologies, those Western concepts and systems that had, by their lights, worked to subvert and reduce black music in America to either a pop music or (for many of them no less a corruption of what black music was supposed to be) an art form.

I don't want to make music  
that sounds nice. I want to  
make music that opens the  
possibility of real spiritual  
communion between people.

-Alan Silva

Alan Silva, a one-time bassist with Cecil Taylor and then the leader of his own 13-piece orchestra, made the point in an interview I did with him for *Rolling Stone*. "I don't want to make music that sounds nice," Silva told me. "I want to make music that opens the possibility of real spiritual communion between people. There's a flow coming from every individual,

a continuous flow of energy coming from the subconscious level. The idea is to tap that energy through the medium of improvised sound. I do supply the band with notes, motifs and sounds to give it a lift-off point. I also direct the band, though not in any conventional way — like I might suddenly say ‘CHORD!’ But essentially I’m dealing with improvisation as the prime force, not the tune. The thing is, if you put 13 musicians together and they all play at once, eventually a cohesion, an order, will be reached, and it will be on a transcendent plane.”

(I commented in the interview that “Silva says his band wants to commune with the spirit world and you aren’t sure that it doesn’t. With 13 musicians soloing at the same time, at extraordinary decibel levels, astonishingly rapid speeds, and with complete emotional abandon for more than an hour, the band arrives not only at moments of excruciating beauty, but at sounds that rising in ecstatic rushes and waves and becoming almost visible in the mesmerizing intensity, weight and force of their vibrations, do for sure seem to be flushing weird, spectral things from the walls, from the ceiling, from your head.”)

Of course not all of these musicians shared Silva’s position entirely. Some saw the music as an intimidating political weapon in the battle for civil rights and exploited it as such. Others, like Taylor, did and quite emphatically, regard themselves as artists. For Taylor, a pianist and composer who took what he needed not just from Ellington and Monk, but from Stravinsky, Ives, and Bartók, it wasn’t about jettisoning Western influences on jazz but about absorbing them into a specifically black esthetic.

For the most part, however, disparities among the younger musicians of the period amounted to dialects of the same language. All of them shared the “new black consciousness” — a new pride in being black — and their reconstruction of jazz, their purging of its Western elements, or their assertion of black authority over those elements, was, to one degree or another, intended to revive and reinstate the music’s first purpose.

Silva saw broad extra-musical ramifications in his procedures. He believed that by rejecting all externally imposed constraints, the inherent goodness in men would surface and enable them to function in absolute harmony with both nature and each other. “Man,” he said to me once, coming off an especially vigorous set. “In another ten years we won’t even need traffic lights we’re gonna be so spiritually tuned to one another.”

And I have to say that I agreed with him.

This was, after all, a period in history when “restrictions” of every conceivable kind, from binding social and sexual mores to (with the moon shot) the very law of gravity, were successfully being challenged. If you were regularly visiting Timothy Leary’s “atomic” level of consciousness, and if you could call a girl you’d been set up with on a blind date and she might say, “Let’s ‘ball’ first and then I’ll see if I want to have dinner with you,” you could be forgiven your certainty that nothing short of a revolution in human nature itself was taking place.

And some of us who regarded Western values as both the cause of all ill (had they not brought us to the brink of annihilation with the hydrogen bomb?) and the principle impediment to such a transformation, saw the new black music as leading the way, as the veritable

embodiment of what Herbert Marcuse called “the revolution of unrepression.”

In so heady a time, earnest unselfconscious debates about the relative revolutionary merits of free jazz and rock — the other musical phenomenon of the period — were not uncommon.

I remember a conversation I had with John Sinclair, the Michigan activist, poet, and author of *Guitar Army*. John took the position that rock was the true “music of the revolution.”

No, I argued, rock did stand against the technocratic, Faustian western sensibility. It did, and unabashedly, celebrate the sensual and the mystical. But in these respects it only caught up to where jazz had always been. In contrast to what some of the younger black musicians were up to — the purging of white elements African music had picked up in America — rock was simply the first hip white popular music.

Rock never got beyond expressing the sentiment of revolution while free jazz, by breaking with formal Western disciplines — by going “outside,” as the musicians termed it, of Western procedures and methods and letting the music find its own natural order and form — got to an actualization of what true revolution would be.

Rock’s lyrics, I said, promoted, in many instances, the idea of a spiritual revolution, but musically rock remained bound to the very traditions and conventions that its lyrics railed against and the audience never got a demonstration or an experience of authentic spiritual communion. Rock’s lyrics were undermined and attenuated in the very act of their expression by the system used to express them. The new jazz, on the other hand, achieved freedom not just from the purely formal structures of western musical systems, but, implicitly, from the emotional and social ethos in which those structures originated.

As I say, it was a heady time.

Now, of course, free jazz, in anything resembling a pristine form just barely exists, and obviously it has ceased to exist altogether as a revolutionary movement. Like other emblematic movements of the epoch with which it shared the faith that a new kind of human being would surface once all structure and authority that wasn’t internal in origin was rejected, free jazz was ultimately ambushed by its naiveté.

But on purely musical terms free jazz has not been without an ongoing impact. If it never achieved what Alan Silva expected it to, it did (however contrary to its original ambition), expand the vocabulary

and the field of options available to mainstream jazz musicians. And while they function today in what are essentially universes of their own, Taylor and Coleman are still very much around and continuing to discover surprise and the marvelous.

Indeed, stripped though they may be of their mystique as harbingers of an imminent utopia, these extraordinary musicians continue to produce musical miracles as a matter of course. For an especially vivid demonstration, try to catch Cecil in one of his live performances — what he would call “exchanges of energy” — with drummers like Max Roach or Elvin Jones.

In a bad time in every department of the culture, a time of rampant — often willful — mediocrity, I could name no better tonic. ★

*Revised and expanded here, this piece originated as an “oral essay” for the Cosmoetica Omniversica interview series on [www.sursumcorda.com](http://www.sursumcorda.com)*



“Omette” by Brandon Bauer



# Surrealism

# Thrives

by Craig Blair

**Art movements come and go.** The usual life cycle goes something like this; the movement is born, it's ridiculed by the general public ("you call that art?"), it's eventually accepted as a legitimate art form, and then interest fades as the next new movement comes along. They've all been through it — Impressionism, Cubism, Modernism, Expressionism, Minimalism — the list goes on.

But at least one movement has not followed that pattern. Surrealism, which never gained the popularity of many other art movements, even during its glory days of the 1920s and '30s. It also never faded into obscurity the way many other artistic movements have, and is as active today (perhaps even more so) than it was decades ago. Perhaps Surrealism's tenacity lies in the fact that it is not, as any Surrealist will tell you, an art movement. It is, rather, a way of life!

Surrealism was started during the 1920s by a small group of writers, led by poet André Breton, as a reaction against the destructiveness of the "rationalism" that had guided European culture and politics in the past — a "rationalism" that had resulted in the horrors of World War I. Breton saw Surrealism as a means to reunite conscious and unconscious thought so completely that the world of dream and fantasy would be combined with the everyday rational world in "an absolute reality, or a surreality." Early Surrealists felt that unconscious thought, uninhibited by the restrictions of conscious thought, was "pure thought," and the movement was strengthened by the visual artists who joined, including Salvador Dali, Joan Miro, and Rene Magritte.

While Surrealism never became very popular among the general public, the Surrealists attracted a fair amount of attention during the next two decades. The original Surrealist group was located in Paris, but groups soon sprang up in other cities and eventually across the Atlantic in New York City. The movement gained slow but steady momentum until 1939.

The Nazi invasion of Western Europe scattered the Surrealists. Most of them fled to the United States. Max Ernst was imprisoned for a short time by the Nazis for his communist leanings. Leonora Carrington, unable to acquire an American visa, fled to Mexico City, where she still lives today. World War II seemed to sound the death knell

for the movement — it was unable to gain the same momentum after the war that it had before and seemed destined to just fade away with the aging and dying of its founding members.

But something has happened in the last decade to breathe new life into the movement. Over the past ten years, the number of people connected to the Internet has grown tremendously, which has resulted in like-minded individuals finding one another all over the world. In this way, a growing number of second- and third-generation Surrealists have been able to find each other and link up, sharing thoughts and ideas, and even collaborating on works sent electronically. New Surrealist groups are forming or gaining new members (Austrian digital Surrealist Zazie was invited to join the Groupe de Paris du Mouvement Surrealiste after its members visited her web site).

The International Surrealist Show in November 2003, in the unlikely location of Bowling Green, Ohio — a small city of about 30,000 in the American Midwest — exemplifies this renewed activity. Fifteen artists from around the world, all found via the Internet and including the aforementioned Zazie, Helmut Goede of Denmark, Tibor Kovacs-egri of Hungary, Lady Hannah Cadaver of Australia, and Leonora Carrington's son, Pablo Weisz-Carrington of Mexico City, participated in the show, held at Sea Lion Studios Gallery in the old downtown section of the city. A digital slideshow, exhibited on a monitor at the show, allowed artists to send works electronically, saving many artists considerable shipping costs.

A related development that has breathed new life into the movement has been the advance of digital computer art. While it is still viewed by most people as a graphic art medium, many Surrealists have begun using digital art as their preferred method of creation, turning it into a fine art medium. Sadly, many digital Surrealists are still having to overcome prejudices on this front. One of the purposes of the International Surrealist Show was to demonstrate that there is plenty of room in the Surrealist movement



"Icicles" by Craig Blair



"Femmes" by Zazie

for this (relatively) new art form alongside the more traditional methods of painting, drawing, collage, etc.

Where will the movement go from here? Only time will tell, but for the moment it continues to gain momentum. Who knows what new innovation may come along and give it even more strength? One thing almost seems certain, and that is that it will never die out. Not as long as there are avid Surrealists in the world who find ways to connect. \*

The Canadian immigration officer glanced up and, as the six of us — dirty, haggard, and slightly nervous — approached her counter, she said, “You must be a band.” It made me wonder how many times a week, or even a day, bands come through her line, driving rusty last-legs vans toward Vancouver. I felt like she knew exactly what we would say, that we were about to play a game we would undoubtedly lose.

We lied, of course, about our intentions. After hearing the horror stories of border guards searching vans and denying entry to anyone who told the truth about playing shows, we cooked up a bogus recording contract, claiming we needed our equipment to record a song for free at a friend’s studio. We had removed from our van any evidence of our real plan to play six shows across western Canada, and we had arranged for a friend to sit by the phone and pose as the person planning to record us.

Our plan worked (though I suspect the immigration officer knew exactly what was going on), and she gave us permission to enter Canada. She then informed us that our merchandise (which we had declared) would not be allowed in. We argued we would need it when we reentered the U.S., but she instructed us that it was illegal to import and sell goods without the appropriate authorization and taxation. She said, “We don’t know if you’re really going to try to sell your records on the street,” which sounded funny until we later realized that perhaps selling them at a basement show was exactly what she meant. We dejectedly drove to the nearest U.S. Post Office and sent our merchandise to Minneapolis before returning to cross the border.

It seemed somehow unjust for the border to define our CDs and t-shirts as “goods.” Sure, they were mass-produced products that we planned to sell and profit from, and sure they were all stamped with our b(r)and name, but we had a much nobler understanding of our merch. Along the underground touring circuit, it is acceptable to have merchandise for survival purposes. Some bands give their music

away, but most sell it. Everyone seems to acknowledge that both touring and producing records incur expenses, and most are more than happy to pay for a recording if they like the band. That’s why all this talk of “goods” at the border was so foreign to us. Our CD wasn’t a “good,” some commodity that we were looking to sell for gobs of cash! And we certainly weren’t going to loot Canada’s youth of all their disposable income and bring it back to the U.S. undetected by the border patrol.

We didn’t like to think of our merchandise as “commodities” as the word “commodity” smacks of capitalism and other things supposedly at odds with underground music. But I began to wonder: at what point has a band “commodified” its music, in the most nefarious sense of the word? Is it when a band creates a sellable product out of its songs? Is it when a band plays a show for money? Is it when a band sells a record for more than it cost to make? Is it when a band turns a profit, after paying back all its investments in equipment, vans, web space, recordings, record pressings, and gasoline? Is it when a band starts fetishizing itself, creating stickers, buttons, patches, and t-shirts? Is it when a band begins advertising its records through promotional posters, advertisements, and onstage plugs to “check out the merch table?” Is it when a record label gets involved?

If the answer is “yes” to any of those questions, then our band has taken the necessary steps to commodify our music, which appears to be a generally accepted practice in underground music. It also seems, however, that everyone who consents to this practice has a threshold of tolerance for how much money a band seems to be making from the commodification of its art. In other words, a band can make some money off its music, as long as it’s not “too much.” I’ve seen people balk at a full length album being sold for \$10, a ticket that costs more than \$5, or a band that asks for any sort of assurance that a certain amount of money will be available for gas and expenses from a given show. None of this uneasiness seems to be based on a thorough analy-

# Moving Units

Negotiating the Performance and the Pitch  
on the Road with Marathon

by Aaron Scott



sis of the economics of being a small band on tour, but rather a general sense of when a band is asking for too much money.

The money issue is an icky one. No one likes to think about money too much when it comes to the music we love, but, for a band on tour, it is difficult not to obsess over it. Between a terminally ill van, an insatiable gas tank, and unforeseen complications (for example, the city of San Francisco towing our van for \$170), it was difficult for us break even, let alone make enough money for drum sticks, guitar strings, and band spaghetti dinners. This made it easy to hope for as much money as possible,

**The money issue is an icky one. No one likes to think about money too much when it comes to the music we love, but, for a band on tour, it is difficult not to obsess over it.**

generally manifested in the form of merchandise sales. Each time we sold a CD or a t-shirt, we had a few more dollars of insulation from further debt. The problem, though, with making merchandise sales such an integral part of touring is that it transforms the actual performance of the music into a sales pitch, reducing the artistic moment into a prospective business transaction. How many times have I said, before playing our last song, "If you like our music, then you can pick up our record at our merch table?"

Unfortunately, the sales pitch is somewhat necessary for an artist concerned with sustainability. Had we embarked on our two months of touring with no records or merchandise, we would have returned home massively in debt. The more money we need to make back and the more money we need to save for future tours, the less we will find ourselves touring.

So when our merch was denied access to Canada, we were extremely frustrated. Finances motivated our frustrations. — No merch sales meant dependence on the unpredictable gas money situation (which ranged on this tour from \$180 to \$12, but was usually around

\$40). These financial concerns were later rewarded with the reality that we lost a significant amount of money that week.

Our six shows in western Canada, however, were among our favorites of the tour. We played great spaces, met awesome kids who loved to dance, and saw some beautiful countryside. To deal with our frustration of having no CDs to sell, we burned copies of our CD and gave them away, and, when we ran out of those, we handed out fliers directing people to a website where they could download our MP3s for free.

Surprisingly, that week in Canada completely liberated me from the clutches of financial worries. With our commodities left behind at the border, we were free to focus purely on the performance, the moment. It was in a living room in Vancouver Island that I rediscovered why we do this, why we strain all of our resources to travel to remote towns and play for 30 kids while most people our age consider us insane for so blatantly disregarding any sort of stability. It was in that living room — as everyone jumped up and down and the floor sagged and bounced along with the people, with no clear division between us and the audience — that the musical moment was reborn for our band. No sales pitch, no commodities, no "check out our web site," and we had rediscovered the art in our music.

