

FEBRUARY 2012



AC

ARTS + CULTURE HOUSTON



Zachariah Rieke

January 26 - February 25, 2012
Opening Reception: Jan 26, 6-8pm

Painting 5, 2010, acrylic on canvas, 94 x 69.5"



4411 Montrose Blvd, Suite 200
Houston, Texas 77006

ph: 713-521-2977
fax: 713- 521-2975

www.wadewilsonart.com

11
12
Season

HOUSTON BALLET

STANTON WELCH Artistic Director

Tickets \$18!
Start At

Cinderella

February 23 – March 4

The story has been a favorite for generations, but make no mistake, this is not your childhood *Cinderella*. More tomboy than princess, Stanton Welch's title character is a striking woman of substance, determination and spunk.



For Tickets
houstonballet.org
Or call 713.227.2787

Rock, Roll & Tutus

March 8 – 18

Contemporary ballet is looking better than ever. Christopher Bruce's *Rooster* is a fast-paced romp set to the music of The Rolling Stones. Performed with two works by Stanton Welch: his sleek and sexy *Divergence* and *Tapestry*, a world premiere set to Mozart's Violin Concerto No. 5.



J.P.Morgan



Methodist The Methodist Hospital

UNITED

Official Airline of Houston Ballet

EDITOR'S REMARKS



A+C is slow journalism in a world of instant information. We are all about lingering, hopefully with a good arts story and a fine glass of wine in front of you. There's something about print that expands in time and space.

It's hard not to slow down as you enter the new Asia Society Texas Center. In our first architecture piece, Ned Dodington takes us inside Yoshio Taniguchi's new Houston landmark.

John Sosini's contemplative portraits at Inman Gallery made me want to park in front of them for hours. Nancy Zastudil tells us why. In contrast, she also lends insight into Laura Lark's arresting images on view this month at Devin Borden Gallery.

Plan on several visits to the CAMH to fully take in "The Deconstructive Impulse: Women Artists Reconfigure the Signs of Power, 1973-1991." Rachel Hooper's interview with curator Helaine Posner provides context.

We're catching up on Houston's vibrant performing arts scene. Considering the amount of activity, it's not an easy task. Mark Lowry spoke with Alley Theatre's Greg Boyd about their new production of Anton Chekhov's "The Seagull."

Holly Beretto examines the past and present of The Ensemble Theatre as they tackle "The Ballad of Emmett Till," August Wilson's "King Hedley II" and more this season.

Nichelle Strzepek delves into Houston Ballet chief Stanton Welch's choreographic trajectory, including "Cinderella," created during his boy wonder years, to his newest creation. More dance history is at work in Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater's return to the SPA stage.

Musicians need more than chops, according to Chris Johnson, who investigates Houston's top professional development programs at Rice University's Shepherd School of Music, Houston Grand Opera Studio and Da Camera's Young Artist Program.

Writing is a form of lingering, so it's fitting that our cultural warrior is Rich Levy of Inprint, Houston's leading literary organization.

I wonder what work of art will stop you in your tracks this month, or at least slow you down.

Nancy Wozny
editor
nancy@artsandculturetx.com
@artsculturehou



ARTS+CULTURE MAGAZINE

THE STATE OF THE ARTS IN TEXAS

PUBLISHER
KEN VILLALOVOS

NORTH TEXAS

MAILING ADDRESS
381 Casa Linda Plaza, Suite 363,
Dallas, Texas, 75218
Advertising 214-282-2845

EDITOR / ART DIRECTOR
SCOT C. HART

SENIOR EDITOR
MARK LOWRY

SOCIAL MEDIA MANAGER
RACHEL VAN HORN

AD DESIGNER
JONATHON KIMBRELL

WEBMASTER
BLACK NEW MEDIA

COPY EDITOR
DAVID TAFFET

DISTRIBUTION MANAGER
RICARDO PANIAGUA

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

HOUSTON

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

EDITOR
NANCY WOZNY

ART DIRECTOR
JONATHON KIMBRELL

SOCIAL MEDIA MANAGER
CANDACE KIZER

AD DESIGNER
SCOT C. HART

WEBMASTER
BLACK NEW MEDIA

COPY EDITOR
DAVID TAFFET

DISTRIBUTION MANAGER
BRYAN ROSS

CONTRIBUTORS
DAVID A. FEIL, JOSEPH WOZNY
HOLLY BERETTO, ABBY KOENIG
CHRISTOPHER JOHNSON, NANCY
ZASTUDIL, RACHEL HOOPER, KATIA
ZAVISTOVSKI, NICHELLE STRZEPEK
MARK LOWRY, BETH SECOR, SALLY
FRATER, TRIA WOOD, ROSIE TRUMP
NED DODINGTON

MEDIA PARTNER

TheaterJones.com

ON THE COVER

LAURIE SIMMONS, "WALKING HOUSE," FROM 'WALKING AND LYING OBJECTS,' 1989, AS PART OF "THE DECONSTRUCTIVE IMPULSE: WOMEN ARTISTS RECONFIGURE THE SIGNS OF POWER, 1973-1991" AT CONTEMPORARY ART MUSEUM OF HOUSTON - ON EXHIBIT THROUGH APRIL 15, 2012, PAGE 8.



published by ARTSTARS MEDIA, LLC. printed by MIDWAY PRESS, DALLAS.
all rights reserved. copyright 2012.

ArtStars Media, LLC is in no way responsible for the loss of any unsolicited materials. Publisher assumes no responsibility for return of unsolicited manuscripts or art. ArtStars Media, LLC is not responsible or liable for any misspellings, incorrect dates, or incorrect information in its captions, calendar, or other listings. The opinions expressed within the fair confines of Arts+Culture magazine do not necessarily represent the views or policies of Arts+Culture magazine or ArtStars Media, LLC or any of its agents, staff, employees, members, interns, volunteers, or distribution venues. Bylined articles and editorial represent the views of their authors. Letters to the editor are welcome. All letters may be edited for style and libel, and are subject to condensation. Arts+Culture magazine accepts advertisements from advertisers believed to be of good reputation but cannot guarantee the authenticity or quality of objects and/or services advertised. As well, Arts+Culture magazine is not responsible for any claims made by its advertisers. Publisher reserves the right to accept or reject any editorial or advertising matter. No part of this publication may be reprinted or otherwise reproduced without written permission.

COURTESY THE ARTIST & SUSAN INGLETT GALLERY, NYC



TABLE OF CONTENTS

FEBRUARY 2012

8

SIGNS OF POWER

12

LAURA LARK'S
PRETTY PEOPLE

17

A TIMELY CHEKHOV

19

SONSINI
AT INMAN GALLERY

23

LEAVING THE SILO

PHOTO: FELIX SANCHEZ



COURTESY THE ARTIST AND DEVIN BORDEN GALLERY



7

Artifacts:

News+Briefs

10

Ensemble Theatre

14

Alvin Ailey Returns

16

Asia Society

25

Cultural Warrior

27

Reviews



PHOTO: CHRISTOPHER DUGGAN

TOP: Sarah Charlesworth, Figures from "Objects of Desire I," as part of 'The Deconstructive Impluse' exhibit at Contemporary Arts Musuem Houston, page 8; MIDDLE: Alfredo (Bryan Hymel) and Violetta (Albina Shagimuratova) in Houston Grand Opera's production of "La Traviata," reviews page 30 , BOTTOM: Laura Lark, "Wood Nymph" on exhibit at Devin Borden Gallery beginning February 11, page 13; RIGHT: Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater's Renee Robinson, Constance Stamatiou and Matthew Rushing in Alvin Ailey's "Revelations," page 14.



