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JULY/AUGUST 2012



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*Dayy Crockett*

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## EDITOR'S REMARKS



**“What are you doing this summer?”** I asked choreographer Jane Weiner of Hope Stone. “Oh nothing much. Just deconstructing Mozart’s *Requiem*.”

Looking at those sleek Hope Stone dancers chillin’ on the cover, you might think it was the swim suit issue, but as I write, those very dancers are in fact busy taking apart Mozart’s *WRECK-WE-UMMM* (as the cheeky choreographer calls it).

In my catching up on local dance, choreographer Andy Noble of NobleMotion Dance also talks to us about his ongoing love affair with light and movement. Devon Britt-Darby talked light too, with none other than James Turrell, regarding his holograms at Hiram Butler Gallery.

In fact, there’s a whole lotta talkin’ in this issue. Liz Duffy Adams brings us into her post-apocalyptic comedy *Dog Act* at Main Street Theater.

Houston Grand Opera’s Sandra Bernhard may be the only one in the country with a job like hers. She gives a glimpse of her vision and work in our Cultural Warrior Q & A. So, maybe it’s the interview issue.

Then we have Holly Beretto’s investigation of three Houston artistic directors with big time reputations outside of Houston including HGO’s Patrick Summers, Ars Lyrica’s Matthew Dirst, and Da Camera’s Sarah Rothenberg. All perform nationally and internationally, while becoming cultural ambassadors for Houston in the process.

Britt-Darby heads to the beach to report on the Galveston Artist Residency’s first round of artists, who are wrapping up their year-long stay on the island with an exhibition at Galveston Art Center. ‘Worth the Trip’ highlights the nation’s three top dance summer meccas with the American Dance Festival, Bates Dance Festival, and Jacob’s Pillow Dance, where I will be heading in August. Looks like “road issue” fits too.

Sicardi Gallery’s reopening in its new digs prompted both David A. Feil’s eloquent review of its Oscar Muñoz show and Ben Koush’s argument that the new building is part of a new locally-inflected architectural practice. Sicardi issue, anyone?

Be sure to hunt through the entire issue for July’s Art/Ad Bomb, *The Cock NYC* (2009), from the portfolio of Houston photographer Timothy Gonzalez. He can be reached at [socialbends@gmail.com](mailto:socialbends@gmail.com).

Don’t let the heat fool you. Nothing much slows down here amidst summer’s swelter. The art continues....

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## ARTS+CULTURE MAGAZINE

THE STATE OF THE ARTS IN TEXAS

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### ON THE COVER

HOPE STONE DANCERS JODEE ENGLE, JACQUELYNE BOE, SHOHEI IWAHAMA, CANDACE RATTLIFF,  
NICK NESMITH & JESUS ACOSTA, TAKE A BREAK FROM JANE WEINER’S “GRUELING, HOT  
REHEARSALS” FOR A DIP IN THE POOL AND A SIP OF COOL LEMONADE.  
PHOTO BY SIMON GENTRY.



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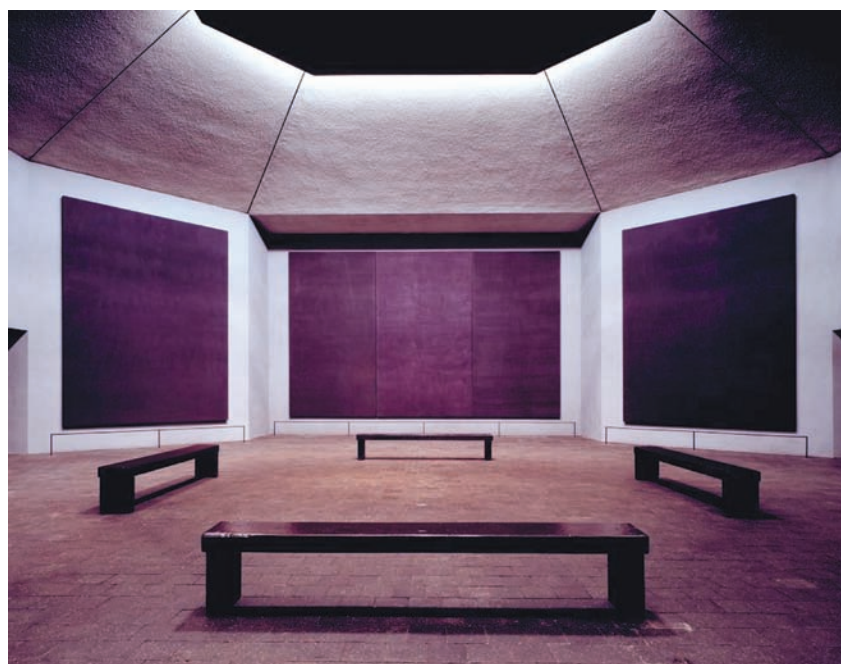
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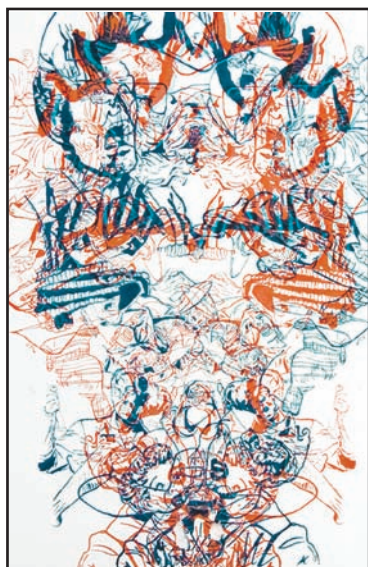
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PHOTO: BRUCE BENNETT

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# ARTIFACTS

**HOUSTON ART DEALERS ASSOCIATION** announces the ArtHouston 2012 summer event with 35 participating fine art galleries, opening on July 14<sup>th</sup> in a day-long event. Participating galleries include those along Colquitt, in the Museum District, Midtown, the Heights, and surrounding areas.  
[www.arthouston.com](http://www.arthouston.com)

**DOMOKOS BENCZEDI, NANCY Douthey, and Patrick Turk** are the new artists for the seventh round of the Lawndale Artist Studio Program.  
[lawndaleartcenter.org](http://lawndaleartcenter.org)

**HOUSTON CENTER FOR CONTEMPORARY CRAFT** welcomes their new artist in residence Rachele Vasquez, a Houston-based artist and certified art teacher who works primarily with fibers.  
[www.crafthouston.org](http://www.crafthouston.org)

**THE MENIL COLLECTION DIRECTOR** Josef Helfenstein announced that the Board of Trustees has unanimously chosen the Los Angeles-based arch-

itecture firm, Johnston Marklee to design the Menil Drawing Institute (MDI), the first major building project to be initiated under an ambitious plan for the institution's future.  
[www.menil.org](http://www.menil.org)

**CRYSTAL BENAVIDES IS THE** new director of Voices Breaking Boundaries.  
[www.vbbarts.org](http://www.vbbarts.org)

**PERFORMING GINASTERA'S HARP Concerto**, harpist and Rice University Shepherd School of Music alumna Megan Levin won the 37<sup>th</sup> annual Houston Symphony League's Ima Hogg Competition on Saturday, June 2 at Rice University's Stude Concert Hall.  
[www.houstonsymphony.org](http://www.houstonsymphony.org)

**THE ENSEMBLE THEATRE'S** 2012/13 season includes *The Nacirema Society* by Pearl Cleage, The African American Shakespeare Company's *Cinderella, Knock Me a Kiss* by Charles Smith, *Broke-ology* by Nathan Louis



COURTESY OF THE ARTIST

**Aaron Parazette, Surf Fever, 2008, Acrylic on Canvas. 68 x 88 inches.**

Jackson, *Race* by David Mamet, and *From My Hometown*, conceived by Lee Summers.  
[www.ensemblehouston.com](http://www.ensemblehouston.com)

**HOUSTON BALLET'S CENTER** for Dance has been honored with a 2012 Landmark Award in the category of "Special Project" by the *Houston Business Journal*. Houston Ballet's Center for Dance was also a finalist in two other categories: *Community Impact* and *Public/Private Assemblies*.  
[www.houstonballet.org](http://www.houstonballet.org)

**THE HOUSTON FAMILY ARTS** Center 2012/13 season includes *Our Town; The Glass Menagerie; Crazy for You; You're A Good Man, Charlie Brown; Annie; Leaving Iowa; Over the River and Through the Woods; and Fiddler on the Roof*.  
[www.houstonfac.com](http://www.houstonfac.com)

**HOUSTON BALLET DIRECTOR** of marketing Andrew Edmunson and Dance Advantage founder Nichelle Strzepek presented at the Dance/USA conference. Frame Dance artistic director Lydia Hance and The Houston Met artistic director Marlana Doyle were selected to participate in the 2012 Institute for Leadership Training (DILT), a mentorship program for dance artists and administrators. Former Houston Ballet executive director C.C. Conner served as a mentor.  
[www.danceusa.org](http://www.danceusa.org)

**FORMER PROJECT ROW HOUSES** development director Michael Peranteau is the new executive director for

Art League Houston (ALH). ALH also named Aaron Parazette the 2012 Texas Artist of the Year and Judy and Scott Nyquist Texas Patrons of the Year. A+C visual arts editor Devon Britt-Darby sat on a panel that chose Parazette and the Nyquists.  
[www.artleaguehouston.org](http://www.artleaguehouston.org)

**STARK NAKED THEATRE COMPANY'S** 2012/13 season includes Annie Baker's *Body Awareness* (October 25<sup>th</sup>-November 10<sup>th</sup>, 2012), with Kim Tobin, Pam Vogel & Matt Lents; Christopher Durang's *Beyond Therapy* (February 21<sup>st</sup>-9<sup>th</sup>, 2013); and Shakespeare's *Macbeth* (June 6<sup>th</sup>-June 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2013) with Philip Lehl and Kim Tobin as Macbeth and Lady Macbeth.  
[www.starknakedtheatre.com](http://www.starknakedtheatre.com)

**RIVER OAKS CHAMBER ORCHESTRA'S** (ROCO) season opener will feature guest conductor Josep Caballe-Domenech and piano soloist Anne-Marie McDermott on October 6-7. On November 17, ROCO will feature American organist Paul Jacobs and guest conductor Edwin Outwater. ROCO performs the second Brandenburg Concerto "conductorless" on February 9-10 with Joseph Swensen as guest concertmaster and soloist. The season finale on April 20-21 will feature guest conductor Andre Raphel and the world premiere of a percussion piece by composer Jonathan Leshnoff, written for ROCO percussionist Matt McClung and guest artist Todd Meehan.  
[www.rocohouston.org](http://www.rocohouston.org)



PHOTO: LEONEL NEIRO, ART INSTITUTE OF HOUSTON NORTH

**Houston Ballet dancers Joseph Walsh and Karina Gonzalez** in Jerome Robbins' Ballet *In The Night*. They head to Malaysia this month to perform pas de deux from *Madame Butterfly* and *Sleeping Beauty*.

# Getting (Not Too Far) Away From It All – To Work

## Galveston Artist Residency Offers Time, Space and a Bike

FOR ARTIST NICK BARBEE, A two-year resident with the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston's Core Program at the Glassell School of Art offered a studio in the shadow of an encyclopedic museum, invaluable professional connections, and plenty of contact with other artists. Sometimes too much contact.

"I definitely enjoyed interacting with some of the students at Glassell, but being in a school building, there's a lack of privacy," says Barbee, a Core Fellow from 2009-2011. "My studio had these big air vents, and you'd just listen to these classes while you're working."

On top of that, Barbee's schedule included teaching as many as four classes a semester at the University of Houston, Rice University, and Houston Community College, and doing installation work at the Contemporary Arts Museum Houston. It's not hard to guess what he likes most about the next residency he landed.

"There's not as much traffic through here," Barbee says of the Galveston Artist Residency and of the city it calls home. "It's a lot easier to just make work."

Indeed, the fledgling residency – Barbee, fellow Core alum Kelly Sears, and Brooklyn, NY artist Nsenga Knight are its inaugural trio, which aims to lure artists to Galveston by making a virtue of the relative lack of distractions, and by providing not just studio space, but a free apartment, a bicycle, and a stipend.

The studios, along with the GAR Gallery and Courtyards, which mount exhibitions independent of the residents' activities, are located in a pair of re-designed and rebuilt industrial



Nick Barbee, *Selection s3, 2012, Watercolor on Steel.*

structures on Ships Mechanic Row, about a block from the Galveston Arts Center. The apartments are in a historic building, which are a five minute walk away.

While the stipend is modest, director Eric Schnell says it's possible in Galveston for a frugal artist with few expenses to squeeze by on it, an unthinkable luxury for Core Fellows, whose residency places a greater emphasis on juggling multiple demands, including working outside the studio. (Barbee has continued to teach during his Galveston residency, but on a less demanding

schedule than during his Houston days.)

Himself an artist, Schnell cofounded GAR last year with Bert Geary partly to join efforts aimed at revitalizing a post-Hurricane Ike Galveston, but mostly because they thought the island seemed like a great place for a residency.

"I was kind of surprised there wasn't one here," says director Eric Schnell, who cofounded GAR with Bert Geary last year. "You can get around on bicycles, and it's a sort of small-town, but you're close to Houston. It's a laid-back atmosphere."

Knight, an interdisciplinary artist whose past residencies have been tied to specific printmaking or film projects, and for much shorter periods of time, calls Galveston "pretty peaceful and kind of simple, but not too boring. It's still urban, but there's the beach, and it has some culture. The residency is very self-directed. You can just come in and go to the studio and do your work."

Knight's time at GAR has led her to try new things, both in and out of the studio, from reincorporating drawing into her practice, which has long been primarily photo-based, to checking out the nearby space center and immersing herself in June-tenth celebrations.

As they wrap up their residencies, Knight, Barbee, and Sears will present some of

the fruits of their labors at the GAC, which agreed to host *Galveston Artist Residency: The First Year* – curated by GAC curator Clint Willour – when it was unclear the GAR Gallery would be ready to open in time for the July 14 ArtWalk. Since it will be, Barbee and Sears will present additional work in that space.

Schnell hopes the residents, who were chosen from a pool of artists nominated by a panel of independent art professionals, will notice a change in their practice as a result of their time in Galveston.

"(The residency) does take some of the pressure off, and I think it does encourage you to experiment more, because you're hopefully having a little bit more free time to just sort of drift," Schnell says. "I think that's when you get those weird ideas you maybe would blow off when you're really busy. My feeling would be that down the road, they'll look at this as a time when something new started."