One of these moments is not enough for me. I want them to happen everywhere, and as often as possible, which requires touring. And I cannot deny that a realistic aspect of touring as much as possible is making money off our merchandise. I think our challenge (and that of other bands with the same goals) is to forge a symbiosis between the purity of performance and the commodities spawned off our music, a working relationship where the money made off records supports the performance, not vice versa. I know for a fact this is not easy. The more successful a band is at selling their merchandise, the more tempting it is to focus on that aspect. But I have hope that my band and other bands like us can continue to tour in a sustainable fashion, yet continue to highly value the performance of our art. ☆

low left: Marathon in Vancouver, below: Aaron and Brian staff the merch table



On December 30, 1979, over 30 New York City artists decided to spend their New Year's Eve making a statement against skyrocketing rents. With boltcutters taken from a guitar case, the artists clipped the lock to an abandoned storefront, one of many neglected city-owned buildings on the Lower East Side. Once inside with neighborhood kids and a space heater, they began to install art — drawing a mural on the wall and making a play using a flashlight and shower curtain. The Real Estate Show opened New Year's Day, 1980.

The next day, the artists returned to find their work locked inside by the city. They immediately contacted the press, creating a media furor and embarrassing the city. The Department of Housing Preservation (HPD) offered the group the storefront and basement of a nearby tenement building for the low monthly rent of \$242 to stymie the bad publicity. Across the street, a lawyer's office displayed the fading sign *Abogado con notario*, so the artists named their dilapidated gallery from the only letters still visible: ABC NO RIO.

From the beginning, ABC No Rio attempted to involve its neighbors, primarily working-class and poor Latino immigrants, in its activities by maintaining an open curatorial approach: anyone with a proposal for a show and willing to put it together could do so. Although they attended the shows, ABC No Rio's neighbors rarely came up with ideas, though photography

# ABC NO RIO

## Twenty-Three Years of Art & Culture in a Four-Story Tenement



words and photos Victoria Law





student Tom Warren brought them into the project. Warren was fascinated by old photographs of immigrants found at the abandoned portrait studio next door, and decided to continue this documentation of neighborhood residents. He offered black-and-white portraits for a dollar, and blew up prints to create Portrait Show. Neighborhood children, too, participated enthusiastically — lending their pigeons, chickens, cockroaches, cats, and dogs for the Animals Living in Cities show, and helping to turn the gallery into a world of cardboard and glue for Tube World.

In 1983, ABC No Rio hosted Seven Days of Creation. Over 100 artists participated in the week of performances loosely based on creation myths. Thus began the Deadbeat Performance era. The founding artists turned the space over to two of Seven Days' principal organizers, Jack Waters and Peter Cramer, and ABC No Rio became the place for performances which couldn't get booked anywhere else. Psychodrama, a group from Virginia, staged a performance in which one member read a poem while giving himself an enema. Other members threw buckets of horse manure at audience members, and chased them down Rivington Street when they fled the gallery.

In 1985, Matthew Courtney began his Wide Open Cabaret, an open mic with no sign-up sheet, time limit, or rules of any kind. Artists performed theater pieces, read poems, played music, and ranted about their experiences. Although many regulars eventually went on to varied degrees of fame in the larger mainstream world, the Wide Open Cabaret, unlike many of its contemporary groups, tolerated and welcomed marginal points of view, eccentrics, crackpots, and ideologues.

Toward the end of the '80s, punk and hardcore kids, fed up with the violence at CBGB's, arranged to use the gallery for Saturday afternoon shows. ABC No Rio intertwined politics and punk and employed a do-it-yourself ethic, reacting against a macho period in New York hardcore history. Gradually, the punks began replacing the performance artists as the driving force behind the space. They built a communal kitchen and began a Food Not Bombs chapter. At the same time, Our Unorganized Reading, a no-holds-barred poetry and spoken word reading, and Amiea Bunker, an improvisational musical

network, held weekly open events there. Political and cultural groups alike used the gallery for both meetings and events. ABC No Rio also continued its tradition of showing unknown artists. The Punk Art Show, in several installments, acknowledged the contingent of punk artists, exhibiting photography, paintings, silkscreens, prints, and sculpture.

In 1994, HPD terminated ABC No Rio's lease and began eviction proceedings. Despite the continuing legal battle, ABC No Rio did not cease its activities. During the summer, it hosted free art classes for neighborhood kids, free self-defense classes for women, and free Spanish classes for neighborhood activists. Weekly punk/hardcore shows continued. Food Not Bombs attracted new volunteers, and ABC No Rio continued to show the work of unknown and emerging visual artists.

In February 1997, No Rio supporters marched to HPD offices intending to stage a sit-in. Instead, HPD's commissioner invited the protesters into her office and scheduled a meeting for the next week, at which both ABC No Rio's volunteers and its squatters met with HPD officials. The commissioner proposed placing No Rio into the city's Community Works program: the city would sell the building to ABC No Rio for one dollar if No Rio could raise the money to renovate it.

As the fundraising began, the upstairs were gradually converted. A silkscreen shop and a black-and-white darkroom were built to provide low-cost access. Computers were donated to establish a free computer lab. A collection of zines was moved from a squat in the South Bronx to start a zine library. Hardcore shows continued as did the Sunday afternoon poetry readings. The art exhibitions changed monthly, sometimes addressing a political topic, but always offering a space for unknown artists.

Twenty-three years after the Real Estate Show, New York's real estate and art market prices are skyrocketing. Many emerging and unknown artists have difficulty finding places to show their work. Soaring rents have forced many alternative performance spaces, some run by veterans of Matthew's Wide Open Cabaret, to close. Despite the economic hostility towards alternative and marginalized culture, ABC No Rio continues to provide a home for their voices

# Living



# Land & Water

My first summer as part of the Living Lands & Waters team was trashy, to say the least. In a community cleanup on the Rock River, I rode on a pile of garbage in an aluminum plate boat and came home covered from head to toe with dirt. Because my office job at LL&W doesn't involve much physical labor, I had to volunteer to get the hands-on, trash-collecting experience that would fully immerse me in this youthful organization focusing on cleaning up waterways, forest restoration, and teacher education.

On my first day as the new office manager in July, I met a vibrant artist and student of the Art Institute of Chicago, Heidi Marie Moran-Sallows. Heidi was just starting a commissioned wrap-around Native Mississippi Wildlife Mural on the small three-level tugboat named "River Cleanup," partially funded by a grant from the Riverboat Development Authority. I was just beginning my dream job — working in an environmental organization overlooking the Mississippi River, talking by phone or email to people from around the country and the world.

I was familiar with the founder and president of LL&W, Chad Pregracke, and his tireless mission to clean up America's waterways, as he is a hometown hero here in the Quad Cities, which straddle the Mississippi River in Iowa and Illinois. Chad grew up just ten feet from the Mississippi River in East Moline, Illinois (his parents' house now also serves as the LL&W international headquarters). Growing up on the river, working as a commercial clam diver, and camping out on the islands, Chad noticed what must have been over 100 years of accumulated trash along the banks. After contacting government agencies and getting apathetic responses, he recruited friends to help clean in 1997. Six years, several prestigious awards, an international summit in Africa, and many donations and grants later, at age 28 he is president of a half-million dollar a year environmental. Heidi and I were just the two newest recruits on a fast-paced team of impassioned and driven young or young-at-heart during the summer of 2003.

The day we met, Heidi drove upriver to join the barge crew, comprising seven sun-kissed 20-somethings, who spend ten months out of the year living communally on the barge, each person (sometimes literally) pulling his or her own weight in the multifaceted organization. The donated barge — with bedrooms for

the crew and a living room with a gigantic American flag on the ceiling and a black velvet Elvis painting on the wall — doubles as a floating classroom with free educational teacher workshops held every few weeks from May through October.

While the mural was being painted, Chad commented that it "reflects what we are about: flora, fauna and the river." This mural would serve as an eye-catching promotion with a fish depiction based on Bluegill on the bottom, Big Mouth Buffalo on the top, and a cottonwood tree on the back. Robert E. Lee's survey map of the Mississippi is also represented. The tree represents the Riverbottom Forest Restoration Project in which invasive vegetation is removed and native species of nut and fruit trees are planted in an attempt to increase the diversity of wildlife in the river valley. The mural's beauty complements, or perhaps contrasts with, the other end of the fleet, the garbage barge, which looks like a floating landfill divided into recyclables and trash.

After she was sure she would have the painting done by the time she had to return to school, Heidi began helping out with the cleanups, which are held from Minneapolis to the Missouri River in St. Charles, Missouri. Past cleanups have been on the Ohio, Illinois, and Rock Rivers, and a cleanup of the Potomac River is scheduled for April 2004, sans barge. Chad's motto is "Coming to a river near you," which indicates his boundless energy and ambition.

Late August finally settled in and Heidi painted the last strokes on the psychedelic-looking towboat as she said her goodbyes to the crew and headed back to Chicago. I have also settled into my position, organizing the office, acting as Chad's right-hand (wo)man, coordinating the Adopt-a-Mississippi mile program, writing correspondence and grants, and working with the board of directors and its committees.

The barge is now docked in its winter home south of us. When I think of my first summer around this carefree, yet extremely concerned bunch, I think of my first visit to the barge. I picked up the paint donated by Valspar and headed north to Prairie DuChien, Wisconsin to deliver it. Leaning backward against the rail of the upper deck while she painted in her sun-bleached short spiky blonde hair, sunglasses glinting, life jacket over her tank top and sporting several tattoos of her own, Heidi joked, "We're calling it a 'tug with a tattoo.'" ☆

For more information visit [www.livinglandsandwaters.org](http://www.livinglandsandwaters.org)

Tiny Giants  
Nate Powell  
Soft Skull Press  
[www.softskull.com](http://www.softskull.com)



*Tiny Giants* by Nate Powell is perhaps among the finest literature to be published in 2003. And it's mostly pictures. Although *Tiny Giants* is a sorta "Best of Nate Powell: 1998-2002" of largely published work, it is coherent as a single piece and a superb addition to any coffee table or library of the serious comic collector. This guy, age 23, is going places and *Tiny Giants* is entertaining and eloquent evidence that he already has.

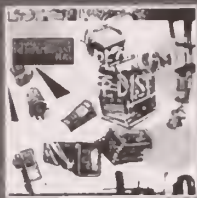
Taken from his self-published comics (*Wonderful Broken Thing*, *Conditions*, and *Walkie Talkie #2-4*), *Tiny Giants* is a dreamy garland of images and prose set in an attractive graphic novel form. There is a certain wonderful restraint to the general eerie darkness which pervades the pages—literally and thematically. Fantastic inking appropriately shifts between stark detail and rough shapes, emphasizing and deemphasizing the focal point while smoothly and logically running from frame to frame — the artwork is worthy of the wall or gallery. The writing, dialogue and plot(s) and all that brain stuff are damn good too. It really is an impressive body of work and Powell should be damn proud and so should his mom. Reminiscent of a Bone and Cerebus hybrid, Nate has a really aggressively black inking style and manipulates the positive and negative space expertly. Movement is especially well portrayed. The kid can draw real good. Perhaps the strongest single piece, "Autopilot," depicts an inked child making pencil drawings that appear exactly as a pencil drawing should and the outcome is nothing short of splendid. Yes, splendid!

Nate also possesses the insight and human understanding required to create an extremely engaging comic with sparse use of the fantastic or surreal. Dealing mainly with that too-short time preceding adulthood known as adolescence, Nate doesn't dwell on boners (stiffies, etc.) and pubic hair — but the general perspective of modern civilization at large that is so clear for many bright quiet kids at that age. Although Powell claims *Tiny Giants* is not autobiographical, there is an overtly personal element to these stories. *Tiny Giants* is easy to relate to, in other words: brilliant. It is clear that *Tiny Giants* is a product of much work, faith, and determination. Plus, he plays in the punk band Soophie Nun Squad. Pretty cool, eh?

Although I wasn't familiar with Nate Powell's work before reading *Tiny Giants*, I will be anxiously following his work in the future and it has established a nice spot in my apartment for guests to peruse. *Tiny Giants* accomplishes the nearly impossible: to communicate the clichés of adolescence without actually being cliché. Amazing! POW! For 15 bucks you should probably buy it, if you have a family member or friend in high school you should buy it for them — they'll think you're the coolest ever.

—Ryan Robert Mullen

**The Dismemberment Plan**  
*A People's History of the Dismemberment Plan*  
 DeSolo  
 www.desotorecords.com



This is it, fans of the Dismemberment Plan. It's over. After over a decade of punk/funk/indie/pop/whatever, they've called it quits. But unlike most bands, they've actually done it at a good time. Instead of making a few progressively worse albums or breaking up before they reached their potential, they've made a perfect finale. In case you haven't heard, they invited their fans to download the raw tracks from all their albums and remix them, the end result being this CD. The result is an odd but interesting album for those that aren't familiar with the band, and something worth crying about for their hard-core fans. Travis Morrison's unique voice is warped through 12 remixed tracks from different points in the Dis Plan's discography. My personal favorites are Drop Dynasty's remix of "What Do You Want Me To Say?" Erik Gundel's version of "Superpowers," and Grandmaster Incongruous' "Pay For the Piano." For their fans, this is a must have. For the rest, it's still an interesting listen. Either way, it shows that the Dismemberment Plan was a truly innovative and interesting band that understood when it was time to step aside.

-Jan Adcock

**Kid Koala**  
*Some of My Best Friends are DJ's*  
 Ninja Tune, 2003



Kid Koala's new record is one of the quirkiest I've heard in a long time, and in a good way. His songs don't really sound much like conventional instrumental hip-hop (as if there was such a thing) but rather like a conversation that the artist is trying to have with you. While it doesn't have any lyrics on it, apart from some sampled words from movies, those samples and the patterns of his music are convincing auditory portraits of emotions. This record is scrubbed clean of any concealments or pretension; no attempts are made to create a façade, it seems, for if the nature of the music seems an unlikely achievement for a pretender.

It isn't much to dance to, perhaps, but the casual listener will find a lot to like about this CD, which is full of happy music which has been set free from disappointment. An interesting explanation is offered by a small booklet which comes with the CD, which, having no words, is itself open to interpretation. It doesn't really take much thinking, though: this record is refreshingly free of pretexts other than clean, enjoyable music.

-Jacob Dreyer

**Kill Me Tomorrow**  
*Skin's Getting Weird EP*  
 Gold Standard Labs  
 www.goldstandardlabs.com



*Skin's Getting Weird* can best be described as off the wall, post-punk, anti-rock, a journey into an electro-rock underground that hasn't surfaced since groups like Wire, Suicide, and Cabaret Voltaire.

This EP almost sounds as though the band's main goal was to torture listeners: "Put the Time Machine in Your Mouth pt II" and part one as well are a couple of the most ridiculous tracks that any band has recorded. On top of those two, "Skin's Getting Weird (subtitle remix)" is one of the more questionable tracks on the album.

After you hear it, you generally ask yourself, "why?" *Skin's Getting Weird* is a series of songs spotlighting white noise, red lights, screeching vocals, distortion and enough feedback to make Black Dice cry their New York hipster eyes out. This is an EP that might not feel right when you're listening to it, but when you think about it's a subtle masterpiece. Feel free to Kill Me Tomorrow after hearing it, but remember, never today.