LUDWIG SCHWARZ

Taos (Taos Thrift Shop)

February 18 – March 24, 2012

conduitgallery

1626 Hi Line Drive, #C Dallas, Texas 75207
214.939.0064 www.conduitgallery.com

ROCO
in Concert

Sat Feb 18, 2012 • 5:00 pm
The Church of St. John the Divine

Sun Feb 19, 2012 • 5:00 pm
Concert & Dinner
The Houstonian Hotel

Kazem Abdullah, *conductor*
Richard Belcher, *cello soloist*

Join us for **Haydn, Schubert**, and the
World Premiere of **Paul English's**
Lumière Lunaire.

Tickets and Information:
www.rocohouston.org
713.665.2700



ARTIFACTS

AURORA PICTURE SHOW HAS received support from the Andy Warhol Foundation to attend the Arthouse Convergence, an annual gathering of art house operators and industry leaders to get together and share successes and challenges of running independent cinemas, that is presented in collaboration with the Sundance Institute. Aurora will be there to network and to learn tips for marketing, fundraising, technology, and programming to improve the quality and effectiveness of our organization. www.aurorapictureshow.org

ST. LUKE'S EPISCOPAL HEALTH System will serve as Theatre Under the

STARK NAKED THEATRE CO., MIL-dred's Umbrella Theater Company and The Classical Theatre Company announce that they will be moving into the performance space Studio 101 at Spring Street Studios, formerly Divergence Music & Arts. The goal will be to provide audience members with a one-stop shop for the highest quality theater Houston has to offer, while allowing the three member organizations to remain true to their distinct artistic visions. www.starknakedtheatre.com

MARLANA WALSH DOYLE HAS been named artistic director of The Houston Metropolitan Dance Company.

nal," the 2011 work represents Lee's first commissioned piece for a public institution in the United States. www.asiasociety.org/texas

ANTONIN BAUDRY, CULTURAL Counselor of the French Embassy, conferred the insignia of Officer of the Order of Arts and Letters on Gary Tinterow on January 23, 2012. Gary Tinterow, a distinguished curator at The Metropolitan Museum of Art for nearly three decades, was recently appointed director of the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston. www.mfah.org

FORMER MIAMI CITY BALLET (MCB) Soloist Marc Spielberger has been hired as the new artistic coordinator at Houston Ballet. Trained at Ballet Schule Schulzke and the German Ballet Academy of Munich, Spielberger danced with Deutsche Staatsoper Berlin before joining MCB in 1999. www.houstonballet.org

IN ADDITION TO THEIR ART League Houston show running through February 24, Hillerbrand + Magsamen have a show in Madrid, Spain at Camara Oscura Gallery and the Indianapolis Art Center, through February 12. www.hillerbrandmagsamen.com

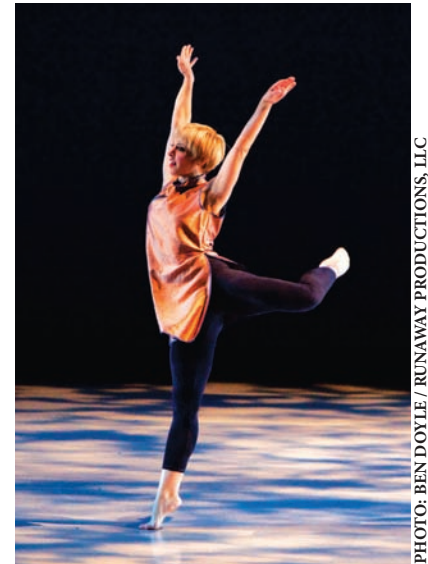
AMY POWELL IS THE NEW CYN-thia Woods Mitchell Curatorial Fellow at Blaffer Art Museum at the University of Houston. Her work frames contemporary art in global perspectives, including modern and contemporary African art and photography, African cinema, critical theory focusing on post colonial theory and contemporary theories of representation, new media and subjectivity, and the history and theory of museums and curatorial studies www.class.uh.edu/blaffer

DIVERSEWORKS ARTSPACE AN-nounces the appointment of Elizabeth Dunbar as the new executive director, taking over from interim executive director William Betts. Most recently, Dunbar served as associate director and curator at Arthouse, a non-collecting experimental art space in Austin. "I'm thrilled to be joining DiverseWorks at this important time in its evolution," says Dunbar. "I look forward to working with the Board, staff, and many committed supporters in realizing its ambitious goals and shaping the organization's future." www.diverseworks.org

SANDY EWEN IS THE NEW ART-ist in residence at 14 Pews. She will be creating two shows that combine performance and the visual arts. Ewen has been experimenting with vintage slide projectors and has created a body of

work that explores materiality and scale. www.14pews.org/pages/home.asp

THE HOUSTON FAMILY ARTS Center (HFAC) Actors Academy cast of Kissless returned to Houston after performing at the 2011 New York Musical Theatre Festival (NYMF). The cast of 27 Houston teens and young adults performed six times at the Off-Broadway



Marlana Walsh Doyle, artistic director of The Houston Metropolitan Dance Company.

Theatre at St. Clement's. "Kissless," with book, music and lyrics by Houston's own Chance McClain, tells the story of two very different people forced to live together for the summer and the unlikely relationship that develops to the dismay of their friends and family. "We're elated that our actors had the opportunity of a life time to perform Off-Broadway," said Bob Clark, HFAC executive director. "They spent 13 days in New York living their dreams." www.houstonfac.com

THE MICHELE BRANGWEN DAN-ce Ensemble performed as a guest company on Dance Theater of Harlem's Sunday Matinee Concert Series on January 8. Repertory included Outside My Window and the opening dance from Get Outside, with choreography by Michele Brangwen and music by Tim Hagans. www.brangwendance.org

THE JULIA IDESON LIBRARY, located in Downtown Houston, has reopened after a five year renovation project. The Ideson Library, part of the Houston Public Library system, is home to the Houston Metropolitan Research Center. The Spanish Renaissance style building is a Recorded Texas Historic Landmark, a City of Houston protected Landmark and a Texas State Archaeological Landmark. www.ideson.org



(L to R) Michael Bakunin (Guy Roberts), Alexander Bakunin (Rutherford Cravens) and Varvara Bakunin (Celeste Roberts) in Tom Stoppard's "Voyage" at Main Street Theater.

Stars (TUTS) 2012/2013 season sponsor, marking the third consecutive year for St. Luke's as season sponsor. www.tuts.com

REBECCA GREENE UDDEN AND Main Street Theater were the subject of a five-page feature article by Frank Boudreaux in American Theatre Magazine about their production of Tom Stoppard's "The Coast of Utopia" trilogy, which is only the second production in the nation. www.mainstreettheater.com

Doyle has been dancing with The Met for the past decade. Since becoming Company Manager in 2005, the company's repertory has grown significantly. www.houstonmetdance.org

ASIA SOCIETY TEXAS CENTER IS pleased to announce that Korean artist Lee Ufan has been commissioned to produce a site-specific work to inaugurate the Sculpture Garden in its new home, designed by Yoshio Taniguchi and located in the heart of Houston's Museum District. Titled "Relatum-Sig-

Signs of Power

“The Deconstructive Impulse” at Contemporary Arts Museum Houston

THIS SPRING, THE CONTEMPORARY Arts Museum Houston hosts the nationally touring exhibition “The Deconstructive Impulse: Women Artists Reconfigure the Signs of Power, 1973-1991” on view until April 15. Helaine Posner, co-curator of the exhibition and chief curator/deputy director for curatorial affairs at the Neuberger Museum of Art, talks to A+C writer **Rachel Hooper** about her inspiration for the exhibition, the ideas behind it, and why its feminist message continues to be relevant.

A+C: When did you first notice a connection between deconstruction and artwork made by women?

HELAINÉ POSNER: It was Craig Owens who made this connection in the early 1980s, along with several important women curators and critics, including Kate Linker, Abigail Solomon-Godeau and Griselda Pollock. Co-curator Nancy Princenthal and I thought it would be interesting to examine feminism and deconstructivism as linked critical impulses from the vantage point of nearly thirty years. We attempted to understand the shift in worldview taking place at that time and its implications for our current media saturated culture. We hope this exhibition will both entertain and provide food for thought.

