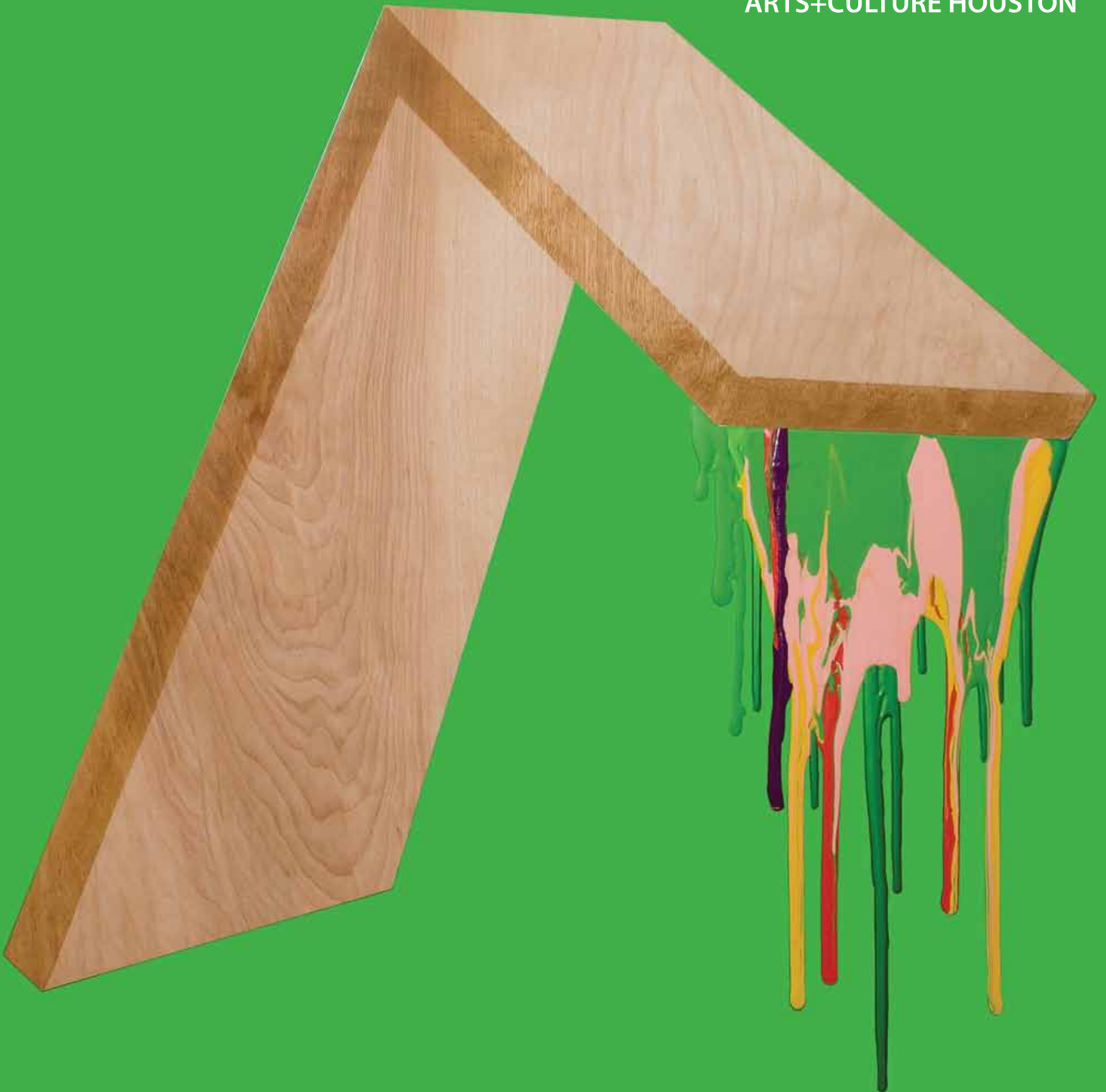


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EDITOR'S REMARKS



After two weekends of art fair stomping, one thing became perfectly clear, we live in one happening, gallery town. With Barbara Davis Gallery celebrating 30 years in the art biz, it seems a perfect time to focus on Houston's galleries in our combined December/January issue.

Whether showing established or emerging artists, Barbara Davis has one famous eye for art. The first time I walked into a room full of Daniel McFarlane paintings, I felt struck by a meteor of vibrant energy. Nancy Zastudil brings us into the rising career of McFarlane, on view at Barbara Davis Gallery in December, and the continuing momentum of Pat Colville, showing in January at Moody Gallery.

Charissa Terranova takes us behind the scenes at Deborah Colton Gallery, highlighting current and upcoming shows, while Debra Barrera profiles Joseph Cohen at Wade Wilson Art.

New work is always exciting. So are new people. Holly Beretto introduces to all the big changes at Opera in the Heights, which begins a whole new chapter in their history.

December is a time to look beyond the traditional. You can do that this month at Catastrophic Theatre, with their production of Lisa D'Amour's "Anna Bella Eema." Zachary Doss interviews D'Amour, who has just won a 2011 Steinberg Playwright Award.

I found compelling theater in an unlikely place during recent performance by Houston Chamber Choir. Our cultural warrior this month is Becky Tobin, the one-woman show behind the Chamber Choir.

New York may be the nation's dance capital, but it's hard to ignore the bounty of dance coming to Houston in 2012. Be it ballet or dance installation work, it's coming this season.

As we pass into 2012, it's time to consider the art that rocked our souls and to get jazzed about what's about to come. A+C writers do both.

Wishing you an artful New Year,

NANCY WOZNY
editor
nancy@artsandculturetx.com
@artsculturehou



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THE STATE OF THE ARTS IN TEXAS

PUBLISHER
KEN VILLALOVOS

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MAILING ADDRESS
381 Casa Linda Plaza, Suite 363,
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EDITOR / ART DIRECTOR
SCOT C. HART

SENIOR EDITOR
MARK LOWRY

SOCIAL MEDIA MANAGER
RACHEL VAN HORN

AD DESIGNER
JONATHON KIMBRELL

WEBMASTER
BLACK NEW MEDIA

COPY EDITOR
DAVID TAFFET

DISTRIBUTION MANAGER
RICARDO PANIAGUA

CONTRIBUTORS
ANDY AMATO, ALEXANDRA
BONIFIELD, ANNA CAPLAN,
DANIELLE MARIE GEORGIOU,
GREGORY SULLIVAN ISAACS,
PATRICIA MORA, DAN PRITCHETT,
KASTEN SEARLES, CHRISTOPHER
SODEN, CHARISSA TERRANOVA

HOUSTON

MAILING ADDRESS
4820 Caroline Street,
Houston, Texas 77004
Advertising 214-282-2845

EDITOR
NANCY WOZNY

ART DIRECTOR
JONATHON KIMBRELL

SOCIAL MEDIA MANAGER
CANDACE KIZER

AD DESIGNER
SCOT C. HART

WEBMASTER
BLACK NEW MEDIA

COPY EDITOR
DAVID TAFFET

DISTRIBUTION MANAGER
BRYAN ROSS

CONTRIBUTORS
HOLLY BERETTO, ZACHARY DOSS,
GEOFFREY SMITH, BETH SECOR
DEBRA BARRERA, KATIA
ZAVISTOVSKI, JOSEPH WOZNY
CHARISSA TERRANOVA, MEGHAN
HENDLEY, CHRISTOPHER JOHNSON
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ON THE COVER

DANIEL MCFARLANE, "MONOLITH," 2011. ACRYLIC AND ENAMEL ON PANEL,
43" X 35", AS PART OF HIS FIRST SOLO EXHIBITION AT
BARBARA DAVIS GALLERY, DECEMBER 9, 2011-JANUARY 6, 2012.
IMAGE COURTESY OF BARBARA DAVIS GALLERY.



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TABLE OF CONTENTS

DECEMBER 2011 + JANUARY 2012

8

THE ABRIDGED STORY OF
DANIEL MCFARLANE

10

LOOKING BACK/
LOOKING FORWARD

15

OUT OF TOWN DANCE

18

OPERA IN THE HEIGHTS

26

CULTURAL WARRIOR:
BECKY TOBIN



COURTESY OF BARBARA DAVIS GALLERY



PHOTO: © 2011 JOAN MARCUS

7

Artifacts:
News+Briefs

17

Q+A Lisa D'Amour

21

Joseph Cohen

23

The Colville Formula

27

Reviews



PHOTO: GWEN TURNER JUAREZ



COURTESY INMAN GALLERY

TOP: Daniel McFarlane's "Dozer" in his exhibition at Barbara Davis Gallery, page 8; MIDDLE: Cody Green and Laurie Kan-yok in "Come Fly Away," page 10; BOTTOM LEFT: Stefano de Peppo (as Sgt. Sulpice) and Ashlyn Rust (as Marie) in Opera in the Heights' production of "La Fille du Régiment," page 18; BOTTOM RIGHT: Jillian Conrad at Inman Gallery, page 27.

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ARTIFACTS



COURTESY THE WEINSTEIN COMPANY.

“My Week with Marilyn,” The Weinstein Company, will be one of the films shown when Sundance Cinemas opens on November 23.

IN JANUARY, THE MUSEUM OF Fine Arts Houston (MFAH) launches Documents of 20th-Century Latin American and Latino Art, a digital archive of some 10,000 primary-source materials, worldwide, available free of charge. This initiative, a decade in the making, promises to transform the field of Latin American and Latino art and cultural history, as it is taught to future generations of students, allowing a broader audience than ever before to study this material. The MFAH also received \$98,325 in funding from Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) and the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation to plan and design the learning lab for middle and high school students. The MFAH learning lab will be designed to improve digital literacy, and to engage young people in hands-on learning.
www.mfah.org

SOCIETY FOR THE PERFORMING Arts (SPA) announced that Trinidad Hernandez has been hired as the organization's Director of Education and Community Programs. Hernandez joins SPA as he is wrapping up his Doctorate in Education at the University of Houston. He began his career in education as a speech communication and theater teacher at Ball High School in Galveston.
www.spahouston.org

THE CONTEMPORARY ART MUSEUM Houston has named Dean Daderko as its new curator. Daderko has mounted curatorial projects in Buenos Aires, Argentina, Montreal, Quebec, Canada, and Vilnius, Lithuania, among others. He's organized shows for some of New York's most well-known alternative art spaces, including Art in General, Artists' Space, Visual AIDS at La MaMa La Galleria, and The Kitchen. According to CAMH Director Bill Arning: “Dean impressed us with his broad curato-

rial experience and global knowledge. He understands that the contemporary art world today is about making connections across great distances, and he comes to Houston with those networks in place. We're excited to see the types of visionary projects he'll contribute to CAMH's over 60-year history of showcasing the world's most innovative artists working today.”
www.camh.org

VOICES BREAKING BOUNDARIES (VVB) received a \$20,000 NEA grant to develop and produce living room art productions that explore and juxtapose the joys, cultures and struggles between Houston, Texas and Karachi, Pakistan. “Voices Breaking Boundaries has been creating urgent artistic work in Houston's neighborhoods for over a decade,” said Houston Arts Alliance CEO Jonathon Glus. “Subverting the traditional concept of art, VVB uses performance and digital media to convert homes into art spaces while exploring histories and cultures.”
www.vvbarts.org

FRENETICORE RECENTLY WAS awarded \$10,000 from the Brown Foundation. Maggie Lasher and her group, China Cat Dance, is the next artist-in-residence. They will be performing a new, original light/fire themed dance performance in the spring at Frenetic Theater.
www.freneticore.net

THEATRE UNDER THE STARS (TUTS) announced recently that Gina Sullivan has joined the staff as Director of Development. Sullivan holds a Bachelor of Arts from the University of California at Davis. TUTS' education program, The River, has recently received funding from two different corporations, The Boeing Company and Valero Energy. The River has served more than 13,000 children who have a broad range of disabilities, from mild to severe. The River, a program of TUTS Education, is a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization whose mission is to provide an accessible, affordable, fine arts education for special children, ages 2-19, who have disabilities, chronic illnesses, or are economically disadvantaged.
www.tuts.com

HOUSTON GRAND OPERA (HGO) announces the appointment of Mena M. Hanna as their new dramaturg. Hanna has a Bachelor of Music degree in composition from Boyer College of Music, Temple University; Master of Music in Composition from Oxford University, Merton College and a D.Phil in Music Composition and Critical Writing also from Oxford University, Merton College, where he was also a Marshall

Scholar. HGO has commissioned the renowned Iranian/American author Farnoosh Moshiri to write the libretto for our new HGOco commission, “The Bricklayer.” Farnoosh has written a number of best sellers about the Iranian revolution, notably, “The Bath House.” “The Bricklayer” chronicles a family's escape from Iran and their new life here in Houston.
www.houstongrandopera.org

DANCE SOURCE HOUSTON (DSH) will be programming Dance Days at Discovery Green again this year, and is looking for companies celebrating anniversaries. DSH has also forged a new partnership with DiverseWorks and the CORE's Fieldwork Workshop to revamp 12 Minutes Max. “We're looking for artists to take more risks, do something bold and have the time and feedback from the workshop to really develop an idea before it gets presented on the stage,” says Stephanie Wong, DSH's executive director.
www.dancesourcehouston.org

DOMINIC WALSH'S “LE SPECTRE de la Rose” has entered into Diablo Ballet's rep. “This was the first work of mine performed in Italy, and the piece tours to Pompeii,” says Walsh. “Domenico Luciano is also guesting with them.” Japanese star ballerina Hana Sakai joins Dominic Walsh Dance Theater for the spring season. “Hana and Domenico were exceptional together in “Wolfgang,” and brought an undiscovered depth of character to the duet,” says Walsh. “I am thrilled to have her join us for our 10th anniversary season performances.”
www.dwdt.org