-Thorin Klosowski

**Lungfish**  
*Love is Love*  
 Dischord 2003  
 www.dischord.com



After Fugazi, Lungfish are Dischord's longest surviving band. They have continued to subtly develop their own brand of repetitive, hypnotic post-hardcore for 15 years. The liner notes to the *20 Years of Dischord* box set state that "critics of Lungfish have complained that Lungfish only seem to play one song over and over again, yeah, but what a song!" On their latest release, they have fine-tuned this song even further. It is safe to say that if you are a Lungfish fan you will be more than thrilled with *Love is Love*.

Perhaps the best way to describe the direction of their music comes from Dan Higgs himself, "Complete symmetry is impossible to achieve in sound or substance, yet the drive toward symmetry persists. This drive is prayer fuel." Lungfish have always stripped down their music to the bone and this album is no different. They certainly appear to have a clearer sense of what they are trying to achieve, perhaps getting closer to the 'complete symmetry' that Higgs talks about. For the most part, you can expect the usual slow to mid paced tribal like rhythms that delicately climb to their zenith, only this time around it all comes across much crisper, clearer and more confident. Yet, *Love is Love* also offers a few surprises that stretch their sound while sticking to their minimalist yet trance inducing and repetitive formula. Most notably, *Nation Saving Song* is an upbeat, and (dare I say?) danceable track, that is a nod towards label-mates Q and not U.

Higgs is the kingpin of the Lungfish mystique and no Lungfish review would be complete without a mention of his lyrics. Higgs continues his cryptic poetic journey towards only he knows where, seemingly tapping into a pagan-like vision of what it means to be human. His voice has never sounded better. Think of an exceptionally articulate drunken pirate whose life depends on his words.

Ultimately, *Love is Love* displays a band that seems to be getting closer and closer to the primeval force that they seem to be reaching for. Lungfish are almost the band they want to be.

-Pete Lewis

**Omid**  
*Monolith*  
 Mush Records, 2003  
 www.dirtyloop.com



Omid is a producer of hip-hop instrumentals, who has collected rappers from all over underground hip-hop to come in on his record. This gives the whole project the feel of a classy mixtape, classy both because there are few shrieks of braggadocio (though unfortunately, these aren't completely absent) and supplemental instrumental breaks, which give the disparate styles cohesion. Omid himself has an interestingly complex, jazzy style of beats, and in some cases, his taste is the same as mine. Songs with Hymnal and one of my favorite emcees, Buck

65, are real gems, as are most of the instrumental tracks. However, there are some songs which are predictable from the word go, and distressingly formulaic. For instance, one of the reasons I listen to underground hip-hop is so that I am spared hearing people claim that they are "niggemese," but I guess that the word hasn't gotten out to one of the emcees featured on "live from tokyo." Also, there is a seeming need on Omid's part to include a song bemoaning war for oil; a view which those who despise cliché may reject regardless of political view. These kind of vulgarities spoil the rest of the record by tainting it's atmosphere with puerility. For the most part, though, it is quite enjoyable, and it is hard to fault Omid that much for things he didn't even say.

-Jacob Dreyer

**The Rapture**  
*Echoes*  
 DFA, 2003  
 www.dfarecords.com



It's finally happened — the Rapture have gone mainstream. I just can't get myself to wallow in indie snobbery, however, and mourn the graduation of the four-man New York via left coast rockers from obscurity to the world of big-time labels and massive hype. The reason is simple enough — *Echoes* is too good, and the Rapture too important to be withheld from the public ear. It's true — of all the hundreds of bands vying to lead the revolution to erase the boundaries between dance music and punk rock, the Rapture is the most creative and my vote for #1 trailblazer. This title isn't only merited by the fact the Rapture were chronologically one of the first dancepunkers (witness their prescient 1999 release, *Mirrors*) to break the scene; neither have they earned my respect for gamering one of the most loyal fan bases in New York for their unassuming but peerless live performances. The Rapture are The Best because they make music like "Constant Heaven" — and there are few things that sound better to me than the dance floor-friendly opening beat, guitar riffs, powerful basslines, and careening wailing of singer Luke Jenner in "House of Jealous Lovers." *Echoes* presents us with the best tracks, newly recorded by DFT specialists, of the band's earlier InSound Tour Support EP that a lucky few were privileged to get their hands on back in the day. The old stuff sounds almost better this time around, and the new stuff (like the three slower, beautiful tracks) points the way for the band's sure-to-be remarkable future. Take it from me — believe the hype, and get thyself to a Rapture show soon. Shake your ass with them now, because soon they're going to be legends.

-Priya Lal

**The Tyrades**  
*s/t*  
 Broken Rekkids  
 2003



The Chicago-based Tyrades are going a long way toward improving my mood of late. Dez-period Black Flag and the Germs show up and are duly recognized for the good of the order. New wave manners and a love of the Weirdos also drift in and out, leavening the punk proceedings. Production smokes — huge guitars, audible drums, and female (and some male) vocals riding just over the ratchet and grind. These nine songs are a fucking b'last. Or as Clamor HMFIC Mr. Kucsma would say, "this is sooooo good." Purchase and play. Repeat.

-Keith McCrea





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# SANE VOICES DU

We asked artists to write about how politics intersect with their work, especially since 9/11 and the beginning of the war in Iraq. The variety of their responses reflects the complexity of the relationship between art and politics. Although not all of the artists featured make explicitly political art, they have all felt the tremors of shifting global power structures. In the following statements, these artists reflect on how these changes have affected their art and their communities.

Six of these artists — Ricardo Levins Morales, Josh MacPhee, Richard Mock, Susan Simensky Bietila, Nicole Schulman and Andy Singer — are a part of Drawing Resistance, a traveling political art show. The show debuted shortly before 9/11, and has traveled more than 5,000 miles throughout the United States and Canada, stopping at community centers, punk show spaces and student unions. At each location, local organizers take over: unloading the art, setting it up, advertising, and then figuring out a way to get the art to the next city. This do-it-yourself style tour may soon be coming to a town near you, or you can take an active role in bringing it to your town. Check out their web site at [www.drawingresistance.org](http://www.drawingresistance.org).

compiled by

Madeleine Baran and Amanda Luker



Miguel Luciano  
New York City, NY

For the past four years, I've focused on making interactive work that is publicly accessible. Public interaction and community exchange can often transform the meaning and experience of the art. My work often addresses playful and painful exchanges between Puerto Rico and the United States, questioning a colonial relationship that persists to present day and problematizing the space between the two cultures from which I come. I'm interested in understanding how globalization extends colonial subordination, as fervent consumerism provides the illusion of empowerment.

Recently, I designed a series of vending machines entitled "Cuando las Gallinas Mean (When Hens Pee)". The title refers to the expression "Children can speak when hens pee," which is an old Puerto Rican colloquialism often used by adults to silence children when speaking out of turn. Since hens never pee, children are never supposed to speak, so it's like an early form of learned censorship or repression. When a quarter is inserted into these customized vending machines a plastic hen "pees," thus opening the possibility for us to express ourselves about the things we're not supposed to say. The hen cackles, pees and lays an egg with a unique prize inside — one designed by community residents that speak out about their personal, communal and global concerns.

I did workshops for months with different groups of young people in the community asking them what they feel they haven't been allowed to express. Many of these sessions took place as the war in Iraq was just beginning. We translated the community responses into vending machine objects such as magnets, buttons, stickers and temporary tattoos. The vending machines were installed in Newark, New Jersey at a local supermarket, community center and at the Newark Museum where the project was initiated. The peeing chicken became a novelty, but I liked that the prizes evoked intimate and sometimes unlikely dialogues in an unsuspecting atmosphere, often giving consumers more than what they bargained for.

This profile is excerpted from an interview with Miguel Luciano conducted by |love.

For the complete interview and color shots of Luciano's work, visit [www.clamormagazine.org](http://www.clamormagazine.org)

# BRING INSANE TIMES



**Susan Simensky Bietila**  
Ashland, WI

Street theater today is as exciting to me as it was in 1969. The audacity continues to be inspiring. The puppets and props are more elegant and they are being made everywhere in the world.

In 1996, some friends and I built a Tommy Thompson puppet. Thompson, then governor of Wisconsin, enacted massive changes in welfare regulations, which would later be used as the prototype for President Clinton's disastrous Welfare Reform act.

The puppet made its debut at a welfare reform protest, where he sported a bandit mask, money sack and a sign that said, "I rob from the poor and give to the rich." The puppet cavorted among the crowd, shaking hands and posing for photos with folks who enjoyed telling "Tommy" just what they thought of him.

As Thompson and his friends at Exxon tried to open a poisonous zinc and copper mine next to the pristine Wolf River, the puppet became Tommy the Fool, wearing a jester's hat and holding a pitcher labeled cyanide, a dangerous chemical used in sulfide mining. The puppet got passed along wherever people were protesting against the mine, accompanied by an installation of 30 "grave markers" dedicated to rivers all around the world poisoned by mining. Recently, the Mole Lake Chippewa and Forest county Potawatomi tribes bought the Crandon mine land, putting the issue of mining it to an end. We won.

The puppet eventually returned to Milwaukee and lived with the Welfare Warriors for a time and then moved to the Peace Action Center. I moved away from Milwaukee a year ago. Last week a friend called to tell me that the puppet had reappeared at an antiwar action when Bush Jr. was in town.



**Dara Greenwald**  
Chicago, IL  
[www.pinkbloque.org](http://www.pinkbloque.org)

In the spring of 2002, Michael Piazza, a Chicago-based artist, put out a call for eight-hour actions to take place during May at the former site of the Haymarket Police Statue in Chicago's West Loop. We designed the actions to commemorate the Haymarket's significance in the hard won battle for the eight-hour workday. We wanted to bring attention to the contested memorial that commemorated the eight police officers who died (several of whom were killed by gunshot wounds inflicted from their fellow officers). No memorial was built for the dozens of protesters who were also injured and killed, nor the four anarchists who were hung after being wrongly convicted of inciting the violence.

Our project was not city-approved or funded. Several groups and individuals participated on different days. I got together with two friends, Blithe Riley and Lauren Cumbia, to come up with an idea. We spent time in the public library trying to find information and inspiration. It was frustrating but not completely surprising to find that many of the books about the anarchists had been stolen.

We decided to create a market research firm called "Hay! Market Research." The firm's purpose was to advertise specific messages and conduct data analysis through billboard advertisements and surveys. We bought wood and constructed a billboard to display the following eight slogans: What happened here in 1886?; Equal pay for equal work; Wage slave?; Guilt by association; Who died for your eight-hour workday?; 4 hung, 1 suicide, 3 pardons; Will you hang by your words?; and Public hanging, lethal injection, indifference?

The billboard was mainly directed at catching the attention of cars, since the former memorial site now butts up against the highway. We wore "company" shirts that said, "Hay!" on the back. These shirts gave a lighthearted feel to the seriousness of the messages we presented. The shirts also seemed to act as an invitation for people to yell "Hay!" at us from their car windows as they drove by.

We also conducted surveys with the people passing by on foot. The surveys gave people the opportunity to share their knowledge (if any) of the site, the Haymarket events, and their opinions on labor, free speech and the death penalty and gave us an opportunity to talk with people about the issues and the history of the place. Breaking art out of the gallery and proscribed boundaries is crucial to being a politically engaged artist.



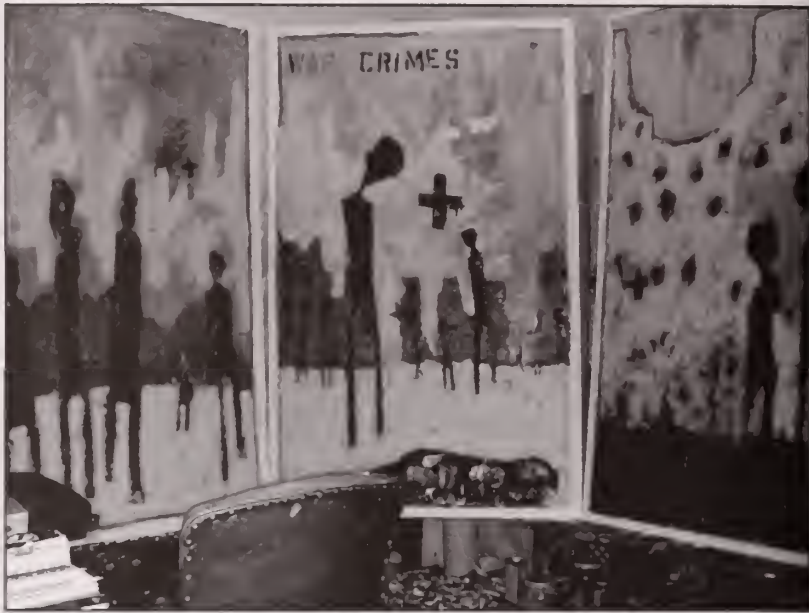


**Brandon Bauer**  
Milwaukee, WI

I feel an obligation as an artist to say something about what is happening in the world. I feel it is my duty. Working on a painting for a month doesn't completely satisfy my need to say something about current events, so I also work on flyers to get something produced quickly. I want to create long-lasting works that will address contemporary politics on an intuitive level, but right now I have to do both. So, I make images and stick them onto streetposts and then come back to my studio to spend time with my oil paints.

For a long time I wondered what art actually does. Lately, however, I have realized how powerful images are and how transformative they can be. As a result of media consolidation and a crackdown on dissent, there is greater control over what we read, see and hear. Right now it is important to create our own images, especially images that are honest or seek a different vision of the world.

One of my favorite quotes is by the Abstract Expressionist painter Barnett Newman. He said that if his work were only read properly, "it would mean the end of all state capitalism and totalitarianism." Sounds good to me. Let's get on with it.



see more of Bauer's work on p. 28-30 of this issue!



**Richard Mock**  
Brooklyn, NY

When I started working for the New York Times in 1979, I was impressed by the high quality of the graphics — truly some of the best political art in the world. My images proved popular and I contributed until 1996 when a shift in newspaper policy dropped the high-quality editorial artwork for simpler, meaningless imagery. In the past, artists would get an article to illustrate at least two days ahead of when it would appear in the newspaper. The editors shortened the turnaround time to keep the editorial art simplistic. In the past there was a level of trust and appreciation of the artist's abilities to such a degree that often the art director's secretary would read the article and give the size measurements to me over the phone. I would deliver the completed illustration the next day. With that kind of artistic freedom, the Times promoted graphic creativity.