So called “high art” is examined through a gendered lens by Sturtevant in her “Warhol Marilyn” (1973) and Louise Lawler’s photographs of galleries and auction houses. Were these women taking a risk by taking a critical position of the art world from which so many of their predecessors had been excluded as women artists?

Yes, of course. But the fact is that many of the artists included in “The Deconstructive Impulse” did not have access to the commercial art market, so why not critique that system? A number of the artists have gone on to have successful careers but, for the most part, that occurred more recently and not for all. Part of the reason for organizing this exhibition is to make the contributions of the artists included more widely known and appreciated.

How would you define “deconstructive” in terms of the “deconstructive impulse?”

Deconstructivism involves taking apart and examining source material generally borrowed from the mass media

or popular culture to unveil its codes and reveal the gender, sexual, racial and class-based inequities embedded within. The deconstructive impulse was defined by art critic Craig Owens in his landmark essay of 1983 titled “The Discourse of Others: Feminists and Postmodernism.” Owens coined the term and identified its concerns as “the crossing of the feminist critique of patriarchy and the postmodern critique of representation.”



Dara Birnbaum, still from “Technology/Transformation: Wonder Woman,” 1978-79. Video, color, sound, 5 min., 50 sec.

The rise of postmodern theory, such as semiotics and deconstruction, is a parallel story to the exhibition. Although the theory is often criticized for being esoteric, many of the artworks being made at this time were very approachable with references to American popular culture that most people can relate to, such as Dara Birnbaum’s video about Wonder Woman or Barbara Kruger’s photograph featuring Howdy Doody. In a sense, were these women bringing theoretical concerns to a new audience?

Postmodern theory initially was expressed in dense critical language, but many of the concepts initially defined in the 1970s are well understood and widely accepted today. Postmodernism challenged the dominance of a singular masculine position, and opened up the discourse to include multiple, often marginalized groups, feminists foremost among them, thereby broadening

and enriching the way we understand our world.

Postmodernism also acknowledged a link between high art and popular culture, which provided much of its imagery. Artists like Dara Birnbaum and Barbara Kruger appropriated imagery from television and commercial advertising to critique a culture that often exploited or excluded them. It also should be noted that they often did so

with considerable wit and humor. How can you ignore the glorious kitsch of the spinning Wonder Woman?

Even though much is at stake in the representation of women in media where negative images or perceived limitations can affect a woman’s self image, these women are trying to make us laugh at the situation, perhaps to invert power or control, and in the case of the Guerrilla Girls, it could be argued that their strategy improved the situation for women artists, although we have a long way to go before we achieve equality. In that sense, do you think the feminist message, even of the earliest artworks in the exhibition, still strikes a chord? Absolutely! In 2007 I co-authored a book with the co-curator of “The Deconstructive Impulse,” Nancy Princenthal, and our colleagues Eleanor Heartney and Sue Scott, titled “After the Revolution: Women Who Transformed

Contemporary Art.” This book looked at women’s contributions to the visual arts since the 1970s, using Linda Nochlin’s seminal essay “Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?” of 1971 as our starting point. We included statistics on the percentage of women who have had one-person museum or gallery exhibitions by decade. One would think that the representation of women has equalized over the past 40 years, and that it has improved since the 1970s, but it still hovers at about 20 percent. I think most people are shocked by that statistic! So yes, feminism and feminist art is still relevant today.

I love your observation in the exhibition catalog that these artists took pleasure in popular culture even as they critiqued it. Do you think they felt ambivalent about the films, magazines, and television shows that they reference in their work or wanted somehow to redeem them?

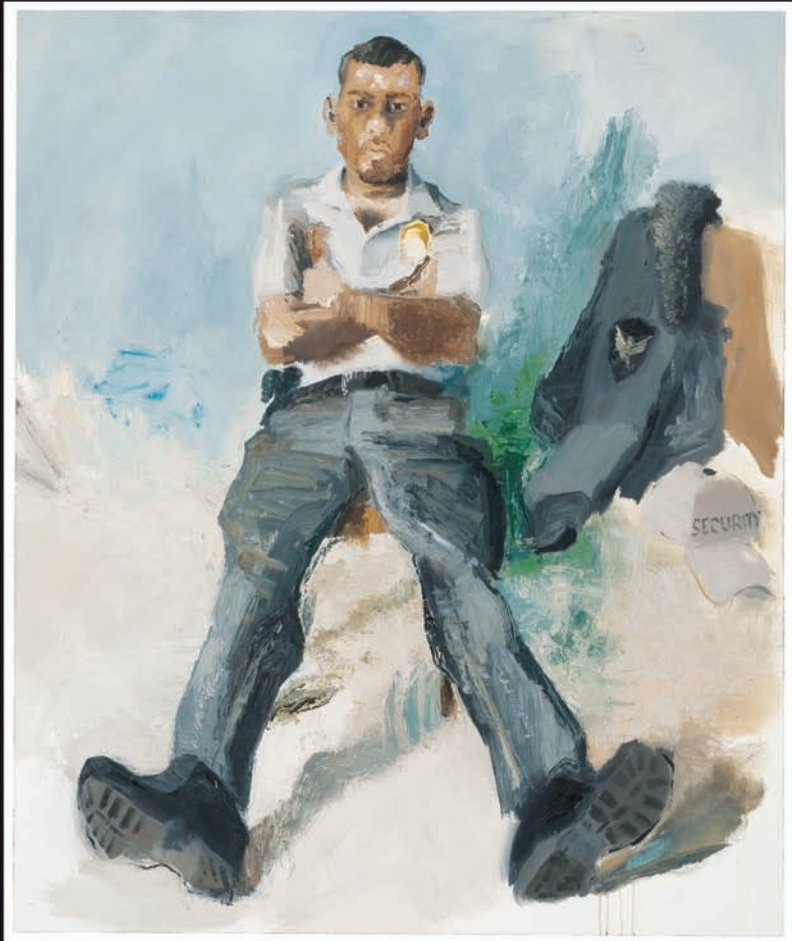
It often has been noted that the appropriation artists, born in postwar America, were the first generation to grow up on television, magazines, and the movies. Their image bank was drawn from the mass media rather than from fine art.

One of the main themes of “The Deconstructive Impulse” is that the critique of popular culture practiced by the women artists included in this exhibition was not gender neutral, as was assumed at the time. These artists were looking closely at gender difference, examining such subjects as femininity as masquerade, commodity fetishism of the 1980s, and exposing and subverting female stereotypes. Cindy Sherman’s untitled films stills of stereotypical female characters from Hollywood B-movies of the 1950s and 60s are enormously seductive, while also constituting an insightful critique of patriarchy. There is visual pleasure for both artist and viewer.

Rachel Hooper is a PhD student in art history at Rice University.

January 20 - April 15

“The Deconstructive Impulse: Women Artists Reconfigure the Signs of Power, 1973-1991”
www.camh.org



Roger, 2011 oil on canvas, 72 x 60 inches

JOHN SONSINI
New Paintings

on view through February 25, 2012

IN MANGALLERY

3901 MAIN ST HOUSTON TEXAS 77002 www.inmangallery.com



Paul Manes, "Snake Eyes," 2012. Oil on Canvas, 30 x 82 inches

PAUL MANES
RECENT PAINTINGS

FEBRUARY 18 - MARCH 24, 2012

OPENING RECEPTION
SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 18
5:30 - 8:30PM

cris worley

FINE ARTS

2277 Monitor Street Dallas, Texas 75207 214.641.9266 crisworley@sbcglobal.net crisworley.com

The Ensemble Theatre Embraces its Past and Builds to the Future

THIRTY-FIVE YEARS AGO, George Hawkins dreamed of a place where African-American actors and artists could practice and perfect their craft. With no physical space available for such an endeavor back in 1976, Hawkins stuffed the trunk of his car with props and costumes and caravanned with other performers around Houston, performing works at schools and community spaces. With unrelenting passion and vision, Hawkins soon moved his burgeoning troupe into a space on

By all accounts, the community realizes the gem it has with the theater in the converted car dealership on Main Street. In addition to serving as a gathering place for groups and meetings, the theater has its own stop on Houston's METRO light rail line. The Ensemble/HCC stop anchors a spot on Main that demonstrates Houston cares about its thriving cultural base.