–DEVON BRITT-DARBY



PHOTO: DEVON BRITT-DARBY

Nsenga Knight in her Galveston Artist Residency studio.

**July 14–August 9, 2012**  
*Galveston Artist Residency: The First Year*  
 Galveston Arts Center  
[www.galvestonartistresidency.org](http://www.galvestonartistresidency.org)



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Sara Kellner is the principal of Kellner Consulting which focuses on consulting in the arts, including organizational and creative planning, public art development and management, and fund development. As a Business Volunteer for the Arts, she is working with the newly created Houston Blues Museum to develop a business plan that will culminate in a mobile museum. Sara has guided the organization as they prioritize needs and set goals for the future with realistic expectations in order to achieve successful outcomes.

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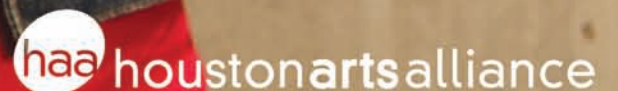
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# Meet Sara Kellner

# Local Lights

## Three Houston Artists Put Houston on the Map

**NONE OF THEM ARE FROM TEXAS**, but as the saying goes, “they got here as fast as they could”. Once they arrived in the Bayou City, they found a thriving arts community.

“People in Houston have an ownership of their arts organizations,” says Matthew Dirst, artistic director for the 10-year-old Ars Lyrica early music ensemble. Dirst came to Houston in 1996, accepting a job at the University of Houston’s Moores School of Music. As a harpsichordist, organist, and musicologist, Dirst found he liked the city and its dynamic performing and visual arts scene. “It worked out,” he says simply of his experience here. “So I stayed.”

That sentiment is echoed by Sarah Rothenberg, the artistic director of Da Camera, a classical music group known for its promotion of seldom-heard and emerging works and composers. A pianist by training, Rothenberg’s career has taken her all over the world, but she’s found that Houston is home. “I have lots of personal and professional contacts in New York,” she says matter-of-factly. “Houston is my base.”

Patrick Summers, who recently completed his inaugural year as artistic director for Houston Grand Opera shared a similar feeling.

the life of a musician means that they spend a great deal of time traveling and performing, as it’s simply the nature of the beast. Each of them understands that the persona they’re known by in Houston may not be the same one that shows up in a program at an arts festival in the Grand Tetons or at Lincoln Center. “It depends on the city and the audience,” Dirst notes when asked how he’s known as a musician. “In Houston, people know me from UH and Ars Lyrica. But at this summer’s National Convention of the American Guild of Organists in Nashville, they know me as an organist, and when I present a paper, I’m a musicologist.”

He doesn’t suffer from any feelings of split personality though. “When I’m playing or presenting somewhere else, I’m also looking for ideas on what other instrumentalists are up to and how they’re playing. That’s invaluable, and the best possible result is when I come back to Houston and I’m inspired to do new things.”

Rothenberg’s made a name for herself doing new things both in Houston and in New York. She’s incorporated multimedia effects into instrumental performances and designed shows from scratch, linking ideas and musical compositions into a dynamic story. For the last six years, she’s successfully

and artistic aspects of life,” she explains. “And here the audience becomes engaged and part of the organization it supports in a way that doesn’t happen in other places.”

Summers concurs and says also that Houston’s arts scene has evolved dramatically over the last three decades, and he’s enjoyed being a part of it. When we spoke, he was conducting *La Boheme* in Los Angeles, a city he says has something in common with Houston in that L.A. was once derided as being devoid of culture and now it’s seen as an arts-mecca. He says Houston knows a lot about that feeling.

“Visitors to Houston are always surprised by its visual and performing arts worlds,” he says. That’s not news to Dirst, who notes that when he’s played abroad, he’s often had to dispel the myth of Texas like the 1980s TV show *Dallas*. “Over the years,” he says, “as national and worldwide audiences have had more exposure to the talent and innovation coming out of Houston, the opinion about the city has changed.”

“I’ve always tried to be an ambassador for Houston,” he says. “And the more people that learn about what we have here, the more we’re viewed as a place for the arts.”

All three talk about how presenting their classical works in ways that audiences will accept is vital to the survival of their organizations. While they note that statement would be true anywhere, in Houston, the audience’s expectations for something familiar is tempered with the trust audiences have that their beloved arts groups will also show them something new.

“Every locale has its own audience,” explains Dirst. “And each one has different experiences and knowledge bases.” “American audiences are very sophisticated,” emphasizes Summers, “but sometimes they are also more conservative about what they’re seeing.” Loosely translated, he says that his opera audiences in Houston expect a performance to look and sound a certain way, so offering up something completely avant-garde might not work.

Still, they all find that Houston is always willing to embrace its performing artists with the same excitement and spirit the city has shown to its entrepreneurs.

“Houston is a remarkably collaborative city,” says Rothenberg. “New York is concerned about exclusivity and there is



PHOTO: ANTHONY RATHBUN

**Matthew Dirst, artistic director of Ars Lyrica.**

so much more competition there. People here connect with our arts groups, and there is a real sense of community.”

That support has allowed the three of them to not only build their audience bases, but has supplied a foundation on which all of Houston’s arts organizations can thrive.

“In Houston, as an artist, you feel like you’re contributing to the construction of the city,” says Rothenberg. “Houston’s identity is always in a state of becoming.”

—HOLLY BERETTO

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

**September 21, 2012**  
Ars Lyrica - *It Takes Two*  
[www.arslyricahouston.org](http://www.arslyricahouston.org)

**September 28, 2012**  
*25th Anniversary Celebration*  
Da Camera  
[www.dacamera.com](http://www.dacamera.com)

**Oct. 18–Nov. 10, 2012**  
*La Boheme*  
Houston Grand Opera  
[www.houstongrandopera.org](http://www.houstongrandopera.org)



COURTESY OF DACAMERA

**Sarah Rothenberg and Marilyn Nonken have performed throughout the world with some of the world’s leading ensembles and at prominent venues ranging from Lincoln Center, The Gilmore Festival, Miller Theater and others.**

“I consider myself a Houstonian now,” says the conductor who has led orchestras in some of the world’s most revered opera houses and says that through his travel he’s become adept at feeling at home wherever he happens to be, “but I consider Houston home.”

All three are quick to point out that

straddled working and playing in New York and Houston. She finds the audience to be different in each place, but loves the relationship that Houston audiences have with their arts organizations.

“In Houston, the arts scene is wonderfully overlapped with the social

A post-apocalyptic vaudeville comedy...

# DOOG

# ACT

BY LIZ DUFFY ADAMS

DIRECTED BY ANDREW RUTHVEN

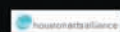
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# Light & Lemonade

## Hope Stone and NobleMotion Rule Houston's Dance Stages

HOUSTON'S AUGUST DANCE scene belongs to Hope Stone Dance and NobleMotion Dance as they offer brave new works for local dance fans. Jane Weiner plans a deconstruction of Mozart's *Requiem*, she calls it *WRECK-WE-UMMM*, while Andy and Dionne Noble combine forces with lighting designer David Deveau on a new movement and light installation, *Spitting Ether: A Reality Bending Dance*. Artistic directors Jane Weiner (Hope Stone) and Andy Noble (NobleMotion) talk with A+C editor Nancy Wozny on what's cooking in their summer studios.

### Lemonade

**A+C: What's the secret to performing in August in Houston?**

JANE WEINER: It's the perfect time when folks are sick of television re-runs and are ready for something new and live!

**I like the idea of dance at a Lemonade Stand.**

Lemonade stands are awesome. I like that people are drawn to them. Maybe subconsciously I was hoping people would see an artistic lemonade stand and have to stop and be part of that energy. The first year we did these t-shirts that said, "When life gives you lemons, make art." My goal is to make art more common in all of our lives. Maybe another part of my dream is that we all stop at the artistic lemonade stand, spend our five cents, support creativity, and drink it down.

**Usually, you start a piece way in advance. Here, you are creating within a short window of time. Are you giving up your choreographer-control-freak habits?**

No, I'm still a control freak; I just drink more coffee. Although rehearsal periods are shorter, a lot of these ideas have been in my head for a long time. There are times when I feel like the *Star Trek* episode where this evil brain is causing havoc for James Kirk and his crew. That reminds me of my brain before I start a project. I have changed to work fast and furious.

**Do your dancers factor into your speedy equation?**



PHOTO: SIMON GENTRY

**Courtney Jones and Jesus Acosta of Hope Stone Dance.**

Yes, many of the dancers have been with me for so long that we are starting to finish each other's sentences -- so less "physical explaining" needs to happen. They know my style so setting things on them is a lot more efficient.

**How do you deconstruct Mozart's *Requiem*?**

OK. I'm going to admit it, this project scares me.

**It would scare me, too. Mozart is not your usual musical choice.**

I like to change directions physically and mentally all the time. Just ask my dancers and office staff. Wolfgang is keeping me on a tighter musical beam than this gal is used to. It's good to challenge oneself and to be uncomfortable, to push my personal envelope and try new pathways.

**Let's get to the *WRECK-WE-UMMM*,**

**which is hard to say without laughing.**

I don't think I can deconstruct his music, which is so classic and laden with stories, mysteries, and intrigue. So I will not even touch the music, although I did find a funky jazz version for one of the sections. I will be using puppets, the Houston Met, some faces from Houston

Ballet, my tried and true lovely Hope Stone dancers, former dancers, actors Justin Doran, Troy Schulze, Stanton Welch, and Mercury love birds Ana and Jonathan Godfrey.

**You do seem to be going the way of the dance theater maven.**



PHOTO: SIMON GENTRY

**Brit Wallis of Hope Stone Dance.**

I love when my dancers pull on their performance skills in a new way. It can also be age as well. I am not so interested in the technical aspects, as in “look how high my leg can go.” I’m more engaged in what I can evoke from my dancers and the audience. “Did something happen while we were in there? (there being the studio or stage)” is a question I ask myself.

**Walk us through the rest of Hope Stone’s season.**

I move from the lovelies of Lemonade Stand into a shared evening with The Houston Metropolitan Dance Company in November at the Wortham. Then I go site specific for an art/dance crawl on 19<sup>th</sup> Street in April. We always end the year with our cutting edge kids art, in *Simplify*.

**You seem to be on a roll this year.**

This past year, I worked a lot on the administrative side of Hope Stone. I was sadly not in the rehearsal room as much as I wanted. Yet, the year was one of my most enlightening and grounding. So I am on a roll, a big roll. I am also very passionate about arts advocacy. I want to be sure that everyone has the chance to do arts. We are not just making artists, but making citizens. I am revved. I plan to do a performance piece in four years where I run for president. My platform will be “art for all.”

**Light**

**A+C: I first read the name of your show as *Splitting Ether*, which sounds like something you might be doing, then I realized it’s really called *Spitting Ether*, which sounds less poetic and way more complicated. How do you spit ether?**

ANDY NOBLE: You can take the metaphor in a couple of different ways. Ether is a drug, formerly used for surgical procedures as an anesthetic that put the patients in sort of a twilight state. The word ether also refers to the regions of space beyond the Earth’s atmosphere. As we are working with the idea of being neither here-nor-there and suspended between worlds, we felt the word ‘ether’ needed to be included in the title of the evening. If someone didn’t quite want to be in this ethereal place, they might just express that by fighting back or “spitting ether.”

**You mention that the piece has a nightmarish quality, so we are not talking about summer fluff. Bring us into your bad dream.**

Well, I don’t want to give away too much, but one of the main concepts we are investigating is liminal dance—dance that is at the threshold of two different states.

**Go on.**



PHOTO: LYNNLANE

**Shohei Iwahama in NobleMotion Dance’s *Spitting Ether*.**

For example, this has led us to think about where the mind goes when it’s in a coma-like or drug-induced state, and the afterlife, specifically purgatory. The openness of this concept allows us to work very subconsciously and enter spiritual, mythical, and even science fiction worlds. We are having a lot of fun inside of the process, and it allows us to bend reality and enter the surreal. So far, there are images of hospitals, gas chambers, mythical Lorelei, and dissolving spirits. Our love of technology and light design works well with these explorations, and enables us to investigate the dance in a sort of imagistic way that is quite stunning at times.

**I see your love affair with light continues. What first triggered this interest?**

Both Dionne (Noble) and I have our MFA degrees in Dance Technology and have had a long love of dance film. In filmmaking, the director is able to completely control what the audience sees. By utilizing light in non-traditional ways, we are able to focus the audience’s attention in a similar fashion, so that they see details that we think are important. We can create worlds that are full of mystery, and we can hide important elements of the dance to create tension. Alfred Hitchcock was a master at creating this kind of tension, as he would often not show the action, but instead a character’s response to the action. This allows the audience to use

their imagination, which is much more powerful than anything I can create.

**Do you think of light as yet another mover?**

I do think light can dance and even breathe, yet it can easily overshadow a dancer if used incorrectly.

**There is often a play between what is seen and what happens in the dark, something hidden from the audience, which is terrifically exciting. Are you developing this concept in this show?**

Yes, this effect really allows us to enter this very surreal world. We are creating walls of fog and light that the dancers magically appear and disappear through. We also have light pads that the dancers wear on their hands that allow only portions of their bodies to be seen. Another section has an ether chamber that engulfs the dancers and replaces them with a projected image of their selves.

**What does David Deveau, your new collaborator, bring to the NobleMotion table?**

David has been fantastic to collaborate with on this project. He has been at every rehearsal and is involved in every decision. It’s very unusual to have this kind of intense cross-disciplined collaboration. The interesting thing about David is that he started his MFA in light design and then switched his

degree to dance. He choreographs, and even dances a little, too.

**I assume that you have forgiven me for saying that you look like Dick Van Dyke. It’s just that you project this sweet, football-loving dad image, and your work is gritty, edgy and street-wise. You have also positioned your company aggressively on the scene and in a larger arena. What’s your biggest hope for NobleMotion?**

I would love for NobleMotion to have a national reputation for making great work. We want to do all of this and still have a healthy and happy family.

**August 9–11, 2012**  
*Lemonade Stand*  
 Houston Ballet Center for Dance/  
 Margaret Alkeke Williams Dance Lab  
[www.hopestoneinc.org](http://www.hopestoneinc.org)

**August 31, Sept. 1, 6–8, 2012**  
 NobleMotion Dance  
*Spitting Ether:*  
*A Reality Bending Dance*  
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[www.noblemotiondance.com](http://www.noblemotiondance.com)

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# Growing an Arts Community:

## Ashley Clemmer Hoffman in Action at Rothko Chapel

**GROWING UP IN A COUNTRY** store and volunteer fire department in rural Virginia might seem like an unlikely start for a career trajectory that has taken Ashley Clemmer Hoffmann to two of Houston's most admired art institutions, Project Row Houses and the Rothko Chapel.