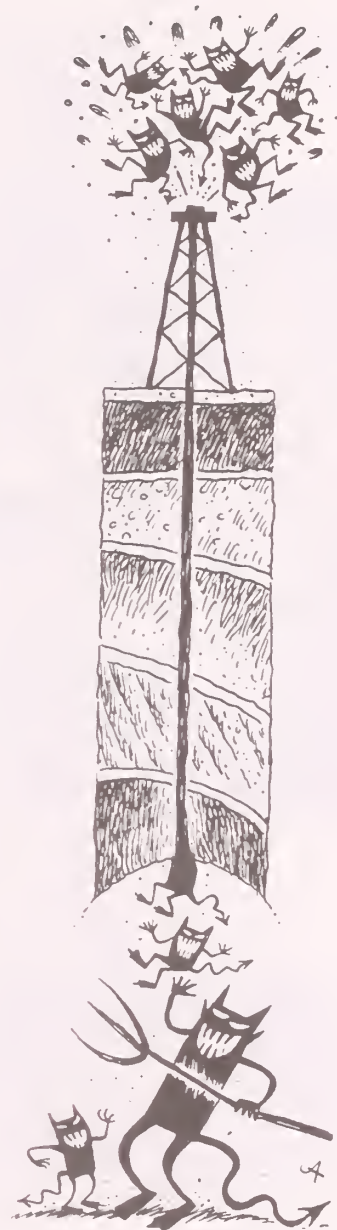
I did editorial illustrations for the United Nations from 1992 to 1997. One of the publications was sent to African U.N. organizations and I heard from the editor that Africans in remote villages were taking the illustrations out of the magazines and pinning them to the walls of their huts. I liked that.

I started doing images for the Alternative Press Review, Anarchy, and the Fifth Estate — all anarchist publications — about five years ago. For the last three years I have also illustrated covers for Streetnews, the world's oldest homeless newspaper. At one time, the homeless could sell the newspaper on the subways and keep the money but New York City recently passed laws to make this illegal.





Ken Avidor  
Minneapolis, MN  
[www.avidorstudios.com](http://www.avidorstudios.com)



I'm a restless guy. I don't like sitting on my butt. That's one of the reasons I became a bicycling and pedestrian advocate. I spend a lot of time sitting on my butt at the drawing table and at the computer. I really look forward to walking or biking instead of sitting on my butt in a car.

About a year ago, I learned that Hennepin County wanted to expand Interstate 35W near my home in South Minneapolis. The so-called "Access Project" would destroy homes, small businesses and a playground. The project would also add more lanes to Lake Street, already a traffic nightmare for bicyclists and pedestrians. I had to become an activist in addition to being an advocate.

The first thing I learned when I joined the movement to stop the "Excess Project" was that I would have to attend a lot of meetings: many long hours on my butt in public forums, open houses, city hall meetings, meetings with politicians, citizen advisory meetings, community meetings and our own strategy meetings.

In March of 2003 I spent two days at a marathon "Roadkill Seminar" sponsored by the Environmental Law & Policy Center in Chicago. The ELPC lawyers took turns drilling us in legal tactics and grassroots strategies to stop highways and other huge construction projects. The war in Iraq had just begun and Chicago was tense as demonstrators swarmed into the city, confronted by phalanxes of police in riot gear.

Inside, I sat on my butt and listened to veteran road warriors recount tragic tales of neighborhoods bulldozed and farmland paved over to satisfy the insatiable demands of the highway and automobile industry. The horror of it all made me want to get off my butt and run screaming into the streets jammed solid with robocops in body armor shields and wielding billyclubs. I resisted the urge and stayed on my butt.

When I returned to Minneapolis, I was appointed by my city councilman to represent the 10th Ward on the Project Advisory Committee overseeing the repaving and reconstruction of Lake Street. Here was an opportunity to gain public support for an alternative to the automobile-centered Access Project. Now, I was spending even more time on my butt in meetings.

A few weeks ago, while one of the county's engineers droned on and on about traffic counts, it occurred to me that this whole experience was really something valuable. I would create an entire series based on what I had learned about fighting big, crazy projects. There was enough material to last a lifetime of cartooning.

My new series, "The B.E.E.P." has all the old Roadkill Bill characters, Mel the Malformed Frog, the Pissed-off Penguins, Vincent Van Gogh (cloned from his ear) and the frequently-squashed squirrel himself. They are all fighting the mother-of-all sprawling highway expansion and big box developments. Through this comic I hope to share what I've learned about grassroots resistance and citizen participation as well as offer a little comic relief to other activists. I'm looking forward to putting a lot of work into this series.

Of course all this extra work at the drawing table means ... more time sitting on my butt.



Dustin Amery Hostetler  
Toledo, OH  
[www.upsso.org](http://www.upsso.org) [www.faesthetic.com](http://www.faesthetic.com)

After 9/11, I put up "Make art not war" posters around town depicting a hand pushing through a pile of skulls. Over a year later, many were still there. Seeing band posters I made pulled down the day after the shows they advertised, I realized it was the antiwar message rather than my design abilities that explained the longevity of the political posters.

I have a collection of underground black and white comics from my dad's youth. They are filled with a lot of anti-Vietnam War stuff, and a lot of pro-drug pieces as well. Nowadays I publish my own black and white magazine filled with illustrations and design from a cross section of modern artists. The current issue contains 194 pages of black and white art. I never suggest a theme for contributions; as long as it is the right size and format, it's in. So I was amazed that such a huge percentage of the submissions were anti-Bush, antiwar and anti-American policy. It has been a real pleasure to see that there are so many other artists out there who are taking advantage of their voice to spread their views. Make art not war.





Nicole Schulman  
New York City, NY  
[www.nicoleschulman.com](http://www.nicoleschulman.com)

I never wanted my work to be just expensive wallpaper. I don't believe in "art for art's sake." I wanted to produce something that was of real use to somebody.

I'm not sure which came first, my interest in comics or political activism, but both came out of growing up on the Lower East Side. The neighborhood had already started gentrifying then, but nothing compared to the way it is now — it breaks my heart. My first inspirations were posters for squat benefits, concerts and demonstrations — simple black and white artwork that had more impact on me than the highest of "high art." I started working in wood and linoleum prints because I liked the idea of mass-producing art so it would be more accessible. When printing got too expensive and time consuming, I started working in scratchboard, which is how I do my comics and illustrations. Comics are a perfect art form, combining both words and images.

Five years ago, I started publishing with World War 3 Illustrated, a collectively run political comics zine that I had been reading since I was a kid. I couldn't ask for a better group of artists to work with; because of them, my work has developed ideologically and technically.

September 11 hit everyone like a truck. I was devastated, but I can't say I was surprised. I felt the urge to censor myself for about five minutes, then the war drums sounded and I snapped out of it. I still could only manage about two pages for the WW3 Ground Zero issue. The emotions were still too raw. Oddly enough, everyone in that issue was asked to donate their work to the Library of Congress after one of the curators had seen our work in a mainstream exhibit at Exit Art. That show had a lot of DC and Marvel comics that dealt with 9/11 mostly in the "Captain America is going to kick your ASS, Osama!" way. The dissident WW3 stuff was hung in the bar. I guess our pieces were easier to deal with after a few drinks.



Josh MacPhee  
Chicago, IL  
[www.justseeds.org](http://www.justseeds.org)

Part of me feels like I have to make political art. My art just doesn't feel finished unless it has some social content. Part of me feels that art is potentially a powerful tool against the status quo.

At the same time, being a political artist can feel thankless. You rarely get paid and it can be hard as hell to get your art out beyond activist circles. It sucks to have your art shrunk and stretched and poorly reproduced in a magazine without anyone asking you first. But it is amazing to witness a sea of hundreds of people all wearing a T-shirt you designed! Last year I designed a shirt for a large pro-Palestinian rally in Chicago. It is amazing to see your art give structure to a crowd and how an image can build connections between all the people wearing it.

Sometimes being a political artist feels like being a clip art machine. It's easy to get in the habit of making little digestible images to be reproduced over and over in newspapers, magazines, political posters or zines that rarely reach beyond their small audiences. But this time the crowd absorbed the shirts and proudly marched with their chests emblazoned with a call for Palestinian liberation.

Only a couple months later I was in Washington, D.C. and saw dozens of people wearing my T-shirt design, but on totally different shirts. Turns out another Palestinian organization had downloaded the image off the web and made its own shirts! It's a strange thing to both feel excited that people value my art and weird that they used it without even contacting me. Maybe that's the contradiction of being a political artist. For your art to really be effective you may have to let go of it being yours.





Ricardo Levins Morales  
 Minneapolis, MN  
[www.northlandposter.com](http://www.northlandposter.com)

A community activist is a mix of organizer, storyteller, trickster and healer. The groups I work with may need an image to help bring diverse constituencies to a spoken word fundraiser; a slogan to anchor an organizing campaign; a logo to express the mission of an immigrant workers' center; a poster to illuminate a complex social struggle; or a creative spark to win concrete gains in a shop-floor confrontation.

An example of the latter came my way a few years ago. Workers from the United Food and Commercial Workers union came to the Northland Poster Collective. Their employer, the Rainbow Foods grocery chain, had been sold and the new management had taken a decidedly hostile attitude toward the workers and their union. They refused to meet with or even return phone calls from union representatives and initiated a major assault on workers' dignity on the floor.

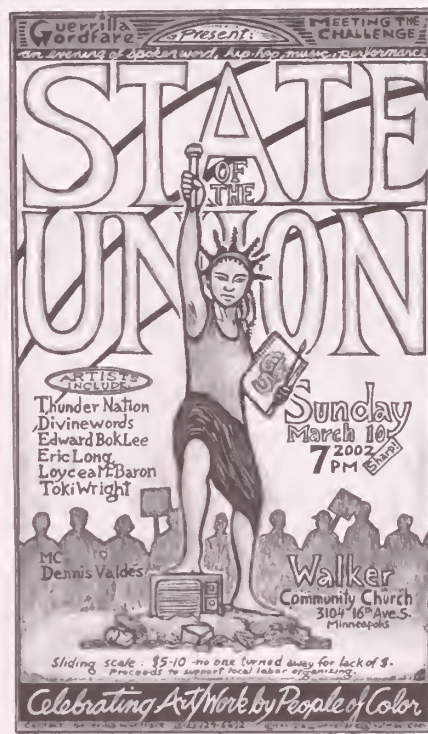
The new bosses flexed their muscles by launching a campaign that they said would reduce "inventory shrinkage" by putting an end to the theft that they claimed was plaguing the enterprise. They established a new toll-free phone line that workers could call (anonymously, using their secret personal identification numbers) to rat out any coworkers they suspected of shoplifting. If any of these people were later busted, the caller could win a \$300 cash payment. In addition, they searched lunch bags to ensure that workers were not filling up at company expense. For the workers, some of whom had worked at the store for 10 or 20 years, this did not feel like the start of a great relationship.

In a group brainstorming session, we decided to respond with a cartoon. We gave the company a new name, "Blame-You Foods," and packed the drawing full of jabs and lampoons to express the way that workers felt about the new policies. We printed flyers and passed them out to representatives of all 11 Rainbow stores. By 8 a.m. the next morning they were all over the shops. They'd been slipped under the doors of supervisors, copied onto badges and handed out to truckers. This was the first public response to the management attacks and the workers were loving it, experiencing the first morale boost in weeks. By 8:30 a.m., the owners had phoned the union leadership demanding a meeting for the next day.

Our work kicked off an extended period of smooth relations between the local union and the new owners. Having seen the power of laughter to shake the atmosphere of fear, the management decided a more diplomatic approach might be advisable. They revoked the lampooned policies and made other concessions sought by workers (such as improved lighting in the parking lots for night workers).



"It's all part of our new morale shrinkage program."



Upsidedown Culture Collective  
 Detroit, MI  
[www.upsidedownculture.org](http://www.upsidedownculture.org)



As the United States stepped up the war for corporate interests in the wake of 9/11, Detroit formed an anti-war coalition. While the government was busy redefining terms like "security" and "terrorism" to suit their needs, we began redefining terms like "protest" and "resistance." A small group of folks split off from the coalition. We wanted more life and color in the movement. We knew that the more vibrant our protest culture was, the bigger it would grow.

Our first project was a collection of poetry and artwork called All the Days After. It was intended to document people's reactions to 9/11 and its aftermath. A series of well-attended cabaret-styled fundraisers — combining puppetry, spoken world, folk music, magic acts, punk rock, and even wrestling — raised money to cover publishing costs.

Through it all, the members of our collective learned skills, acquired new interests, and discovered unexpected talents. Acting as emcee for the fundraisers, one member found his hammy acting muse. He also got to live out his pro-wrestling dreams in a series of satirical matches that pitted Scapegoat against Misguided Patriot Man and the Military Industrial Complex against El Mundo. I attempted to write press releases and HTML. We all led workshops, designed flyers and booked shows. As we face another cold Midwestern winter, we're flush with new and exciting ideas. We want to encourage people to speak out for their dreams.

Andy Singer  
St. Paul, MN  
www.andysinger.com



In addition to alternative weeklies and political journals, I draw cartoons for my local daily paper, the St. Paul Pioneer Press. Since my cartoons run in their "Comics and Entertainment" section, there is pressure to avoid extremely partisan political subjects. Nevertheless, I try to push the boundaries and regularly print cartoons about transport policy, taxes, consumerism and environmental issues. In March, just before the United States invaded Iraq, I tried to print some antiwar cartoons, including one equating terrorism and militarism. My editor refused to print the cartoons, saying that they were "over the top," and yet, two days later, she printed a gag cartoon about airport security, featuring partial nudity and implied sodomy!

This incident highlights a larger truth. In the United States, expressions of certain political opinions are deemed to be "offensive" and unacceptable for mainstream media. Yet, outrageously violent, titillating, or sexually explicit content is deemed "acceptable." Because of MTV and shows like Howard Stern, the casual observer is under the illusion that there is free speech in America. In reality, however, when it comes to politics, media content is tightly controlled. Even on the opinion page, I've seen cartoons or opinion pieces censored out of fear they might offend one of the paper's major advertisers.

I've also seen how well organized interest groups will threaten media outlets that air opinions or content they don't like. A cartoon I did about Israel in a small Berkeley weekly became the target of a pro-settlement, conservative Israeli group who launched an e-mail campaign against it. The paper got over 70 pieces of hate mail, most of it from people who'd never seen the paper or any of my other work.

Despite all the pressure and censorship, progressive ideas and images manage to seep through the cracks and make it into the mainstream. I always urge people to support content or opinions they like and editors who are willing to risk publishing it. Many people, myself included, are much more apt to write in and complain about something they hate, rather than praise something they like. If you see a good cartoon, article or opinion piece or if you hear a good band or a good radio show, take the time to e-mail or write the radio station or newspaper publisher and tell them you liked it. Also, I urge people to constructively suggest content (writers, artists, bands) that they'd like to see. Most mainstream editors have little knowledge of new music, artists and writers but will often take the time to check them out, if they are shown where to find them.



Dave Crosland (and Debbie)  
Milwaukee, WI  
www.hiredmeat.com



The year was 2001 and we wore it well. Dave and I lived modestly, rocking the thrift store threads and exploring the outer limits of gourmet Ramen noodles.

Around this time, we landed a gig with Joe, an ex-Navy diver. Somehow, he came out of the big-boats-with-guns-factory with a penchant for comic and adventure art. Yeah, go figure. Joe hired us to create artwork promoting 5K races and diving team triathlons, but the overall theme for the pieces was balls-to-the-wall adventure. So there were explosions, bare-chested heroes and barely-clothed mermaids pouring out of our sketchbooks for months. Not our finest work. Still, it was fun and paid the bills. Like Judge Mathis said, "Times were tough. We had to make due." And make due we did, through summer and spring, right up to the gnarliest season ever — fall.

Of course, fall blew ass chunks in 2001, with that whole "terrorist attack" and all. Still, we made like Corky and Becca and let life go on. Part of moving on was laughing with friends and appreciating things a little more. Another part of it, for us, was to keep making art.