And on stage at the Ensemble, showing how African-American actors and the

Bayeza's "The Ballad of Emmett Till," the story of a young black Chicago man who is lynched visiting his relatives in Mississippi during the 1950s. Told with infusions of prose and music, it's a powerful exploration of one of the most pivotal times in our history. Following that, the Ensemble presents "Cuttin' Up," set in a barber shop and told across 60 years of stories and memories.

"It's a neighborhood story," says Morris. "And the way it's written, it can be set in any city, anywhere, so we've had the license to put in some local color in terms of names of streets and businesses."

This season, the Ensemble will also mount August Wilson's "King Hedley II," the completion of the playwright's acclaimed Pittsburgh Cycle, which also includes "Fences," "The Piano Lesson" and "Seven Guitars." Set in 1985, it tells the story of a man who wants to make a difference by planting seeds. Following the saga of the characters first introduced in "Seven Guitars," "King Hedley" is a story of forgiveness and dreams.

The Ensemble has produced nearly all of Wilson's Pittsburgh Cycle plays, and Morris says that his work always resonates. With the mounting of "King Hedley," she becomes the only woman to have directed eight of Wilson's plays.

"That is such an honor for me," she says. "To show the works of the great August Wilson, that's just something wonderful and special for us. And, he tells stories that belong to all of us."

"People come in to see these stories because they are universal," says Cosley. "And we're able to tell them in an intimate space, where you feel you're very much part of what's happening on stage."

Allowing the audience to feel that connection is something that is important to both Morris and Cosley. Working to craft a season that showcases established and new works, bringing in actors who've been on stage before, as well as extending invitations to new performers are all key elements to the theater's vibrancy. And it certainly looks as though their hard work on and off stage is paying off. Subscriptions are up at the theater: in 2006, it had around 500 subscribers; now there are 1900. The Ensemble started a young professionals group and has built a core of volunteers who assist with everything from concessions to outreach.

"We have members of the audience who

tell us, 'We've been following you since Tuam,'" Morris says. "And it's so gratifying for us. People want to see good theater and we do our best to provide that, and people want to support that."

Cosley says she's seeing a great diversity in the Ensemble's supporters, and she believes it's because of the diversity of the works presented.

"There are so many different perspectives and stories that have been on our stage — and continue to be there as we determine what we'll present," she says. "It's just amazing for me to see it all come together."

Both Morris and Cosley believe they've been entrusted with something special at the Ensemble. They realize that they are carrying on a dream.

"George gave us a great gift," says Morris. "And I am so glad, physically, spiritually and emotionally to be here to help carry that on. George gave us a place that we can call home, where we can connect and cultivate a creative spirit."

— HOLLY BERETTO

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



COURTESY ENSEMBLE THEATRE

(L to R) Cancace D'Meza, Roenia Thompson, Regina Hearne in "Blues in the Night."

Tuam, and later, to a former car dealership on Main.

From those lean years, when Hawkins and his team raided their own closets and attics, looking for anything usable to build sets, turn into costumes or props, the organization has grown into a solid force in Houston's arts scene. Artistic director Eileen Morris worked with Hawkins as he used his talent and charisma to build the Ensemble, brick by metaphorical and literal brick.

"I am so very excited that we're celebrating 35 years," she says. "We have such a proud past and I know we have a bold future, continuing the work of man who invested so much to give African-American artists a place they could call their own."

It's not unusual in the arts community for the people who work in theater companies to be dedicated to what they do. But for those at the Ensemble, their work is about much more than putting on high-quality productions. It's about the preservation and promotion of the African-American voice. And it's also about connecting with the community.

works of African-American playwrights can thrive is part of the continuing story of George Hawkins' legacy.

"For some of our audience members, especially the young people who see our shows, this is the first time they've seen African-American actors on stage," says executive director Janette Cosley. "And that is such a powerful thing. It can change perspectives."

Changing perspective was always part of Hawkins' original plan. For even as he knew he wanted his company to present contemporary and classic works by black playwrights and performed by black actors, he was fully aware that theater is about telling the stories that connect us.

"At their heart, these aren't just African-American plays," explains Morris. "These are stories about family, about conflict, about the human dynamic. These are plays where people can say, 'that's my story.'"

This season is arguably one of the Ensemble's strongest ever in terms of variety of storytelling. On stage now is Ifa



COURTESY ENSEMBLE THEATRE

Alex Kennedy (Prince Charming) and Teacak Ferguson (Cinderella) in "Cinderella."

February 2–26
"The Ballad of Emmett Till"

March 22–April 15, 2012
"Cuttin' Up"

May 10–June 3, 2012
"King Hedley II"

June 28–July 29, 2012
"Sanctified"

www.ensemblehouston.com

Main Street Theater

An epic trilogy
of romance and revolution.

TICKETS at 713-524-6706



MainStreetTheater.com

THE COAST OF UTOPIA

A TRILOGY BY TOM STOPPARD

SHIPWRECK

MST - Rice Village
February 10 - March 8, 2012

SALVAGE

MST - Rice Village
February 24 - March 11, 2012

This project is supported in part by a grant from the Mayor's
Special Initiative Program of the Houston Arts Alliance.



haa houstonartsalliance

Vinson&Elkins LLP



Multimedia
Sponsor



ARTS-CULTURE MAGAZINE
HOUSTON
Print Media
Sponsor



HOUSTON CENTER FOR CONTEMPORARY CRAFT



Bridge 11: Lia Cook
February 4 – May 13, 2012

Transference: Andy Paiko & Ethan Rose
February 4 – May 13, 2012

Alyssa Salomon—The Handmade Print
February 4 – April 8, 2012



Innovative Exhibitions • Artist Studios • Unique Shopping • Tours & Workshops



Houston Center for Contemporary Craft is funded in part by grants from The Brown Foundation; Houston Endowment, Inc.; the City of Houston through the Houston Arts Alliance; Texas Commission on the Arts; the Wortham Foundation; and Windgate Charitable Foundation.

In the Museum District | 4848 Main Street | 713.529.4848 | www.crafthouston.org
Free Admission | Accessible parking behind building

february 1 - march 3 @ various locations

community artists' collective

16th Annual CITYWIDE AFRICAN-AMERICAN ARTISTS EXHIBITION

Annual Citywide exhibitions allow artists to show work to a broader public and the collecting community. Sponsored by African American Art Advisory Association at Museum of Fine Arts, Houston.



february 9 @ barnavelder movement/arts complex

aurora picture show

MY HEART IS AN IDIOT: with FOUND Magazine Mini-performance by Co-Creator Davy Rothbart

A romantic documentary that captures the road-tripping lifestyle for Davy Rothbart as he looks for love in all the right places.



february 9 @ contemporary arts museum houston

musiq

the DECONSTRUCTIVE IMPULSE LOFT CONCERT

This informal, intimate concert features new music by female composers in conjunction with CAMH's exhibition *The Deconstructive Impulse: Women Artists Reconfigure the Signs of Power, 1973 - 1991*.



february 14 - 18 @ wortham center, cullen theater

mercury baroque

A FRENCH VALENTINE

A selection of Jean-Phillipe Rameau's most famous cantatas, *Orphee* and *Thetis*, explore the themes of love.



february 17 @ museum of fine arts houston, law building, lower level

southwest alternate media project (swamp)

SCREENING: SLACKER 2011

24 of Austin's top filmmakers banded together to update Richard Linklater's *Slacker* with their own perspective in celebration of the iconic films' 20th anniversary.



through february 19 @ stages repertory theatre

stages repertory theatre

MISTAKES WERE MADE

Passion is at a premium in Craig Wright's funniest play about the impulse to create art in a complex and commercial world.