DA CAMERA OF HOUSTON ARTISTIC and General Director Sarah Rothenberg recently performed the New York premiere of Tobias Picker's “Piano Quintet: Live Oaks,” with the Brentano String Quartet at Miller Theatre at Columbia University, as part of a composer Portrait of Picker. Commissioned by Da Camera, the performance was well-reviewed in the New York Times. “Handsomely performed by Ms. Rothenberg and the Brentano String Quartet, the quintet conveyed a stage-worthy sensation of tension and release.” Rothenberg also recently performed in the world premiere of a work by Danish composer Poul Ruders, known for his operas “The Handmaid's Tale” and “Selma Jezkova,” at Bridge Records' 30th anniversary concert at Lincoln Center. Rothenberg and violist Hsin-Yun Huang performed “Romances: Six Short Pieces for Viola and Piano.” They have recorded the piece, which was co-commissioned by Huang and Da Camera, for release on Bridge in 2012.
www.dacamera.com

INPRINT AWARDS \$35,000 IN PRIZES to graduate students at the University of Houston Creative Writing Program in January. They also add a new manu-

script workshop for teachers this spring as part of the workshop offerings. The workshop, taught by Lacy Johnson, is offered tuition-free for all Houston-area educators, thanks to underwriting support from the Kinder Foundation, and will give participants a space to focus on preparing larger projects for publication.
www.inprintheouston.org

HOUSTON CENTER FOR CONTEMPORARY Craft announces its call for entry for “CraftTexas 2012,” the seventh in a series of juried exhibitions showcasing the best in Texas-made contemporary craft. The exhibition is open to artists currently residing in Texas who work in clay, fiber, glass, metal, wood and found/recycled materials. Applications must be completed by March 15, 2012.
www.crafthouston.org

INTERACTIVE THEATER HAS RECEIVED grants from Texas Commission on the Arts and Houston Arts Alliance for “The Frog & the Princesses” and “The Little Mermaid.” Both are original pieces written by Angela Foster and Robb Brunson.
www.interactivetheater.org

THE CLASSICAL THEATRE COMPANY (CTC) received a \$10,000 grant from the Pepsi Refresh Project. CTC's Executive Artistic Director John Johnston says, “We are thrilled to be able to accept this critical funding from Pepsi. \$10,000 will go a long way towards helping our company bring a high quality production of “Uncle Vanya” to our Houston audiences. We feel like paying people is the critical element to any artistic endeavor, and these funds will be used to compensate the artists and technicians who come together to work on our production.”
www.classicaltheatre.org

SUNDANCE CINEMAS HOUSTON opened its doors on November 23 at Bayou Place. Sundance Cinemas has also been chosen to be one of the locations for the 2012 Houston Cinema Arts Society film festival. “We are excited to join Sundance Cinemas in a new era for film exhibition in Houston, and look forward to a great partnership for the 2012 Festival, November 7-11,” said Trish Rigdon, executive director of the Houston Cinema Arts Society. “We always strive to be good neighbors, friends and supporters as we all share the same cooperative spirit,” said Sundance group president Robert Redford. “We're proud to be affiliated with such a great group of local organizations that serve the arts and members of the community,” added Redford.
www.sundancecinemas.com

Abstract Track:

The Abridged Story of Daniel McFarlane

DANIEL MCFARLANE'S CV READS

well beyond what any ambitious young artist could hope for: Bachelors of Fine Art with Cum Laude honors from Sam Houston State University; Masters of Fine Art with a full ride fellowship from the University of Florida; currently employed as Professor of Art at Lone Star College in North Harris, Texas; and recently obtained gallery representation from our city's beloved Barbara Davis Gallery.

Even better, he was born and raised in Houston, goes wild for science fiction, plays rock music, and makes some really kick-ass paintings.

After completing his graduate studies, McFarlane was Artist-in-Residence at Lawndale Art Center (2010-2011). Accepting the residency meant that he could return to Houston, and Lawndale's prime Museum District location meant walking distance to many of the city's unprecedented arts institutions. The experience was a positive and timely one that gave him his first glimpse into the world of the professional artist, affirming his suspicions regarding discipline and self-motivation.

He explains, "I feel you get what you put into it — sitting with the artwork and putting in the hours. I had been training and working in graduate school nonstop for seven years, but at Lawndale, I was on my own for the first time. Another first for me was being on display. I was used to being a private artist and only showing work that I was ready to share. Working in a public space forced me to expose more of my process and artworks in various stage of completion."

The Lawndale residency also provided the right context and environment for McFarlane to meet Barbara Davis of Barbara Davis Gallery.

"As I got to know Barbara, I could tell she was passionate about contemporary art. It was reflected in the way she spoke to me about my own work and I could also see it in the artists she represented. When I visited her gallery she brought out of her display big, beautiful, heroic paintings by Mie Olise, Gavin Perry, and Joe Mancuso. I saw that she was someone who cared about abstract painting and we hit it off personally, so that's a bonus."



COURTESY OF BARBARA DAVIS GALLERY

Daniel McFarlane, "Capsized," 2011, Acrylic & Enamel on Panel, 48" x 82", on display at Barbara Davis Gallery.

Fresh from inclusion in the 2011 Houston Fine Art Fair, McFarlane will have his first solo exhibition of truly professional caliber in Houston at Barbara Davis Gallery, "What I Saw" (December 9, 2011–January 6, 2012).

According to McFarlane, "What I Saw" is an exhibition about abstraction itself: the idea of meeting a strange form and the attempt to recreate the moment of encounter. Each painting expresses this attempt in the depiction of the form through color, shape, texture, and superimposition. The paintings represent what may or may not be or look like what actually is; which may or may not be or look like what one thinks and sees."

McFarlane's method of abstract painting has developed in various stages. Early on, he incorporated sketches of the human figure and found objects — everything from cardboard boxes, trash from his studio, and his own clothes. He finally realized that paint was the real object of his interest, and that he could make it 'do' and 'be' whatever he wanted.

These days, since he doesn't fancy himself a brush-work-type artist, McFarlane uses a combination of collage and poured paint to create his paintings. He

begins with a wood panel and, after tapping over sections that he wants to show through as wood grain, he paints the surrounding areas with a solid hue of deeply saturated acrylic paint that competes with, yet compliments, the wood grain surface. Once dry, he peels pieces of the slick, shiny paint from the surface ("a la fruit roll-up," he says), molds it into a form, and re-positions it on the picture plane.

By manipulating several key factors — surface, composition, and illusionary depth — and activating multiple sensations at once, McFarlane constructs an imaginary world. The natural wood grain throws into question whether or not it's a faux finish, the forms he creates seem to both sit on top of and sink into the picture plane, and the surrounding space is ever-expanding.

"I'm a color junkie — and not always for the bold, bright, shiny ones even though they are sexy. It's amazing the luminosity and depth you can achieve in a color field and the buzz amongst parts of the form. I'm looking for that hum in my work. I want the colors to simultaneously blend and repel, to exist on that edge."

When you see "What I Saw," you might

recognize other edgy characteristics, influences, and direct references in McFarlane's paintings — those of science fiction, a genre of writing that McFarlane often listens to on audio books while he paints.

"I get excited and involved in the descriptive and imaginative language science fiction authors use when they depict forms and creatures from other planets. I often think of these characters when I am developing my own forms."

And make sure to compliment him on how well he can paint wood grain — he loves that.

—NANCY ZASTUDIL

Nancy Zastudil is an itinerant curator always on the lookout for the next kick in the pants, most often in the form of Houston art. Her other writings and projects can be found at www.thenecessarian.com.

December 9
"What I Saw"
Barbara Davis Gallery
www.barbaradavisgallery.com/2009

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Looking Back/Looking Ahead

Writers Picks for 2011+2012

PHOTO: ROBERT MCKEEVER



Walter De Maria, "Bel Air Trilogy: Circle Rod," 2000–2011, courtesy the artist and Gagosian Gallery. Copyright Walter De Maria.

AS THE YEAR TURNS, IT'S TIME to look back and look ahead. A+C writers chose their favorite performance of 2011 and look ahead to 2012.

2011

Having just moved to Houston, I began 2010 with many questions. Coincidentally, my answer to A+C's question about last year's best exhibition is "Answers to Questions," John Wood and Paul Harrison's survey show at the Contemporary Arts Museum, Houston.

2012

Leaving my first year as a Texas resident behind, I look forward to Yasufumi Nakamura's exhibition "Utopia/Dystopia: Construction and Destruction in Photography and Collage," on view at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston from March 11–June 10, 2012.

— KATIA ZAVISTOVSKI

2011

Everything about Classical Theatre Company's production of George Bernard Shaw's "Candida" was so well done. Shannon Emerick's Candida was really lovely and subtle.

2012

I most look forward to "In the Next Room (or, The Vibrator Play)" at Stages Repertory Theatre. I love Sarah Ruhl

and would watch absolutely any play of hers.

— ZACHARY DOSS

2011

The best thing about the Houston arts scene in 2011 has to be the opening of "Salon of Beauty" at the Rice Gallery, resplendent with bright, bold colors and a loving look at a neighborhood that manages to be beautiful amid its tattered edges.

2012

I'm looking forward to both "Anna Boleyna" at Opera in the Heights January 26–February 5, and "Mary Stuart" at Houston Grand Opera April 21–May 4, two parts of one of my favorite periods of history — drama, love, loyalty, betrayal, these two pieces have it all.

— HOLLY BERETTO

2011

Houston Ballet's performance of Jorma Elo's "ONE/end/ONE" was a stand out. Elo takes the language of ballet and manipulates it in surprising, delightful, and signature ways, and it's a dialect in which Houston Ballet's dancers proved fluent.

2012

I'm most looking forward to "Come

Fly Away" at Gexa Energy's Broadway Across America, April 10–15. Tharp plus Sinatra makes for comfort food, familiar but still makes my mouth water a little bit.

— NICHELLE STRZEPEK

2011

"By a Committee of Style" presented by

Leslie Scates and featuring powerhouse improvisation dance artists such as Nina Martin, Jordan Fuchs, Sarah Gamblin and Rebecca Bryant, was a showcase of daring work by dancers truly steeped in their practice.

2012

As part of their Dance Month, The Jewish Community Center presents the

Continued Page 12

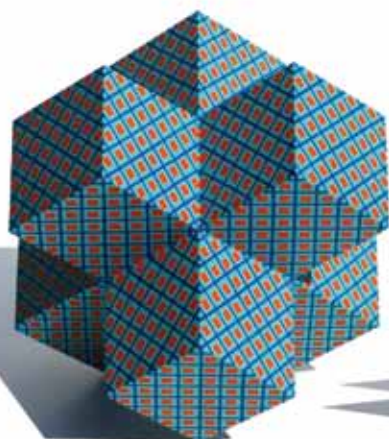


COURTESY LAWNDALE ART CENTER

Still from David Politzer's "A Rousing View of Nature's Magnificence" Video Installation, 2010, as part of a May 2012 exhibition at Lawndale Art Center.

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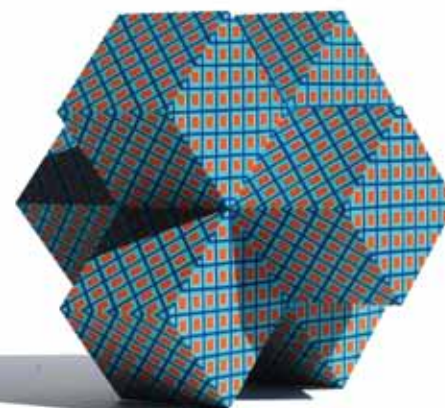
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VIEW 1



VIEW 2



VIEW 3

Artwork: "Crown Ornament Of An Angel" Lacquer on Douglas Fir Hardwood 10 in. x 10 in. x 10 in. (2011)



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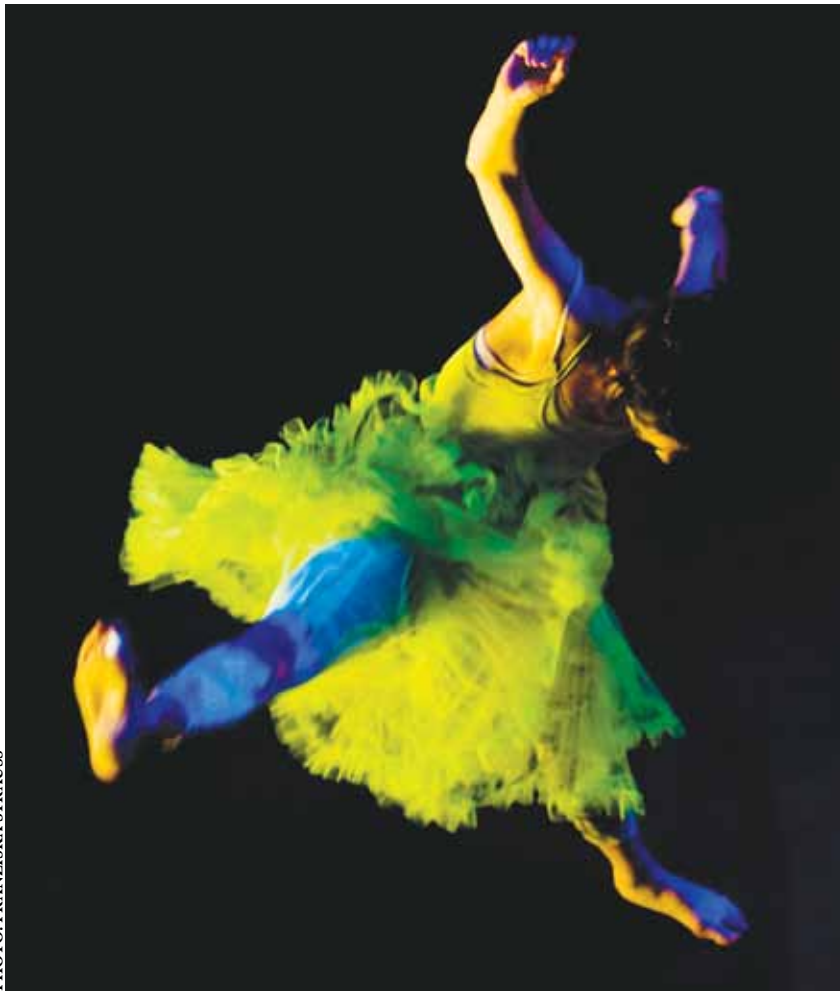


PHOTO: FRANZISKA STRAUSS

Gallim Dance Company headlines Dance Month at the JCC.