Unfortunately, 9/11 brought about an ugly trend that we met head-on in winter, when Joe asked us to do a patriotic T-shirt design, one with a muscle-bound good ol' boy standing tall and Old Glory waving proudly behind him. He said, "The patriotic stuff is selling great down in Florida." But financial urges aside, we had to refuse the job. When Joe asked why, Dave took the calmer route of telling him, "We don't believe in plastic patriotism." I didn't go on my tirade about the rampant pimping of blind faith the American public had been horded into. I didn't express my anger at the fact that any skeptics of the "movement" were seen as liberal, traitorous pieces of shit. It's not that I'm against unity. I'm against the Pied Piper schtick behind a government that protects us by figuring out new ways to fuck us.

After we declined that job, Joe "ran out" of work for us. It's almost 2004, and Dave and I are still rocking the thrift store threads and Ramen noodles. And I'm sure Joe is still out there somewhere, paying someone else to draw big-titted mermaids in stars and stripes seashell sports bras. God bless America, eh?





# Christofurious!

**Christopher Cardinale** is a New York City-based muralist and artist. With World War 3 Arts in Action, a group with roots in World War 3 Illustrated magazine, he helps create banners and graphics for many activist organizations, including United for Peace and Justice and No Blood For Oil NYC. Recently, WW3 Arts in Action worked to draw attention to the closing many New York City firehouses by the Bloomberg administration.. He has also created murals with Make the Road by Walking, a Brooklyn community-based organization.

*Clamor: What did you get into first, art or activism?*

Christopher: Art came first. My mom began giving me drawing lessons before I was a teenager.

I see my politicization as having its first traces in the punk movement. But long before I was a skate punk, I stared at prints by Kathe Kollwitz, a German printmaker from the early twentieth century, that hung in the living room of my parents' home. I was drawn to printmaking while in art school because of my love for drawing the figure but also because historically it was a less elitist way of producing art.

The major politicization of my work began when I spent over a year in Mexico City doing prints, banners, and aerosol murals as I simultaneously saturated my eyes with hundreds of murals by the great Mexican muralists and participated in collectives organized by the anarcho-punks of Mexico City.

*How does your style relate to your topics?*

My style has its roots in a German Expressionist and Mexican woodcuts, Mexican muralism, American aerosol art, and comics. All of these art forms were and are concerned with communicating a message, narrative, or emotion to the viewer in a straightforward and often not-so-subtle way. The subjects of my banners, murals, and graphics are urgent, raw and emotional; therefore the jagged, hand-carved line of the woodcut combined with the size and dynamism of monumental figures most effectively expresses messages concerned with social justice.

I love the challenge of working without text. It is more difficult to communicate a concept by using images alone. I also try to do without tired symbols like the peace symbol unless they are switched up in a fresh way.

*How do your banner and construction workshops work?*

The banner construction workshops that Seth Tobocman and I gave last summer were part of a larger event called Summer Camp, organized by Chicago-based Creative Resistance. I tried to structure those workshops to give some of the technical knowledge that I have learned.

Normally when WW3 Arts in Action gets together to make banners and placards for an action it is less structured. Artists of all skill levels and ages show up and we work together around a common theme such as "Arms manufacturers need war like umbrella makers need rain." [Eduardo Galeano, Uruguayan writer] Some artists come with fully developed concepts in the form of sketches and others are content to fill in a background color on someone else's piece.

*When you're facilitating art workshops, what kind of balance do you look for between helping people feel empowered to make their own art and looking to keep good aesthetic standards?*

Getting a mural or a piece of collaborative work to be well crafted, unified in style, and to clearly express its message is just as important, especially if people are going to have to live with it in their neighborhood and see it day after day.

This really comes into play with the community murals done in collaboration with youth. I direct them to conceptualize the mural and come up with a theme that speaks of issues that relate to their situation, to research the themes thoroughly, then to do the visual research and come up with the imagery. We then compile their imagery into a working design, which, once they OK, gets transferred to the wall. We fill in the local colors. I explain things such as shading, light source, and line quality as we work on the piece and then towards the end I personally refine unresolved areas of the mural, to unify it stylistically and to bring it to high degree of finish.

*What role do you think art plays in activism?*

I was just looking at some political illustrations published by the Wobblies [Industrial Workers of the World] from 1905 to 1908 and found that their impact was strong, inspiring and relevant to this day. These illustrations published in pamphlets and periodicals served to educate, inspire action, clarify direction and create a vision of a society not yet realized.

Art can be far less intimidating and dogmatic than a slogan being chanted or a lengthy manifesto handed out in pamphlet form, not to mention less boring and more accessible. \*



Interview by Sarah Groff-Palermo

**M**y history with ARA began when I went to my first Warped Tour when I was 16. I remember signing a mailing list for Anti-Racist Action, which had a booth on the tour. A few months later I received a newsletter in the mail. I was intrigued by the fact that people my age were not sitting back letting others do the fighting — they were doing it themselves. In 1998, I started college in Maryland. I received a second ARA newsletter. The next month, I was at an I120 show in Baltimore where I saw Maryland ARA handing out leaflets. They said that they were looking to form another chapter in the area. At the time I was not an activist, I had never been to a protest or demonstration. Meeting the people from Maryland ARA began my involvement with ARA and activism. With other people from my school we set up an ARA chapter on campus, which still exists to this day. We agreed on four points of unity:

1) We go where they go: Whenever fascists are organizing or active in public, we're there. We don't believe in ignoring them or staying away. Never let the nazis have the street!

2) We don't rely on the cops or courts to do our work for us: This doesn't mean we never go to court. But we must rely on ourselves to protect ourselves and stop the fascists.

3) Non-Sectarian defense of other Anti-Fascists: In ARA, we have lots of different groups and individuals. We don't agree about everything and we have a right to differ openly. But in this movement an attack on one is an attack on us all.

4) ARA intends to do the hard work necessary to build a broad, strong movement against racism, sexism, anti-Semitism, homophobia, discrimination against the disabled, the old, the young, the poor and the disenfranchised. We support abortion rights and unrestricted reproductive freedom. We want a classless society. We intend to win.

I began to see how issues were connected, and specifically realized the connection between racism and globalization. My friends and I decided to participate in the IMF/World Bank demonstrations taking place in Washington D.C. where I learned just how big this movement is.

The summer after forming a local ARA chapter at my school, organized racism hit home for me. The Nationalist Movement, a small white supremacist group based in Mississippi, was having a rally about an hour from my parent's house in New Jersey. I joined a coalition that was organizing to counter the rally. Protesting with hundreds of community members and activists made me realize that this problem can affect anyone and everyone. This is a problem that needs to be countered by everyone at any time and any place, to make sure racist ideas do not take control of our society.

Time went on. I graduated from college and moved back home to New Jersey where there was an active chapter of ARA. While at school I was mostly limited to campus activism. In New Jersey, I had the opportunity to work with a chapter that was involved in the national network, and had street credibility. I have been working with New Jersey ARA ever since.

ARA is based on a network of chapters working together. There is no main office, no chapter has more of a say over another, regardless of their number of members. The network is made up of people dedicated to the

## Be Young, Have Fun, Smash Racism!

### A Personal Account of My Involvement with Anti-Racist Action



#### HISTORY

1987: Anti-racist skinheads form the first ARA crews in Midwest (Minneapolis, Chicago, Milwaukee, Cincinnati) to physically confront and organize against various nazi skinheads crews, like the Skinhead Army of Milwaukee and the Chicago Area Skinheads. These new anti-racist groups begin to form relationships with people across the US and Canada, including People Against Racist Terror in Los Angeles (PART). PART begins to publish "Turning the Tide," the oldest existing grassroots anti-racist publication in North America.

1989: Bay Area Anti-Racist Action forms in San Francisco area. Other west coast crews include ARA San Diego, Portland ARA and SHARP (Skinheads Against Racial Prejudice).

1990: ARA gathering in Portland, Oregon, after the murder of Mulugeta Seraw, an Ethiopian student, by boneheads associated with White Aryan Resistance.

1991: Minneapolis ARA initiates a coalition to shut down a white "student union" at the University of Minnesota.

same cause for the safety of their family, their friends, and their community.

I can definitely say that ARA will be around for a long time. ARA does pro-active work in addition to organizing big demonstrations. For example, many chapters have emergency response teams with nazi reporting hotlines where people can report acts of extreme racism. Some chapters have worked in coalitions to oppose police brutality, or set up Copwatch chapters to make it harder for police to harass and abuse people on the streets. We connect the lines between different issues. For instance, as I mentioned, racism and globalization are issues that are directly connected. After 9-11, ARA groups recognized the possibility that refugees and immigrants would be scapegoated and resolved to organize in support of their rights. Some chapters organized emergency response systems, mosque watches, and so on. Others have worked to educate themselves and others, and to take action in defense of the First Nations/Indian treaty rights and human rights.

Many ARA chapters have done clinic escorting, and clinic defense work, helping to make sure women have the right to choose.

ARA chapters traveled to Wichita, Kansas both times that the militant pro-life group Operation Rescue vowed to shut down the clinics there. Some ARA chapters have been involved with queer liberation work. We have marched in pride parades, responded to hate crimes by setting up neighborhood watches, and we work hard to create a culture where everyone is welcome and made to feel comfortable. We defend and help each other, worldwide, when anyone is in trouble. We have no time to push papers. The real fight against racism, sexism and homophobia is in the street, where real people live their lives. That's where ARA is from and that's where you will always find us!

One of the ways we do outreach is at shows and concerts, schools, or conferences. Our presence allows us to interact with youth to help build an anti-racist culture. For instance, there were reports of racist bone-heads planning on showing up at the Jacksonville stop on the Warped Tour. We made plans to counter their attack. When kids came up to us to report nazis at the show, we deployed teams to alleviate the problem. Working with security, seven neo-nazis were removed from the show. Nazis should not

be given the freedom to recruit their next generation of foot soldiers, and ARA will do whatever it can to stop them.

We go on speaking tours and set up workshops at events. Fighting racism is not just about countering organized racists. It is also important to counter the recruiting of youth.

ARA is a network of over 50 chapters from New Jersey to California, from Canada to Brazil. We are alive and still fighting. We have changed and evolved, and our presence is felt amongst the people we organize against. We fight racism because it affects us on a daily basis. We organize against people who exploit others. Anti-Racist Action is a living, reathing network of people fighting all forms of bigotry. Our Points of Unity conclude with the statement: We intend to win. It is for this reason that ARA is here for the long-term - we will not be going anywhere until we win!

For more information on ARA, or to get involved, please visit <http://www.antiracistaction.us>, in the United States or <http://www.antiracistaction.ca>, in Canada.

# UNITY

Zach Morris, New Jersey ARA

**1992-1994:** Toronto ARA takes on the Heritage Front, one of the Canada's most successful fascist groups. Through direct action, education, and community organizing, ARA forces the Heritage Front into retreat.

**1994:** Columbus OH: Columbus ARA and various left and anarchist groups in Michigan and Ohio convene the Midwest Anti-Fascist Network (MAFNET), to organize against the regular Klan rallies held in Ohio, Indiana, Michigan, Pennsylvania, Michigan, and Wisconsin. At its highest point, the Columbus ARA newsletter is mailed out to 70,000 people.

**1995:** MAFNET adopts the name "Anti-Racist Action Network".

**1996:** Toronto ARA gathers 200 anti-fascists from across Canada and the northern US for "Youth Against Hate." This conference, which connected government-funded groups and academics with radicals and street activists, was financially supported by the city of Toronto. New ARA groups start across Canada in the following year.

**1998:** On July 4, two members of ARA Las Vegas, Dan Shersty and Lin "Spit" Newborn, are ambushed and murdered by nazis in the desert outside Las Vegas. ARA supporters from around the continent rally in Vegas.

**1999:** In Coeur d'Alene, Idaho, anti-racists from the Northwest converge to disrupt a march of the Aryan Nations, based in nearby Hayden Lake. Also in July, a member of the World Church of the Creator, a fascist group run by Matt Hale, goes on a killing spree near Chicago. Chicago ARA spends the following year disrupting WCOTC events and meetings in suburbs and towns around the city. Confrontations escalate until state police team up with FBI to protect every WCOTC meeting.

**2000:** ARA takes root on Canada's East Coast.

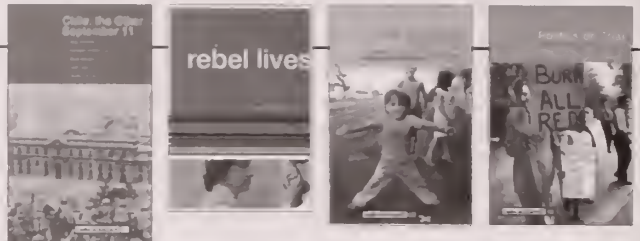
**2001:** In April, 100s of ARA-affiliated activists participate in Quebec City protests against the Free Trade Area of the Americas and the Summit of the Americas. After 9-11, ARA organize in support of immigrant rights. Several chapters organize rallies and vigils on

December 10, International Human Rights Day. Latin American anti-fascists begin to adopt the ARA name and to affiliate with the ARA Network.

**2002:** In January, ARA organizes with people of York Pennsylvania to disrupt a public meeting of WCOTC, attended by representatives of the National Alliance, Aryan Nations, White Aryan Resistance, and Hammer-skin Nation.

In August, ARA joins hundreds of others in Washington D.C. to confront the National Alliance in Washington D.C.. Dozens of people, including many ARA supporters, are arrested earlier in the day in nearby Baltimore, Maryland, and charged (mistakenly) with attacking a group of NA people on their way to the march.

**2003:** ARA tables Lollapalooza and the WARPED Tour across North America.



Australian independent publisher Ocean Books ([www.oceanbooks.com.au](http://www.oceanbooks.com.au)) kicked off a new project recently with their series of brief paperback polemics *Radical History*. The first three books in this series are cheap, timely, and give us reason to look forward to the next batch of *Radical History* releases, covering resistance in the Warsaw Ghetto, the Paris Commune, and the Wobblies (the Industrial Workers of the World). They've also launched a *Rebel Lives* series highlighting the rabble-rousing lives of figures like Albert Einstein, Sacco and Vanzetti and Helen Keller (see below). Like Odanian Press's popular *Real Story* series, Ocean Books looks poised to expand the number of inexpensive, easy to read works of leftist history. And, also like the Odanian series, these books would make great gifts to people who want to learn more about the left without making you feel like you are some pompous ass handing out homework.

**Chile: The Other September 11**  
Pilar Aguilera and Ricardo Fredes, eds.

A collection of poems, memoirs, speeches, and quotes, the book aims to reclaim September 11 as a day of mourning for Chile, which it became nearly two decades before the attack on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. September 11, 1973 was the day of Pinochet's violent, U.S.-supported coup d'état against the democratically elected socialist president, Salvador Allende. The story of the coup is revealed in slices and chunks, beginning with Ariel Dorfman's essay on the *deja vu* he experienced watching devastated New Yorkers carrying pictures of their loved ones, frantic to know whether they were alive, just as Chileans had done so many years earlier. This is followed by a translation of Allende's final radio transmission, given from the Presidential Palace where he refused to surrender and was ultimately killed. The book also includes testimony from those who lived through the conflict, speeches delivered in Cuba shortly after the coup by Allende's daughter and Fidel Castro, revolutionary poems by Pablo Neruda, and a chronology outlining U.S. involvement.