For a complete list of #houarts, visit fresharts.org.

i ♥ #houarts

Laura Lark

All The Pretty People

ANY IDEA HOW SEXUAL FAVORS, Pete Seeger and faux gold leaf make their mark on the art world? It may not be what you think.

Laura Lark is a Houston icon. Her piece “The Misses Wang” (1999) is the first artist’s work I remember seeing in the city — in all its 8x10 feet of pink-acrylic-paint-and-black-Sharpie-marker-glory, the inspiration of which was taken from a Vera Wang bridesmaid dress advertisement.

And as far as she is concerned, Houston is worth it.

“I like it here,” says Lark.

“It’s weird and multicultural and disorganized and grimy and it makes no sense in many ways. I love the area I live in, and my studio is in my back yard. Essentially, though, it’s about the work,

COURTESY THE ARTIST AND DEVIN BORDEN GALLERY



and Houston is a good place to get that done relatively inexpensively. And the food kicks some major butt.”

Some readers may also know Lark as a visual arts writer for *Glasstire*, but these days she is no longer writing about art. She explains, “Making art is completely at odds with my practice as a writer and, despite the fact that I love to have written in certain ways. I absolutely hate to write.”

She is quick to acknowledge, however, literature as a strong informant for her visual art. As a University of Houston Creative Writing student, she felt akin to the independent yet imprisoned (societal or self-imposed) female characters of Hawthorne’s “The Scarlet Letter,” James’ “Portrait of a Lady” and Whar-

ton’s “House of Mirth.”

“This is what I see when I look at the fashion imagery that I am drawn to. This is not what all fashion imagery imparts, but that which does is what I select.”

Lark has also been crafting a series of interrelated fictional short stories, the subject of which she describes as, “...a fictional family that looks an awful lot like my own. It’s not pretty. It’s ugly and violent and looks nothing like my art.”

Much of her artwork is inspired by her good-intentioned but guilt-ridden, liberal, white, middle-class Chicago-area upbringing, describing her parents as “pre-hippies, the Pete Seeger-type.”

“Since I was inundated by instruction growing up, I think I’m trying to fend off the chaos or the anxiety of the unknown in some way, and so I execute my artwork in an organized, systematic manner. Also, as women (and sometimes men nowadays), we are directed with a list of instructions: recipes, sewing patterns, ‘how-to’ guides for clothing, cosmetics, and hair. While waiting in the nail salon one day, I saw a magazine article in *Cosmo* with a step-by-step guide to giving a hand job.”

Not much left to the imagination there. So, what’s a Midwest girl to do?

Lark sources exclusively from fashion photography. Most often she is responding to images in magazines that she recognizes as transcending fashion and representing a certain era, images of how she wanted to look (maybe how she wanted to be seen) as a kid growing up in the 1980s — illustrating romantic notions about her own icon, such as Françoise Hardy, Michelle Phillips and Mary Tyler Moore.

“I see my work as a kind of paradoxical feminism that embraces a rejected cult of beauty,” Lark says. “I’m not interested in real people; I’m interested in how fashion images work on real people. Trends come and go, but a woman in a hideously-hued taffeta bridesmaid dress seems to be pretty timeless. Pretty ridiculous.”

In Lark’s experience, two assumptions are usually made about her work: one, that her large scale, painstakingly hand drawn, detailed images are commercial prints; and two, that the figures she portrays are actually her. She resists the temptation to point out the absurdity of an 11’ printing press. And when, during the exhibition opening for what is assumed to be a “deeply autobiographical”



COURTESY THE ARTIST AND DEVIN BORDEN GALLERY

Left: Laura Lark, “Grace I,” 2011, Ink on Mylar, 39 x 30 inches. Top: “Dreamy Steve (McQueen),” 2011, Ink on Tyvek, 36 x 24 inches.

series of works, someone places a hand on her shoulder and says, “I’m sorry you’re so sad,” her dry, witty response tends to be, “Yeah...me too...but not for the reasons you’re thinking.”

She also resists the formal materials inherent to her UH MFA Studio Art training, opting for lightweight, durable, and practical qualities. For example, she uses Tyvek instead of rice paper because her synthetic materials of choice (Sharpie markers, metallic paint markers, faux gold and silver leafing) adhere well to its surface.

“Most importantly, Tyvek, like my subject matter, is completely artificial.”

What isn’t artificial is Lark’s artistic presence in Houston. She has had a relationship with Devin Borden Gallery since the mid 1980s. She recalls,

“I was surprised — delighted — that, often without my knowing, Borden would visit my shows, paying attention to how my work was progressing. Because Devin Borden worked with Hiram Butler, and because there’s not much, if any, figurative art at their space, I never imagined that I would be included among their artists.”

Of equal surprise and delight for Lark was that Devin and Hiram Butler even-

tually brought her on board. Her current exhibition at the Devin Borden Gallery, “The Liveable Forest,” is a continuation of that relationship. The show includes many of Lark’s usual themes, however this time there are images of men, including the infamous Steve McQueen. Aspects of the exhibition also point to Lark’s thoughts about the incompatibility between nature and society, with installation elements that represent “leaves,” “hills,” “snow” and so on.

“...as if nature were made by a person who really doesn’t want to go outside,” she says.

After all, who wants to risk dirtying their taffeta?

— NANCY ZASTUDIL

Nancy Zastudil is an itinerant curator who entrusts her art collection to an anonymous Houston resident.

February 11–April 3, 2012

“The Liveable Forest”

Preview: Friday, Feb. 10, 6–8 p.m.

Opening reception: Saturday, Feb. 11, 2–5 p.m.

Devin Borden Gallery, Houston, TX

www.devinborden.com

Under the Great Dance Umbrella

Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater Returns to Houston

WHEN THAT TRANSLUCENT white umbrella floats on stage during Alvin Ailey's masterwork "Revelations" during Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater's return to the Society for the Performing Arts Jones' Hall stage on March 2-4, it will be a historic occasion. Although the event marks the company's 16th visit to Houston, it will be its first with Robert Battle as artistic director. Battle took over the helm from the legendary Judith Jamison in 2011, one of the most significant successions in the history of modern dance.

Battle in Houston

The Ailey connections run deep in the Houston community. Battle has been a mentor to Marlana Walsh Doyle, The Houston Metropolitan Dance Company's artistic director and dancer. Doyle met Battle in 2001 at Point Park University while he was setting the "Envelope" by David Parsons and his own "Mood Indigo."

"We became friends instantly, and have stayed in touch ever since," says Doyle. Battle subsequently came to Houston to set "Strange Humors" and "The Hunt" on the Met. "I have always been a huge admirer. Robert has helped out the Houston Met and my direction for the company tremendously, and he has referred wonderful choreographers to us, like Kate Skarpetowska and Jason McDole (former dancers in his company)," says Doyle. "I'm proud of his new position at Ailey and feel that his intelligence, creativity, knowledge about dance will be influential for years to come."

Curator/Artistic Director of Dance Salad Festival, Nancy Henderek, brought Battle in twice; once with "Strange Humors" in 2002 and again with "Takademe" in 2003, danced by Kanji Segawa, who is now a dancer in the Alvin Ailey company. Henderek recently saw Battle in the Ailey studios in NY. "He is so relaxed and happy being the new director. It was a job waiting for him," says Henderek. "I knew Alvin though my dancing days in Sweden when the Ailey company was on tour in Europe. The company always rehearsed in Claude Marchant's studio in Gothenburg, where he had a company that I danced in. Claude and Alvin were close friends, so he liked to come to our studio. I spent hours watching Alvin interact with his dancers. He was a warm human being. I feel there is a real connection between Robert and Alvin. They both share being sensitive people and artists with trusting smiles as large as life. Robert is so good for the company. I can feel Alvin through him. I understand why Judith Jamison chose



PHOTO: PAUL KOLNIK

Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater in Robert Battle's "The Hunt."

him to lead the Ailey company?"