Gallim Dance Company on February 11, led by choreographer Andrea Miller, this company will undoubtedly be both visually and physically stunning; I am expecting a feast for the eyes and mind.

— ROSIE TRUMP

2011

The best exhibition for me was Walter De Maria's "Trilogies" at The Menil Collection, the juxtaposition of clinical precision and billowing Americana romance proved to be the most moving show I've seen this year.

2012

I'm looking forward to the culmination of Lawndale's residency program in their 2012 exhibition featuring their three current residents, Seth Mittag, David Politzer and Anne J. Regan in May. I can't wait to see how the artwork will evolve over the course of the residency.

— DEBRA BARRERA

2011

This year I was very impressed with a little movie called "The Debt," a well-made thriller about Mossad agents tracking down a Nazi war criminal in East Berlin. Jessica Chastain and Helen Mirren were standouts.

2012

I'm most excited about "Skyfall," the

23rd James Bond movie and the third with Daniel Craig. It will be the 50th anniversary of the Bond series and the pressure is on for director Sam Mendes.

— REGINA SCRUGGS

2011

Lars von Trier's "Melancholia" marks the high point in his beautiful misanthropic visions. It's a dreadful blend of grand cinematic art and intimate anxiety.

2012

Following his infinitely creepy "The Skin I Live In," Pedro Almodovar, arguably the best living Spanish director, announces his return to his most trusted genre-melodrama. "Mina" will chronicle the life on Italian singer Mina and her private and public battles in stardom.

— JOE WOZNY

2011

"Steamrolled" at Gallery M Squared (July 11-12) from Print Matters, which exhibited giant relief prints from over 30 artists all pressed by a steamroller at the one-day "Rockin' Rollin' Prints" event in June.

2012

In "Identified and Objectified: A Study of the Ephemeral" at Box 13 Artspace, Shannon Duncan, Britney Connelly and

Bryan Forrester explore the effect of objects on identity and memory through photographic media, albeit with different objectives: finding a true self, connecting with others, or gaining closure with the past.

— GEOFF SMITH

2011

Without a doubt, my favorite performance in 2011 was Houston Grand Opera's production of Benjamin Britten's "Peter Grimes." I rearranged my schedule to see a second performance of this production, something I had never done.

2012

I'm looking forward to hearing the luscious sounds of soprano Karol Bennett in the River Oaks Chamber Orchestra's premiere of "Maternity — Women's Voices Through the Ages," with music by Anthony Brandt and libretto by David Eagleman on April 21.

— CHRIS JOHNSON

2011

American Festival for the Arts' Finale Conservatory Orchestra Concert truly spoke to their mission, as these young phenomenons pulled out the power and details in each orchestral piece, including Prokofiev's prolific "Romeo and Juliet" suite.

— NANCY WOZNY

2012

Da Camera's "Rites of Spring," featuring The Bad Plus On Sacred Ground on May 5 is at the top of my list. This dynamic trio explores the masterpiece that set the classical music world on fire in 1913 with a dynamic rescoring of "The Rite of Spring" for piano, drums, and bass.

— MEGHAN HENDLEY

2011

Marc Bamuthi Joseph's "Red, Black & GREEN: a blues" at University of Houston Cynthia Woods Mitchell Center for the Arts was one of the most original performances I have ever seen. Bamuthi Joseph engineers an entirely different way for audiences to perceive his work, allowing the full power of his message to come through.

2012

As a Tom Stoppard maniac, I can barely contain my excitement to see Main Street Theater's production of the Stoppard trilogy, "The Coast of Utopia," beginning January 12, only the second production in the U.S. Stoppard's magnificent trilogy chronicles a group of real-life Russian intellectuals chafing under an oppressive regime and dreaming of revolution.



PHOTO: JAN SAENZ

Matt Lents and Shannon Emerick in the Classical Theatre Company's production of "Candida."



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WE ARE LUCKY TO HAVE SUCH a vibrant local dance scene, but it takes more than homegrown talent to build a dance city. Enter the out-of-towners, and fortunately for dance fans, the winter/spring season offers a bounty of visiting dance companies. It took a savvy group of presenters and curators to bring this particular group of companies to town.

DiverseWorks

DiverseWorks is the city's foremost presenter of edgy dance. Artistic director Sixto Wagan has a particular expertise for work that bleeds beyond the boundary of the proscenium. He found a perfect fit in Seattle-based Zoe Scofield and her artistic partner Juniper Shuey, know collectively as *zoeljuniper*.

"A Crack in Everything" is an installation and performance based on the Greek tragedy "The Oresteia," opening on January 19, with performances January 19–21. Dominic Walsh Dance Theater will perform a version of the piece each Saturday through February 25.

"Zoe's choreography is singular in its idiosyncratic approach to certain ballet traditions, which I thought would resonate well here — bringing together Houston's contemporary dance audi-

ences with the increasing appetite for contemporary ballet," says Wagan. "A Crack in Everything' pushes the boundaries of form, expectation and perspective. It's re-interpreting the proscenium performance and creating an immersive experience for the audience, which will resonate both as a live performance and as an installation."

DiverseWorks also premieres Ayman Harper's "(the)LID," a collaboration with sound artists Matmos and Kidd Pivot's Jermaine Spivey on January 13 & 14. Harper may hark from Clear Lake, but he has built his reputation abroad, dancing with the Forsythe Company and now based in Berlin. Harper has kept his Houston ties though, showing work with DWDT and at Barnevelder.

"DiverseWorks is excited to be part of an international co-commission of Ayman's newest work, in part because we get to see how an HSPVA graduate has incorporated his experience with Hubbard Street and Forsythe to really develop his own artistic voice," says Wagan. "We're not just getting Ayman, but the incredible Jermaine Spivey, who dances with Kidd Pivot, and we get to bring his extraordinary musical collaborators Matmos to Houston for the first time."



PHOTO: BRUCE MONK

Royal Winnipeg Ballet in "Moulin Rouge."

Jewish Community Center

Dance audiences always look forward to what company Maxine Silberstein has selected for Dance Month at Jewish Community Center (JCC). This year's it's Andrea Miller's Gallim Dance on February 11.

Miller's career has moved steadily upward since leaving Ensemble Batsheva Company. She's performed at Jacob's Pillow, graced the cover of Dance Magazine and shows no signs of slowing down. Her fresh voice has been in full evidence in the work I've seen at the Pillow and at The Juilliard School.

"I liked the fact that Andrea Miller was influenced by Ohad Naharin. We presented Ohad Naharin's Dance Company when he had his own company in New York before he became the artistic director of Batsheva Dance Company in Israel," says Silberstein, JCC's dance director. "We were looking for companies that were smaller, newer and have not been presented in Houston, so Gallim fit the bill. She has a humorous as well as a serious side."

Society for The Performing Arts

With Royal Winnipeg Ballet (RWB) on February 4, Corella Ballet, Alvin Ailey American Dance Theatre (March 2–4) and Corella Ballet (May 5) on the spring bill, it's obvious that SPA's executive director June Christensen has the kind of dance smarts that build audiences. Getting the right company at the right time is never easy.

"I saw excerpts from RWB's "Cinderella"

several years ago," says Christensen. "I thought it was a beautiful company but the timing was not right for scheduling — then they planned to tour 'Moulin Rouge' in the 2011–12 season and it was perfect timing."

Christensen marveled at Corella's stage presence when he was here with American Ballet Theatre a few years ago. "There are those dancers that you just can't take your eyes away from — even with a stage brimming full of fantastically talented dancers," recalls Christensen. "I was following the opening of the Corella tour last year and, due to a last minute cancellation in my planning for 2012, the stars aligned in the touring world and made it possible to bring them to Houston. It was kismet."

Houston has a long relationship with the Alvin Ailey American Dance Company, yet this is a historic visit; it will be the first time the company will be here with Robert Battle as the new artistic director. In addition to past Ailey shows, Houston dance audiences have seen Battle's work on the Dance Salad bill and The Houston Metropolitan Dance Company.

"SPA has been presenting the Ailey Company since the 80's, long before I came on board at SPA," says Christensen. "I think of Ailey as the best of the best and an institution of dance — everyone should see the company perform at least once, twice or as often as they come to Houston."

Continued Page 16



PHOTO: ATTILA GLAZER

Members of Compagnie Pal Frenak, Paris, France/Budapest, Hungary performing Pal Frenak's "Seven."

Dance Card Continued



PHOTO: ANDREW ECCLES

Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater's Rachael McLaren.

Dance Salad Festival

Dance fans mark their calendars a year in advance for the annual festival, which always takes place over Easter weekend, this year on April 5–7. Artistic director and founder Nancy Henderek has put Houston on the international dance map with her popular festival, which features up to nine dance companies. Henderek not only selects each piece of choreography, but works closely with the choreographer to choose the excerpt that will end up on the Festival stage. “I proceeded to write out a map of the piece, starting from the beginning the end, making descriptive and timing notes of each section,” says Henderek. “After that, I look for how to weave certain sections together to make a shorter version that is basically never done this way.”

This year Henderek is especially excited by Compagnie Pal Franak's “Seven,” choreographed by Hungarian Pal Franak. “What I liked about this piece was the unique use of six tire tubes and how he used them,” says Henderek. “Sometimes set pieces can get in the way of the dancing, but a clever choreographer can make use of a set piece to make the dancers move in a very different way, which can create interesting movement.”

Gexa Energy Broadway Across America

Broadway Across America presents Twyla Tharp's “Come Fly Away,” at the

Hobby Center, April 10–15. Tharp got her “Movin Out” groove back with this show. Set to Frank Sinatra songs, Tharp mines the wistful longing in old blues eyes' voice with her outrageously athletic choreography. The crossover queen has a way of creating dance musical extravaganzas that appeal to both post modern dance lovers and Sinatra fans. The touring company features Cody Green, the break out star of TV reality show “Step it Up and Dance.”

Ars Lyrica

It's hard to discuss early music without dance, as at one time they were intertwined. So it makes perfect sense for Ars Lyrica to present the New York Baroque Dance Company (NYBDC) as part of their season closer, “Heaven and Hell,” on June 8. Directed by Catherine Turocy, NYBDC is an authentic experience that will take you back in time. Ars Lyrica artistic director Matthew Dirst has actually done a bit of baroque dancing. “I've known about Catherine's work for years, since my own experience doing this stuff at the summer Baroque dance workshops at Stanford during my graduate work there,” says Dirst. “Plus, she lives in Dallas, so we've interacted in a number of different contexts since I came to Texas. It just requires calves of steel.”

— NANCY WOZNY

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Q + A with Lisa D'Amour



PHOTO: ZACK SMITH

Playwright Lisa D'Amour features her play "Anna Bella Eema" at Catastrophic Theatre beginning December 2.

ACCORDING TO PLAYWRIGHT Lisa D'Amour, there's a lot more going on at our local trailer park than we might imagine. In her play "Anna Bella Eema," which is being presented by Houston's Catastrophic Theatre, D'Amour invites us into the densely lyrical world that she imagines somewhere between the trailer homes. A contemporary Alice in Wonderland, "Anna Bella Eema" is the story of a mother, her daughter, and the twin her daughter sculpts from living mud.

Houston art-lovers are no stranger to D'Amour's work. Her art installation piece, "How to Build a Forest," was presented by the Cynthia Woods Mitchell Center for the Arts in 2009. "How to Build a Forest" invited audience members to watch — and participate — while D'Amour and her collaborator built a forest from scratch, and then dismantled it. Prior to that, D'Amour collaborated with Infernal Bridegroom Productions to develop an original play, "Hide Town," which premiered in 2006.

A New Orleans native and graduate of the MFA program in playwriting at the University of Texas in Austin, D'Amour's work has been performed throughout the United States. Her play "Detroit" premiered at Steppenwolf Theater in Chicago and is currently headed for a run at The National Theater in London. D'Amour is the recipient of an OBIE

Award, and "Detroit" was a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize in Drama. In November 2011, D'Amour won the Steinberg Playwright Award.

Arts+Culture writer **Zachary Doss** caught up with D'Amour in the week following her Steinberg Award win to talk about "Anna Bella Eema" and her take on theater.

A+C: What was the "spark" that inspired you to write "Anna Bella Eema"?

LISA D'AMOUR: A local TV news story in Minneapolis about a woman who had her children taken away from her when neighbors in her trailer park reported her for having no running water and other unsafe living conditions. The tone of the news story was like monster mom! But when they let the woman speak on camera I saw this frightened woman trying to explain herself — how she was trying to deal with the water in her trailer being turned off for lack of funds, and also take care of neighbors kids — and I just didn't know who to believe? Were the reporters demonizing her to make it a good story? Was there bias against her because she was "white trash?" Or was she really dangerous to her children? I wanted to create a play in which a woman like the women in the news story got to state her case.

There is a lot of music in the play — it's

not a musical, per se, but it is a sung drama. Do you have a background in music? What made you want to include musical elements in this play in particular?