But Clemmer Hoffmann, who was recently named the chapel's community engagement director, now credits those two childhood gathering spots – both founded by family members – with heavily informing her desire to work within various communities. That interest led her, after earning a bachelors degree in visual art at Roanoke College, to teach art in Community Art Corps, an AmericaCorps program developed by the Maryland Institute College of Art in Baltimore, where she went on to earn a masters degree in community art.

“It was through my experiences in Baltimore that I was introduced to, and ultimately fell in love with community-based art,” says Clemmer Hoffman, who also cites her work teaching art in a community center and as assistant direction of education at The Creative Alliance, a multipurpose arts center, as formative influences.

“They brought together community and art, two things that resonate deeply for me. It is hard for me to imagine one without the other.”

The former public art manager for Project Row Houses, which she joined in December 2006 after graduating from MICA, is equally affectionate towards the Houston arts community, specifically its entrepreneurial spirit and the ways in which artists and organizations openly collaborate.

“There is something about the southern hospitality of Houston that provides an environment where artists and organizations make themselves easily accessible. After a while, it begins to feel like a small town, which I appreciate.”

During her time at PRH, Clemmer Hoffman developed and managed numerous community-based art programs including: the bi-annual “Rounds”, the Summer Studio Program, the PRH/Core Residency, and others. She also oversaw marketing and communication for the organization as a whole. Over the years, she kept note of the important lessons she was learning, such as sensitivity, balance, the process of collaboration, and the importance of timing.

Through her administrative roles

in programmatic partnerships such as *Communograph*, an artist-based mapping project conceptualized by Los Angeles artist Ashley Hunt, and supported in part by the Visual Artist Network and the University of Houston's Cynthia Woods Mitchell Center for the Arts – as well as her participation in initiatives such as The Idea Fund and NAMAC's Leadership Institute for Visual Arts Organizations, Clemmer Hoffman has challenged herself to balance the needs of an organization with those of the artists with whom she works. With this guidance of key people she met at PRH – including founder Rick Lowe, executive director Linda Shearer, and Art League Houston executive director Michael Peranteau, a fellow PRH alum – she has cultivated the sensitivities necessary for an outsider working within a specific community.

When Rothko Chapel executive director Emilee Whitehurst reached out to her, Clemmer Hoffman recognized the chance to play a vital role in further developing the significance of the chapel in Houston and around the world.

“The Rothko Chapel, like PRH, is an extraordinary example of how multiple elements (architecture, art, etc.) can be merged to create a place that can spark social change,” she says. “Both places rely heavily on being activated by people.”

Continuing to build on its 40 year history, she describes Rothko Chapel as a growing, independent organization. (Although the chapel was founded by John and Dominique de Menil and is part of the Menil Collection, it has its own board and staff.) It develops programs in partnerships with approximately 40 local and national cultural, arts, religious, and social justice non-profit organizations, advancing the Chapel's mission and integrating the focus of art, spirituality, and human rights.

The official mission of Rothko Chapel is “to inspire people to action through art and contemplation, to nurture reverence for the highest aspirations of humanity, and to provide a forum to explore matters of worldwide concern.” Clemmer Hoffman explains that, as an institution, the Chapel functions as an art space, a sacred space, and a forum for global concerns. It has two vocations, which are contemplation and action.

A good match, if you ask me.

As community engagement director, she takes the mission personally, developing the first ever Rothko Chapel Guild, intended for those who are dedicated to help provide hospitality to chapel



COURTESY ASHLEY CLEMMER-HOFFMAN

### Ashley Clemmer Hoffman.

visitors and protection for the Mark Rothko paintings. Clemmer Hoffman plans to recruit and interview potential members in July, launch the program in August, and have a group of dedicated volunteers trained and ready for the 2012 Fall program series.

Rothko Chapel contributes heavily to Clemmer Hoffman's view of Houston as “culturally rich,” with its ongoing free public events plus the Chapel's public accessibility 365 days of the year (10am to 6pm). Each year, more than 70,000 visitors from around the world visit and approximately 5,500 participate in the Chapel's programming.

This month, Rothko Chapel offers two performances to watch out for. On July 12, African percussion ensemble D.R.U.M. (Divine Rhythm, United Motion) presents African and African-diaspora music led by the award-winning Baba Ifalade (Alafia Gaidi). And on July 28, in conjunction with The Menil Collection's exhibition *Silence*, sound artists Steve Roden and Stephen Vitiello present *The Spaces Contained in Each*, a collaborative improvised sound performance that uses silence – recorded pauses and silences on published

recordings as well as field recordings made by both artists. Additionally, installation artist, composer, and performer Jacob Kirkegaard presents his new piece *A CAPELLA*, created live inside and in collaboration with the Rothko Chapel itself.

The Sufi mystic Rumi once wrote, “Let the beauty of what we love be what we do.” Seems that Clemmer Hoffman is right on track.

–NANCY ZASTUDIL

Nancy Zastudil is an itinerant curator who can't seem to stay away from Houston.

**July 12, 2012**  
*Summer Sounds: Baba Ifalade and D.R.U.M.*  
Rothko Chapel Plaza

**July 28, 2012**  
*As If They Were Not There: Sound Art in the Rothko Chapel*  
In Collaboration with The Menil Collection  
[www.rothkochapel.org](http://www.rothkochapel.org)

# Dreaming in Words

## Liz Duffy Adams Returns to Main Street Theater



PHOTO: WWW.RICORNELPRODUCTIONS.COM

Main Street Theater's 2011 regional premiere of Liz Duffy Adams' *Or*. Pictured L-R: Charles II (Patrick D. Earl), Aphra Behn (Stephanie Holladay Earl), and Nell Gwynne (Jessica Boone).

**LIZ DUFFY ADAMS** FIRST AMAZED Main Street Theater audiences with her play/poem *Or*, a delicious period piece all set in rhythm. She's back with *Dog Act*, a post-apocalyptic play set in the future, which follows Zetta Stone as she travels with Dog (a young man undergoing a voluntary species demotion) to China where there's work for a couple of vaudeville players. Adams talked with A+C editor **Nancy Wozny** about her take on *Dog Act*.

**A+C:** I love when the words “post apocalyptic” and “comedy” are found in the same sentence. I imagine you do too. What brought you to this place?

**LIZ DUFFY ADAMS:** I grew up on science fiction and in particular, I've always loved post-apocalyptic stories. I love stories about how people recreate social/political systems and civilization in the midst or aftermath of catastrophe, and protect human culture through the darkest of times. In a usually more obscure way, I think all my work is about trying to think about how we live and how we are human in catastrophic times, which to me is not really all that distinguishable from ordinary life.

**Your apocalypse comes with a smirk and a smile though.**

I find that humor tends to enter into my work whatever I do, so I usually think about other things and let the humor take care of itself. In this case, I wanted to tell a certain kind of story set in a dark, dangerous, perilous world, and – since it was partly about theater itself – let it be as ridiculously funny as it wanted to be.

**Talk about setting a play in the future.**

The future is the most fun setting because you can make everything up! No one who writes futuristic fiction really believes they are being prophetic (or if they do, they're nuts) – the one thing we know about the future is that we can't imagine it; it will always surprise us. But you can take things about the present and extrapolate them into the future as a way of talking about the present, and the past, and humanity – what is eternal and what is mutable.

**Rebecca Greene Udden** told me that she selects plays based on the language. I could see her reading one page of *OR* and saying, “Let's do it.” It's such a word fest! *Dog Act* has it going on too though, especially in the banter. Can you talk about your savvy with colorful conversation?

I really believe in theatrical language –

heightened poetic aggressive outrageous language – that's what excites me in the theater. *Dog* was an opportunity to go to town with the language to define the world of the play, the characters, the various tribes by the way they speak. It was tremendous fun working all that out. When I teach playwriting, I always say that the way a character uses language isn't decoration – it defines and creates the character, which is something I learned from studying Shakespeare. With *Dog*, I challenged myself to go to extremes with it.

**I'm curious about the concept of Dog, who is undergoing a voluntary species demotion from man to canine. Did you look at your dog once and think, “Huh, looks like fun?” Can you give us some insight into the character?**

I don't have a dog, as it happens, but I admire them. The natural virtues of your average mutt puts the best of us to shame. On the one hand, Dog has demoted himself from humanity out of shame and a need to survive in a dangerous world – to live as a dog; specifically a useful working dog, a life of humble, loyal service. Dog has radically effaced himself, a way of hiding in plain sight. No one wonders about a dog's past. No one expects a dog to explain

itself. But in choosing dog-hood, Dog has unconsciously expressed something true about himself, that he himself is unaware of; that he *is* doglike in the best sense: loyal, humble, loving, and valiant.

**Good to know that when all else is gone, vaudeville is still around. Can you talk about that choice?**

One thing I'm always interested in is the cyclical nature of human history, the way certain historical moments repeat and echo through the ages. The vaudeville in this play is inspired by traveling players throughout history, from ancient Greece to medieval Europe up through American vaudeville troupes of the early-21st-century, to name just three incarnations. Over and over again, troupes have packed up their costumes and instruments and hit the road, to tell the same stories in new ways for audiences who need to hear them. And I love that, it kills me. To imagine it into the future, to have the characters be performers who are the sole source of art in a very dark future, was exciting to me.

**So China is hiring actors in the future. That's pretty funny. It's always strange to see what makes the cut. Why China?**

In our culture, China tends to stand in for the farthest, most mysterious place, doesn't it? When I was starting to write *Dog* and feeling daunted and paralyzed, the way you often do when starting something new, I thought: “Well, it's like setting out to walk to China. You probably won't get there, but with such an extreme goal, you're bound to get somewhere.” So the phrase “walking to China” stuck in my mind and worked itself into the play.

**I cracked up when Claudia La Rocco in The New York Times called your play “The Road: the musical.” Rhythm, music and song factor into this piece. It's nice to hear a little tune as the world crumbles. For you too?**

Yes! Again Shakespeare is my inspiration; the occasional song in a play does something theatrical that words alone can't do.

**Do you ever need a break from words?**

I rarely do. Sometimes I even dream in words.

**July 13–29, 2012**  
*Dog Act* by Liz Duffy Adams  
Main Street Theater  
[www.mainstreettheater.com](http://www.mainstreettheater.com)



# Gray Boxes

## Sicardi Gallery's New Building Extends a 10-Year Trend

ABOUT TEN YEARS AGO I WAS intrigued by the construction of what was then Evelyn Gorman's avant-garde boutique, Mix Modern Clothes, which was on Colquitt Street across the way from where I worked at Val Glitsch Architect. (It is currently the home of Laura Rathe Fine Art.) Since I had moved to Houston in the late 1990s to study architecture at Rice, the new buildings I had seen looked to be mostly uninspired, as if determined to prove Philip Johnson right when he complained, "Must we discuss architecture in Houston? It's so dull."

What passed for a modern building here was generally some sort of hulking Bauhaus-like collage of stucco-covered volumes (mostly white, but sometimes painted in bright tropical colors) spiced up with appliques of stone veneer, dark stained wood paneling, concrete block or brick, and occasionally some cast-in-place concrete. However, this building, designed by Albert Marichal, seemed different. What fascinated me was its geometric purity, thoughtful relationship to the street, and its deployment of cheap-looking materials (like cement board panels, windows made of plate glass and dimensional lumber, and exposed pipe columns) in a witty and tectonic manner.

It took up many of the strategies used by Renzo Piano in the design for the Menil Collection (1987), Houston's most significant modern building of the last 30 years. Marichal's building is not without its flaws, the main one being its awkward scale. But it was so much more interesting than anything I had seen that was built in Houston since I arrived that I hoped it was the harbinger of perhaps a new, local "school" of architectural design in the way that the original "Tin Houses" of the mid 1970s through the 1990s had been. (These buildings, which were characterized by simple rectangular plans, gable or shed roofs, and cladding of corrugated galvanized iron panels, took their inspiration from sturdy, but cheaply-built metal warehouses and commercial buildings erected in Houston's old suburbs from the turn of the century up to the present.)

Ten years later, the June opening of Brave Architecture's new Sicardi Gallery building on West Alabama – located across the street from the Menil parking lot – stands as the latest exemplar of what could indeed be described as a locally inflected architectural practice, however marginal it may be. While some examples of what I've come to call the "Gray Boxes" mode of design



PHOTOS: BEN KOUSH

Clockwise from top left: The 48' house, the Perez House, Laura Rathe Fine Art, Saint Emmanuel House, Charles Toomey's Cleveland Street townhouse, the Lora Jean Kilroy Visitor and Education Center, the Helfenstein-Sauter House, the E. Rudge Allen Jr. Family Education Annex, the Matuszczak House, and Sicardi Gallery.

are more cautionary tales than success stories, suggesting that the trend risks becoming another undigested style if applied indiscriminately, at its best, the new style follows the Menil building's lead in revealing the place-making qualities that architects can achieve when they trade ego for modesty and pay attention to such things as context and climate.

These days, the Menil building's sensitive integration with the surrounding neighborhood – despite being a block long, 165 feet deep and three-and-a-half stories wide, as critic Reyner Banham noted in *Art in America* when it opened – is nearly universally admired for reasons Banham pointed out. Above all, Banham praised Piano for balancing "resolute bloody-mindedness" – exemplified by "a skinny but highly visible and purposeful steel frame with emphatic verticals picked out conspicuously in white paint" – with the "surreptitious tact" of a "boarded exterior painted the same gray as the neighborhood houses."

But when the designs for the Menil Collection were first publicly presented in 1982, architectural historian Stephen Fox wrote in *Cite* magazine that, "...among those who attended the architect's presentation at Rice, there seemed to be a slight feeling of disappointment that the design was so modest, as if in Houston this attribute was not contextually appropriate."

This sentiment seems frustratingly common among Houston architects, in that every building they design, should be some sort of monument leading to a plethora of buildings exhibiting what Fox described as "that sense of scalelessness—semi-big, bland, and impersonal, which is so characteristic of many modern American buildings."