Company connections

Ailey company members have also made an impact on Houston's dance community. The African Dance Society, founded by Madeleine Pate Wright at Houston Community College, brought in several company members over the years, including Marilyn Banks in 1989, Dwana Smallwood in 2003 and 2005, and Glen Allen Sims in 2007.

In 2009, current Ailey dancer Hope Boykin set "A Long Journey Home" on Ad Deum Dance Company, a dance tailored made to the small troupe's strengths. The last time the company was here, Ad Deum watched Boykin triumph in "Go in Grace," with award-winning singing group Sweet Honey In The Rock, in her second work for the Ailey company.

More recently, rehearsal director and guest artist Matthew Rushing was in town to visit with Ad Deum and its director Randall Flinn. The two talked teaching and choreography while Rushing took classes with Ad Deum and joined in the company's communal culture while on vacation.

Houston dancer makes the ranks

There's always something truly exciting when a Houston son makes the ranks of

a major dance company like Ailey. Marcus Jarrell Willis' story has fate written all over it. "People were telling me that I should be dancing with Ailey before I even knew the company existed," recalls Willis. As a teen, he left Houston to attend the Ailey School, eventually landing a coveted spot in Ailey II. Other than two years between Ailey II and joining the company in 2008 when he guested with Dominic Walsh Dance Theater, Willis' dance career has been involved with the Ailey institution.

Dancing on home turf is equally exciting and nerve wracking for Willis, who was new to the company for Ailey's last Houston show. "It was overwhelming because my family had not seen me dance in a long time," recalls Willis. "This time, I'm more relaxed; I feel more in my own skin."

Ailey has packed a wallop of a program, including Rennie Harris' riveting "Home," Ohad Naharin's dynamic "Minus 16," Battle's signature, "Takademe" and relentlessly physical "The Hunt," Paul Taylor's "Arden Court," and of course, Alvin Ailey's masterpiece, "Revelations."

Willis finds a challenge in each piece. "Robert's work is hard for me. "The Hunt" is about raw power, and I'm more on the fluid side," he says. "My nick-

name is 'Crazy Legs Willis' because I'm so loose and limber. I have to work to get that aggressive spirit down."

The relentless pace of Harris' "Home" took some getting used to. "Rennie used to tell us if we had one more minute to live we would be OK. That runs through my mind while I'm dancing," says Willis.

Houston audiences come for the variety, but "Revelations" has to be in the mix. Last June, in an unprecedented outreach program, SPA brought in two Ailey teaching artists who worked with 150 Houston area students, utilizing "Revelations" as an inspirational framework for creative writing and dance.

Performing "Revelations" for the first time with the Ailey company caught Willis off guard. "I had performed it with Ailey II, but this was different," he says. "Standing under that famous umbrella next to Matthew Rushing and Renee Robinson, who were my idols growing up, was truly amazing. I felt part of something big."

— NANCY WOZNY

March 2-4, 2012

Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater
Jones Hall
www.spahouston.org

GEOMETRIC WORKS BY RICARDO PANIAGUA

p: 972.804.1548



VIEW 1



VIEW 2



VIEW 3

Artwork: "Machine Flower" Lacquer on Douglas Fir Hardwood 10 in. x 10 in. x 10 in. (2011)

MICHAEL KENNAUGH

ZERO ROAD

JANUARY 28 - MARCH 3, 2012



Fault Line 2011 oil on canvas 31" x 51"

MOODY GALLERY 2815 COLQUITT HOUSTON, TX 77098 713-526-9911 WWW.MOODYGALLERY.COM

Moments of Respite:

Understated Elegance Triumphs in Yoshio Taniguchi's Asia Society Texas Center

HOUSTON IS NOT KNOWN FOR its grand public architecture. We have a smattering of noteworthy and inspired civic space spaces. The Menil obviously, the Miesian and Monean MFAH buildings, the Rothko Chapel of course, City Hall perhaps (but no one goes there) and maybe a space or two on one of the university campuses in town, but that's about it. Houston, a landscape of private interests and corporate politics, has a tradition of grandiose private architecture, where the benefits of a bespoke space are enjoyed alone or in pairs, quietly and leisurely behind closed doors — or gates if you're lucky. Not so for the new Asia Society Texas Center. This new building, designed by Japanese Architect Yoshio Taniguchi and scheduled to open in April 2012, rivals any of the top spaces in Houston.

The Asia Society Texas Center (ASTC) is a small cultural facility located in Houston's Museum District. The building encompasses 39,000 square feet of space at a cost of over \$48 million, making it a very, very nice place to visit. The immediately notable quality of the new Asia Society is just how much of its lush, landscaped lot has been left open and undeveloped — a surely un-Houstonian gift to the neighborhood. Similarly outlandish are the lengths to which the building attempts to actually disappear. Standing from any outside street corner, the building, for all of its pregnant grandeur, has very little punch. From nearly every exterior perspective, the building



PHOTO: PAUL HESTER

blends, bows and blurs into the surrounding neighborhood. But when we step inside — it's a whole different experience.

After crossing the generous courtyard, we are led to a modest front entrance. A small canopy over the front door architecturally performs the obligatory bow



PHOTO: PAUL HESTER

TOP: Exterior of the Center, which fronts on Southmore Boulevard, facing north, in the heart of Houston's Museum District. LEFT: Interior view of Center.

as we enter the delicately glazed front atrium.

Here, for the first time, we get a taste of Taniguchi's rich material pallet. Warm Jura limestone covers the left wall and a dark, rough Basaltina Italian Stone paves the floor. Both of these hearty materials contrast with the delicately-lined glass wall through which we just passed, and on the peripheral view we can catch a glimpse of Taniguchi's vibrant American cherry wood tones. Five materials, glass, basalt, limestone, wood and steel, serve as the constant theme throughout Taniguchi's building, and each material performs a particular part in this chamber-orchestra sized master-piece. But the double-height atrium is a mere appetizer. Around the corner awaits a progressive sequence of even more impressive spaces.

On the immediate other side of the atrium wall we come suddenly into the soaring and stately Great Hall. Standing at the front of the Great Hall, we can see pieces of other spaces surrounding us — the performance theater to the left, a hint of the water garden, a peek of the upstairs lounge, a sliver of the cafe. These partially obscured views into other spaces create a sense of spectacle that enliven the Great Hall. We see people walking in distant rooms and get a sense of spaces to come. As an introduction, the Great Hall is a rich spatial experience, but the most special spaces are yet to come. On the second floor, Taniguchi

has placed three gardens that orbit around the central atrium and we get the impression that these are really what the ASTC is all about. The three gardens — water, stone and vegetal — are purely contemplative, almost objects, we can't really access them, and that's not the point. They are discrete spaces, each with their own meditative methods and beautifully detailed. And yet...

As an organization the Asia Society is complex and multi-faceted with a broad mission to "strengthen relationships and promote understanding among the people, leaders and institutions of the United States and Asia." They perform their mission by fostering dialog between these two peoples, generating "new ideas across the fields of arts and culture, policy and business and education" to further their goals. It's a big mission. Not to mention the fact that "Asia" here encompasses over 30 countries including the people of Bangladesh, Afghanistan, Australia, the Fiji Islands and Bhutan to name a few — a very broad constituency.

The challenge to Taniguchi then, it would seem, would be to artfully mediate this razor edge between the word "Asia" and the plurality of that population. To essentially answer the question, "How can any one institution embody the cultures, values and principles of so many very different people?" And judging from the building the answer is: you can't and don't try. For the Asia Society,

Taniguchi has designed a collection of individual spaces, preferencing the experience of each space over that of the whole. In the end, we get a sense of standing in framed vignettes, moments of respite, not the journey between them — and it's exactly right.