I grew up singing a lot of campfire/folk songs with my family — my Dad plays the guitar. And I performed in a bunch of musicals in high school. I think my impulse is that the singing could really expand the scope of certain moments and bring characters into a mythic place (not to mention drop characters RIGHT back in cold, hard reality when the music stops).

You have a very facile way of working in the theater — may of you works involve folding in another medium, such as visual art in "How to Build a Forest" or music in "Anna Bella Eema." What is it about this fluidity of medium that appeals to you as an artist?

I like moving between the introverted world of my private head space and then into the extroverted world of bigger collaborations. I learn so much from the artists I work with in different disciplines — my collaborations keep me really open to the many languages we use to try and make meaning in this world.

What challenges do you believe "Anna Bella Eema" presents for the performer?

The music is really, really beautiful and really hard! Filled with strange chords and impossible-to-find notes. In general I find the actresses who perform this piece love this challenge — even if it keeps them up late many nights trying to lead it. Also, this play requires three actresses to be on stage and very active/alert for just over 90 minutes — that's a lot of energy to put out each night.

You have strong ties to the Gulf Coast region, especially Texas and Louisiana. Does this regional landscape have an influence your writing?

Absolutely. New Orleans, Austin, those ghost towns — they all contain spaces

that seem pedestrian at first, but people relate to them as though they are mythic. Because stories have been passed down about them. A table is not a table, it the dinner table my great-grandfather made out of logs he chopped himself, the great-grandfather who was an artist and sang opera and lived with his "secretary" in the home he named "L'Esperance" and so on. So yes it is the landscape and the way people spin stories out of it.

Would you say there is a common theme or concern that informs most of your work?

I'd say first, the desire to truly know another person and second, the desire to transcend/shatter/break out of "the norm."

What is it about playwriting that speaks to you as an artist?

Well, I love letting characters talk, and exploring the quirks of how people try and communicate with each other as they make their way through the world. And then I love that, after I've written all these words down, all of these people — directors, actors, designers, etc. — each with his or her own particular intelligence, comes together to make it come to life. And then after all those people have come together, we get the audience — the final collaborator. So yes, I guess I love how my solitary experience of writing the play becomes this big communal experiment.

— ZACHARY DOSS

Zachary Doss is the Associate Artistic Director of Mildred's Umbrella Theater Company and a freelance writer.

www.catastrophictheatre.com

December 2-23
"Anna Bella Eema"
DiverseWorks Art Space
diverseworks.org



PHOTO: JIM BALDASSARE

New Georges production of "Anna Bella Eema" in 2003, directed by Katie Pearl.

Overtures:

Opera in the Heights Opens a New Act



PHOTO: GWEN TURNER JUAREZ

Maestro Enrique Carreón-Robledo, Artistic Director, Opera in the Heights.

WHEN THE CURTAIN ROSE ON “La Fille du Regiment” last fall, there was a nearly palpable gasp of pleasure — not simply for Donizetti’s rippling score and the beloved map-cap opera. No, there was an excitement through Lambert Hall that said, something new starts now. And nowhere was that excitement more apparent than at the podium just below stage right, where Enrique Carreón-Robledo, Opera in the Heights’ new artistic director was at the baton, his passion openly on display, both for opera and for the organization he’s heading.

“I see Opera in the Heights as a essential link between the academic institutions and the world-class companies,” he says, his sense of optimism about Oh’s future evident.

Carreón-Robledo is a key part of that future, as is newly named executive director Lawrence J. Fried. Together, the pair are forging a path to help the small, professional company in Houston’s Heights neighborhood embrace higher artistic standards and increase appreciation for opera, and for the productions on Oh’s own stage.

Four full-time staff members and numerous part-timers, plus an army of dedicated volunteers help Oh in its mis-

sion to bring affordable opera to Houston audiences.

“Everything we do comes from the music,” says Fried. “And we look to provide high quality performances at affordable prices in a beautiful setting.” Fried and Carreón-Robledo are in synch about those artistic and fiscal goals.

“From the very beginning when I accepted this appointment, I knew that I wanted us to be able to maximize our resources today to achieve the highest results those resources would allow.”

To that end, Carreón-Robledo has been scouting talent around the country, and intends to build strong relationships with both the University of Houston Moores School of Music and Houston’s Grand Opera’s Houston Grand Opera Studio program for young artist development. He’s eagerly anticipated the debut of three young singers, all UH grads, in Oh’s second production this season, Mozart’s “Cosi fan Tutti.”

“This is their professional debut as singers,” he says. “And offering that kind of opportunity for artists is something we’re uniquely poised to do. Not only that, allowing young singers a place to grow in their craft is part of our mission.”

Mentoring is important to Carreón-Robledo, who grew up in Mexico City and found his way into music quite accidentally. Every day on the way to school, he’d pass by a house where he heard music from within. He discovered that inside, a man was teaching children to play the mandolin. The man had no formal training, but he had a love for the instrument and for music. Carreón-Robledo convinced his parents to buy him a mandolin and he took lessons with the man, eventually going on to teach himself how to read music and write his own compositions. Throughout his musical career, he says he’s been fortunate to have a number of mentors along the way, to help him learn about his craft and the business of music. He’s grateful to be in a place to pass that gift along.

Both Carreón-Robledo and Fried know that music is important, not just for their company, but also for the life of the community. Oh’s outreach efforts bring opera to schoolchildren, allowing them to see performances of dress rehearsals, which exposes them to the art of opera. “These are wonderful programs, funded by both the Boeing Charitable Trust and the George Geary Initiative, and it’s a thrill to see these young people react to opera,” says Fried. “Many of them are seeing it for the first time.”

“Human nature has an innate sensitivity for the arts,” Carreón-Robledo. “All you have to do is trigger it.”

The pair is united in that effort, and they feel Opera in the Heights is a perfect venue for showcasing the spectacle that is opera. While they acknowledge that the art form has a reputation for being elitist, they’re committed to showing Houston that opera is really about the stories of love and life told through music.

“We live in a visual world,” says Fried. “And opera is so visual — the lights, the costumes, the whole thing. I know anyone who comes once will be affected by it.”

Carreón-Robledo thinks so, too. And he says he’s starting off his tenure being very hands on in terms of productions, because he wants to set the direction for the company. This season’s sets have not only demonstrated that Carreón-Roble-

do wants his designers to kick things up a notch, they’ve shown audiences that Oh fully intends to improve its already high standards. Going forward, Carreón-Robledo says he’s looking to build upon the strong openings he’s had this season, offering audiences still more talented singers and more engaging production design.

Fried is behind him in his efforts.

“The future is very bright for us,” he says. “And I see it as my responsibility to find ways to help Enrique reach his dreams for us.”

As they look to what’s in store for Oh’s next act, both men are united in their love of opera and their passion for their company. They express gratitude for their board of directors and for the audiences who’ve helped them achieve a nearly 90 percent sell-out rate for performances. And both of them are excited about seeing Oh grow.

“I’ve had an international career,” says Carreón-Robledo, who’s worked in London, Mexico and Asia. “And being here in Houston not only allows me to find an artistic home where I can grow in my own craft, it lets me tap into my professional networks to help raise the level of artistry that we can do.”

“We offer a welcoming place from everyone who’s an opera aficionado, to people who are coming to see this art form for the first time,” says Fried. “We make our music accessible to everyone, and we wouldn’t have it any other way.”

—HOLLY BERETTO

Holly Beretto writes about food, travel and the arts for local and regional magazines. You’ll see her at the opera.

January 23

“Anna Bolena”

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“Il Travatore”

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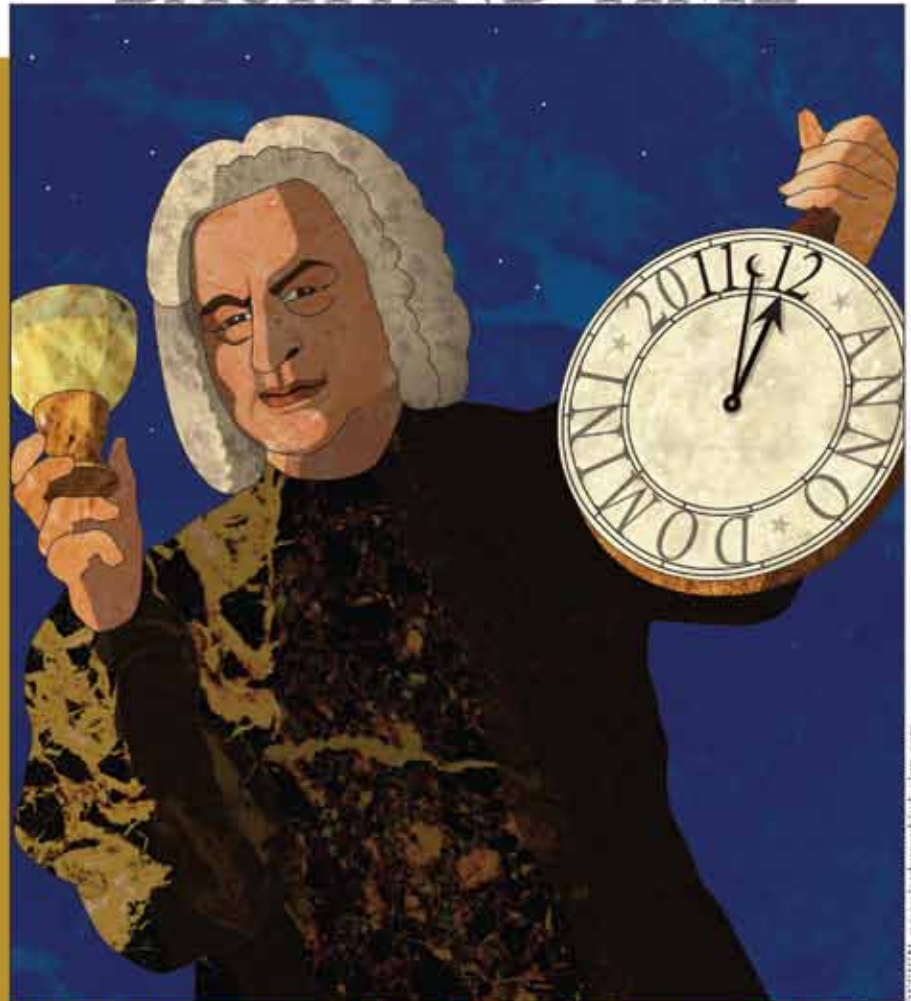
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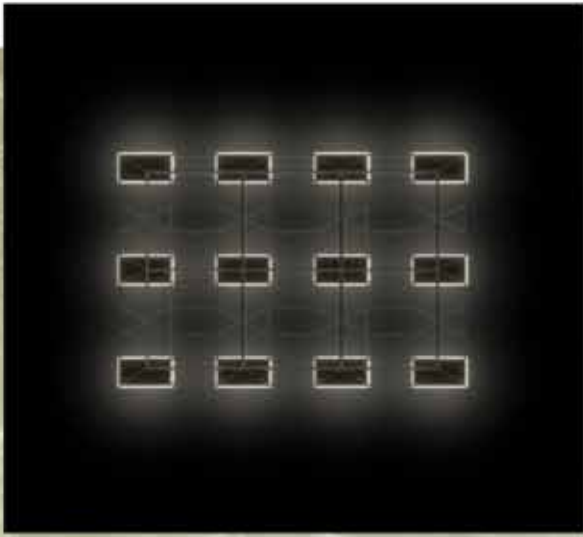
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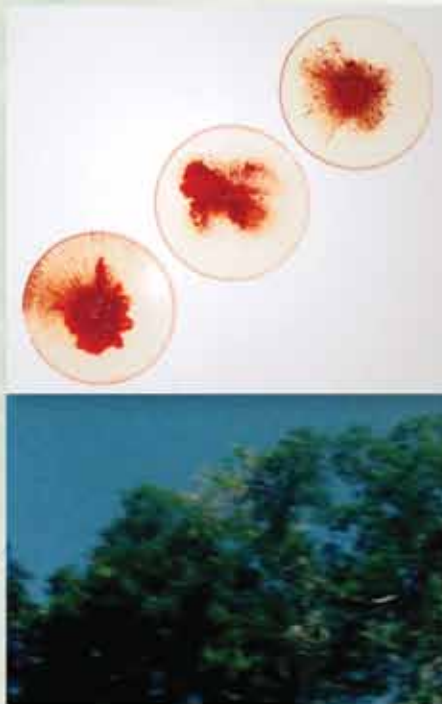
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Pushing Paint

Joseph Cohen at Wade Wilson Art

JOSEPH COHEN BENDS THE LINE between concretion of materials and sublimity in presence. His work could be summed up in the trite statement “it is what it is” but this doesn’t elucidate why even the most unlikely materials for constructing the sublime can, through art, become so. Returning from a residency abroad, Cohen brings with him new works that strive to change the nature of contemporary painting within the boundaries of the concrete process.

The series of works in his upcoming Wade Wilson exhibition were completed during the Martignano International Artists Residency in Lecce, Italy. Cohen participated in two exhibitions in Lecce: a solo show at Carlo V Castle titled “Proposizioni” and “Vessel Traces” a collaboration with artist Joshua Hagler at Chiesa San Giovanni di Dio-Shown, a small baroque church. In both exhibitions, Cohen’s paintings were transformed as they were placed on holy altars and against eighteenth century brick.

From completely different lineages of aesthetics, Cohen’s paintings and the ornate architecture of Italy’s Catholic past converge on a line that enhances the power of each. Although Wade Wilson’s gallery is not an 18th century altar, Cohen’s paintings resonate with the same demure sublimity in presence, while maintaining strength from their self-containment.