Twenty years later, Marichal's building suggested Piano's influence was taking hold, however belatedly. To be sure, it too was hulking, but with its insistent monochrome battleship gray coloring, oddly delicate cantilever over a handful of covered parking spaces, and gravel-paved forecourt shaded by giant live oaks, it fit rather comfortably with the other art galleries and houses on the street. Happily, the next ten years brought a steady trickle of small modern buildings that appeared to be formally related.

In 2003, the Matuszczak House, designed by Wittenberg Partnership was completed several blocks further west on Colquitt Street. This house featured similarly legible geometric forms, but instead of cement panels it was clad with extra-wide corrugated metal panels. These panels differed from those of the Tin Houses in that the corrugations had a larger, trapezoidal profile instead of being wavy and were installed horizontally instead of vertically.) A one-and-a-half-story wing projects

from the front of the house, which is at the scale of the 1930s bungalows that used to line the street. A taller, three-story wing articulated by boxed-in balconies is set behind it.

The Perez House (2004), designed by William Price on Eberhard Street was a rectangular prism clad in the same kind of panels set on a darker recessed base so that it seemed to hover lightly above the street. Artistically asymmetrical cut-outs in the panels provide opening for windows and a recessed balcony. At the top floor, they neatly frame a view of the downtown skyline from a walled roof deck. The 48' House (2006), designed by Mark Wamble and Dawn Finley of Interloop Architecture as their residence and architectural office, was named for its width. Another perfect rectangle, this time with a void on the ground floor for a carport, was set as far back as possible on its lot, which backed up to the Southwest Freeway to block traffic noise and thereby allow the front yard to be a more pleasant outdoor space.

The Helfenstein-Sauter House, designed by Nonya Grenader, FAIA (2009), was built for Menil director Josef Helfenstein on Sul Ross, some 200 yards from the museum. Instead of metal panels, this long and narrow rectangular, two story building was clad with cementitious clapboard siding and painted the same

*Continued on Page 21*

# The Conductivity of Collectivity

## Houston Artists Find Power in Numbers

**“IF YOU WANT TO GO FAST, GO alone. If you want to go far, go together.”**  
-- African proverb

All co-operatives are collective but not all collectives are co-operative. All collaborations are collective, but not all collectives collaborate. And co-operatives do not necessarily collaborate, collectively.

Confused yet?

Whether formally organized co-ops (comprised of managing members who are equal owners and shareholders) or loose-knit groups of participants (those with common interests working together) -- and all versions in between -- the artist collective (an identified group of people who share goals and pool resources, usually sharing a physical space) has found its staying power in Houston.

Spend time at any one of Houston's collaboratively-run project spaces, exhibitions, or events and you'll see the diversity, passion, and energy that comes with working together.

Take for instance Archway Gallery, Houston's longest living artist-owned-and-operated gallery. It opened its doors in 1976 because, in part, artists wanted direct control of the environment, promotion, and sale of their artwork. No middle-man-gallerist here.

Archway is a co-operative, the formal definition of which is “owned and managed by the people who use its services and/or by the people who work there.” For Archway this means exhibiting a wide range of traditional media art (painting, sculpture, pottery, etc.) made by co-operative member artists who, in addition to their individual practices, each adopt specific volunteer administrative roles within the gallery (director, curator, etc.). This “one artist, one vote” approach ensures that members have democratic control over the creative and economic health of the gallery.

“Archway is unique in that each month the artwork is rotated and everybody's work is always on display,” says John Slaby, artist and director at Archway, which currently has more than 30 members.

In July, Archway will host its fourth annual juried exhibition benefiting ARTreach as part of the city-wide ArtsHouston event. This year's open-themed show features guest juror Julie

Farr, director of Houston Center for Contemporary Craft and offers cash awards for first, second, and third place winners.

Similarly rooted in Houston's art history and contemporary activity is the Community Artists' Collective, which is in the midst of celebrating its 25th anniversary, with a culminating event tentatively slated for mid-November.

The Collective's co-founder and executive director Michelle Barnes calls the organization a “collective” because of the vision for their structure, which she briefly describes as “decision-making based on the input of an expanding circle of creative individuals to improve the quality of life for Houston and the region.”

“The greatest benefit of working collectively is the efficient use of resources through shared responsibility and accountability among groups that have overlapping objectives,” says Barnes. “The greatest challenge is matching the values, skills, aspirations, and interests of people who are considering getting involved with The Collective with real work that can be accomplished to our mutual benefit.”

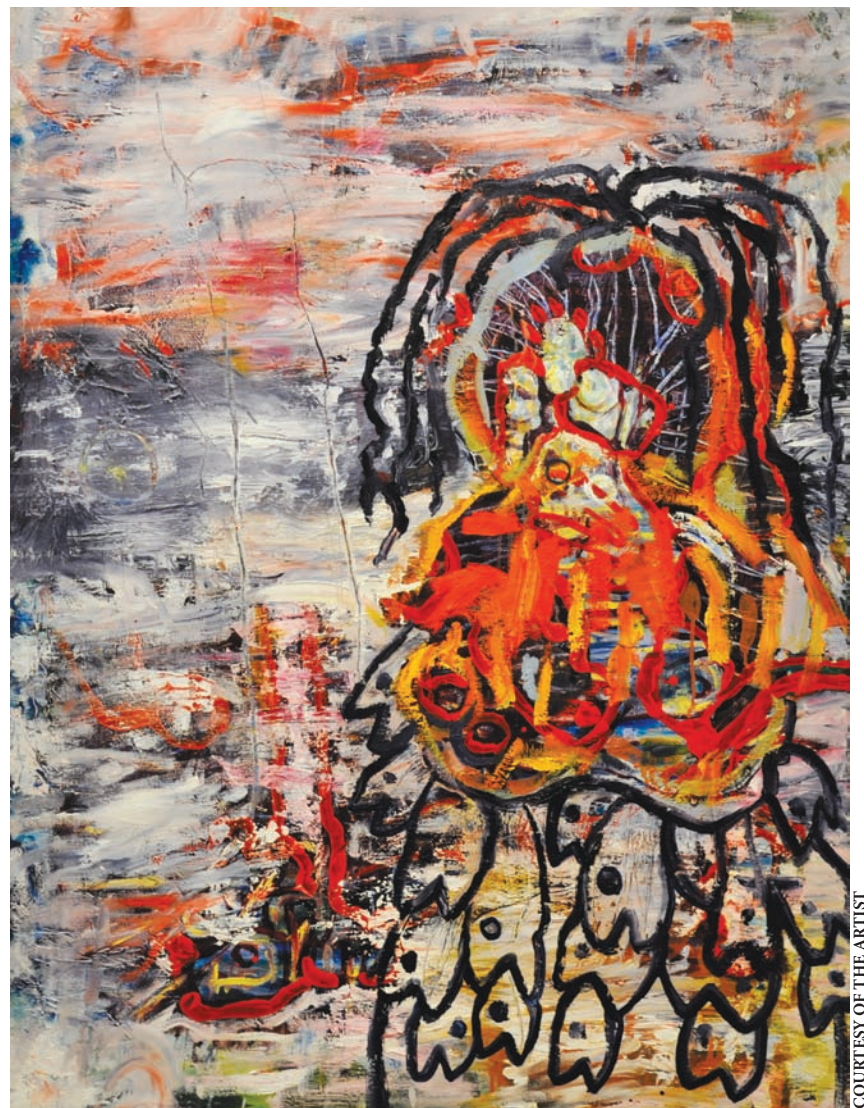
Winter Street Studios and Spring Street Studios host Houston's largest community of artists -- more than 150. Although collective in its effort to create, market and sell, the artist community functions independently of building ownership, says managing partner Jon Deal.

Another popular studio space is BOX13 ArtSpace where, according to artist Monica Foote, the primary objective is to provide an innovative environment for the advancement of experimental contemporary art in Houston. Though BOX13 artists work together to collectively manage the space and some have collaborated on various projects, the artists keep their practices separate.

Raul Gonzalez, visual artist and Montrose Art Society director of public relations, says the society started in May 2010 as a group of artists who didn't want to wait around for gallery representation. Instead, they did whatever they needed to do to organize their own art exhibitions.

“Making time for art is what we push each other to do,” he says.

Others not waiting around, are the artists and organizers of SKYDIVE



COURTESY OF THE ARTIST

Archway 2011 Juried Exhibition 1st place winner, Juan Aaron Castillo's *Big Gullah Mama*.

Art Space, who aim to broaden the spectrum of the dialogue in Houston by bringing in artists from outside of Texas and hosting a range of art practices that push the limits of their material forms.

El Rincón Social (The Social Corner), on the other hand, works through and expands from local means.

According to exhibitions coordinator Juan Alonzo, the spirit of El Rincón Social lies in the collaborative nature of a self-sustaining community that is “earned and built, not bought.”

“Each who arrives here has something to show and teach, and likewise will find something to see and learn,” he says. “The challenge of collective and collaborative endeavors is in the balance of independent thought and universal engagement -- in the task of sustaining a creative ecosystem that allows for personal growth while simultaneously maintaining a mindful objective to have a proactive relationship with our community.”

These are hardly the only local collectives around. I've barely scratched the surface. It's up to you, collective art lovers, to dig deeper into the scene. Revisit your favorite venues and projects, then introduce yourself to new ones.

Just don't go it alone.

—NANCY ZASTUDIL

*Nancy Zastudil is an itinerant curator who, through support and inspiration from her Houston community, co-founded a collective of her own: PLAND [www.itspland.org](http://www.itspland.org).*

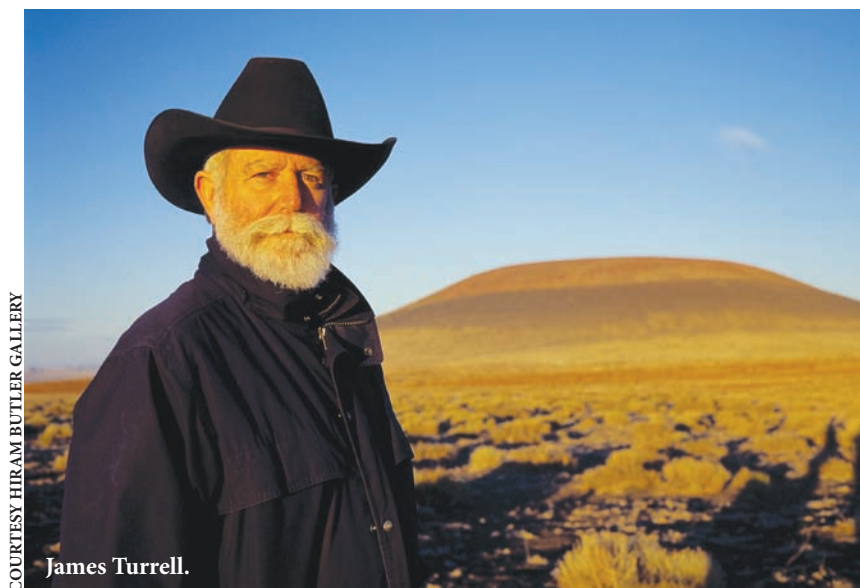
**July 7–August 1, 2012**  
4th Annual Juried Exhibition  
Archway Gallery

**July 7: Opening Reception**  
5–8pm

**July 14: ArtsHouston Reception**  
5–8pm  
[www.archwaygallery.com](http://www.archwaygallery.com)

# Light – Hold the Pickle Juice

## James Turrell on the Trouble with Holograms



James Turrell.

**A MONTH AFTER THE UNVEILING** of *Twilight Epiphany*, James Turrell's skyspace at Rice University, Hiram Butler Gallery is presenting a body of work from 2010 that posed a very different challenge for Turrell: how to get rid of the "pickled light" effect found in most holograms. Below, he talks with A+C visual arts editor **Devon Britt-Darby** about the hologram show, what we can expect at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston's iteration of his 2013 retrospective, and his thoughts on the Rice skyspace, now that the fanfare has died down.

**A+C: Have you made holograms before creating the works on view at Hiram Butler Gallery?**

**JAMES TURRELL:** Yes, I've been working with them since the early 1980s, trying to make them part of my work. It's a long-term process. I think only one was collected in Texas; that was by Isabel Wilson (a former MFAH board chairman of the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston and executive director of the Brown Foundation, who died in March). It's mostly in Europe that these have been shown.

This hasn't been a big part of my work, but I try to make some work that's smaller and more collector-friendly than most of my work.

**Is there a particular challenge to working with holograms?**

A hologram is just a photograph, but it's taken from one position of this object, but seeing it from more sides than you'd normally see it. Everyone told me, "You work with light, so you should work with lasers and holograms and all that." Actually, generally it looks like a still

life of objects in sort of an aquarium of pickled light.

So for me to make this work, I had to get rid of that surrounding strange yellow-greenish light and try to have [the image] come in front of the picture plane. So I had to get rid of the surrounding atmosphere so it just looks like light. The problem is that, generally, holograms are of an object. So to make it look just like light, I have to make this strange object and then overexpose it. So it's like I have to make a bad hologram in order to make it work as something that looks like what my work has been about.

I have two kinds. The larger ones are transmission holograms – I really needed to do that to get the greater amount of light out of them – and the smaller ones are reflection holograms. So there are two different processes involved. The transmission ones are the ones that project out, but oddly, I've made them like a reflection hologram because I use a mirror to actually have them come out front. Otherwise you'd have to stand in front of something that was projecting this.

The transmission holograms are about five feet, while the reflection holograms are about 18-by-24 inches.

**Do they change dramatically depending on the viewer's vantage point?**

The large ones, the transmission holograms, do. In fact, if you go up too close to them, they'll disappear.

**Your retrospective coming up next year is unique in that it's going to be a different show altogether at each venue, with different bodies of work**

**on view.**

The reason for that is that I can do about six to seven large installations that wouldn't quite cover a year of work, and here we're trying to represent 45 years of work. In a way, that's why we're doing three museums to start with, each with a different body of work, but representing the same kind of coverage of periods.

**In the MFAH's case, they're using the retrospective to introduce a recent acquisition of a career-spanning body of your work, which you call *The Vertical Vintage*.**

Yes. The *Vertical Vintage* deals with pieces out of each decade and with works that are early in each [body] of work, so in that way it's as a vintner would say, a vertical vintage – a collection that deals with the overall in that manner. And I think this was done very well. That was something that both [former MFAH director] Peter Marzio, Isabel Wilson, the Brown Foundation, and others



**ABOVE LEFT & RIGHT: James Turrell, *Untitled*, 2010, Holographic Image on Glass and Plexi.**

were interested in doing. They were instrumental in putting this together.