Considering the daunting task of Asia Society's Mission, the series of spaces in their discreteness gives us the only possible way to engage the architectural challenge — through quiet meditation. Rather than attempting to render a delicate cultural multiplicity in rough materials, or provide an over-simplified answer of cultural reductivism, we are left with a series of spaces — a fractured mosaic — to reconcile. Taniguchi, in a series of unique contemplative zones, deftly reflects the question of plurality back into our hands. For the question asked of him, on the surface relating only to Asia Society, is profoundly related to the very basics of democracy, freedom and liberty. And it is only ever answered by each of us individually — out of personal reflection and sincere thought.

— NED DODINGTON

Ned Dodington is the director of Caroline Collective, a founding board member of C2 Creative, chief editor of AnimalArchitecture.org and a designer at PDR. He currently lives in Houston TX.

www.asiasociety.org/texas

A Timely Chekhov

The Alley Theatre Tackles “The Seagull”

THERE ARE 32 KNOWN ENGLISH translations of Anton Chekhov’s 1895 play “The Seagull,” and when deciding to add the title to the Alley Theatre’s 2011–12 season, Gregory Boyd and his team read every one of them. After all, this would be only the second Chekhov play at the Alley in Boyd’s 25 years there and his first crack at this particular work. In his first season at the Alley in the late 80s, he directed “Three Sisters,” which he has directed four times total in his career — “12 sisters worth,” as he puts it. But for “The Seagull,” the masterpiece among a collection of masterful works by the Russian writer who Boyd calls the greatest playwright of the modern era, everything had to be just right. He found revelations in a number of translations, from Tom Stoppard’s (which felt “too British”), to the first 1909 English translation and the seminal 1939 translation by Stark Young, which was done in collaboration with actors Alfred Lunt and Lynn Fontanne, who famously starred in a New York production that year. As a play about the theater, having actors involved proved to be insightful.

Still, none of them felt perfect. “The fact that there are 32 translations says that none of them are considered definitive,” Boyd says.

So he commissioned two separate literal translations from the original Russian, with the translators working independently of one another. The result is a combination of those, with some inspiration taken from the 1939 version.

“You wonder if people really spoke it while they were writing it down,” Boyd says. “Part of the reason Chekhov is unique and why you can’t really make a film version of these plays is because it’s not always the person talking that’s the focus. It’s important to Chekhov for you to see all of the characters all the time, which the theater lets you do. In the language of film, if you stay close-up or at a two-shot, someone’s choosing for you who to eliminate. But many times the eliminated silent character is the one whose world is changing. He doesn’t communicate the play strictly through the dialogue; that’s one element of what he’s doing.”

“The juxtaposition of a silent character to a speaking character and the juxtaposition from scene to scene is what he’s going for,” he continues. “So if the dialogue calls attention to itself, with a clunky word or an old-fashioned word



(L to R) Karl Glusman as Konstantin and Erica Lutz as Nina in the Alley Theatre’s production of “The Seagull.”

or a too-British-sounding word, you’re not making the scene work. We’re trying to make it as speakable as we can without being modern or contemporary.” Even in 1939, Stark Young wrote about his translation that “we could scarcely pretend that Chekhov’s meanings as a rule are not easy to discover.”

It’s an issue that has perplexed theater practitioners in the past century: how to keep this play about a group of actors, writers and artists at a Russian estate as true to the original as possible.

One of Boyd’s commissioned translations — from a former colleague at Williams College — yielded a surprising result: “It was funny,” Boyd says. “It wasn’t simply literary or poetical. His lines were

shorter in their rhythm; there were fewer words in them. I hate productions of these plays that go on and on. The plays are pretty fast if you do them right.”

That isn’t so surprising when you consider that it’s often repeated that Chekhov considered many of his plays comedies, even if that might be a hard concept for modern audiences who want to compartmentalize everything. Admittedly, “The Cherry Orchard” probably offers more laugh lines than we usually get from “The Seagull.”

“He called them comedy, but Chekhov is a little bit of a trickster too,” Boyd says. “It’s not comedy like ‘The Comedy of Errors’ is a comedy. He’s really trying to get people to stop being so morose and

moody about it. Bad things happen in ‘Seagull,’ there’s no question about that, but I don’t think you can categorize it as a drama or a tragedy or a comedy. It’s a play. A Chekhov play is a very particular kind of animal.”

Boyd’s production features Alley Resident Company members James Black (as novelist Trigorin), Jeffrey Bean, James Belcher, Chris Hutchison and Todd Waite. Josie de Guzman is the actress Arkadina and Karl Glusman is her son, aspiring writer Konstantin. The production takes place in the smaller Neuhaus Stage, because Boyd likes it when the classics are done there — “You get a chance to see these iconic plays up close and they get much more of a human face when you do that.”

It’s interesting to note that the production comes on the heels of several high-profile and acclaimed Chekhov productions in New York in 2011. Like all classic writers and their individual works, these plays seem to have cycles. When the legendary Peter Brook, known for producing original work, revived “The Cherry Orchard” in New York in 1988, Boyd asked Brook why he chose to revive Chekhov after so many years of producing his own work.

“He said ‘when the world is very tense that’s when Chekhov becomes back into our consciousness.’ I think that’s probably true right now. That’s why we’re seeing a lot of revivals. The atmosphere in the world could use some healing, the heavily oxygenated air that Chekhov brings.”

That sentiment is true in any language.

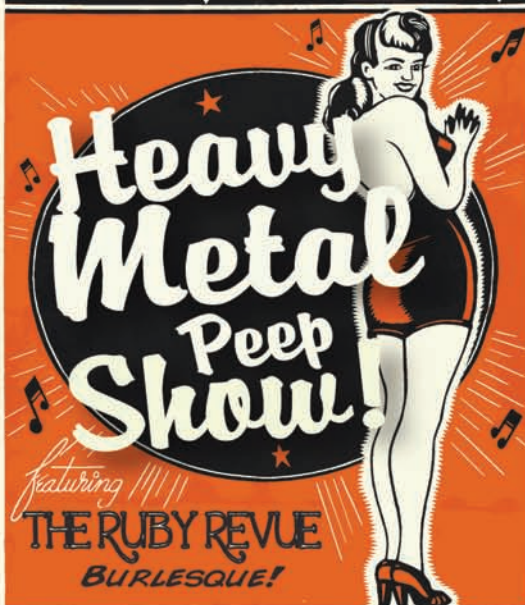
— MARK LOWRY

Mark Lowry is an arts writer based in Dallas. He’s the former theater critic of the Fort Worth Star-Telegram and the co-founder and editor of the North Texas performing arts website TheaterJones.com, which is a media partner with Arts+Culture DFW.

Feb. 3–March 4
“The Seagull”
Alley Theatre
www.alleytheatre.org

APRIL 2012

NIC NOBLIQUE *on the* RAMPAGE!



SENSATIONAL! * BOLD! * STARTLING!

GALLERY M SQUARED IS PLEASED TO PRESENT...