The anthology is a fast and powerful read, and its themes are still relevant today. In June 1970, prior to Allende's election, Henry Kissinger told a White House Committee, "I don't see why we need to stand by and watch a country go communist due to the irresponsibility of its own people"-or in other words, due to the results of democratic elections. In April 2002 the U.S. government voiced initial support for a failed coup against another popularly elected leftist, Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez. This book shows vividly the suffering others have endured at our hands, the same sort of suffering our government has pledged to fight since 9-11-2001: attacks against human life, against civil rights, against democracy and against freedom. This book is the kind of true testimonial against terrorism that all Americans should read.  
-Kathenne Glover

**Helen Keller (Rebel Lives series)**  
John Davis, ed.  
(Written by Helen Keller)

When Helen Keller comes to mind, most of us flash back to a report we did in fourth grade. A deaf, blind little girl overcomes her obstacles to learn reading, writing, and oratory skills through her hardships. A+, end of story. But the story doesn't end there. Keller's image as a poor, debilitated deaf blind person masked a radical revolutionist breaking free from her physical restraints. This new addition to Ocean Books's excellent *Rebel Lives* series shines light on the concealed radicalism of Keller, and how she was a beacon of truth above the capitalist system. The book discusses Keller's debates concerning women's suffrage and rights, war, slavery, economics...the list goes on. Her writings were phenomenal. Every letter, essay, and article was eloquent and precise, and the depth of her emotions and knowledge concerning each subject she encountered makes a deep impression. They are works of art, each one persuasive and with Keller's trademark sense of wit and charm. The media grabbed and displayed (exploited) her work and marked her as an evil socialist- treatment to which Keller does not take kindly. Keller indeed is a socialist, (and a Marxist), trumpeting her ideals and beliefs to the working class and striving for justice and equality for all. Her search for equal rights and justice is heart wrenching as she pleads with the working class (and the IWW) to band together against the masters that keep them in poverty. She continually reminds them that if they come together as a whole and refuse to work or go to war, the wealthy will have to listen, and that everyone is connected to each other. Keller explains war is unneeded and the wealthy just want to make a quick dollar from conquered countries. She pleads to the working class that they have nothing to fight for since they have been brainwashed to think they even have a country (a country that, after all, provides them with no means of food, shelter, clothing, or work). Her views on economy were so astounding, but her belief in socialist theories, however, impeded her progress many times (exploitation from the media) and built for her a considerable FBI file (not a good thing). Keller had the initiative and drive, to spark a revolution. A literary genius, Helen Keller should be remembered not by her blindness, but by her radical social vision.  
-Melissa Leuschel

**One Hundred Red Hot Years: Big Moments Of The 20th Century**  
Deborah Shnook ed.  
**Politics On Trial: Five Famous Trials of the 20th Century**  
William Kunstler

*One Hundred Red Hot Years* is a brief (80 pages) look at the tumultuous 20th century from a decidedly leftist viewpoint. Tucked in these pages is a timeline of each year and events throughout the world, focusing on economics and politics. Peppered throughout the timeline are posters from the Organization in Solidarity with the Peoples of Africa, Asia, and Latin America as well as cheery quotes from such Einstein, Kissinger, and Emiliano Zapata, who is quoted as saying, "Better to die on your feet than live on your knees."

Of more interest even than the timeline were the preface and the two supplemental chapters, one a detailed list of American aggression in Latin America and the other a list of U.S. assassination targets throughout the 20th century. The list, compiled by former CIA agent and author William Blum, will surely make even the staunchest defender of America wonder about his/her government. Of particular note is that the U.S. has attempted over 600 assassinations on Cuban leader Fidel Castro. While the book is short, it still serves as a good primer for those interested in reading about some lesser-known world events, including some events which had occurred in the good old U.S.A.

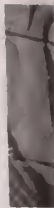
Five such events make up William Kunstler's *Politics On Trial*. Kunstler, the now deceased attorney for such individuals as Malcolm X, Martin Luther King Jr., and Marlon Brando, wrote these essays back in the early 1960s and it was first released in 1963 along with five other chapters under the title (*Metallica fans, take note*), *...And Justice For All*. Various lawyers including Kunstler's daughter, Kann Kunstler Goldman, worked on this Ocean Books re-release 40 years later with introductions to each chapter.

The five trials that the author covers include Italian anarchists Sacco & Vanzetti, the Scopes "Monkey Trial," The Scottsboro Nine, infamous "traitors" Ethel and Julius Rosenberg and Morton Sobell, and *Engel v. Vitale*, which covers the topic of school prayer. While many of these names and trials may be familiar to people, what is truly of interest here is seeing the trial from the view of the seemingly persecuted group. While the first four chapters involve defendants being unfairly prosecuted, the case of *Engel v. Vitale* involves a group who felt their rights were being violated when the state of New York introduced mandatory school prayer in the 1950s and a few parents took the school board to court.

From the start, *Politics On Trial* suffers from two problems: there is a general sense of confusion about each case and, secondly, Kunstler has a difficult time making the case for his protagonists. The first is seen with the large number of names of which to keep track. Each defendant seemed to have multiple lawyers and each prosecution team had multiple lawyers as well as the judge, the key witnesses, secondary witnesses -it's easy to get confused. The second problem arises most noticeably with the Rosenbergs. At the end of the chapter devoted to them, it was hard to see why the Rosenbergs shouldn't have been found guilty. Only upon re-reading the introduction to that chapter is one reminded of de-classified papers which had been released after Kunstler had written the chapter, papers which help shed light on the wrongs done against the Rosenbergs.

These problems, however, do not detract from the quality reconstruction of each trial that Mr. Kunstler has developed for the reader. The relevance of a work such as *Politics On Trial* is important in today because we once again see these same problems, problems which have not been solved, these problems "of political repression and racist scapegoating" (as the back cover of the book states) readily seen in the cases of people whether they be Sacco & Vanzetti or Muslims in the U.S. today who have to undergo extra scrutiny everywhere they go just because they're from Iran or Indonesia. In tying this work back to current events, the introduction serves as a reminder of the problems that still remain today, primarily regarding anti-terror laws passed since September 11th and the increased powers of the federal government. In conclusion, this is a timely, well-written, and intriguing book from the late William Kunstler.  
-Kurt Morns

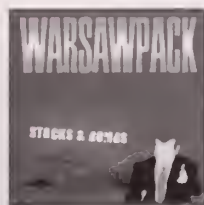




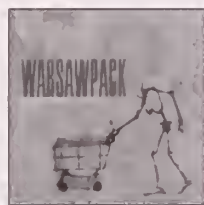
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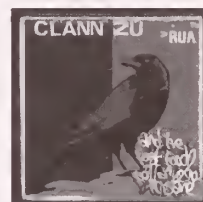


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*In Memoriam*

*Edward W. Said*

1935–2003

PATHBREAKING SCHOLAR

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PASSIONATE CRITIC

UNFAILING HUMANIST

*You will be missed.*

*the South End Press Collective*

Publishers of *Culture and Resistance: Conversations with Edward W. Said*  
Interviews by David Barsamian

photo courtesy of Justin McIntosh—leftistlounge.com





Carolyn Chamberlayne talks candidly  
about her job as a "hostess" on

# Fantasy Island

Seven years ago I went to Japan solo via a free airplane ticket with only \$40 in my pocket, lived rent-free, and came home with thousands of dollars. Call me crazy, but jeez, who in their right mind who had just had a big break-up with a boyfriend splatter all over them, survived paycheck-to-paycheck, lived in a small town, and wanted to run from it all wouldn't consider it? So it seems everybody realizes that there are multitudes of odd jobs all over the world geared to the wanderlust-ful who feel the need to be anyplace other than home. I was just learning this then. In Japan, for a female, the most accessible jobs seem to be those in teaching, modeling, or "entertainment." Due to my lack of convention, in combination with the absurd stories I'd heard from a few friends who already worked at jobs of the latter variety in Japan, and because of the absolutely incredible likelihood that I would find something daily that would take my mind off of what was bothering me at home at the time, the entertainment category won hands down.

Japan is well known throughout the world for having a rather unique assortment of entertainment outlets for those looking to alleviate the doldrums and stress of everyday constrained life, and many of them are quite original and oftentimes more than a tad perverse. The evening hours of the average salaryman in Japan appear to be a private playtime that often must be tolerated by their family, if not accepted. It might consist of visits to any number of a vast array of drinking and eating establishments, gambling outlets, and entertainment clubs. Younger Japanese men seem to enjoy izakaya, dance clubs,

pachinko, and game centers for video games; while their older counterparts, the salarymen with larger wallets, appear to gravitate towards more upscale eateries, gambling establishments with a Vegas-like feel, and a slew of sex-imbued clubs. On the tamer end on the sex club spectrum is the hostess club, which is typical in many Asian countries and outside of Asia to a slight extent. I asked a friend, an exotic dancer who had worked in Japan, for her booking agent's telephone number to see if he might have any openings for an inexperienced hostess. I called him, and two days later with a plane ticket bought for me by the agent, I was on my way to my new odd job in Japan.

At this point some readers are probably wondering what the connection is between perversity, an exotic dancer's agent, and a person who wants to work as a hostess. What's the deal? Though it's definitely no secret job, it's still not general knowledge, and it's certainly enticing...

A hostess may be girl at the door of a restaurant who seats you at your table, but in Japan a hostess's job description is quite a bit different. Often people seem to like to describe a hostess's role in a rather romantic sense by comparing her place in Japanese society to that of a geisha; however, I find this comparison a bit far-reaching. A hostess, typically, is a young female, from Japan or elsewhere, who dresses in evening wear or cocktail clothes and works at a club where she acts as both a facilitator of customers' good times and of the club's increasing bank account and, in turn, her own. Her job requires no past experience, though a clever

head and pretty face helps: it is to encourage customers to spend as much as possible at the club they are visiting and to keep them coming back to do so again and again.

A geisha's role in Japanese society is also to facilitate pleasant times between people, but they are vastly unequalled in that they are highly skilled and trained for years in a whole variety of traditional Japanese arts, music, history, and conversation. The people who customarily visit geisha are incredibly wealthy and will spend hours upon hours cultivating a careful and precious relationship that has at its heart the common admiration of those involved for very specific aesthetics as well as a high level of respect for one another. It is about the relaxation and comfort of the patron, but it is not brought about simply or carelessly; it is assiduously thought out. Geisha and their patrons choose each other with care, and the patrons directly support the geisha for their time and work; thus it is a very intimate relationship. A geisha and a patron will build something between each other that I feel is quite substantial and can even border on or be love. Whereas, for the most part, a hostess and her customers create something false and fleeting and ultimately inconsequential but for only the short time it lasts.

Nowadays there are many Japanese girls who hostess in Japan, and there are also many who come from every country imaginable, but everyone who hostesses does the same thing: uses whatever skills she might possess to bring about as much spending of money on the part of her customers in the club that she works for — that is her job. I came from

Canada but I worked with Japanese, Chinese, Israelis, Romanians, Australians, British, Americans, Philippinas, Swedish, you name it. Japan is a popular stop-off point for people looking to secure a quick job and a hunk of cash before continuing on with world travel or perhaps returning home to help support a family or realize a dream that needed financial backing. The hostess is paid by the club for a whole range of duties, including being present at the club, having drinks and snacks bought at her request, having a customer request her, going on a dohan, which is basically having the customer take you out somewhere, perhaps dinner and then subsequently bring you to the club, having karaoke requests — the list goes on and on. Foreign



or gaijin hostesses receive all pay in cash as is common in Japan, but none of it is taxed as the job for foreigners is completely illegal. On top of

being paid by the club, customers often give you tips, which incidentally are considered crude in Japan, and valuable gifts such as a camera or jewelry might also make up a part of the hostess's income. In short, it can be quite a lucrative job.

Of course, you are wanting to know the catch, and there's definitely more than one, for it is not an easy position. To me, the hostess's job is to create a dream for her customers or a fantasy where everything the customer says is funny, everything they do is accepted, where they can feel loved and desired and powerful and perfect — basically a grown man's fairy tale realized for as long as he's paying. Though sex is not part of the job, sexual banter is and desire is and with it often comes drunken flailing attempts at a kiss or a touch. All of this must be diverted in what was for me and most others an unnaturally coy manner that is appropriate for each customer. This relationship for the hostess is all about false flirtation, faking love, and appearing available to the customer, though you are not. As for the customer, it might also be about faking it, although many times the men seem to enjoy genuinely falling for their favourite hostess and then reveling in either the possibility of sex or a relationship evolving. In addition, in Japan there also appears to be a value placed on the powerful and vibrant emotions brought forth through unrequited love. So although on the surface a hostess's job is simply to order drinks, be genki or lively, light cigarettes, sing, and generally create a fun and sexy social dynamic, underneath a megaton of psychological strain and keen organization is taking place. I've heard many refer to hostessing as mental prostitution, and I'd have to agree; it sure felt like it was at times.

Although the job of a hostess allowed me a sense of liberation that the typical 9 to 5 job never could, it had further drawbacks.

Hey, what job encourages you to drink and smoke freely throughout your shift and basically be paid very well to be a part of a celebratory atmosphere? Not too many. Then again there are obvious health hazards which come with being involved in a club setting six nights per week. Alcohol plays a crucial role in social situations in Japan; it acts as an important social, mental, and physical lubricant that is indispensable. Drinks along with expensive pleasant experiences shared together at common cultural institutions such as hostess clubs are of key social and business importance in Japan. In a country where the population is bound by extremely structured hierarchical rules, in which few feel they can speak their minds plainly, especially at work, alcohol and a relaxed environment often seem to allow for this release to happen. This fantastic combination has the ability to enable a group of customers to gain trust in each other and potentially create commercial alliances that are remembered and remain a reality long after the night comes to a close. Since the hostess is expected to encourage the customers to drink and to buy her drinks, and the customers do not need to be sold on this idea, you can easily imagine the incredible amounts of alcohol that are flowing down both the customers' and the hostess's throats every working night in a hostess club.

Drinking alcohol night after night combined with sitting in a room that is dominated by smokers is not the healthiest of environments, to say the least. Everyone knows about the obvious detriments of cigarette smoking and even being around others' smoke, but it is made all the more clear upon being infiltrated by it for so many hours every day on the job. Before going over to Japan, I was a social smoker and would occasionally smoke when going out to places that involved drinking, but in Japan I became quite a different breed of smoker. Smoking in Japan is still very socially acceptable; almost everyone smokes, be that person young, old, male, or female. I found that working at a hostess club and being engaged in so much drinking combined with my already extant characteristic to smoke when I drank resulted in an incredibly huge amount of smoking to the point where I actually felt pain in my chest. I had never felt that I was addicted or needed cigarettes for physical reasons, only social ones. The pain in my chest led me to decide to stop smoking; however, sitting in the club breathing so much smoke from others' cigarettes was still painful, and it also stunk so much more! It seemed that if I smoked, other people's smoke didn't stink so much, but when I stopped, it reeked! Combining all this drinking, smoke, late nights, and dramatic social moments may sound like ingredients for quite an incredible time, but having it come at you day after day was fairly wearing.