**The last time you and I talked, it was about Peter Marzio shortly after he died in December 2010. You described how he had that unique ability in a director of being able to work well with artists and work with trustees and the community. As you put it, he was able to "take other people's money, take other people's work and actually make them feel terrific doing it." Do you think his successor will turn out to be in that mold too?**

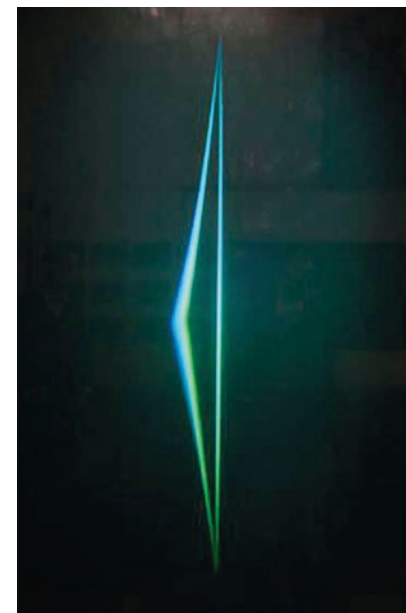
Oh, Gary Tinterow is a tremendously

capable person, and I think it will be very exciting. He has his specialties, but he loves art, and that makes a big difference. They are big shoes to fill, but he'll take his own walk and step out in his own way, and I think that's something to look forward to.

I feel very positive about what Houston has done and where it's going. Of course, I feel that way too in terms of what happened at Rice.

**The Rice structure is more open than most of your other skyspaces. Is that unusual for you?**

Yes. There's three that are like that. These are public spaces, and it was important for people not to be involved in these cul-de-sacs or places that can be rape spaces or dangerous spaces for people, so I wanted to have this openness, and at the same time I wanted to be working with the sky. I also liked the idea of the plane, almost like a piece of paper held up in the sky.



COURTESY HIRAM BUTLER GALLERY

**ABOVE LEFT & RIGHT: James Turrell, *Untitled*, 2010, Holographic Image on Glass and Plexi.**

You do lose light by not concentrating it in a space and bouncing it off walls, but we put more light into this, and I'm pleased with how it came out. It does have this openness, and yet it has this quality of working with sky and light at the time of change from night-to-day and day-to-night, and these special sort of things that occur. It's something that's kind of different and unique in how I've worked with this series.

**July 14–August 15, 2012**  
*James Turrell: Holograms*  
Hiram Butler Gallery  
[www.hirambutler.com](http://www.hirambutler.com)

# A Frame Shop with Curatorial Caché

Ariane Roesch's UNIT Looks for Print Collectors Online

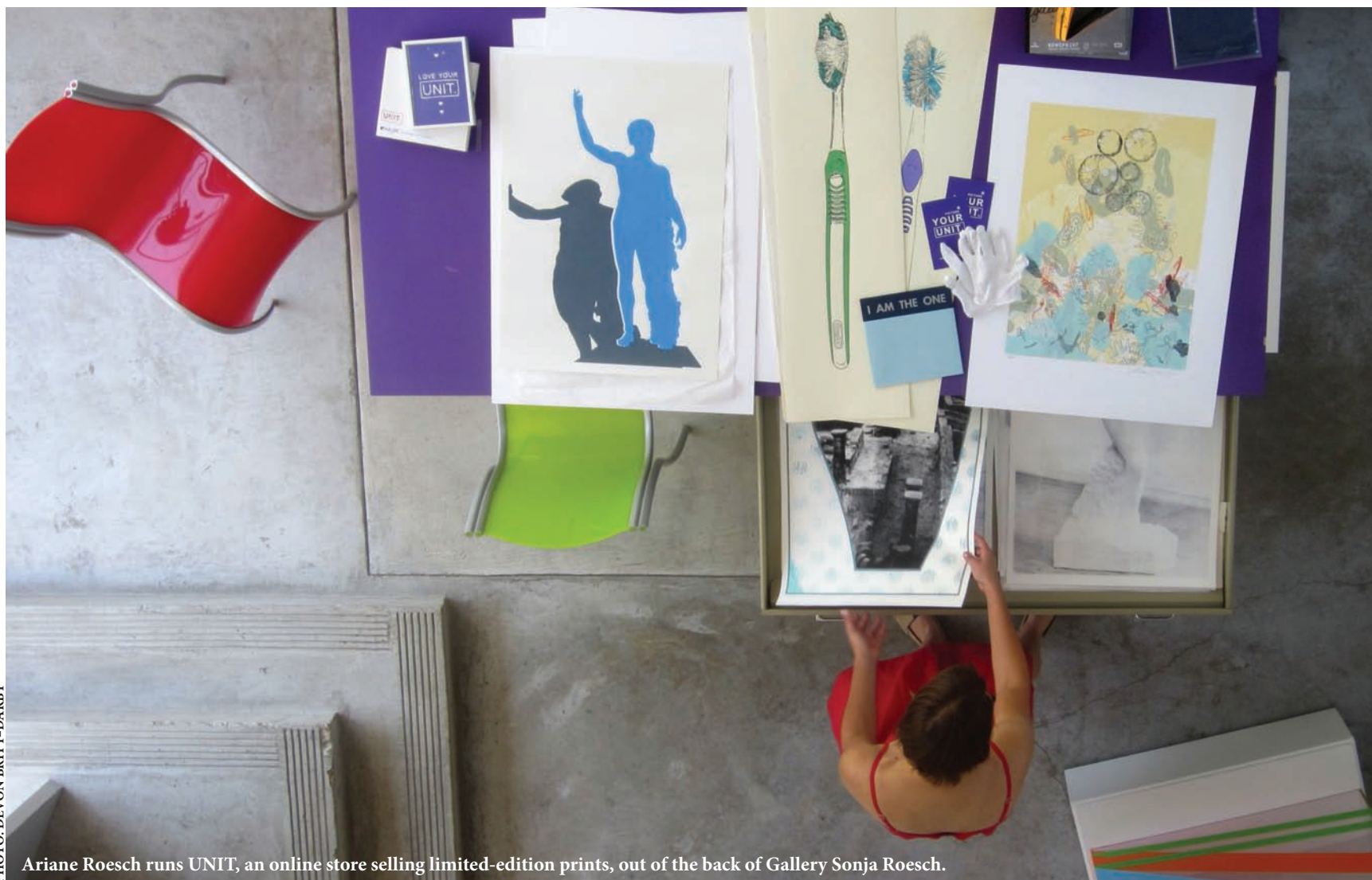


PHOTO: DEVON BRITT-DARBY

Ariane Roesch runs UNIT, an online store selling limited-edition prints, out of the back of Gallery Sonja Roesch.

**AS PRINTHOUSTON CONTINUES THROUGH THE** summer with its sprawling calendar of events, one can't help but notice how many galleries started as print-only dealers that diversified as their markets grew. It stands to reason that many new art dealers might appreciate prints not only for their quality, but that they can exist in multiple. The new art-dealing venture UNIT started with this in mind, but is focused on creating a simple, accessible platform to buy and sell art with a strong online component.

The brainchild of Houston artist Ariane Roesch, UNIT is an online gallery dealing exclusively in editioned originals. The website targets new collectors, while attracting emerging and established artists to work in multiples.

Roesch came up with UNIT to sell prints after inheriting a framing business from her late father. More specifically, Roesch inherited the task of generating a market in the US for the modular design frame HALBE. Popular in Europe but widely unknown in America, HALBE frames

are front-loading, reusable frames that are suitable for rotating collections. However, it's hard to make a case for just buying a fancy frame.

Roesch, a cofounder of Skydive Art Space with a Cal Arts master's degree and experience working in Gallery Sonja Roesch (her mother's respected Midtown venue), decided to add her art-scene connections and curatorial caché to the framing business. The idea is to sell prints from artists she handpicked along with the frames as a complete unit. (Collectors also have the option of buying unframed prints.)

Because UNIT deals in multiples only, the cost of each object is spread throughout the edition, making original works more accessible to new and first-time collectors. An edition refers to artwork that exists in multiples, and can refer to prints, sculptures, photographs, or any process that can repeat an image. In the fine art world, editioned works retain value through a presumed scarcity, which is preserved by any edition containing a finite number of copies. Generally the mold, matrix, or

plate is destroyed or altered after an edition is produced to ensure that no new copies can be created.

UNIT has a set of loose guidelines to ensure all works available are editioned originals, but leaves the language broad enough to include more than prints alone. Everything listed online is editioned between 10 and 100 and must be hand-pulled or hand made in some way. While this decision excludes giclée reproductions and monoprints, UNIT may include small-run books, LPs, cast sculptures, hand-drawn xeroxed zines, and variable editions with one-of-a-kind touches such as found objects.

Nearly all manner of traditional printmaking like relief, intaglio, lithography, and serigraph techniques are included if the print is editioned. Artists interested in being featured in the store can contact Roesch through the website to be considered.

Notwithstanding its online emphasis, UNIT makes occasional forays into the brick-and-mortar gallery scene. Roesch is teaming up with her mother

to present *What's in Store*, a group exhibition opening July 14 at Gallery Sonja Roesch as part of PrintHouston. The show features everything available on the UNIT website so far this year. Other plans include building the UNIT website into a resource that features an advice blog for starting or maintaining a personal collection and information about editions and printmaking.

While the future remains unclear for the arts market during this recession, Roesch is gambling that her unconventional approach to the gallery model provides the right framework for success.

—GEOFF SMITH

*Geoff Smith is a twenty-something arts enthusiast, printmaker, and occasional curator.*

**July 14–August 25, 2012**

*What's In Store*  
Gallery Sonja Roesch  
[www.theunitstore.com](http://www.theunitstore.com)  
[www.printmattershouston.org](http://www.printmattershouston.org)

## GRAY BOXES CONT.

color as the gray siding of the Menil Collection. Unlike the other buildings, it had a shed roof, perhaps in response to the neighboring pitched roof bungalows. The crisply articulated trim and window frames of the house seemed to echo in spirit “the purposeful steel frame” of the museum building. (Grenader also designed a Tin House for Jim Love as late as 2004, a reminder that many of the recent Gray Boxes owe as much to that style as to the Menil’s influence.)

Also in 2009, architect Ronnie Self completed what he calls the Saint Emanuel House, named after its Saint Emanuel Street location in the Third Ward. This house, where Self lives with his partner, Bernard Bonnet, is like the 48’ House, literally perched on the edge of a freeway. However, unlike the Southwest Freeway, which passes through a genteel neighborhood and has tall, heavily landscaped concrete sound walls erected along its length, the South Freeway passes through an economically depressed neighborhood and has no such visual and acoustic barriers. Self used this to his advantage and by propping the house on concrete pilotis, he achieved stunning views of downtown over the freeway chasm in an inspired design move.

Also completed in 2009 was the E. Rudge Allen Jr. Family Education Annex, designed by Jackson & Ryan on Binz Street across from the Children’s Museum of Houston. This building is a long narrow, flat roofed rectangle clad with horizontal corrugated metal siding in two shades of gray. It derives its principal architectural decoration from the three-dimensional, multi-colored letters that spell out the name of the building and its address in a continuous frieze just below the first floor windows. Its semi-industrial look refers to the original museum, which was made out of two pre-engineered metal buildings. The annex suggested that the trend was no longer confined to houses and small commercial buildings, but was now “officially” sanctioned by at least one of Houston’s cultural institutions as appropriate for one of its public buildings.

The next year, the Lora Jean Kilroy Visitor and Education Center, designed by Leslie K. Elkins Architecture with landscaping by McDugald-Steele, was completed. It serves as the public entrance to Bayou Bend, a pink-tinted stucco mansion designed by John Staub in 1928 for the philanthropist and civic leader, Ima Hogg that is now the Museum of Fine Arts: Houston’s American decorative arts wing. The visitor’s center is a two-story rectangular, metal clad building, articulated with heavy-looking horizontal sunshades supported by steel I-beams. Why the new building

so emphatically contrasts with Bayou Bend, I am not sure. While the previous buildings I described respond to their site or to neighboring buildings in an inventive way, this building seems to do neither.

Another building that I found problematic for the same reasons was the four-unit townhouse designed by Charles Toomey of Studio 333 on Cleveland Street in the Fourth Ward, directly across the street from the recently rehabilitated African American Library at the Gregory School. This building is a three-story rectangle clad in a horizontal cementitious panel rain screen painted a uniform, charcoal gray. It has the uninteresting enigmatic presence of one of the monoliths from *2001: A Space Odyssey*, that suddenly dropped into the old Freedman’s Town.

On either side of it, sits two-story, gable-roofed row houses for which the developer had made the effort to install an alley, so the garages would not have to face the street. But not only does the Cleveland Street townhouse not respect the massing and form of the surrounding buildings, it also fails to take advantage of the alley, which it actually interrupts to make a positive street presence.

The new Sicardi Gallery brings the trend to the present moment. From the street, it appears to be a two-story corrugated metal clad volume set on top of a one-story white-stucco ground floor. In reality, it is a two-story building with a very tall first floor that extends into the metal clad section with a lower-ceilinged second floor above. A large, glazed cut-out in the main volume lights the main stair.