“The artwork is not derived from any source except itself, unlike abstract painting or minimalism it refers to nothing outside itself,” states Cohen. This statement may quiet questions for some, but lead others down a philosophical path to infinity. Influenced by concrete masters like Joseph Marioni and Robert Ryman, Cohen strives to reinvent painting. With such a daunting task ahead of him, it’s no wonder he studies philosophy in his relentless pursuit of painting something new.

Cohen leans toward philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer’s definition of beauty in that it should be unconscious, insisting, “If you strive for it or start with the idea of beauty when beginning an artwork you will lose it altogether.” For Cohen, leaving a canvas face consumed by color or extending the paint beyond its natural form goes against his philosophy.



COURTESY OF ARTIST & WADE WILSON ART

Joseph Cohen, “Proposition 262,” Reclaimed Paint, Gold, Pigment, Varnish and Oil on Panel, 74 cm x 50.5 cm x 5 cm, on display at Wade Wilson Art.

Cohen does not paint flowers or porcelain nudes for this very reason but such subjects do not interest him as much as the endless chemical and physical components of paint.

Building up layers and forms with paint, Cohen considers his material as a sculptor would: “Sculpture was a big part of my early practice,” he says. “I think it still influences the work.” Like Bernini to marble in the Borghese is Cohen to Home Depot house paint off I-10. He is an architect with building blocks made

only of pigment and the constraints of the universe, paint and all it could possibly be, makes up a large part of Cohen’s artistic process.

Unlike Marioni, who only uses three colors in his paintings, Cohen wants to focus on pushing the boundaries of paint as far as a concrete painter can. “Marioni limits his color palate to the primaries, I don’t want to restrict myself to a few colors,” he says. “I want really want to see how far I can go within the constraints of concrete painting.”

The viewer can look through his paintings, not just at them. Like TV sets turned on to an endless static, they shift and move slightly, but are contained to small components of visible matter. These subtleties in color, form and material are not always apparent. For example, one large painting can take up to 400 hours of layering paint both on the top and bottom of the painting’s structure.

What started as a lush blue on the face of a painting will ultimately seem like toothpaste white. Underneath hundreds of paint layers lies a heavy skeleton of wood board providing a flush surface for paint to act as paint with little interference. The manipulation of material is akin to the difference between a microphone set on low and a megaphone, it is a manipulation of subtleties.

The titanium faces of Cohen’s paintings under streams of light shimmer and sheen as they shift like white holograms. Along with the slight undulation in color, the surface begins to look as if it was lit from within. Light refracting and reflecting against pigment finds its way through the layers of paint and back to the eye’s rods and cones. Peering into the layers of Cohen’s paintings, it’s evident that his surfaces are an artistic treatise on the characteristics of light.

One of the most intriguing discoveries in quantum mechanics was wave-particle duality. The long-debated hypothesis explains that, atomically, light can act as both a particle and a wave. This fundamental paradox of the universe describes the nature of Cohen’s concrete paintings as they teeter on the edge of particle-like self referentiality and wave-like possibility of the marvelous. Like the elusive nature of light, Cohen’s paintings shift between solidarity in their form and fluidity in their color. This transmutation creates a visual space where paint acts as a vessel for the sublime.

— DEBRA BARRERA

Debra Barrera is a local writer and artist.

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The Colville Formula

Q + A with Pat Colville

ARTIST PAT COLVILLE RETURNS to Houston after 30-plus years teaching and making paintings in New York City. As Colville settles in and begins to absorb what she sees as an active and exciting cultural life here in Houston, A+C contributor **NANCY ZASTUDIL** interviews her about her consistent yet curious abstract paintings, her experiences operating between art and science, and her return to Houston.

A+C: You have a Bachelor of Science degree from the University of Houston so when and how did you become interested in painting?

PAT COLVILLE: I always wanted to be an artist. I had been accepted into the architecture program at Rice University but was lacking math credits, so I

my approach to painting.

How do you generate your painted imagery and compositions?

I have a commitment to abstraction and the 2D surface but am also drawn to the illusion of space, from the earliest paintings up the architectural drawings of today. My latest acrylic paintings have been influenced by a study in landscape design history of early Chinese and Japanese landscapes from the 13th and 14th centuries as well as isometric drawing. While creating tension through contradictory elements of color — both local and chemical, imagined space and distorted scale relations — I try to bring a sense of resolve.

Are there other artists (or other think-

suggested I stop making art. I was horrified because the thought had even occurred to me.

Tell me about the pieces in your upcoming show at Moody Gallery, “New Works.” Some new characteristics such as the hexagonal chain-like or fence-like elements appear, along with a looser, freehand paint application which harkens back to some of your work from the 1990s. How do you manage these kinds of variations within such a consistent body of work?

The work is constantly evolving and being influenced by my life. For example, a pine tree in my yard was dying so I found a book to see if I could find a cure and I saw the interior geometric structure of the pine. I found geometry every

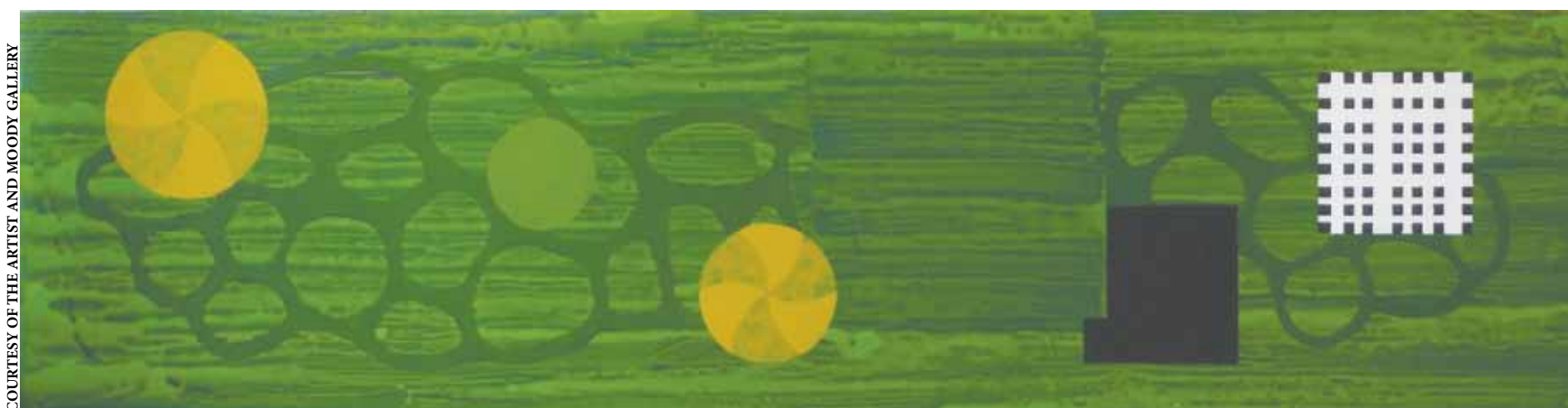
a granddaughter and have moved back here to be a part of her life.

What can you tell me about your experience as a teaching artist?

Teaching has always been a large part of my life. I have taught at the Houston Museum School, St. Thomas University, The University of Houston, Bennington College, Sarah Lawrence College and the Cooper Union in New York City where I have recently retired after 20 years. I loved teaching; it was always a rewarding experience for me.

How would you describe the relationship between art and science?

Well, this is difficult. While science reveals, explores, and tries to resolve the mysteries of our world and universe, the



TOP: Pat Colville, *Untitled*, 2011, Acrylic on Canvas on Panel, 18" x 72". BOTTOM: *Untitled*, 2011, Acrylic on Canvas on Panel, 16" x 20."

enrolled at the University of Houston to make up the difference. My professor in art history discouraged me from architecture and suggested a major in art at the University of Houston. My stepfather saw no value in a Bachelors of Fine Art, so I signed up for a Bachelors of Science in abnormal psychology with a double major in art.

And how did you decide on your painting materials?

A number of years ago my eyes were burned by overexposure to volatile chemicals. I decided to change my painting medium from oils to acrylics and spent the following year painting circles and squares until I felt comfortable with the new medium. It changed

ers, makers, doers, etc.) with whom you feel a kind of kinship, familiarity, or understanding?

Throughout my life many artists have influenced me. I have wanted to paint as aggressively as the Abstract Expressionists and also to be as sublime as the Minimalists but, alas, this is what I do and I have accepted it.

You've had a consistent exhibition record since 1974, complete with some stellar awards and inclusion in several major collections. What keeps you interested in painting specifically and art-making in general?

This is what I do. I can't imagine a life without art. While complaining one time about the life of an artist, a friend

way I turned — chain link fence and the makeup of a tree — and I found local color and artificial color...on and on. So those early squares and circles turned into cubes and spheres, and the squares turned into more geometric form and units of form.

What are your ties to/relationship with Houston?

I moved to Houston when I was 17 and attended the University of Houston. I married and had two sons. In the 1970s, I received a National Endowment for the Arts grant and went to live in England for a year. After my return to the United States, I moved to New York City where I have lived for the past 35 years. Every year I have come back to Houston to spend time with my family. Now I have

artist tries to describe the unnamable and the grace that exists in our world.

Nancy Zastudil is an itinerant curator and freelance writer who cant seem to stay away from Houston. Her other writings and projects can be found at www.thenecessarian.com.

December 3, 2011–January 14, 2012
“Pat Colville: New Works”
Moody Gallery Houston
www.moodygallery.com

An Artful Life

Deborah Colton & Her Texas Home for International Contemporary Art

GALLERY OWNER AND COMMUNITY leader Deborah Colton takes pride in the fact that her gallery is an entity of the world. It is an international art zone in the middle of one of the nation's largest and fastest growing cities. Nonetheless, true proof of presence is in the ether. "When one Googled 'Deborah Colton Gallery,'" Colton said, "the first thing that would come up would be 'An International Contemporary Art Gallery based in Texas.'"

Since opening the space in 2004 as Deborah Colton Gallery, Colton has hosted an array of artists from around the world and major international exhibitions, such as "China Under Construction" and "Qatar Narratives." While Colton is at the helm of most curatorial endeavors, she continues to work on occasion with Carolyn Farb. An effervescent and singular presence, Farb was Creative Director of the gallery for two years in an earlier incarnation as Colton & Farb Gallery.

Colton and Farb connected years ago through the passion of artist patronage. Colton says, "my beginnings" in the gallery world "started as a patron [through] extending my love for the arts and the artists in terms of investing all these years in providing a good private gallery...to promote them and help them have a steady income in their fields as artists...My background comes from this, as did Carolyn's, which is why she always felt so comfortable in our gal-



Inside Deborah Colton Gallery.

leadership early on, graduating magna cum laude from Quinnipiac University in Hamden, Connecticut. She did not though graduate with a degree in art or art history, but marketing.

With a background in business promotion, Colton developed art-world savvy and a profound sense of professionalism later while living with her family in Thailand. As a result of her community leadership in the local art world there,

the international puzzle, Colton shifted her career, moving from private patron to public impresario. Referring to the coming exhibition, Colton says, "These artists who will be back at the gallery in our January–February exhibition go back to my deepest roots and inspiration and beginnings as a private gallerist." In short, hers is a welcoming space. Colton combines an astute sense of aesthetic judgment with an openness to difference in the world. "This was always my goal," Colton says referencing the greater city of Houston. "We wanted to enhance the art scene in Houston and provide something fresh, strong, and different."

Creating something of a dialectic between the far-away and right-here, the global and the local, Deborah Colton Gallery [DCG] maintains a close-knit sense of place. Reflecting an equal-opportunity commitment to artists from the neighborhood and beyond, the current exhibition, "Truth: Sublime Beyond Words, shows the work of five artists currently living in or around Houston. A collection of white canvas and steely grey totems, together the works strike a sense of symbolic transcendence and, by connection, neo-modernism. Conceptually parallel to "Statuesque," the sculpture exhibition the Nasher Sculpture Center in Dallas in the spring 2011 which bore a similar sense of the modern, the works currently showing in Colton's space seem a collective throwback to the mid-20th century. With the exception of David Graeve, a sculptor who strikes a hand-felt presence in the short, twisted tendrils of brick glass

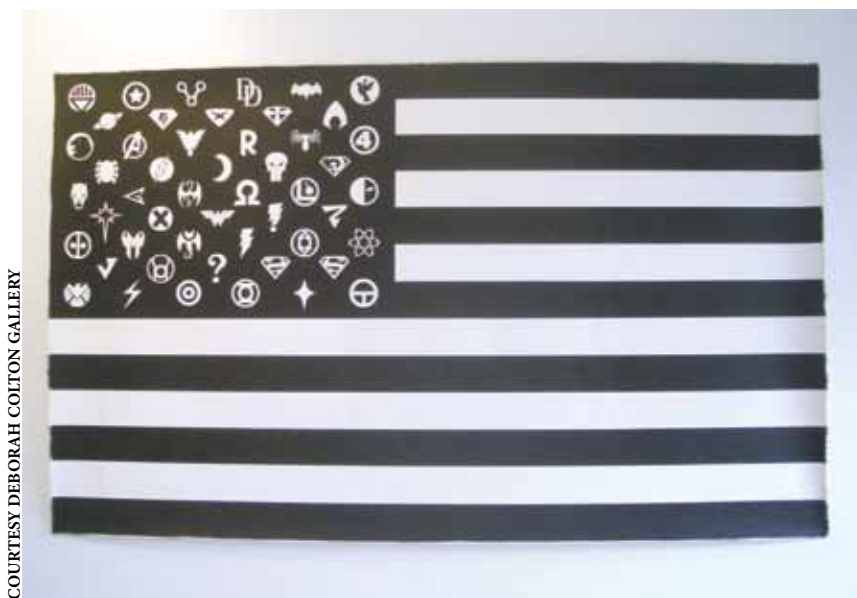
mounted to the surface of a video monitor, the four painters in the exhibition are preoccupied with questions of the play of paint and gesticulation on the surface and, as the show theme suggests, queries of sublime presence and truth with a capital "T." Perhaps to the disappointment of deep readers of philosophy and practitioners of analytics of otherness, one can only deduce by the work in this show that "truth" and the "sublime" are delimited by the color white. Simply put Truth = white. On a note of process, craft, surfaces and action painting, one might imagine a gestural face-off between Joseph Cohen, whose layers of dripped paint in a mid-size triptych are so thick that they create delicate stalactites, and McKay Otto, whose canvases covered in translucent nylon mark an absolute resistance and denial of the drip and the artist's hand. With respect to the drip, Cohen is to Otto as Pollock is to Kelly, as in Ellsworth.