Even though it was not the easiest position I've held, it was certainly interesting,

especially in hindsight. Although I had quite a corrupt view of Japan compared to the average tourist, I think I was able to experience and be a part of an authentic everyday Japanese life to a great extent and make money while doing so. I have to admit, feeling hungover after getting to bed at 3 in the morning or later did not enable me to have the most glorious tourist-y tours, nor the most awake and functioning shopping experiences, nor be as active at the gym as I can be, but as a concession, my job as a hostess allowed me to encounter things that I would never have otherwise and in turn, learn a lot. I was invited to restaurants, events, and even into people's homes that I would have never known about nor seen had I not held the position I did.

The girls that I worked with consisted of both hostesses and dancers, and we lived together dorm style in a number of apartments paid for by the club, which was truly fun! On top of working together, groups of us shared a lot of down-time with each other; there was always someone to hang out with, confide in, and do things with, and the bonds grew quite strong. It was like having a bunch of sisters around you who all understood exactly what you were about, and for the most part these were rather fascinating people who each had a fairly strong and independent personality and astounding life stories to share. There was no shortage of friends and never a difficulty in finding a clan to go out clubbing with after work, or someone to go on a motorcycle excursion with, or surfing, or swimming, or just taking transit with to random places. There was always someone up for something and that, I realize, is something rare and wonderful.

Many of you probably already know about Japan's world famous entertainment sex trade either firsthand or through anime, manga, the Internet, books, or elsewhere. Although I believe it tends to be strange to bizarre extremes at times, it's rather intriguing, and I found I was able to uncover bits and pieces of reason behind it while working as a hostess on the outermost boundaries of the strange world of the mizu shobai, or the water business. Though I didn't always feel 100 percent safe, it was my choice and I felt safer in Japan than I have often felt at home. Initially my goal in going to work in Japan was escape, but I ended up really finding myself over there. I learned so much about human nature and the power of fantasy and belief, of acceptance and of being strong. What hostessing in Japan inspired me to realize blew every McJob away — that everyone has their oddities and everyone just wants a little love, and even if they hide it all by day, it's still there, and more than anything they want to let it out and be accepted. It was a tough job, but would I go again? Yes, and I did, twice more. ★



**A**t the ripe age of 28, my sex life is fucked — pun intended. My last boyfriend, Emilio, ruined my life. He had the audacity to love me and leave me. But what's inhibiting me from getting my groove on is not that he left, but that he loved. Since the demise of our relationship, I haven't been able to look at life, or sex, in the same way.

He's destroyed all my fantasies. Just as I come from the memory of a hot ex-lover on top of me, I recall how Emilio's heart would race, pounding against my open chest after he collapsed in orgasmic frenzy. Thus, far from sexual ecstasy, I end up covering my eyes and weeping.

I wasn't always this sentimental. In fact, I used to get around. Happily reaping the benefits of feminism, I always carried condoms in my purse and made sure my friends did too. I quietly slipped in between the sheets of an anonymous lover's bed after midnight. I sometimes even silenced the feminist arguments in my head and allowed machista power dynamics to run. Words like "papi" and "good girl" came up — often. We indulged in as many positions as we could until our fatigued bodies fell. Then, just after dawn, he barely stirred as I buttoned my blouse and tiptoed out the back door on my way to work.

One of my favorite former aficionados called me recently. "Let's get some coffee," he proposed enthusiastically. The first time we were supposed to go for coffee I went to pick him up, but, instead I walked into his house. We have yet to drink coffee together, although, we use the suggestion as a euphemism for having sex.

I declined his offer even though my vagina was wet and thrilled by the idea. She, my pussy, doesn't find celibacy very stimulating. Nor do I, frankly. So, what the hell is stopping me? It's not that I think that sex always has to be a consecrated act of communion between two people in a committed, loving relationship. Nor do I have some romantic notion that it won't ever be as good with someone else.

Although I know I'm not supposed to compare, or judge a man by his "machinery," most of us do. Three decades after the sexual revolution, women's bodies are constantly under scrutiny and men's are still off limits. Naomi Wolf, in *The Beauty Myth*, writes that when Masters and Johnson, human sexuality experts, were asked in *Playboy* to comment on the average penis size they flatly refused, concerned that it would have a "negative effect on *Playboy's* readers," and that "everyone would walk around with a measuring stick." What they would never admit is that while we may not literally carry a ruler into the bedroom, we're all measuring. And, to screw that taboo even harder: We're comparing our findings.

What's laughable is that "Does size matter?" is still a regular story on the cover of men's magazines, as if it were a real question. Those of us having sex with men agree — there's no debate — bigger is better.

Nevertheless, through discussions with others faced with the challenge of loving a man with a little dick, I've found that most of us agree that what is lacking in size can be made up for in style. Emilio's smaller and way less experienced than other men I've been with. Still, I'd prefer to be with him. There's something about the way we were redefining closeness, creating a dynamic of mutuality and support between us that altered my relationship to sex and love.

Unlike my experience with other lovers, the orgasms didn't commence as Emilio's tongue caressed my clit. In the same way, penetration didn't begin as I opened my legs on top of him, melting into him, our beings becoming one. Making love with Emilio started hours, even days before our bodies touched. In fact, our whole relationship was one big experience in making love, even when we argued and felt estranged from each other. "Surround me," he used to softly say reaching for a kiss, his breath hot against my lips. There weren't power dynamics or dirty talk. Instead, there was genuine vulnerability, real safety. Now, I don't think I can face intercourse without that.

And so, I've asked it before and I'll ask it again: After experiencing "sex for love's sake" can you ever go back to sex for the sake of sex? In the same way, once you recognize the potency and dynamism of political art can you appreciate an "art for art's sake" abstraction? After all, once you learned to read, did you ever look at letters in the same way? \*



# Sexual Ruin

## When Love Conquers Sex Can You Go Back?

by Stephanie Abraham



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SUNDAY—APRIL 25, 2004 WASHINGTON, DC  
10:00am: Assembly on Mall  
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# Art Against Empire

The Beehive Collective  
Discusses  
Global Economic Policy  
through Pictures

How do you draw the intricate, overlapping effects of a proposed trade agreement? It's a question that members of the all-volunteer Beehive Collective think about often. The group's mission is to "cross-pollinate the grassroots" by creating images that are used as organizing tools in the movement against corporate colonialism. *Clamor* Economics Editor, Arthur Stamoulis, spoke with one of the collective's "bees" during a multi-stop educational tour mobilizing turnout for the Miami protests against the Free Trade Area of the Americas.

*Clamor:* What are some of the things the Beehive Collective is working on right now?

One of the things that our collective does is work on what we call graphics campaigns. We don't really call it political art. We call it a campaign that's in pictures. The idea is that we gather lots of information as straight from the source as possible. We talk to tons of people that are involved in the issues that we're focusing on. Then we translate that information into cartoons that are all choreographed into this big picture with a narrative circuit that leads you around so that you can read it as a storyboard. All those images form a big poster. That poster, as well as all the little pieces of it, are dispersed among the grassroots, and people replicate them as material to use in their organizing.

For the past couple years, we've been working on a trilogy about globalization in the Western Hemisphere. The first poster was about the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA). The second poster in the series is about Plan Colombia, which is very much the same story. The



third poster will be about Plan Puebla-Panama, which is a mega-development project, which goes alongside the FTAA as the development infrastructure side of it that will drastically affect southern Mexico and Central America. We're going to be working on that poster with people in the region this winter and, hopefully, it will hatch in the spring.

When we get done with the third one, we're going to make a coloring book — a big, fun anti-globalization activity book thing which goes through all the characters and storyline of all three of them. It will have activities, and all of that book will also be a collaboration with different activists working on the single issues that are discussed in it.

So, we made a poster about the Free Trade Area of the Americas. We started three months before the big protests that happened in Quebec City a couple years ago, and we were trying to get it all finished in time to be at that event. We hoped it would be this thing that people could take home with them to discuss with people to help explain what they had just gone to protest. It could be used as a teaching tool. We didn't get it done in time. We were locked in a closet for three months, and we still couldn't get it done.

We missed the deadline. What ended up happening is that it went on to be a long-term tool that people could use when campaigning around the FTAA, and it didn't end up just being a souvenir for one protest.

*How exactly have people been using the posters?*

Teachers use them as coloring projects in their classes a lot. The teachers divide them into different sections and kids adopt a single issue and do the research around that. Then they all come back together and put their stories together into a play or do a report on what globalization is, based on the single issues that they researched. That's been happening a lot.

People use the posters as a springboard for discussions about the issues.

In the past few months, we've been resuscitating the FTAA poster because we had been sucked into Plan Colombia world for the past year-and-a-half. We went back and did all these revisions on the FTAA one. Originally, that poster had sort of been snatched away from us due to a printer deadline. It was really gray. You couldn't see it very well from far away. All the jokes were very North American and cynical. It wasn't multilingual. We really hadn't known what we were getting ourselves into when we first did it.

So, we just spent all this time drawing tons more ants, which represent different forms of grassroots resistance. We drew tons more of the good news and improved the contrast on all of it. It's really exciting. For our current FTAA graphics campaign, we sent out announcements all over the place for groups that wanted to collaborate on the print run with us. The idea is that the more groups that go in on the print run, the cheaper it is for everyone. Then people can use the posters as mobilization tools, to teach people why it's important to go to the FTAA protests in Miami and to also help raise travel money, sort of like Girl Scout cookies or something. We had a special emphasis that the money that people raised be used to send Latinos and students to the protest. When going to print, we had 60 different groups collaborating with us.

Right now, we're on a tour that we started a couple of months ago from Maine to Miami. We're doing talks with the FTAA poster, mostly at a lot of colleges right now because everyone is having teach-ins. We're basically doing talks at high schools and colleges every

day, sometimes two or three times a day, and we'll be doing that for a couple more months.

This swarm of people together right now, five of us, have worked together a lot. We're actually headed down the bigger East Coast. We're going from Maine to Miami, but after the School of the Americas protest, we're heading through Texas to Central America. We'll be making the Plan Puebla-Panama poster and bringing it to Ecuador in the spring to the Latin American Social Forum. Then we're going to tour Colombia after that. So, part of the print run collaboration that's being done right now is also to raise funds to print 10,000 posters to be shipped to the south and given away for free at these different conferences that we're going to.

This group called Pastors for Peace does a lot of border work, bringing things to Mexico and Cuba. They're bringing the 10,000 Beehive posters down to Central America in their buses and dropping them off at different locations. They'll be passed out so that people can use them.

Never boring.

*What is it about the format that the Beehive Collective is using that makes it so effective? It sounds like you are getting a great response.*

We are all big strategy nerds. We like to talk about needs and strategy a lot. All of what has happened with us and the adventure we've been on is very much a testimony to the desperate need there is for more visual communication about these things that nobody wants to fucking think about.





Teachers especially are desperate for anything that will get kids to pay attention to economics or world history, so that's why we've had such an amazing response from high school teachers.

There are a couple of other things we've done as well. We bought an old grange hall in eastern Maine. It's a farmers' organizing hall from the legacy of the populist movement. We've been restoring that building to open it up for the community. The hive is based there in Machias. It's where our apprenticeships take place. Mostly in the summer, people come from all over the place to learn how to make stone mosaic murals. Our big, big project — as if all these other ones aren't crazy enough — is a mural about the political history of agriculture, all in insects and plants. It'll be a stone mosaic that will be installed permanently throughout the floor of the Common Ground Fairgrounds in Unity, Maine. We think that will take 10 years or more to build.

People ask us a lot what the deal is. Why we're all so possessed about this stuff. What a lot of us have in common in our collective is that we grew up on junk food and television and video games and are really casualties of the cultural homogenization of the United States. This is our therapy to do these things that are way bigger than us. Long-term projects help with our attention span. It's healthy to think about things that are 100 years down the road or 1,000 years down the road. We didn't grow up that way, but people totally respond to that a lot.

*Why is visual art such a good way for communicating about these issues?*

Who the hell wants to think about the FTAA? Who wants to sit around and talk about economics in their free time? It's not fun. It's not inspiring. It's overwhelming and scary for most people.

So, it's been really interesting to see people get these FTAA posters and sit around and color them. It's a really meditative thing to do. It's really intimate in the quiet. I think it's about people being able to take things in on a level where they can really digest them. It's not so jarring. A lot of the propaganda on the left is really arrogant. It doesn't ask questions; it just tells you.

We've had amazing success with art or pictures or whatever you want to call it. It doesn't incite debate in the same way. You can open up an issue by pointing to all these different pictures, and people aren't armed with automatic, rote rebuttals. You can come in from the side, instead of from head on. That makes people open up, or at least listen to the whole thing, instead of picking it apart.

*Describe what these posters are like.*

The FTAA poster is five feet wide and two-and-a-half feet tall. It's like a little mini-mural. We think it's funny that people move stuff off their walls and put them up like alters and don't take them down. If you had a book on the subject, you read it and you're done. It goes on the shelf where you don't necessarily access it again. Because these posters hang out on people's walls, people end up staring at them again and again and again. Each time, people can drink them in differently.

*How are the posters made?*

They're created out of conversations with many people — people plugging in with all sorts of different skills and skill levels. Some people help us with maps for the perspective. Some people look up different articles. We have an advisory board of people that we bug for different types of ideas. Basically, we make people who are used to dealing with words or campaigning do what comes down to metaphor push-ups with us. "How do you turn your issues into a picture so that people understand it?"

When people sit down and draw it, there's tons of mapping and planning out. It's such a sad state of affairs that if you get an artist to work with one other person it's called "a collaboration." There is so much work that goes into this. Two people working together is not a breakthrough.

Comic books get made in layers. They look uniform in the way that they're designed, but tons of people are working on them.

*You mean Stan Lee didn't do it all by himself?*

I guess not. Of course, it's no coincidence that the names that float around for a long time are men. Our work is definitely a reaction to that.

Part of our mission is to take the "who made it?" and "how much does it cost?" out of being creative. Instead, all the work that we do is anti-copyright and anonymous. We use the name Beehive, but beyond that there aren't any superstars in our collective. There are no skill hierarchies — at least we try to make sure that there aren't.

*What are some of the benefits you've seen from not having different people's names attached to different pieces of work?*

It's not so personality-driven. We were bringing this up today at a presentation we were doing at a mural school here in New Haven. Can you name a single famous muralist that was a woman? Do you know the names of the underling people that made Diego Rivera's thingamajigs? By keeping it anonymous, it honors that there are all these people that dig the coal and wipe your ass and do all the administrative work without necessarily holding the pen. We're constantly barraged with the question, "Who drew it?" It's like, "Who cares?" Why is that so important if the work is informed by zillions of people?

*A lot of political art seems to have an industrial feel to it, with buildings and skylines and people. The Beehive Collective's images typically involve agricultural or living-world themes, with lots of plants and animals. Why that focus?*

Part of the Beehive's strategy involves not drawing humans at all. There are a lot of stereotypes involved with how to portray people from all the different places in the world that we are trying to represent in our graphics. Instead of plugging into that, we do our homework and figure out the specific insects, plants, and animals from each bio-region where the people we're trying to represent live. In doing so, people from different areas can still identify with and see themselves in the posters, but we don't have to draw some homogenizing, stereotypical picture of what people from "wherever" look like. We're careful not to be racist in the way that we portray things, because we want people everywhere to be able to use our work as an organizing tool. So far, we've been really successful. We may draw really stereotypical pictures of ants, but tough shit.