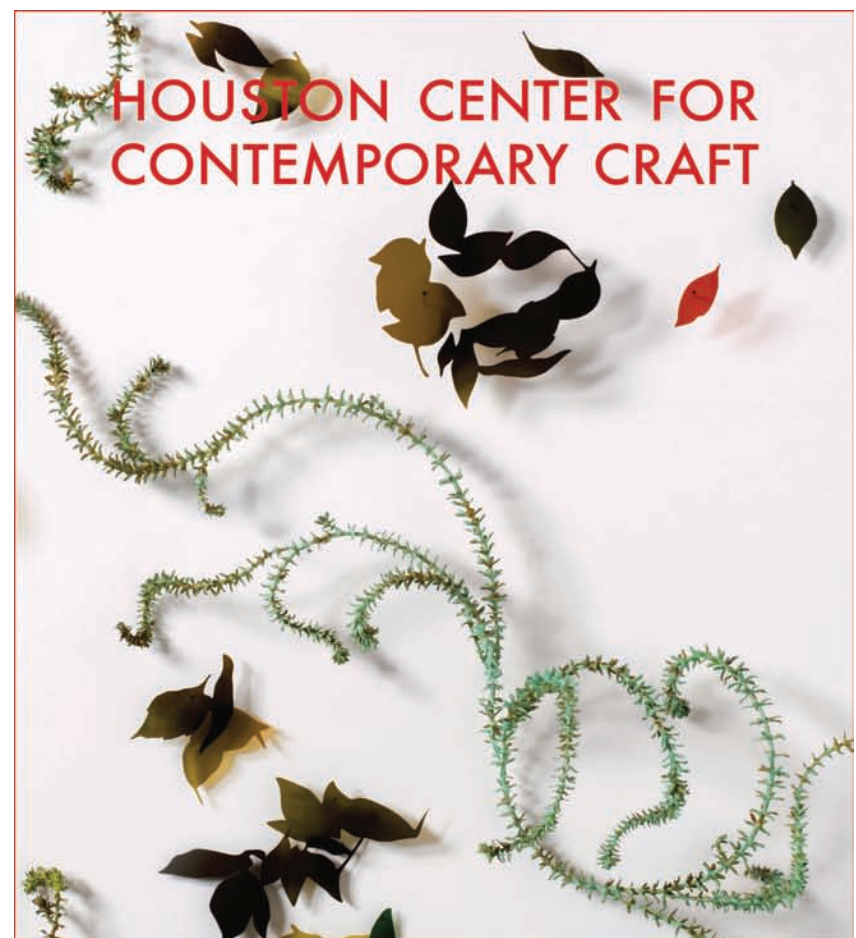
This building, like several of the others, has an ambiguous scale because of the odd sizes and locations of its openings. However, its compositional elegance and the lofty generosity of its interior spaces more than make up for this defect. In addition, I look forward to a lively dialogue between it and the neighboring building that architect Dillon Kyle plans to build on the vacant lot next door.

The Sicardi building is the latest sign that, on the whole, the Gray Boxes design mode produces meaningful modern buildings that respond to the physical and cultural environment of this city. Instead of big, generic Bauhaus boxes, these self-effacing, gray buildings quietly assume their places and provide an intriguing example of a contextually and environmentally responsive architecture for Houston.

–BEN KOUSH

*Ben Koush is an architect in Houston. He writes for Cite magazine and Texas Architect.*

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# Cultural Warrior

## Houston Grand Opera's Sandra Bernhard



PHOTO: ALBERTO DEMESTRES

HGOco director Sandra Bernhard.

**SANDRA BERNHARD IS THE** engine behind such ground-breaking HGOco/Houston Grand Opera programs such as *Song of Houston* and *Home and Place*. She also is the lead on numerous other projects that bring HGO into Houston's multi-cultural communities in a way that sets the standard for how a major organization sources its own people. She came to Houston after a two-decade career at the San Francisco Opera and five years as Chair of the Opera program at CCM (College Conservatory of Music at University of Cincinnati). In addition, she has directed many operas. Bernhard discusses her passion for music, meaning, and making her mark on Houston with A + C editor Nancy Wozny below.

**A+C: You have such a highly nuanced position at HGO that really grew out of your history, experience, and passion. What's your elevator speech when people ask you what you do there?**

**SANDRA BERNHARD:** HGOco stands for company, community, and is Houston Grand Opera's unique initiative that connects the company to the community through collaboration through new works, residencies, and storytelling projects with music. We define opera as telling stories with music and explore relevant stories of those who call Houston their home. HGOco is a "lab," a "center for creativity and exploration," and a "playground for the curious." Yes, this is the Houston Grand

Opera – a cultural resource for the City of Houston.

I usually follow this speech with: Have you seen any of our works, such as *Operato Go!*, *East + West: The Bricklayer* with a libretto by Houston writer, Farnoosh Moshiri, or *New Arrivals*, the story of Houston's local hero Yani Rose? Perhaps, you've seen a concert of works of Houston artists through our program Houston Artists Respond...let me tell you about that...(once the on button has been pushed it sometimes gets stuck!)

**I'm not surprised, because you are behind so many projects, yet, you don't use the word, "outreach", a word that has frankly lost its punch in art education circles. How do you differentiate the work you do from traditional outreach?**

Anthony Freud and I share our phobia for the word "outreach". Let me quote Anthony to define an example of "outreach": "For HGO as an opera company to go to a community and say 'this is *La Bohème* and you should like it, seems arrogant.' I couldn't agree more. Our job is to provide awareness, education, and relevancy for opera (as defined as storytelling with music) at the Wortham Theatre Center and anywhere else we can be heard. Our job is not to tell people what 19th century opera is and "why they should like it." Our job is to provide a way to understand the chaos of the world and the human condition through an art form that allows people to feel and reflect.

**There was a time when HGOco's image was a little unclear. The entity has a solid presence now, in large part to your steadfast devotion and the work that has come out of it. What other factors have been involved?**

I've been there when people have been moved to tears, laughter, anger, and community conversation. I've stood on Ellington Field watching our brave heroes before the *Heroes Run*. Listen to a song from *Pieces of 9/11*, or attend a performance of *The Bricklayer* at the Arab American Cultural Center, or attend – or instigate a community conversation about the good, bad, and ugly about our communities and how we can make change. I've watched Houston artists through our Houston Artists Respond program become inspired by a senior writing class run by WITS or a poem created by an immigrant mom.

I've watched people be transformed through the power of art as presented by kids, teens, adults, and artists of all ages. Every day, I am renewed by the power art provides to move people to action.

**Christopher Theofanidis's ground breaking opera, *The Refuge*, felt like a HGO milestone to me. For you too?**

*The Refuge* was the first of its kind: seven communities in Houston, from which stories were shared and premiered in those communities, from which they came and finally brought together on the Brown stage at the Wortham Theater Center, and then at Miller with the Houston Grand Opera Orchestra, Chorus, Children's Chorus, Studio members, and community musicians from around Houston. *The Refuge* was a game changer: how HGO uses resources, what we stand for as a company, how we are a cultural resource to our city, how we create, and who we are.

**Opera To Go! (OTG) is getting some legs these days. You have been instrumental in developing local talent. Fill us in on what's in store for us there.**

OTG has always been committed to telling stories in a relevant way – whether that be *Cinderella* in a more contemporary and fun setting in Spanish and English in *Cinderella in Spain*, or creating new tellings of old folk tales such as *The Clever Wife – A Chinese Folktale*. These stories are presented in schools, community centers, libraries for young audiences, and new audiences to opera – storytelling with words and music. These stories are presented by a talented group of Houston artists who audition for *Opera to Go!* each year. HGO is committed to providing opportunities for Houston artists. OTG is one of those ways through which Houston Artists can perform for nine months.

**You confessed to me that you were a musical theater geek in high school, with high hopes of being the next Broadway "side kick." I loved hearing your opera baptism story. Can you share the highlights of that story with us?**

I sang for a chorus job – for money with the brand new company Opera Colorado, then saw Francesca Zambello assisting Nathaniel Merrill (director of *La Bohème* and Opera Colorado) – I never left. The drama, the music, the storytelling...I realized singing was not going to pay the bills, but assisting and then directing would be my path into the world of opera. I built my home in this world and have happily tended this garden forever.

**Last season you directed a rather controversial opera, *Powder Her Face*, for Opera Vista. Any other plans to**

**direct outside of the mothership?**

Yes! Opera Vista has invited me back in the fall. More on this soon.

**In looking at the trajectory of your career from San Francisco Opera to HGO, you have really carved a completely unique path in the opera world. At HGO, it seems you have been able to have programs emerge from your vision and not the other way around. Do you see it that way?**

Yes. This is not only a playground for the curious, but a playground for my soul. Vision is a funny thing. You can see it in your head, but it's only a fuzzy dream until the right team steps up and plays with that vision. That team is here at HGOco, and are making visions a reality. Otherwise, visions remain a dream.

**Lead us into next season from where you stand. What projects can we look forward to?**

Next year's commissions will include: *East + West Korea and Japan*, *OTG Trumpet Opera* (working title), and *Houston Artists Respond*. Additionally, we will be working collaboratively with HGO to connect themes, ideas, and community conversations with the mainstage repertoire, commissions, and symposiums. I aim to live my elevator speech: to connect the company with the community through collaboration through the universal and powerful language of storytelling with music.

[www.houstongrandopera.org](http://www.houstongrandopera.org)



PHOTO: FELIX SANCHEZ

Bray Wilkins in Gregory Spears' *The Bricklayer*.

# Arts Aid

## Houston Arts Alliance Launches the Inaugural Houston Arts Resource Fair

**BEING A PROFESSIONAL ARTIST** is not for the weak. Money, fame, and even a decent living are hard to come by. A recent report on the high poverty rate of professional dancers brought the discussion of the sustainability of highly trained artists to a boil. Clearly, we need to head into this field with a solid plan.

During my art making days, I had a two-step business plan. First make a dance. Second, wait for phone to ring. The phone rang alright; it was my mother wondering when I was ever going to be able to support myself.

It's hard out there, which is why Houston is lucky to have Houston Arts Alliance (HAA) partnering with several key arts organizations to present Houston Arts Resource Fair on July 28, 9am-6pm at St. Thomas University. Come with an open mind and body, prepared to learn, mingle, and learn from other smart arts folk.

The Houston Arts Resource Fair is presented through a local consortium of arts service organizations including Dance Source Houston, DiverseWorks,

Fresh Arts (Spacetaker + Fresh Arts Coalition), Houston Arts Alliance, Houston Theatre Alliance, Southwest Alternate Media Project (SWAMP), and Texas Accountants & Lawyers for the Arts (TALA).

HAA's Jerome Vielman and Richard Graber first dreamed up the conference after attending the Chicago Creative Expo. "We knew we had to do one," says Graber, HAA's director of programs and services. Both Vielman and Graber have worked in the performing arts trenches and know first hand that it takes more than talent and training to succeed. The discussions at the roundtable of the Artists Services Organizations also fed the momentum.

The Houston Arts Resource Fair is a free, full day info marathon on sustainability, survival, and practical advice. Topics covered include arts funding, housing, arts marketing, audience development, health insurance/services, capacity building, and business resources.

Experts will be on hand too. Stephen L. Klineberg, Co-Director of the



PHOTO: MARK WOZNY

**Movers and shakers of the Houston Arts Resource Fair, Sarah Schellenberg, A+C Social Media Manager Candace Kizer, Jerome Vielman and K.C. Scharnberg.**

Kinder Institute for Urban Research Rice University will deliver the plenary address on "The Changing Face of Houston: Challenges and Opportunities for the Arts." Emily Gray from Fractured Atlas and Thomas Cott, the marketing director for Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, and others will be giving keynotes.

Cott knows the territory. "I came to this work as a playwright and director, a creative person with an aptitude for business" says Cott. He is also well known to the Houston arts community from his daily e-newsletter, You've Cott

Mail, a must read for anyone working in arts.

Cott plans an interactive talk, which will address topics provided by the participants such as Houston's changing demographics, planning strategic partnerships, and innovative fundraising ideas.

"I think of it as a group conversation where I'm the facilitator. I want people to leave stimulated and perhaps think of something that was not in their perspective before," says Cott. "There's

*Continued on Page 25*

**RICARDO PANIAGUA**  
**NEW YORK**  
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# Worth the Trip

## Dance Festivals Define Summer Stages

WHILE OTHER ART FORMS GO into a summer slumber, the art of dance ramps up as three top dance festivals offer a steady stream of American and international dance. The American Dance Festival in North Carolina, Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival in the Berkshires, and Bates Dance Festival in Maine make up the go-to threesome for dance fans. Each is unique in atmosphere, history, and mission, yet each offers an exciting array of must-see dance. Curiously, they all have some Houston connections.

### American Dance Festival June 14-July 28

It's a season of change at the American Dance Festival (ADF), America's oldest modern dance festival, its first year with Jodee Nimerichter at the ADF to helm. The festival kicked off with *Fräulein Maria* by Doug Elkins and Friends, a piece that is becoming as popular as *The Sound of Music*.

The line up is a terrific mix of seminal artists such as Paul Taylor Dance Company and Mark Morris Dance Group, along with more eclectic offerings such as Monica Bill Barnes &

Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui, a frequent Dance Salad choreographer.

ADF is a place for college students to hone their skills, get noticed by up and coming choreographers, and become exposed to the best in their field. I had the great privilege of attending ADF as a student in the 1970s, returning as an NEA Fellow through the Institute for Dance Criticism, and just recently, working on the Inside Insights videos with Nimerichter and Steve Milligan. [www.americandancefestival.org](http://www.americandancefestival.org)

### Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival June 16 - August 26

Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival kicks off its 80<sup>th</sup> season with appropriate fanfare, including performances by leading international companies such as Kidd Pivot, Hong Kong Ballet, and Campagne Kafig.

Although I traveled there in my twenties, it was a few years back when I decided to take my great dance-geek vacation in the Berkshires, watching a string of fantastic performances, holing-up in the Pillow archives with 5,000



PHOTO: SARAH SILVER

Stephen Petronio Company in *Underland*.

and rising choreographer Liz Gerring. Jonah Bokaer returns to the Pillow on August 1-5. This time, he is paired with David Hallberg, a principal dancer with the American Ballet Theatre and the Bolshoi Ballet. Visual artist Daniel Arsham unveils three new installations, designed site-specifically for the Doris Duke Theatre. Bokaer recently performed his stunning *On Vanishing* at Asia Society Texas Center in partnership with University of Houston Cynthia Woods Mitchell Center of the Arts.

The Joffrey Ballet premieres a new work by Houston Ballet artistic director Stanton Welch, his first for the company on August 22-26. The Houston Metropolitan Dance Company appears on the Pillow's famous Inside/Out stage, August 25, performing Larry Keigwin's "Air" section of *The Elements*, *Stand Back* by Kate Skarpetowska and *Rebound* by Kiki Lucas. [www.jacobspillow.org](http://www.jacobspillow.org)

### Bates Dance Festival July 2-August 11

Bates Dance Festival turns 30 this year. Known for its intimate setting on the graceful grounds of Bates College, the festival has a stellar season this summer, with several names Houston dance lovers will recognize, along with artists who are up and coming.

The line-up includes the return of Rennie Harris' Puremovement, who are celebrating their 20th anniversary, Keigwin's *Starstruck* and Kyle Abraham/Abraham.in.Motion's Live *The Realist MC* will premiere at the festival. Abraham is quickly moving into the position of "choreographer to watch".

Bates is also known for creating an environment for multi-generational learning. It's not unusual to see teachers, choreographers, and young students all engaged in a dance life.

Audiences can also look forward to the newly air-conditioned Schaeffer Theatre.