True to the spirit of Colton and, more importantly, artists Cohen, Graeve, Daniel-Hayne, Otto and Williams, the current exhibition "Truth: Sublime Beyond Words" is exploding with energy. Mid-size and large canvases crowd the walls of the front gallery, perhaps to the point of overwhelming the art itself.

— CHARISSA N. TERRANOVA

Based in Dallas, Charissa Terranova is a freelance critic and curator working globally.

www.deborahcoltongallery.com



Matt Messinger, "Flag," 2011, Black and White Gesso on Canvas, 36 x 60 inches.

lery." While on the same page when it comes to artists, other, distinct geographies emerge in listening carefully to accents, Houston for Farb and New Jersey for Colton. Originally from the northeast, Deborah bore the imprimatur of

many asked her to open her own space. It was "the group of artists who asked me to become a private gallerist...the Thai artists, Deans, and professors at the university, where I assisted when I lived there." Adding yet another piece to



For the past four years, brewmaster Garrett Oliver has been working on a massive project. It's the ultimate beer collaboration, but it's not a beer. Published this September by Oxford University Press, it's *The Oxford Companion to Beer*, the most comprehensive book on beer ever published, featuring 160 experts covering more than 1,100 subjects. It's a momentous thing, so Garrett (Editor-in-Chief), Horst Dornbusch (Associate Editor, writer, scholar, man-about-town) and Thomas Kraus-Weyermann (writer and master maltster) hatched a plan. Together, they brewed our next Brewmaster's Reserve beer, called *The Companion*. Thomas created special new floor malts for *The Companion*, which is brewed in an old style called "wheat wine", a wheat-based equivalent to barley wine. The floor malts give this beer a juicy malt character of considerable depth, 55% malted wheat gives it a surprising lightness on the palate, while our house ale yeast lends a gentle fruitiness. *The Oxford Companion to Beer* will impart knowledge, while *The Companion* imparts conviviality. Maybe you really can have it all?



Brooklyn Brewery | 79 N 11th St, Brooklyn NY 11211 | brooklynbrewery.com

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Cultural Warrior:

Houston Chamber Choir's Becky Tobin

FOUNDED BY ARTISTIC DIRECTOR Robert Simpson in 1996, the Houston Chamber Choir has grown to be one of Houston's cultural gems. Executive director Becky Tobin is the one-woman show behind the scenes. A+C Editor **NANCY WOZNY** visited with Tobin to get an inside view of her life running the city's only professional choir.



PHOTO: JEFF GRASS PHOTOGRAPHY

Becky Tobin, Executive Director of Houston Chamber Choir.

A+C: Did you ever imagine you would end up as the executive director of a major arts institution when you were in music school?

BECKY TOBIN: Actually, yes I did. I was lucky to have known what I wanted to do in high school, and to be doing that today. I loved playing the clarinet, but wasn't sure I was up for a career as a professional musician. One of my teachers encouraged me to stay in music, but behind the scenes on the administrative side. I was immediately intrigued, and have been on that path ever since.

Can you talk about that transition from performing to working behind the scenes?

Quite honestly, working behind the scenes felt natural to me from the very beginning. I firmly believe that people with an arts background make the best arts administrators; as a musician, I understand the nuances and challenges that arise when presenting live music, and that knowledge has helped me understand more completely my administrative role. I often respond emotionally during concerts because it triggers a memory from my performing days, or I might hear a really awesome clarinet solo that I wish I were playing. Music overwhelms me in the most fantastic way, and even though I watch from the sidelines, I still feel a great sense of pride and accomplishment in the work I do.

What attracted you to choral music?

Truthfully, I never expected that I would

leave the orchestra industry. But, one of my career goals was to become an executive director of an arts organization, and the opportunity to become the executive director of a group as stellar as the Houston Chamber Choir was one I could not pass up. With some helpful networking through friends of friends, I learned of the Houston Chamber Choir executive director position opening in June 2010. I thank my lucky stars every day for that great timing.

Talk about your relationship with the artistic director Robert Simpson. How do the two of you work together?

We work on opposite ends of the spectrum, but also need to be tuned in to what the other is doing. Bob is one of the most gifted artistic directors I've ever worked with. He has an excellent ability to create beautiful, intellectual and collaborative concerts while making the music accessible to diverse audiences. I've got my eye on the books while Bob has his eye on the scores, and we work together to understand the bigger picture of the Houston Chamber Choir — where it has been, where it is now, and where it is headed.

How does the Chamber Choir fit into the ecology of the choral music in Houston?

Bob founded the Chamber Choir on the premise that professional singers in a choral setting should be compensated for their talent and training just as instrumentalists in an orchestra are. This was a novel concept then, and even today there are only a handful of truly professional choirs around the United States. Yet, for 16 years, the Chamber Choir has attracted the finest singers in our region and compensated them for every minute of rehearsal and performance. This is a huge game-changer for the choral art.

With the enormous capabilities of these musicians, Bob has forged an ensemble that is now counted among the finest professional ensembles in the country. Recording and touring are important elements of our work. We just completed the world premiere recording of a long forgotten masterpiece from the Italian Baroque, for example. And in April, we will travel to the northeast for concerts in New York City and Yale University.

The Chamber Choir is known for its collaborative events, this month with River Oaks Chamber Orchestra. Talk about building bridges in the community that lead to successful joint efforts like the "Messiah for Kids" and others.

Houston Chamber Choir has worked with many fellow organizations, includ-

ing River Oaks Chamber Orchestra (ROCO), Da Camera of Houston and Ars Lyrica, just to name a few. Houston has many talented performing groups; when you join forces you get something really special that benefits everyone — much like "Messiah for Kids!" coming up on December 3rd. Sometimes the smallest sparks catch fire, like when Alecia Lawyer of ROCO brainstormed with us about a kid-friendly, family-oriented version of Handel's "Messiah." We are very excited to present, in collaboration with ROCO, the world premiere of "Messiah for Kids!" to the Houston community. That performance will be followed by our full-length performance with ROCO of "Magnificat" and "Messiah" featuring the Christmas portion of Handel's "Messiah" later in the evening.

In February, we are proud to perform again with Da Camera of Houston to recreate a performance of Schubert's works given in the last year of the composer's life. Collaborations such as these are a blast for the performers and the audience alike, and create an almost-audible buzz in the community.

What do you take with you from your time as a fellow at the Kennedy Center?

There's no question in my mind that I

to have my hands in every aspect of the organization. Since my background is primarily in operations and artistic administration, I really love the opportunity to dig deep into finance, marketing and fundraising. The downside of having to manage it all from the book-keeping to the grant writing to the advertising is finding the time to fit it all into the schedule. I've learned there are times when I have to say to myself "it's time to go home" because being the only full-time person means the organization depends on my ability to deliver every day (not just today).

What don't we know about you and would be surprised to find out?

I still find time to play my clarinet. Last year, I participated in ROCO's Pro-Am series in a woodwind quintet; and this year I've gone back to my true love — that is, orchestra — as the principal clarinetist for the Texas Medical Center Orchestra (about 20 percent of the orchestra is made up of non-medical professionals like me). And, one of my favorite things to do is sprint triathlons. I admit I don't have that running thing down yet, but I'm a pretty good swimmer.



PHOTO: DAVID SCHMOLL

Artistic Director Robert Simpson and Houston Chamber Choir.

owe my career as it stands today to the Kennedy Center's internship program. The five months I spent working as an operations intern for the National Symphony was a unique opportunity to learn the essentials of concert production, ensemble touring and orchestra management from some of the best people in the business. My time at the Kennedy Center solidified my desire to embark on this career path, and laid the foundation that ultimately led me to my first position at a symphony orchestra.

What are the challenges of running a one-woman shop?

One of the things I love is the chance

December 3, 11 a.m.

Messiah for Kids with River Oaks Chamber Orchestra (ROCO)

December 3, 7:30 p.m.

Magnificat and Messiah with ROCO

January 29, 4 p.m.

Hear the Future
13th Annual Invitational School Choral Festival

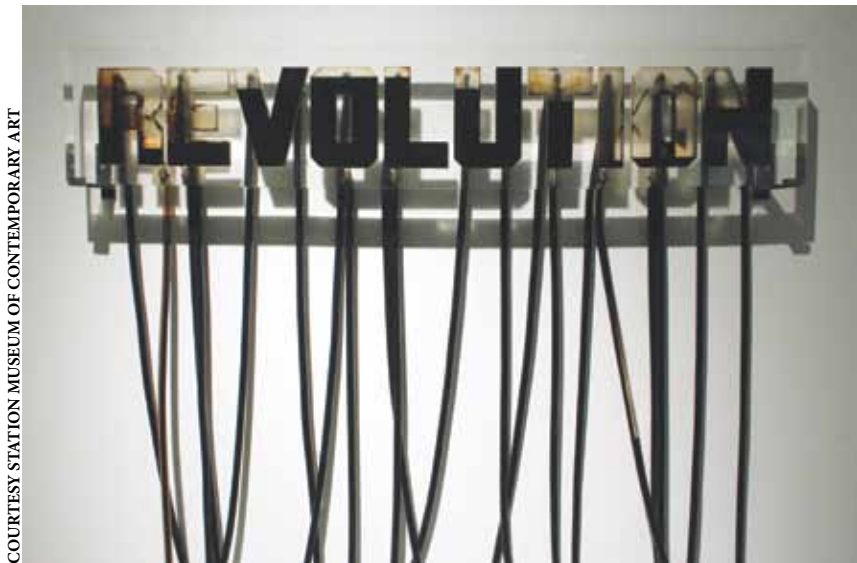
February 4, 8 p.m.

Vienna 1828: Schubert's Invitation Concert

Presented by Da Camera of Houston

www.houstonchamberchoir.org

RECENT + CURRENT WORKS OF NOTE



COURTESY STATION MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART

Andrei Molodkin's "Crude" currently on view at the Station Museum of Contemporary Art.

"Andrei Molodkin: Crude"

Station Museum of Contemporary Art
November 5, 2011 – February 12, 2012
www.stationmuseum.com

If there ever were a time to be outraged by the course of American Empire, it is now. Jobs are scarce. Unemployment is high. And, the antics of Washington, D.C. constitute a circus of perpetual distraction only matched by the American state of perpetual war. Leadership has been trumped by greed in the form of bubbly, black gold, or crude oil, according to the artwork of Russian-born Paris-based artist Andrei Molodkin. It would seem pedantic and monological for anyone to reduce all of our political and economic woes to a single source, in this instance oil. In contradistinction, and very far from narrow-minded, Molodkin is persuasive and incisively perceptive. In short, he is exactly right with his art. In a panoply of objects — from clothing to bags to car parts to the gasoline that makes cars go — oil is omnipresent in everyday life. It is the foundation and substance of the American way of life. Oil, gasoline, and automobiles are the reason why our cities sprawl. Oil makes consumerism go, commodities turn, and profit amass. Oil is the root of perpetual American war. This is Molodkin's message.

There is no subtlety in the way Molodkin strikes that message, but, at the same time, it is light on the literalism. In the spirit of 1917 and the Constructivists of that moment, there is an abstract kineticism of machines that electrifies the air, as the whir-thump-and-wheeze of small pumps on the floor propel oil through hollow resin signage located on the floor, walls, and podia. Snake-like hoses connect signage to pumps, wind-

ing and twisting across the open floor of the gallery, weaving art work to art work creating a damning, unholy yet supra-powerful one. Like tentacles, the hoses capture the resin forms, crude-oil pumped words "Justice" and "Democracy" into a greater mythic totality reminiscent of the serpent-strangled "Laocoön," the famous Roman sculpture of a Trojan priest and his sons being dragged under by a sea monster. Striking an inversion of morals, if the vignette taken from the "Aeneid" tells of the founding of empire, Molodkin's tells of its imminent demise.

Like doing philosophy with a hammer, Molodkin delivers his politics with a mixture of a dark humorous sense of the cerebral and the forthright obviousness of social realism. Amidst the fray of rubber, oil-filled coils, there sit two video projections, "Liberty (Head)" and "Oil Victory." In a complex play of immediacy and deferral, a camera captures oil pumping through resin blocks — one containing a small version of the head of the Statue of Liberty the other the Louvre's "Winged Victory" — and projects it in real time on the wall. They carry the heavy political message that petroleum-based greed saturates any sense of freedom with formal and proportional aplomb. One headless, the other fully headed, they are video, live-feed portraiture of America teetering on decline. In contrast to this high-tech diversion, "Empire at War" is a large picture of George W. Bush holding an open Bible meticulously scribed by hand in blue ink. Molodkin learned to draw while in the Russian army, passing his time scribbling and rendering with ink pens. For the artist, ink-based doodles and drawings are directly to related criminal activity. "In my consciousness,"

Molodkin explains, "the ballpoint pen has always been associated precisely with criminality." Linking American politics to corruption and crime writ large, there is across the room a portrait of Obama rendered in green ink in the style of Shepard Fairey, the artist who made the famous Obama hope posters. Next to it sits a three-dimensional acrylic sign with crude oil chugging through it. The bottom of the Obama sign reads "Yes We Can," while Molodkin podium-mounted sculpture reads "Fuck You." There are no bones about this message.