*How can someone see this work and get involved?*

All the images are anti-copyright. You can download them for free and look at them. There are different booklets for each one that serve as little decoder rings for the posters. All of it is on the website, [www.beehivecollective.org](http://www.beehivecollective.org). If people want to get more involved, they can write us about collaborating or being a bee. We have a big booklet that explains the history of the collective and the different stuff that people can get involved with. We're pretty organized on the recruiting front. A lot of people come through the collective and say, "I have three months and am giving it to the Beehive," and they participate in different ways. ☆

# A Tale of Two Pilsens



## Art and Gentrification in America

WORDS AND PHOTOS Kari Lydersen

**H**ector Duarte's studio in the mostly Mexican Pilsen neighborhood of Chicago was bustling with activity on the afternoon of October 19. Artists from around the neighborhood came in and out to do shifts painting large white numbers on pieces of black canvas. Duarte's wife Linda Lutton, a reporter, did some last minute media work while taking care of the couple's two kids. The group was preparing for the first-ever Pilsen Open Studios the following weekend, in which 22 studios (including a few cafés) would be open to the public, allowing people to see Pilsen artists and their work in their "natural habitat." The big numbers they were painting would be hung on the outsides of apartment buildings and houses, helping visitors find the studios in parts of the neighborhood that most from outside the area would never have visited, areas known rightly or wrongly more for gang violence than art.

For the artists involved, the Open Studios event was a way to get their work out to a wider audience and make some sales. But the subtext of the event goes way deeper than that, with significance for the art and political scene in Pilsen that mirrors situations in cities all over the country where race, class, economic and political issues collide and artists find themselves at the center of the storm.

### From Cheap to Trendy

Three weeks before the Pilsen Open Studios, the neighborhood hosted another art extravaganza called the 33<sup>rd</sup> Annual Artists' Open House. This took place on the east side of the neighborhood, which was originally a port of entry for Eastern European immigrants and over the past three decades has become over 85 percent Mexican and Mexican-American. The Artists' Open House in East Pilsen, which has gone by various names over the years, was the work of a patriarch from one of those original Eastern European families, John Podmajersky Jr., whose father had come to the neighborhood to start a dairy. Podmajersky gained a reputation early on as a patron of the arts, and now he and his son, John Podmajersky III, own well over 100 buildings in East Pilsen housing mostly artists' lofts and galleries. The Podmajersky family has been controversial from the time they started buying up buildings, with many accusing them of driving Mexican families out of housing as they rehab or convert the living spaces and court artists, most of them non-Latino, as tenants. Over the past decade East Pilsen has become progressively more hip, and it is now home to scores of art students, professors and professional artists. And in that part of

the neighborhood, Mexican families and the grocery stores, laundromats, and other small businesses that serve them are mostly absent.

In a nutshell, this is gentrification.

It's not a new story. Anyone who lives in a major city today has seen it, the reverse white flight that happens as suburbanites move back into rehabbed lofts and apartments in the city, driving up property values and pushing the lower income "inner city" residents out. And as is also widely known, many times artists play a significant role in the gentrification process. They move into a neighborhood for the same reasons that lower income workers and immigrants are there — cheap rent. Then they make the neighborhood seem safe and trendy for students, yuppies, and waves of successively higher income people to move in.

In Chicago and even nationally, the Wicker Park neighborhood is often seen as a test case for gentrification. Once a low-income Polish, Puerto Rican, and Mexican neighborhood celebrated in the works of Nelson Algren for its gritty charm, it became a cutting-edge art scene in the '80s and early '90s and then transitioned into its current status as a very upscale 'hood with expensive night clubs, valet parking, sushi bars, and commercial art galleries affordable to only wealthy buyers.

“Wicker Park was the hip art scene to be in, and now it’s Pilsen,” said Miguel Cortez, one of the founders of the Polvo studio on the 18<sup>th</sup> Street main drag of Pilsen. “That has a lot to do with gentrification and what artists do to make an area hip. Most of the artists we knew back in Wicker Park are gone because they couldn’t afford it anymore.”

Pilsen is an even more complex and disturbing example of the effects of gentrification, because there it is not only an immigrant working class neighborhood at stake, but one that has an artistic tradition of its own, a very different one than the scene blossoming in East Pilsen, or what is now labeled as “the Chicago Arts District,” thanks to realtors and developers.

Ironically, many of the original “pioneering” non-Latino artists who moved into East Pilsen in the early days came largely because of the rich and politically charged artistic scene created by the Mexican artists.

But as more and more artists moved in, many of them young, white, and without a clue as to the Mexican traditions and history of the neighborhood, the schism between east and west Pilsen became clearly defined and filled with plenty of hostility, at least on the part of west Pilseners who saw their neighborhood being encroached on by the cafes and galleries from the east.

This was evident at the Open House in East Pilsen, where well-dressed people drank wine and laughed in the street while walking between the galleries and lofts looking at art in many cases priced higher than a typical working class immigrant would earn in a month. “This isn’t a hang-out spot,” said one friendly, well-intentioned young artist from his comfortable gallery space on the second floor of an East Pilsen building. “But soon it will be. It’s coming.”

For the families and groups of Latino teenagers who spend long summer nights gathered on their porches, Pilsen is an ideal “hang out scene.” But that’s obviously not what the newer residents, accustomed to trendy cafes and bars, have in mind.

#### Catch-22?

In 2002, a local weekly newspaper published a story about how non-Podmajersky tenants were excluded from the Open House art fair. In 2003, it appeared that organizers did make a conscious effort to be more inclusive of non-Podmajersky tenants and Latino artists. Young Latino artists like Cortez and Saul Aguirre had their work on display, though Cortez wryly noted that the Latino artists were mostly in an “alternative” space on the edge of the strip.

“East Pilsen is Podmajersky town,” said Duarte bluntly. “They have different

conceptions about the community. They’re trying to sell all of Pilsen. We’re resisting.”

So with the Pilsen Open Studios, the mostly-Latino west Pilseners hoped to create a buzz of their own, to show their work on their own terms and get the recognition which they feel they deserve while they have been overshadowed by the transient, flashier art community to the east.

“Often people come here to eat or go to the Mexican Fine Arts Center Museum, and

famous David Alfaro Siquieros school of muralism in Mexico before coming to Chicago.

But ironically, the Pilsen Open Studios highlights the catch-22 that artists always find themselves in regarding housing. While it is naturally the right and desire of most artists to gain exposure and financial compensation for their work, bringing attention to their neighborhood and its artsy street cred is one of the steps in gentrification. While the east side of the neighborhood is heavily gentrified, most outsiders still don’t venture into the areas where many of the west Pilsen artists live. But once they do, they might decide the area isn’t as scary as they once thought and they might even consider investing or moving in there. “This is a new way of bringing more people into the scene,” said Aguirre, 29, who came to Chicago at age 11 from Mexico City. “But it’s also part of the city’s approach to gentrifying the neighborhood, saying ‘This area’s cool.’”

The media, city administration, and local art world have already started taking more notice of the west Pilsen art scene. Duarte was actually featured on the cover of the city’s October Chicago Arts Month brochure, in a dramatic sepia-toned shot holding a paintbrush defiantly in front of his face. “His image on the cover was symbolic of all the attention Pilsen’s getting,” said Aguirre, noting that the image was very “proletarian.”

#### Resistance through Art

So how can artists promote their work and artistic community, without worrying about gentrifying themselves out? And how can newcomer artists to a certain neighborhood support and contribute to the existing community and avoid being tools of displacement? In an ideal world, people of all races and economic classes would have swirled into Pilsen and fed off each other, educating the public and each other about their various political struggles and cross-pollinating each other’s work with different artistic influences and techniques. And to some small extent this has happened.

For instance, Cortez and Aguirre’s Polvo studio exhibits the work of emerging artists of Latino and non-Latino descent, from the neighborhood and around the city. Much of their work is political, including a recent anti-war show and various pieces dealing with imperialism, consumerism, and the like, while other works are purely abstract and conceptual. At their openings, the “old guard” of highly politicized, Mexican artists



In fighting  
gentrification,  
art is our  
weapon.

they don’t realize there is a good-sized arts community here,” said Rene Arceo, a teacher who was one of the veterans of the local mural movement. “I think we’re finally entering the public eye, and I think that’s great.”

Unlike most of the apolitical art in the East Pilsen shows, much of the content in the west Pilsen artists’ work deals with themes of revolution, struggle, or indigenous issues in Latin America or local political issues of gentrification, police brutality, and racism. “In fighting gentrification, art is our weapon,” said Duarte, who trained at the

mix with School of the Art Institute students and hipsters from around the city. "We like to show emerging artists, regardless of race, as long as the art is great," said Cortez, noting that in September people from all over the city came to the Lowrider Parade and art show Polvo put on in conjunction with a local car club. They note that many of the younger artists in Pilsen are influenced by the veterans, and long-time artists have also seen their styles go in new directions, perhaps partly because of the influx of young artists and students. "Hector Duarte has influenced

exhibited at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago, is also a big influence to both East and west Pilsen artists. The party at his studio during the Pilsen East Open House, showcasing surreal works obsessed with technology and sexuality, was arguably the most multicultural and lively spot that weekend. "Raya's been here decades," said Aguirre. "He was one of the first muralists. Now he's doing more conceptual art."

As many of the murals in Pilsen show, art has long served as a public forum for dissent, resistance, and discussion. So what

It remains to be seen if the "two sides," as many see them, can both contribute to an artistic resistance and renaissance in Pilsen. Eufemio Pulido, a 28-year resident of Pilsen who like Duarte and Arceo is from Michoacan, Mexico noted that the organization of the Open Studios event is an encouraging start, considering most of the west Pilsen artists had never worked together to that extent before. "We never tried to do this before, but finally we got together," he said. "This is a great experience, we're excited to see what we can do."

A 1997 mural by Hector Duarte, Jose Guerrero and others opposing gentrification and "urban renewal" planned for Pilsen.



## "We don't want to give the neighborhood over to the rich people."

a lot of artists," said Cortez, 33, who came to Chicago from Guanajato, Mexico at age eight. "He's continuing the tradition of the Mexican muralists and bringing it to Pilsen." Mark Nelson, whose west Pilsen studio is called Gringolandia, notes that Pilsen has been at the forefront of the movement to have professional artists work with high school students on murals, mentoring them on both artistic and personal levels along the way. "They're passing on knowledge and empowering youth who might otherwise be doing who knows what," he said.

Aguirre notes that Marcos Raya, who has a studio in East Pilsen and has been

better way than art to explore the conflicts over gentrification in Pilsen, and the possibility that artists of different backgrounds could actually work together to protect affordable housing and a vibrant artistic culture. There are numerous examples of murals crying out against gentrification in the area, for example "Alto al Desplazamiento Urbano de Pilsen" ("Stop the Gentrification in Pilsen"), a large colorful mural painted by various artists including Duarte and long-time community member Jose Guerrero in 1997. It shows a Mexican elotero (corn vendor) being clawed at by a robed KKK member and protesters carrying signs denouncing displacement.

"We hope we can resist it [gentrification]," said Roberto Ferreyra, a Mexico City native who runs the Colibri gallery in west Pilsen along with Venezuelan artist Montserrat Alsina. "Maybe we can follow the example of Chinatown, where they have restaurants and tourism but the real people still live there. We don't want to give the neighborhood over to the rich people." ★



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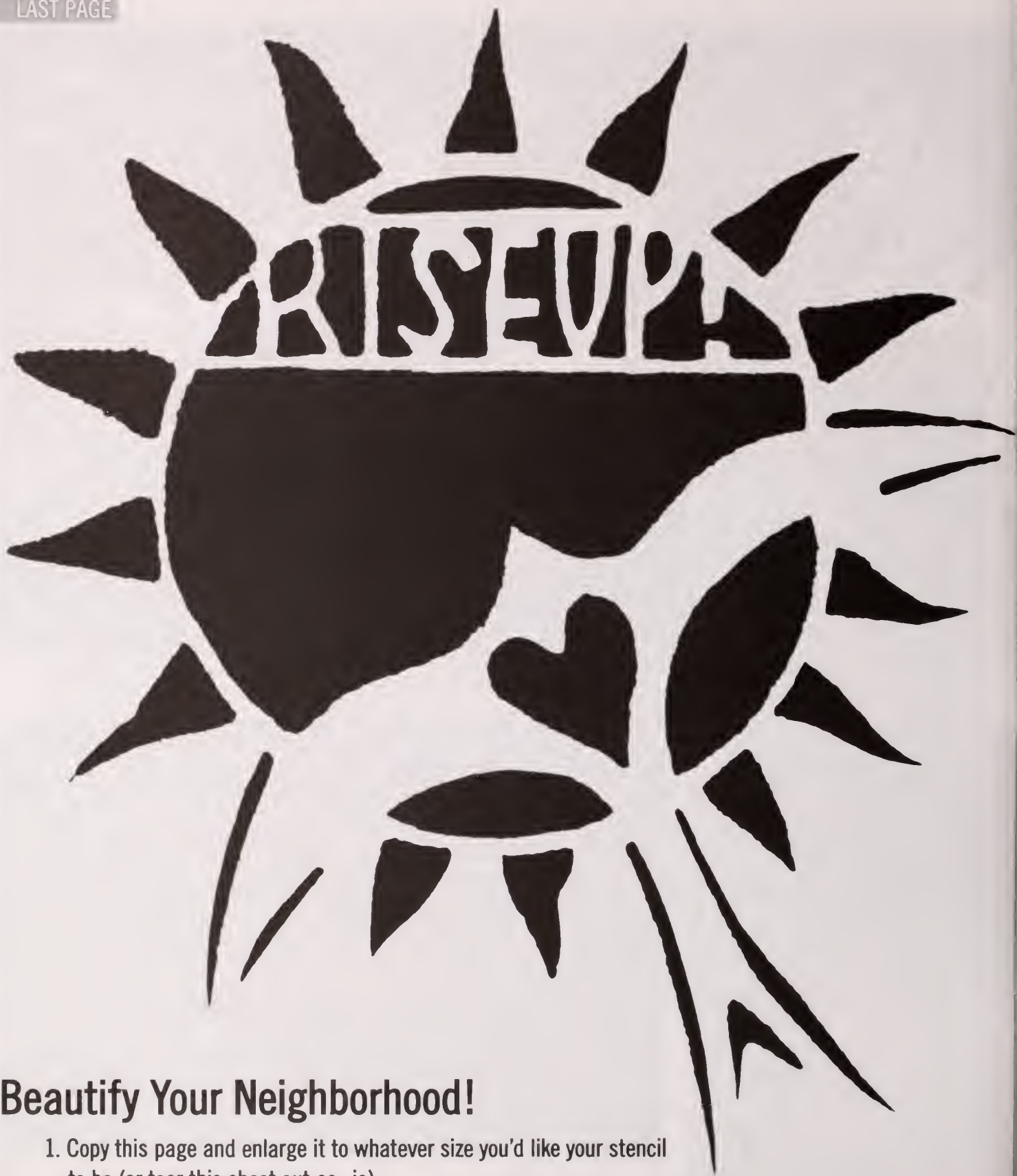
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