I have never been to the Bates, but Jane Weiner, profiled in this issue, cut her dance teeth there, spending over a decade soaking in the Bates vibe and running an outreach program. Weiner gets a little misty-eyed when you mention Bates. It's that close to her heart. Her ground breaking program for children, Kids Play, is deeply informed by her time at Bates. [www.batesdancefestival.org](http://www.batesdancefestival.org)

—NANCY WOZNY



PHOTO: LOIS GREENFIELD

Trey McIntyre Project.

Company and Brian Brooks Moving Company. There's also a rare chance to see Steven Petronio's *Underland*, which graces the Society for the Performing Arts stage on January 11, 2013.

July highlights include Shen Wei Dance Arts' sprawling performance installation *Undivided Divided* at the North Carolina Museum of Art, Vertigo Dance Company's *Mana* and crowd favorite *Pilobulus*, with a premiere by

titles to keep me busy, and just living and breathing dance. I will never forget bombing down Route 20 and seeing those gorgeous posters of Ted Shawn lining the highway. Much to the dismay of the dear folks behind me, I just had to slow down and revel in the moment.

I have since returned as a scholar-in-residence for two weeks every summer. This year, I will be talking about a favorite Houston son, Trey McIntyre,



PHOTO: MATTHEW MURPHY

Keigwin + Company.



## ARTS ALLIANCE CONTINUED

something about all of us being in the same room that moves things forward.” Dance Source Houston executive director Stephanie Wong knows the power of arts crowds, having attended several Dance/USA conferences. “I fully understand the benefit of sitting in a room with your peers to learn from the experts and from one another,” says Wong. “It truly is invaluable, and I hope that attendees at the Resource Fair will leave empowered. I think the fact that we’ve structured the panels based on the needs of organizations separate from the needs of individual artists means that attendees will be able to find information that is very pertinent to their situation.”

Sometimes you need very specific help from specialized practitioners. Participants can also step up to the SmART bar for 15-minute sessions with experts in the fields of marketing, management, consulting, press, publicity, and arts development. Some of the SmART bar experts include Dan Workman (president of Sugarhill Studios), Leigh McBurnett (executive director of the Dominic Walsh Dance Theater), Matt Adams (president of the Visual Arts Alliance), and Chris Johnson (announcer at The Front Row

and Classical 91.7). Five SmART bar sessions will be offered throughout the day.

There will also be a “fair” part of the fair, with vendors from the fields of marketing, management, consulting, press, publicity, production, building management, venues, lighting, audio, film, products, and arts development.

Wong sums up the value of such an event. “There are some very important, real world issues that affect our ability to be better artists and to reach a bigger audience. And it’s important to address those issues if we want our field to continue to grow. I think the Resource Fair will be a great place to learn about some of those issues and to start seeking solutions.”

—NANCY WOZNY

**July 28, 2012**  
*Houston Arts Resource Fair*  
Jones Hall, University of St. Thomas  
[www.houstonartsresourcefair.com](http://www.houstonartsresourcefair.com)



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# RECENT + CURRENT WORKS OF NOTE



PHOTO: JIM CALDWELL

Artists of the Houston Ballet in Ben Stevenson's *Romeo and Juliet*.

## *Romeo and Juliet*

Houston Ballet

June 9, 2012

[www.houstonballet.org](http://www.houstonballet.org)

How is it that after seeing Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* on stage, on film, transformed into a musical, and numerous ballet versions, we still feel these tragic lovers' epic pain?

In the case of Houston ballet's recent revival of Ben Stevenson's *Romeo and Juliet*, the honor would go to Karina Gonzalez and Ian Casady, a pairing that ballet fans will be talking about for a good long while.

Let's start with Gonzalez. This is her first Juliet on Texas soil. She looks like a Juliet - young, all spring and lightness, not that far from girlish ways. When she bursts on stage, it's as if someone just let a flutter of butterflies loose. She dances above the ground, stirring up the air that takes a while to settle again. Her effervescent presence makes a startling contrast to the gravitas around her, with a distracted mother, and a father who wishes she would just settle down and marry Paris.

But she's not all mischief and mayhem; as the story progresses and Juliet has to grow up quickly, we see Gonzalez taking on a different quality. Shape becomes more defined, even restrained, as she allows her limbs to carry weight, and even dread. Her unearthly quality deepens into the ground. Her performance assumes the nucleus of the story. When she's off stage, you miss her and hope to get to her next part. She's a ballerina of extraordinary range, technical ability and transcendent grace. This is a dream role for her to show it all off.

Casady undergoes a similar transfor-

mation, from one of a gang of party-boys to lover and husband. He too, like Gonzalez, has a keen ability to modulate innocence. We know from the start that he's capable of making grave decisions. It's a life condensed in three acts. Casady rides that arc with a knowing presence, and he's a dancer with a rare psychological dimension. The two are so well matched that even the word "chemistry" doesn't suffice.

Oliver Halkowich as Mercutio hit all the right notes, along with his side kick, nicely played by Rhodes Elliott. Christopher Coomer's restrained swagger as Tybalt added equal doses of drama and trauma. And there was something miraculous about Aria Alekzander's Nurse.

David Walker's crimson and gold-hued set and costumes hold up remarkably well, giving us glorious stage pictures. This production marked the opening of the Wortham some 25 years ago. Now in 2012, with Gonzalez and Casady's breathtaking performances, it marks a new age of talent.

—NANCY WOZNY

## *Jason Yates: All We Ever Wanted Was Everything*

Barbara Davis Gallery

May 12–June 30, 2012

[www.barbaradavisgallery.com](http://www.barbaradavisgallery.com)

Tightly structured and composed of hatch marks drawn into dozens of petal-like shapes, Los Angeles artist Jason Yates's abstract paintings seem to be of two minds. On one hand, the paintings cultivate patience through meditative repetition. On the other hand, they express impatience with the limitations of their medium.

They want to be more than paintings.

Many of the scalloped shapes lift off the support like feathers summoning flight while exposing not bare canvas but reflective Mylar – but they air that complaint in whispers, not stage screams, despite Yates's parallel practice making indie-rock posters. (The title of his first solo show at Barbara Davis Gallery, *All We Ever Wanted Was Everything*, comes from an early 1980s song by the English gothic-rock band Bauhaus.)

At least that's how I've looked at individual Yates paintings when I've come across them before, either at art fairs or in Davis's rotated hangings in the back of the gallery. Seen in the company of other, perhaps noisier work, their reticence has seemed too polite, their sense of quiet frustration too easily taken for contentment. (Part of what dimmed my enthusiasm may have been that the examples I saw included forays into color. I find Yates more effective



Installation view of Jason Yates: *All We Ever Wanted Was Everything*.

in black and white, which fortunately dominate this show.)

Seen together and in the company of related 2-D and 3-D works, the paintings' desire to break free of the canvas feels less like thwarted ambition than a triumphant conquest. Yates's hatches and stripes rustle along their supports in one- or two-column patterns, ultimately spilling out onto two of the most effective wall drawings I've seen Davis, a fan of the medium whose exhibitions nearly always include at least one, present. Bracketing either side of the larger space's entryway into the smaller room, *Snake Pit* electrifies its black-and-white repeating zig-zags with vertical stripes.

Interrupting *Snake Pit*'s two "panels" is the view into *Sunset and Sunrise*, which features gridded square patterns

of the paintings's Jasper Johns-style hatches on what the gallery describes as "repositional, self-adhesive wall-film." The sightline effectively creates a triptych whose central "panel" recedes into actual space, an effect reinforced by *Snake Pit*'s diagonal lines and starker contrast.

The hatches also make their way onto *Zombie Stella*, an assemblage mostly consisting of spray-painted plastic sheeting layered into units akin to the painting's petals, an analog of which can also be seen in the loops of rope that join the panels of Yates's aptly named black wooden "monk boxes", presented either directly on the floor or stacked on top of one another.

It adds up not to a collection of well-installed objects, which it also is, but to a total experience and a site-specific installation whose whole far outweighs the sum of its parts. Like Yayoi Kusama's

"infinity fields" of polka dots, it's easy to picture Yates's hatches colonizing ever larger and more challenging spaces.

—DEVON BRITT-DARBY

## *David Katz: Systemic Expansion*

Houston Center for Contemporary Craft

June 16–August 11, 2012

[www.crafthouston.org](http://www.crafthouston.org)

Spindles and webs of organic shapes span the hallway like an alien garland, interlinking peculiar bulbous nodes. Hard ceramic cages squinch and shape the interlinked tumorous forms. The bone-like lattices that festoon the hallways of the Artists Gallery at the Houston Center for Contemporary Craft comprise *Systemic Expansion*, the latest installation from David Katz,

COURTESY BARBARA DAVIS GALLERY

a sculptor and installation artist who works primarily with ceramics.

Much of the look of this exhibition is indebted to cellular and microscopic organic influences, with portions looking like microscopic bone structures, plant cells, or the twisting reminiscence of the double helix. However, an industrial component is pervasive as well, in that the suspended portions appear as strange trellises, bridges, or cabling while the rectilinear forms bring an architectural intervention.

Further, the larger, lumpier forms appear as large roots or tumors that grow around the rectangular shapes much in the way a vine may latch to a support, or when a root encounters an obstacle. It's as if a gardener or architect previously trained the organic shape to the mold of the boxes, but through their absence, we now witness some sort of entropic reclamation.

Katz produces these installations by creating ceramic hard-lined prism forms that are interspersed along the walls of an installation space. The artist suspends wires between the rigid forms which makes an armature to hold the unfired clay. Katz applies clay around his armature while still pliant, and sculpts it into recognizable biomorphic forms.

While the shapes are too abstract to ascribe to any specific forms exclusively, the relationship between Katz's organic and rigid forms prompts the mind to relate to the outside world.

Indeed, Katz directs us to contemplate man's desire to fabricate structure to control or influence the natural, and how this superficial structure may create dependencies in the future. Readily the mind ponders how arbitrary any infrastructure really is, from physical roadways or urban planning to the internet or the social mores that dictate how we interact.

—GEOFF SMITH

*Geoff Smith is a twenty-something arts enthusiast, printmaker, and occasional curator.*

**Oscar Muñoz**

Sicardi Gallery

June 7–August 25, 2012

www.sicardi.com

Fire, water, dust, and light. Though modern science has moved well past the classical theory of elements, there remains some category of pure substance that holds great sway over our imagination. As ancient philosophies moved from the center of intellectual debate to the sediment of cultural memory, perhaps our mystical relationship with such elements remained with us not because of their

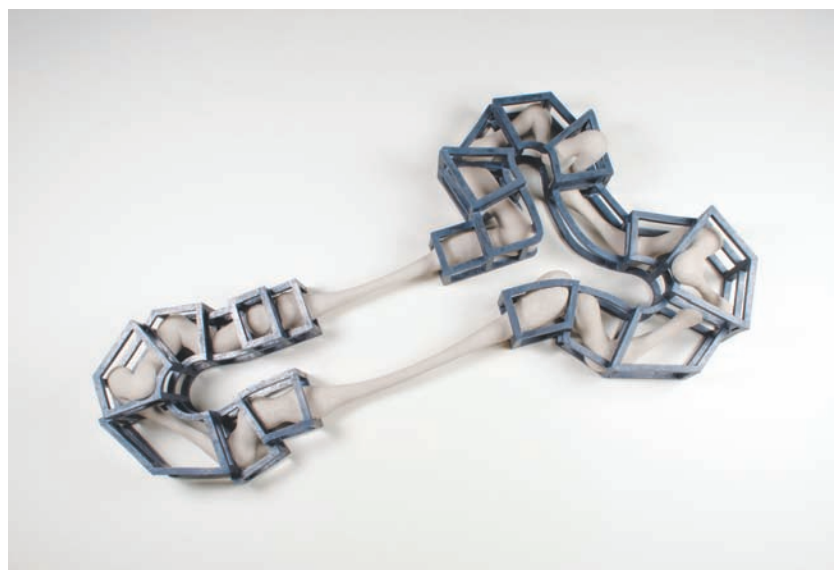


PHOTO: DAVID KATZ

David Katz, *Suburban Trap*, 2012, Ceramic, Glaze, Wire and Unfired Clay.



COURTESY THE ARTIST & SICARDI GALLERY

Oscar Muñoz, *El Juego de las Probabilidades*, 2001/2008, 12 Color Photographs, Edition of 5.

curiosity, but because of their intimacy by existing alongside other quotidian phenomena. They are like memory and consciousness, which we abide and are thankful for, not due not to scientific certainty, but to a sense of human-like loyalty.

Colombian artist Oscar Muñoz focuses his work on memory and identity, two concepts, which paradoxically become insubstantial, all while reminding us how ungraspable our world would be if, in fact, this ephemerality were all that laid at the heart of life. Collecting work created by Muñoz between 2004 and 2011, Sicardi Gallery's exhibition inaugurates their new gallery space

— itself something to behold — and creates an experience so thoughtful and cohesive as to be on par with any of the city's great institutions.

The work on hand is minimal in the sense that each production has been reduced to only one or two generative elements, such as newspaper front-pages reprinted as unreadable half-tone grids of burned holes, self-portraits produced similarly, documentation of the artist's hand brushing water onto hot concrete, photographs of books printed in a ghostly layer of coal dust on paper, and a video projection of similarly dust-printed photographs being dipped into a swirling basin of water as the

eddy increasingly darkens. While what immediately impresses the viewer is the magic of the images' ephemerality and wonderment at their creation, appreciation slowly turns to harder and less delicate resolutions.

Although the fleeting vision of a face as it evaporates off of a slab of concrete betrays a delicate touch and sensibility, the metaphoric resonance of a society where citizens regularly "disappear", does not allow the viewer to take comfort in the romance of the experience. Muñoz allows us and accepts us for our fascinations, but by making the delineation between mystical and rational understanding a slipperier slope, he also asks us to be aware of our fascinations, to recognize them as such, and to recognize the difference between the excusable fragility of memory and the inexcusable choice to forget.

—DAVID A. FEIL

*David A. Feil is a writer and educator in Houston.*

**Hilary Wilder: A Northern Tale**

Devin Borden Gallery

June 15–August 5, 2012

www.devinborden.com

J.M.W. Turner, Caspar David Friedrich and the Hudson River School understandably come up a lot in discussions of former Museum of Fine Arts, Houston Core Fellow Hilary Wilder's work. Visiting her current exhibition at Devin Borden Gallery, I thought of James Abbott McNeill Whistler, a 19<sup>th</sup>-century painter. It wasn't because of how he painted landscapes and seascapes – though I'm a huge fan – but because of something he said in *The Ten O'Clock Lecture* that resonates with the contradictions of landscape depiction dramatized in her paintings, drawings, sculptures, and installations.