— CHARISSA N. TERRANOVA

Based in Dallas, Charissa Terranova is a freelance critic and curator working globally.

"Related Clues: Jillian Conrad, Claire Falkenberg, Ian Pedigo & Brion Nuda Rosch"

Inman Gallery, Houston
November 4, 2011 – January 8, 2012
www.inmangallery.com

"Related Clues" is an apt title for Inman Gallery's current group exhibition. Though the four artists in the show — Jillian Conrad, Claire Falkenberg, Ian Pedigo and Brion Nuda Rosch — employ a range of media and artistic techniques, each exhibited work offers a subtle clue to another.

Ian Pedigo literally connects the dots in "Signal Unavailable" (2009). The large-scale installation includes fabric orbs that are diagrammatically connected by thin lines of graphite drawn directly onto the wall. The circular forms are airbags that have never been deployed, everyday objects that we (hopefully) never see. Though associated with accidents — circumstances beyond one's control — there is nothing accidental about the composition of Pedigo's work, which is akin to a mathematical diagram or a map of the night sky.

A visual reference to celestial space is also evident in Claire Falkenberg's work. Combining the familiar with the unknown, Falkenberg overlays photographs of mundane landscapes with ethereal painted forms. Amorphous clouds of paint float over collaged C-prints like luminous nebulae, at once drawing the viewer into their depths and impeding the ability to discern the images that lie beneath the milky stains.

Brion Nuda Rosch similarly occludes pictorial space, manipulating images of mountains, waterfalls, and other geolog-

ical monuments from old encyclopedias and nature books to create unfamiliar terrain. "Time as Concept (Infinity)" (2011) depicts six framed photographs of the same found image of a rocky landscape. Scraps of cut paper lie on top of the reproduced print, forcing viewers to look more closely at the visible areas that remain and simultaneously obscuring the scenic view.

While Falkenberg's painted apparitions contribute a transcendental aura to her photographs of twigs, garbage, and dirty snow, Rosch's cut paper — painted over with clumpy, poo-colored house paint — debases the monumentality of the rock formation on view.

Incongruity is likewise at play in Jillian Conrad's work. "Casing" (2011) is a topographical map of materials, ranging from those found in a hardware store — plywood, cinder blocks, foam — to more refined vellum or paint. Conrad's found vintage postcard of tourists standing on the bridge overlooking the Royal Gorge also reveals a tension between the banal and the extraordinary.

Like the spectators in the postcard, so too do visitors to the Inman Gallery look out onto a re-imagined terrain both natural and man-made. Each betraying a concern for material, process, space and landscape in differing ways, taken together the artists in "Related Clues" create a constellation of formal and conceptual echoes that bounce around the room.

— KATIA ZAVISTOVSKI

Katia Zavistovski is a PhD candidate at Rice University, and the Menil Curatorial Fellow at the Menil Collection, Houston.

"New Formations: Czech Avant-Garde and Modern Glass from the Roy and Mary Cullen Collection"

Museum of Fine Arts, Houston
November 6, 2011 – February 5, 2012
www.mfah.org

"New Formations: Czech Avant-Garde and Modern Glass" examines a new chapter of early 20th century art once occluded by the iron curtain. This exhibition focuses on the artists flourishing within this brief period of freedom to establish a national identity within the international avant-garde, but eventually succumbing to totalitarian censorship.

The avant-garde portion of the exhibition
Reviews Continued on Page 28

“Seeing Stars: Visionary Art from the Collection”

Menil Collection

September 23, 2011 – January 15, 2012

www.menil.org

I became, and have since remained, a fan of outsider art in 1988, when I started working at The Orange Show. “Seeing Stars: Visionary Art from the Collection,” on view at the Menil and curated by Michelle White, does nothing to deflect my enthusiasm.

The exhibition opens with works by Jean Dubuffet, the original proponent of outsider art, which he dubbed “Art Brut,” after seeing the works of Swiss mental patients, including the schizophrenic Adolph Wölfl, whose self-mythologized drawings are in the Menil show,

Variouly referred to as “Art Brut,” outsider, or visionary art, these works are made by individuals who generally, but not always (as evidenced in “Seeing Stars”) are neither influenced by artists nor art history, and who may see visions, suffer from grief or mental illness, are incarcerated, or have taken up art to fill the void of their later years.

The artists’ stories are often as compelling as the artworks. Witness Charles A.A. Dellschau, whose fantastic and beautifully rendered aircraft are the stars of the show. The Prussian-born Dellschau, a former draughtsman for the secret California-based Sonoma Aero Club, whose members designed and built aircraft on the sly, moved to Houston around 1850. He began drawing imaginary airships (14 scrapbooks full!) in his spare time after the death of

his wife and son.

Nearly destroyed in a fire in 1967, the scrapbooks were found by a Houston junk dealer, who promptly placed them under a tarp in his store where they were rediscovered by a St. Thomas art student, who brought them to the attention of Dominique DeMenil.

Other “Seeing Stars” artists worth noting are Bill Traylor, former slave, and master of the perfectly balance composition; Houstonian Henry Ray Clarke, a.k.a. The Magnificent Pretty Boy, who could only channel his creative forces while in a state of incarceration; and Surrealist Unica Zurn, partner in love and misery with Hans Bellmer, and creator of delicate and, at time, mescaline fueled inked works. The only false note, by any standard, are the scrawling of Eddie Jackson. If you can overlook this minor misstep, then prepare yourself for an aesthetically brilliant adventure.

— BETH SECOR

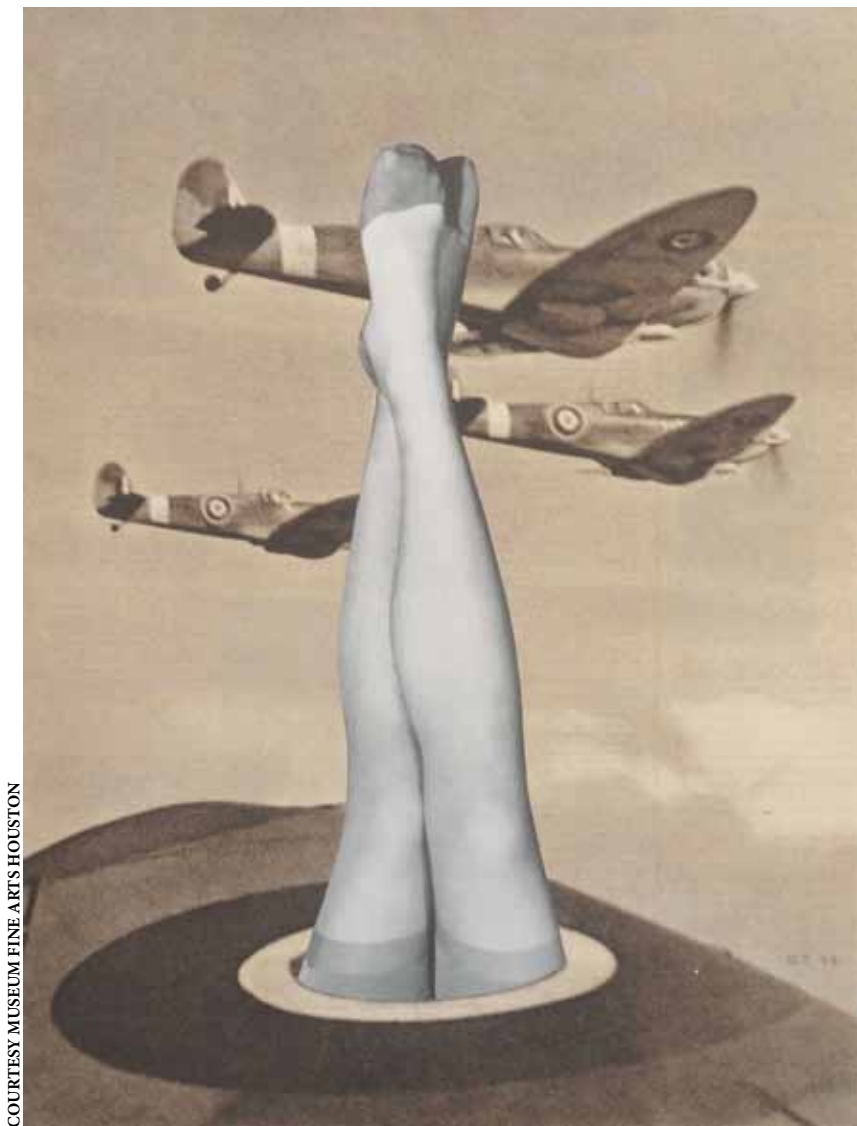
Beth Secor is an artist, writer, and educator. She also blogs for Glasstire, teaches at the University of Houston Downtown and Houston Community College Central, and assists with Development at Art League Houston.

“Cinema Arts Festival”

November 9 - 13, 2011

www.cinemartsociety.org

After five days in the dark, 12 films, a handful of parties and a good dose of director schmoozing, I can safely say that the third annual Cinema Arts Festival Houston (CAFH) proved a smashing success. Curated by Richard Herskow-



COURTESY MUSEUM FINE ARTS HOUSTON

Karel Teige, Untitled, 1947, Collage, 15 x 11 1/4 inches (38.1 x 28.6 cm)

tion features creations from an array of artists, but closely follows three influential figures in the Czech vanguard: Karel Teige, Jindrich Styrsky and Toyen. Teige appears as a key founder of the Devestil Association of Artists, a collective that sought to set itself apart from, yet flirted with international influences of cubism (French), expressionism (German), and constructivism (Russian) — a reflection of the Czech populous forging a new identity.

Teige collaborated internally with Devestil poets, dancers, artists, and designers, playfully innovating book design typography. Toyen, Styrsky and others found a second home in Paris, aligning with surrealists like Andre Breton and disseminating ideas back in Prague.

However, the reality of censorship encroaches midway through the exhibition. Surrealist and Freudian ideas of the subjective unconscious were met with censorship, which ratcheted further with Nazi occupation that forbade surrealist expression branded as “degenerate.”

In reaction and witness to Nazi occupation, Toyen created three cycles of photograveurs (31 in total) from 1939–1944 that parallel Francisco Goya’s “The Disasters of War,” albeit through a surrealist lens. Haunting allusions of war pep-

per dreamlike deserts, as farm animals and toys fall into states of damage and disrepair. In later images, the dessert is polluted with smog, a skeleton dog, and other macabre projections from life during wartime.

The glass portion of the exhibition allows the viewer to meditate on design rather than the prevailing politics, and hones in on the rapidly changing styles of glass from 1908–1935. Renown for engraving and enameling techniques for decades, the collection shows artisans skilled in cold-working techniques adapting to prevailing styles from classicism through art-nouveau and deco. Influences from Italy and abroad crop in with lighter and fanciful shapes, and closes with a more traditional bohemian treatment of glass like a carved stone.

This exhibition is as much about ideology and subsequent intellectual reactions as it is about a particular art movement. Grounded in a geopolitical context, the exhibition reveals free thinkers and the glass industry altering under the shifting and threatening political climate of the early 20th century.

— GEOFF SMITH

Geoff Smith is a twenty-something arts enthusiast with a background in print-making.



PHOTO: HICKEY-ROBERTSON, HOUSTON

C.A.A. Dellschau, “War Aero 8, From Above & Below,” Plate 1790 from Press Bloom, Artist Named, Hand-Bound Aeronautical Scrapbook, 1908 (Oct. 24.) Watercolor, Gouache, Graphite Pencil, and Black Ink with Cut Newsprint on Paper, 17 x 19 inches. The Menil Collection, Houston.

itz, CAFH is one of the few film festivals focusing on films about the arts.

The best thing about David Grubin's "Downtown Express" was the dreamy Russian violinist Philippe Quint playing a dreamy Russian violinist. More of a concert than a movie, Grubin's film points to the divide between popular and classical music. Nellie McKay proved less comfortable on screen, unless she was in front of her keyboard singing her wistful tunes.

I'd like to see "The Welcome" again, be-

It's no wonder that local boy Robbie Pickering's "Natural Selection" cleaned up at SXSW, it's a strong first film. Think of a more earnest version of the Cohen brothers, but less subversive. Rachael Harris and Matt O'Leary deliver spot on performances. Stay tuned for a Houston release.

Part of any film festival is listening to your friends rave about all the films they saw and you missed. There is another chance to see some of these films. "The Mill and the Cross" screens at the MFAH on January 7, 8, & 14, while

The centerpiece of the program was the "Brandenburg Concerto No.5" by J.S. Bach. Having heard this piece in recordings many times and even performed the solo violin part once as a student, I was shocked to discover what I have heard said so many times and never fully understood. Despite that on the surface this piece appears to be a triple concerto for solo flute, violin and harpsichord it is, in fact, a concerto for harpsichord.

Dirst's command of the keyboard is unquestionable and his deftness and ease of approach to the difficult cornucopia of notes was dazzling. He even seemed to be smiling throughout the expansive cadenza which allowed for the kind of delightful astonishment that listeners during Bach's day might have experienced in the face of a musical form the likes of which had hitherto been unheard.

Making her Houston debut was violinist Ingrid Matthews, who is also Music Director of Seattle Baroque. Although it was sometimes difficult to hear where I was sitting, her oaky and mellifluous sound was a fine match for oboist Kathryn Montoya and traverso player Colin St. Martin. Making her Ars Lyrica debut as well was violist Suzanne LeFevre, who's meaty baritone was also a delightful addition to the ensemble.

— CHRIS JOHNSON

Chris Johnson is a radio host and producer, a violinist and a 2008 Fellow of the NEA Institute for Arts Journalism in Classical Music and Opera at Columbia University.

"Handel's 'Rodelinda'"

Mercury Baroque
Cullen Theater, Wortham Theater Center
November 19, 2011
www.mercurybaroque.org

A royal tale balancing human emotion and quest for power, Handel's "Rodelinda" is recognized as one of his most beloved operas exhibiting his mastery of vocal brilliance and musical poignancy. Mercury Baroque showcased the opera seria form with an un-staged production, allowing for the singers to be the main focus of the evening tapping into the pure expression of the characters. The orchestra was masterfully commanded by Antoine Plante who brought out magic between major and minor shifts along with the clarity of the lines of Handel's composition.

During the first act, the audience was treated to the ornamentation and elaboration of the music. Many of the passages featured rapid flourishes of strings and impressive vocal runs especially in a ritornello form. Soprano Nathalie Paulin immediately captured the audience with a voice so striking, yet composed, a queen faced with discerning love in the

midst of turmoil. The second act finally revealed the depth and emotion of the characters. Truly the star of the show was countertenor Tim Mead, who's piercing voice soared as strings intertwined with the vocal stromentalo recitatives. Paulin and Mead's duet shined with ornamentations that melded into one voice for the final note of the phrase.

—MEGHAN HENDLEY

Meghan Hendley is a pianist, vocalist, composer, teacher, and arts administrator.

"Memoirs of a Sistahood - Chapter Three - Ave Maria"

DiverseWorks
November 17 - 19, 2011
www.diverseworks.org

The Beaulieu sisters, Becky Beaulieu Valls and Babette Beaulieu, turn their memory sourcing minds toward their Louisiana Catholic upbringing in the 1950s. The Virgin Mary was huge for their family, especially their mother. Mixing dance, sculpture, video and text, the sister team weaved a loosely narrative tale that sustains itself more from its bright spots than its overall cohesion.

"Memoirs of a Sistahood-Chapter Three-Ava Maria" didn't find its groove until Act II, where the most potent dancing and images occurred. A mother daughter duet, sparsely danced Toni Valle and Valls, had the dancers tethered by a shroud, reminiscent of the sheer veils obscuring statures of the Virgin Mary. The two struggle, reconcile and struggle again, revealing the complexity of their relationship, especially when you are one of many daughters.

A second, more agitated duet, danced by Valls and Joanie Trevino, contained the most intriguing movement vocabulary of the evening, and a rare chance to see Valls move. She's an intelligent dancer with an authority to her shapes, holding the space with a quiet reverence and depth rarely seen on Houston stages. Well into her 50s, Valls carries all that she knows into her movement, showing a grounded quality, a studied grace and a modern dance nobility. She's like a great mother eagle when she spreads her wings.

Although her dancing became the corner stone of the piece for me, it still couldn't be the glue that held the entire work together. Slow transitions between sections interrupted the flow, making it more episodic, as if each section was made separately, then strung together. Perhaps memory is a fuzzy thing, and the structure mirrored that. Yet, it felt more of a production problem. A redundant video of Virgin Mary statues didn't add much either.

Reviews Continued on Page 30



Dancers from the Tanztheater Wuppertal in Pina Bausch's "The Rite of Spring" from Wim Wenders' "PINA 3D," screened at Cinema Arts Festival.

cause my incessant weeping obscured my vision through most of Kim Shelton's powerful documentary of a healing poetry retreat for veterans suffering from post traumatic stress. It's an elegant film, exquisitely paced, and deeply respectful of the therapeutic container of the expressive arts.

Alex Rotaru's "Shakespeare High" chronicles the Southern California Shakespeare Festival and several of the contestants. Rotaru doesn't shy away from the full catastrophe of high school theater, showing the joys mixed with the craziness that comes with any competitive high school event. The film presents a compelling case to keep the arts in the schools and brought me right back to my years as a drama mama.

Lynn Hershman Leeson's "Women Art Revolution" (WAR) contained a sense of urgency. Raw and unpolished, much like the women's movement the film documents, "WAR" is an important film, covering missing sectors of American cultural history.

Patricio Guzman's "Nostalgia for the Light" combines macro and micro visions as the viewer travels from the star filled sky, examining Chile's Astronomy heritage, to the desert sands with a group of women search for the remains of the "disappeared." It's a cultural memoir of the highest order, visually stunning and deeply moving.

"WAR" screens on February 5 & 12, and "Charles & Ray Eames: The Architect and the Painter" airs on December 19 on HoustonPBS/Channel 8.

In a save the best for last move, the festival closed (for me) with Wim Wenders "Pina," a brilliant remembrance of Pina Bausch's time with Tanztheater Wuppertal, ultimately bringing a sense of closure to the loss since Bausch's sudden death in 2009. In eye-popping 3D, Wenders' film leaves us with joy and wonder for Bausch's seminal canon of choreography.

— NANCY WOZNY

"Music Alchemy"

Ars Lyrica
Hobby Center for the Performing Arts,
Zilkha Hall
November 12, 2011
www.arslyricahouston.org

Under the leadership of artistic director Matthew Dirst, Ars Lyrica Houston continues to lead the way for period-instrument performance in Houston and its recent program of "Musical Alchemy" in Zilkha Hall showcased the repertoire selection and artistic standard that has awarded the ensemble a sizable following in Houston, in addition to a recent Grammy nomination for its world premiere recording of Johann Adolf Hasse's "Marc'Antonio e Cleopatra." (Sono Luminus)

COURTESY CINEMA ARTS FESTIVAL

REVIEWS CONTINUED

During the course of the show, Beaulieu methodically builds a sculpture of a woman's form with wire, twigs, beads and other objects. By the end, the piece becomes enshrined into a cavern of branches, as if the sisters have reinvented their own Virgin Mary.

— NANCY WOZNY

"Sharon Isbin, Guitar & Mark O'Connor, Violin"

Da Camera of Houston
Cullen Theater, Wortham Theater Center
November 20, 2011
www.dacamera.com

Da Camera of Houston brought together two virtuosic forces for a remarkable musical evening. The audience was treated to a flight of folk, classical, jazz and improvisation re-imagining classic solos while highlighting the dynamics of their duo. Isbin opened the concert with the beauty of unpretentious mastery of her instrument. Her rubato was instinctual and her phrasing was shaped by the moment. Highlights included Francisco Tárrega's "Recuerdos de la Alhambra" with tremolos evocative of the ripples of the fountain that inspired the composer.

Mark O'Connor opened his portion of the concert with a flare of a soul as the technical aspects floated and flourished from every strike of his bow. He surprised the audience with a purely improvised piece echoing fiddling styles of gypsy music while using effects pedals to expand the range and tone of his instrument. The final piece featured both performers in the "Strings & Threads Suite," 13 tunes composed by O'Connor. The suite revealed various folk styles flowing in chronological form, showcasing the evolution of American musical traditions. The "Fair Dancer Reel" was a rapid trip into a jig while "Texas Dance Hall Blues" allowed for the duo to swing and sway together with southern sweetness.

— MEGHAN HENDLEY

Opera Vista: "Powder Her Face"

Hobby Center for the Performing Arts
Zilkha Hall
November 11 - 19, 2011
www.operavista.org

The fifth anniversary season for Houston's contemporary opera troupe, Opera Vista (OV), has surely been full of mixed emotions for founder and artistic director Viswa Subbaraman. After opening the season for an audience of 300-500 at

Bayou Bend with a troublesome production of the rarely produced opera "The Fall of the House of Usher" by Philip Glass, Subbaraman and his company set a new standard for themselves as they turned out the best performance in their short history with the recent Houston premiere of Thomas Adés' controversial opera "Powder Her Face" at the Hobby Center's Zilkha Hall.

The plot revolves around the life and sexual exploits of Margaret Campbell, Duchess of Argyll, who during a scandalous divorce proceeding in 1963, became known as the "Dirty Duchess." Not since Houston Grand Opera's 1997 production of Richard Strauss' "Salome," have Houston audiences seen something quite as risqué and provocative on the operatic stage. While Director Atom Egoyan merely added a couple or two in the act of fellatio in the back ground of "Salome," Adés, along with librettist Philip Hensher created an entire scene complete with a vividly descriptive aria which, despite its subject matter, was portrayed tastefully and elegantly by Director Sandra Bernhard.

Cassandra Black dominated the stage with her powerful soprano and thoughtful character portrayal in the highly demanding role of "Her Grace." Black's vocal palette was rich in color and her acting commendable given that the libretto left her with a somewhat one-sided character.

With his velvet tenor and boyish good looks, Benjamin Robinson was the perfect compliment to Black. Like his cast mates Kelly Waguespack and Kyle Albertson, he moved effortlessly through multiple roles throughout the evening including The Waiter, who, in the notorious scene described above, was the recipient of the "friendly welcome" for which the Duchess became known not only at the hotel where she lived for the 28 years following her divorce, but also throughout London's high society of the mid-1960s.

Although OV is reliable for supplying excellent singers for its main-stage performances, an equally great instrumental ensemble to accompany them has, no doubt due to financial constraints, sometimes eluded the organization. Most remarkably, the orchestra for this production proved to be a happy exception.

Adés' score is surely one of the most difficult of recent times. Requiring a battery of percussion instruments, including fishing reels, a popgun and more, this music is not for the faint of heart. Despite what was an obvious exercise in

mental acuity, Subbaraman led the performance with grace and ease, and the orchestra responded with impressive precision and fullness of sound.

— CHRIS JOHNSON

Chris Johnson is a radio host and producer, a violinist and a 2008 fellow of the NEA Institute for Arts Journalism in Classical Music and Opera.

"My Cold Dead Fingers"

Bobbindoctrin Puppet Theatre
November 11 - 19, 2011
www.bobbindoctrin.org

Joel Orr's latest puppet show, "My Cold Dead Fingers" tells the story of a fragile lapsed Jew who must battle an army of kombucha soaked demons disguised as contemporary ideologues. The show is charming and irreverent.

An audience member said to me, "It's just like South Park. I love it," but I think Orr's show moves beyond the singular punch line dynamic of the Comedy Central show. The script and puppeteers gracefully articulate physical and metaphorical gestures of indignation at the bobbling heads in society. The show assumes the risk of going all the way, confronting abortion head on with jokes (one of the hardest things to do in humor) without making an ass of itself or conceding artistic ground by way of omission. I commend Orr on the au-

a Rambo/Rick Perry hybrid of a Christian warrior, can save Joshua the Jew and send him on a hero's journey, which is fulfilled when he becomes more than himself, he becomes a Jew for Jesus.

Puppeteers say the magic in puppetry resides in the things they can do with puppets that they can't do with actors. When I watched Joshua, a mythical hero, proceed to climb into his own anus (perhaps the only sphincter puppet I'll ever see), I might have felt the magic of puppetry.

Orr's introduction to the piece, delivered in the spirit of a true bible thumping puppet leader, created a glowing authenticity to the satirical notion that some strange post apocalyptic Christians might actually travel the Earth telling the story of how an honest Jew fought to bring about the end times and defeat the evil kombucha monster. The decision to stage the show at 14 pews, an old church turned haven for artists, perpetuates the hilarity of it all.

Good satire should make us laugh at and with ourselves and each other in hopes of grasping the infinite absurdity that oozes from society. "My Cold Dead Fingers" is good satire.

— JOSEPH WOZNY

Joseph Wozny is a Houston based writer, videographer and musician.
www.theshapeofjunkto.com



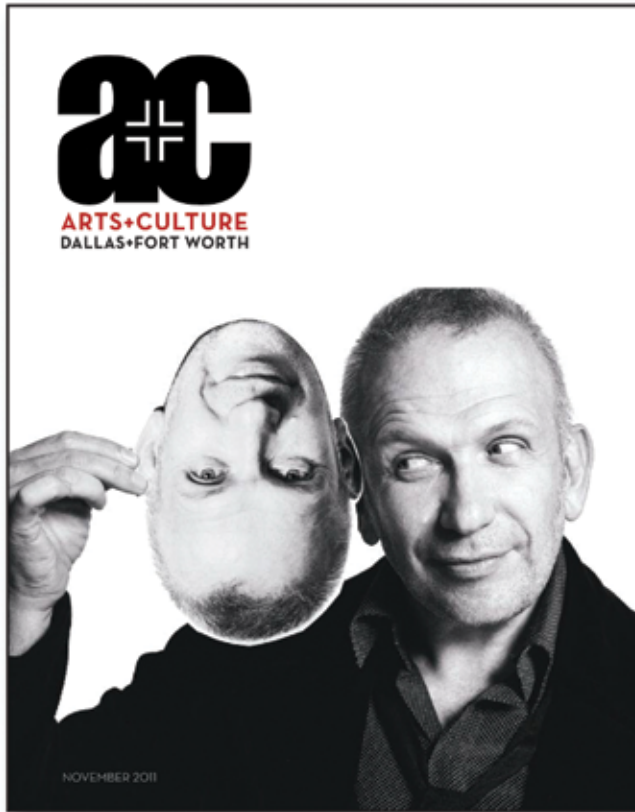
PHOTO: ANTHONY RATHBUN

Bobbindoctrin Puppet Theatre's production of Joel Orr's "My Cold Dead Fingers."

thenticity of the Joshua's wife's ramblings on probiotics. (I only wish my Whole Foods enthusiast neighbors could have been there to hear it and understand how they sound when they lecture on the benefits acidophilus.)

Only the foolish and charming Daniel,

A Tale of Two Cities.



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SPRING 2012

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Internationally acclaimed Chinese contemporary artist Ai Weiwei has recreated twelve bronze animal heads representing the traditional Chinese zodiac that once adorned the fountain in Yuan Ming Yuan (Old Summer Palace) in Beijing. The Circle of Animals / Zodiac Heads is a centerpiece of a global, multi-year touring exhibition that will be presented in the United States, Europe and Asia.

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