"That Nature is always right, is an assertion, artistically, as untrue, as it is one whose truth is universally taken for granted," Whistler said. "Nature is very rarely right, to such an extent even, that it might almost be said that Nature is usually wrong – that is to say – the condition of things that shall bring about the perfection of harmony worthy a picture, is rare, and not common at all."

Nature gets it wrong a lot in Wilder's responses to recent residencies in Iceland and Ireland, the landscapes, histories, and legends of which inform the new work.

The eruption in *The Geyser (Strokkur's Big Day)* is contained in hard-edge geometric shapes that are at odds, not just with the geyser's fury, but Wilder's kitschy way of painting it. A Turner-esque sea is reduced to a souvenir

*Continued on Page 28*

## REVIEWS CONTINUED

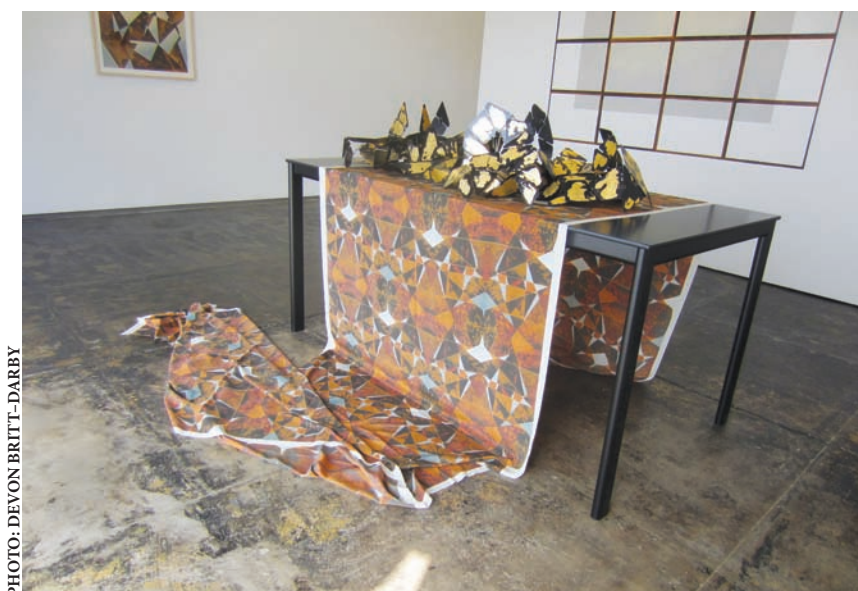


PHOTO: DEVON BRITT-DARBY

**Hilary Wilder, *The Viking's Skiff*, 2012, PVC, Spraypaint, Gold Leaf, Aluminum on Custom-Printed Silk Crêpe de Chine.**

image in the mise-en-scène painting *Commemorative Table Top (The Cod Wars)*, in which the table top is set against the patterns of a linoleum floor and rug. (The so-called “Cod Wars” were a series of bloodless confrontations between the United Kingdom and Iceland over fisheries rights, with the Icelandic Coast Guard performing such heroic exploits as cutting British fishermen’s nets.)

Elsewhere, shards of light are juxtaposed with crisp geometric fragments resembling wood veneer in brilliantly executed works on Yupo, a synthetic waterproof paper. Their patterns get transposed to a custom-printed silk crêpe de Chine, which Wilder drapes, waterfall like, across a table with an angular PVC sculpture whose planes are part spray-painted and part gold-leafed in *The Viking's Skiff*.

Veneer shows up again on a grid that’s superimposed over a sky in the wall painting *View* and in the wall-mounted sculpture *Raft*. Its planks are barely held together with twine, as if it had come apart on one of the turbulent seas Wilder depicts, yet their veneer surface looks straight out of a furniture store. The competing impulses for nature’s grandeur and human order are at loggerheads – all the more tragically so when you realize these “logs” are made of Yupo paper too.

–DEVON BRITT-DARBY

***Rusty Scruby: Cube Network & Cherry Blossoms***  
McMurtrey Gallery  
**June 2–July 7, 2012**  
[www.mcmurtreygallery.com](http://www.mcmurtreygallery.com)

The disparate influences informing Dallas-based artist Rusty Scruby’s photographic reconstructions and folded-paper constructions include

knitting, piano composition, and mathematics. You can see evidence of all three in Scruby’s mastery of structure, harmony, and tension in *Cube Network and Cherry Blossoms*, his second McMurtrey Gallery solo show.

The wall-mounted *Cube Network* pieces use photographic sources but are actually charcoal drawings painstakingly folded into interwoven units akin to 3-D stitches. Starkly backlit, they depict tree branches and power lines as seen either at dusk, or in the case of works titled *Rip Van Winkle*, just after a dust storm had swept into Dallas, leaving the sky browned out and Scruby feeling like he’d stepped out of a movie. The images’ structural emphases work well with Scruby’s interlocking cubic elements as they piece together the scenes.

Even as the *Cube Network* pieces charmingly call attention to their making, their imagery remains straightforward and easily legible compared with Scruby’s *Cherry Blossoms* works. The latter defamiliarize their banal source imagery – think overpasses and flower-beds – often to strikingly beautiful effect.

Using photo-editing software, Scruby reduces a mosaic-tile-size piece of a picture to the color point at its center, then builds up the image either with adjacent hexagonal pixels, interlocking circles or some combination thereof.

The interlocking circles allow for the most tonality and texture Scruby permits himself, but the *Cherry Blossoms*’s austerity somehow yields a greater overall feeling of lushness than much pixelated imagery.

Intriguingly bridging the two bodies of work is *Iris – Hex Grid Study*, a two-year old line drawing of an iris. Like his photographic reconstructions at the

time, it is more defined at the center and less so as iterations of its flowers and stem ripple out in increasingly reductive shapes that can be seen as variations on the repeating hexagon.

To his elegant line drawing, Scruby has added a few hexagons – one black, two gray, several white – to the composition as if beginning the process of reducing each area to the most basic unit of information. It’s a welcome addition to the show, both for its window into Scruby’s process and its own distinctive beauty. It’s quite unlike anything else on view.

–DEVON BRITT-DARBY

### ***The Turin Horse***

Museum of Fine Arts, Houston

**June 29–July 1, 2012**

[www.mfah.org](http://www.mfah.org)

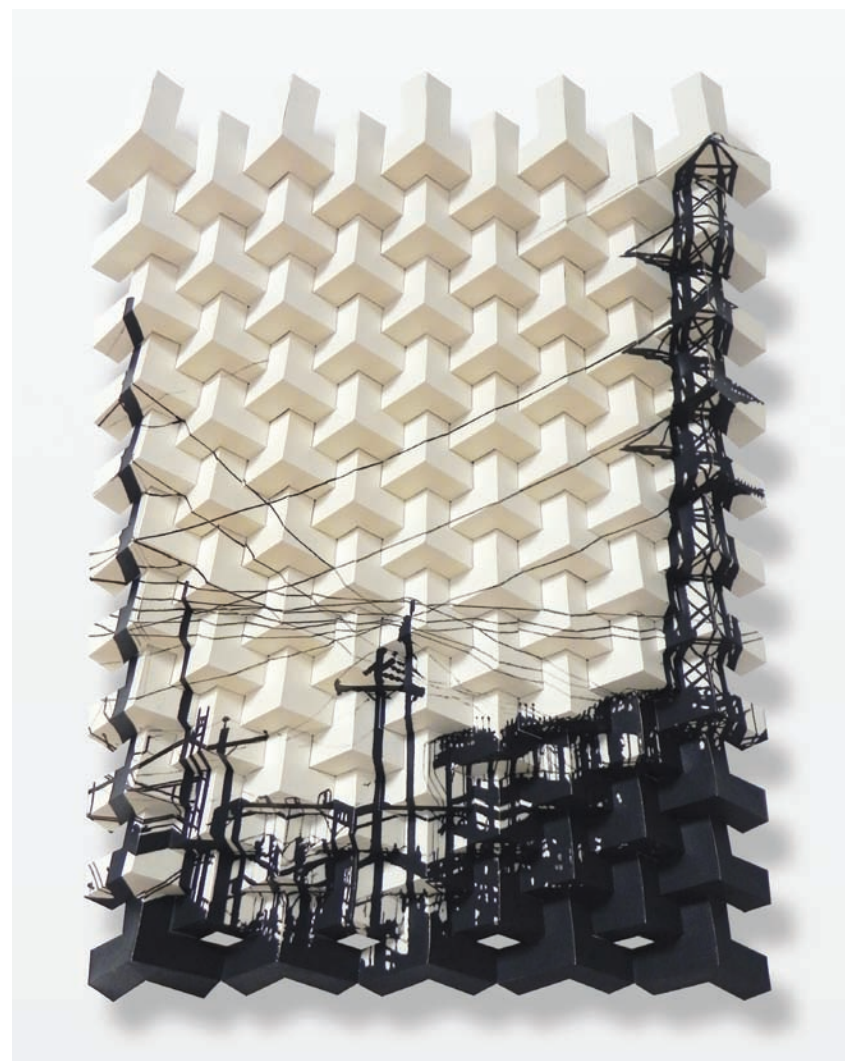
Béla Tarr claims *The Turin Horse* will be his last film, and unlike American celebrities who use retirement as a PR scam, he’ll probably stick to his word. *The Turin Horse* is a haunting bookend for his nine film career. It begins in darkness as a voice describes the famed encounter between Friedrich Nietzsche and the Turin horse. This is the horse

that Nietzsche supposedly threw his arms around while he wept and began his descent into dementia that was more likely caused by his syphilis than the horse. It’s a compelling image—the weeping philosopher and the horse—but it’s one we aren’t shown. We know what happened to Nietzsche, but Tarr asks, “What happened to the horse?”

I was introduced to Tarr’s work with his 2002 *Werckmeister Harmonies*, a strange tale featuring a giant whale, a chaos obsessed prince, and a town full of powerless souls trying to cope with communal fear and paranoia. I followed *Werckmeister Harmonies* with his sprawling 1994 seven-hour epic, *Satantango*, also full of poor creatures unable to transcend the simplest of petty desires and hopes.

I fell in love with the camera work of Fred Kelemen, Tarr’s cinematographer. His carefully orchestrated movements are expansive and graceful. The camera seamlessly peers down the street, through doorways, over crowds, into the cracks of men’s beards, and right back out to the top of the night sky. Some of the shots are as long as 11 minutes (the average cut length in *The Bourne Ultimatum* is about two-seconds). *The*

*Continued on Page 30*



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**Rusty Scruby, *Linear Charge Density*, 2012, Charcoal on Paper, Construction.**

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## REVIEWS CONTINUED

*Turin Horse* clocks in at two and a half hours, using only 30 shots.

Most of *The Turin Horse* is spent watching Ohlsdorfer and his daughter (only known as Ohlsdorfer's daughter) go through daily rituals. Ohlsdorfer stands still at the bed waiting for his daughter to take off his outside clothes and put on his inside clothes and vice versa. She also gets water from the well and boils potatoes. He eats the potatoes quickly like a dog while she takes her time.

Each morning they have a drink of brandy. He always has two shots and she always has one. For one brief moment a neighbor stops by to deliver a monologue about the moral destruction of the town, confirming there is nothing more to their lives than the hours spent waiting for the potatoes to boil. Meanwhile, some gypsies come to steal water from the well and Ohlsdorfer chases them off with an axe in his hand. Each day they attempt to get the horse to pull a cart and eat, but the horse refuses and it's put back in the barn.

Nothing much happens in *The Turin Horse*, but Tarr is open about his views on the futility of plot. He says, "I don't care about stories. I never did. Every story is the same. We have no new stories. The film isn't the story. It's mostly picture, sound, and a lot of emotions."

Tarr has finally stripped the most he could from a film, leaving only Ohlsdorfer and his daughter's bodies, a few spare words, the howl of the wind, and the one piece of music in the film, which was composed by Mihály Víg, a longtime Tarr collaborator. Perhaps that's why he doesn't want to make any more films, there's nothing much left to strip away.

It would be easy to mistake these grim events as fatalistic or nihilistic, convinced that because life is meaningless for Ohlsdorfer and his daughter, it must be for his audience. However, I don't think Tarr is trying to draw any philosophical conclusions. He believes that the problems of the world are universal and constant, and in spite of that, people have to live their lives. Through the carefully constructed world of film, Tarr wants to show you these people's lives, their emotions, and their dinner, even if it's just a potato.

Retiring in your mid 50's could be a noble gesture. People confuse "Having nothing left to say" with "having said all that you wanted to say." I believe Tarr said everything he wanted to with his art, and he doesn't seem to have any

reservations. *The Turin Horse* is a fitting last message.

-JOSEPH WOZNY

*Joe Wozny is a Houston based writer and musician.*

### **Next to Normal**

Stages Repertory Theatre  
May 16-June 24, 2012  
www.stagestheatre.com

If someone told me that the minute the curtain came down after the first time seeing *Next To Normal*, that I would voluntarily see it again, I would have responded, "Honey, go take your meds."

But there I was, along with a packed house at Stages Repertory Theatre, going for a second dose of Tom Kitt and Brian Yorkey's 2010 Pulitzer Prize-winning musical. I'm glad I did, because Stages did a smashing job with the piece, and during the first time around, I couldn't get beyond my, "Wow, this is a musical about a woman with bi-polar disorder," thought cycle.

Nearly two years later, I could finally pay attention to the details of Kitt and Yorkey's poignant and gut wrenching emotional roller coaster of a musical. Stages handled those details with the utmost elegance. First off, is Happy McPartlin's penetrating portrayal of Diana, the woman who doesn't really ever make it to a place called "Next to Normal."

Brad Goertz gives Dan, the too-patient husband, an under-stated grace, while Tyler Berry Lewis makes one fascinating and irritating hallucination as Diana's imaginary son, Gabe.

Kregg Dailey's warm tenor voice imbues both of Diana's doctors with a mixed sense of hope and betrayal. Mark Ivy and Rebekah Stevens, as Henry and Natalie, come as close to stealing the show as possible (but ultimately, it was still McPartlin's show). With their honesty and pitch-perfect adolescent angst, combined with strong voices, these are two performers to watch.

Melissa Rain Anderson's uncluttered direction and choreography lets this difficult material stand on its own. The dancing office chairs, however, did add a welcome levity. Ryan McGettigan's spare set follows Anderson's lead by framing the action and getting out of the way.

-NANCY WOZNY

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