NIC NOBLIQUE

'Heavy Metal Peep Show!'
MODERN ABSTRACT IN CORTEN STEEL

ON VIEW APRIL 13 - MAY 6, 2012

OPENING RECEPTION APRIL 14, 2012
7 - 10 pm

WITH SPECIAL GUEST PERFORMANCES BY
THE RUBY REVUE



339 W. 19th St., Houston, Texas 77008

713.861.6070

www.gallerymsquared.com



"WE ARE THE SMOKE THAT GETS IN YOUR EYES" / 72" X 30" / ACRYLIC & SILK SCREEN ON WOOD / 2011

JONATHON KIMBRELL

jonathonkimbrell.com

John Sonsini

Men at Work

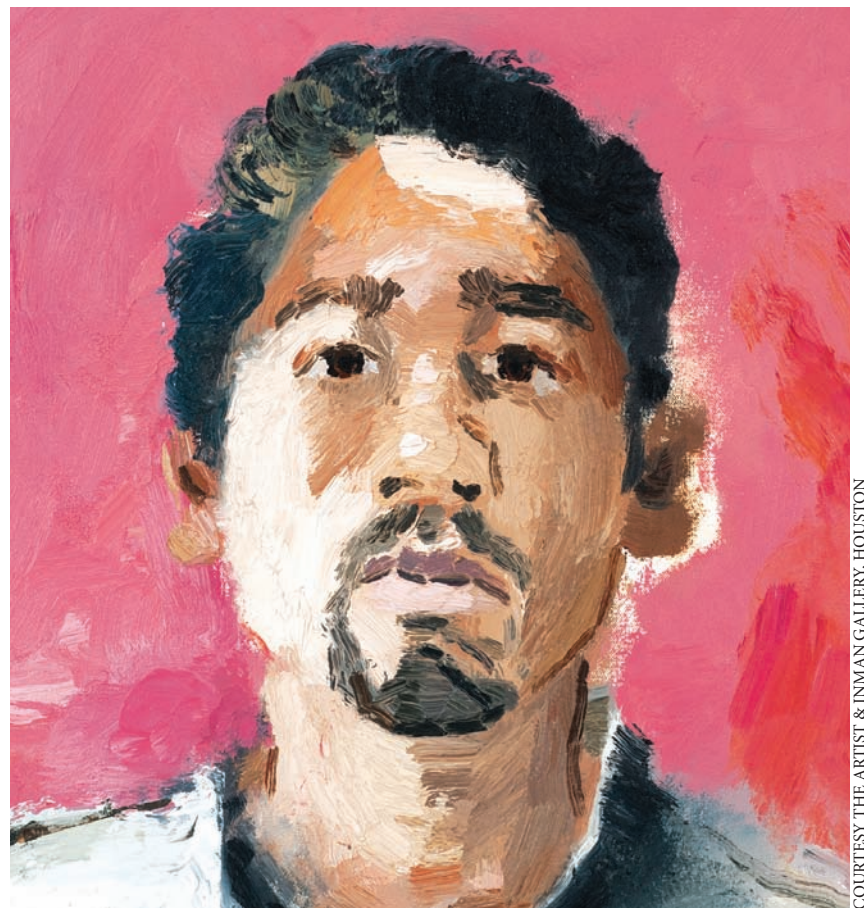
THE PHRASE “PAINTING FROM life” can bring to mind a host of images produced by the working artist — fruit-filled still life arrangements positioned as a table centerpiece, landscapes created plein-air on the side of the road, or bar scenes as viewed from the corner booth. But day workers and soccer players modeling in the artist’s studio?

Over the years, John Sonsini has painted from life — portraits of men whom he identifies as Los Angeles “day workers,” nearly exclusively Latin men who gather on street corners, in hardware stores or similar, inquiring about daily for-hire work. Though their range of skills can be applied to construction and other labor-intensive tasks, Sonsini proposes a competitive wage for five-hour workdays as his studio model. A day-worker’s consistent availability in concentrated amounts of time is especially advantageous for Sonsini. And for anyone who has had to sit or stand still for any length of time, you can respect the amount of rigorous work that goes into modeling.

“My practice of working with men who are not professional models really began in the mid-1980s when I met so many of my sitters at the legendary Athletic Model Guild studios, known for their raw and racy nudes of streetwise guys,” says Sonsini.

“In the early 90s, I taught a life drawing class at a Los Angeles art college where the classes worked with exclusively professional models. So during those earliest years of working from life I got the opportunity to weigh one against the other — professional and non-professional models. What I liked was that non-professional models approached sitting for me as work whereas I found that the professional models seemed to approach sitting as more of a creative experience and I didn’t really care for that. So, I guess it is this notion of having a sitter that views the process in a way that I do — it is work.”

While working for five hours a day for several days at a time, Sonsini’s workers must handle not only the mental rigor of staying focused while modeling but also deal with the physical strain. It is important that all parties involved, including Sonsini, are as comfortable as possible. So while he usually determines if he wants the sitter to be standing or seated, allowing him with continual, unobstructed views of their face, hands, feet and torso, Sonsini leaves it up to the them to adopt a position that will be comfortable while allowing him unobstructed views of their faces, arms, feet, and torso. Therefore, most often the portraits depict men standing with feet shoulder-width apart, arms crossed



COURTESY THE ARTIST & INMAN GALLERY, HOUSTON

TOP: John Sonsini, detail of “Jorge,” 2011, Oil on Canvas, 20 x 16 inches. BOTTOM: “Sergio & Francisco,” 2011, Oil on Canvas, 72 x 60 inches.

at their chest or hands in their pockets, and relaxed facial expressions.

Many times the nuances of this process may be overlooked. Imagine the exchange that unfolds between an artist and his model over the course of several days: behind-the-scenes conversations, the initial awkwardness of sitting with a stranger and the eventual level of familiarity, the intimacy of watching someone work, and knowing you are being watched (for both the painter and the sitter).

Sonsini explains, “I am trying to capture an immediacy within the making of a painting and the building of an image.”

This capturing, making, and building is illustrated by his subject’s frontal positioning, the weight of his brush strokes, his color mixing and paint application, and the non-hierarchical relationship between the figure, ground, and minimal pictorial elements. And though it is concern for his model’s comfort that mostly drives Sonsini’s composition, a viewer’s read of various suggestive psychological or emotional states is somewhat unavoidable — especially given their physical stance, body language, and Sonsini’s tendency to exaggerate the size of their hands and feet. Simply put, he says, “One rarely decides to paint a subject for the same reasons that others want to look at it.”

Similar in spirit to his day-worker compositions — which include minimal personal elements such as a suitcase, a hat, or table — is a new body of work portraying men who play soccer (“fut-

bol”), a very popular past time in Los Angeles. The compositional depiction of his models in uniform and with a soccer ball suggests a weighted importance to what these men carry on their backs and in their arms.

Much of this new work is included in John Sonsini: New Paintings, the exhibition currently on view at Inman Gallery. New Paintings is a result of Sonsini’s working relationship with Houston, which began in 2003 when he was included in a group exhibition at Inman.

He recalls, “Kerry Inman and I discussed the possibility of doing a solo show of my work. In the end, I wasn’t able to spend the kind of time away from Los Angeles that would have been necessary for the sort of Houston project we’d been discussing. So, instead we decided to proceed with the show but I’d paint all the work in LA.”

He adds, “I’ve visited Houston on several occasions. I love the city. I feel certain that at sometime in the future I will return to make paintings in Houston.”

— NANCY ZASTUDIL

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

January 13–February 25, 2012
 “John Sonsini: New Paintings”
 Inman Gallery
 Houston, TX
www.inmangallery.com



COURTESY THE ARTIST & INMAN GALLERY, HOUSTON

Making Music: Making a Career

Houston's Young Artist Professional Development Programs

SO YOU HAVE TRAINING AT A major music school, does that guarantee you a career? Not necessarily. That's where professional development programs come in. As the number of highly trained musicians graduating from universities and conservatories has dramatically increased over the last generation and the number of traditional career opportunities has steadily decreased, the issue of how to make a living as an artist in the 21st century is one being pondered by many institutions and arts organizations. In Houston, three distinct programs are providing their own answers.

Shepherd School of Music

Catching up with rising conductor Jacob Sustaita isn't an easy prospect. I finally connected with him in between rehearsals of the recent production of Kirk Mechem's "Tartuffe" at the University of Houston's Moores Opera Center, where he is the assistant conductor. I could hear the hum of a copying machine in the background as he prepared parts to distribute at his afternoon session with the orchestra.

"The thing about music schools," says Sustaita, "is that they teach you how to play, but not how to get a job. Of all the classes I took, I remember so much from that one."

He is referring to Janet Rarick's "Professional Development for Musicians" course at Rice University's Shepherd School of Music. It's been in existence for several years, and more recently is just one of many programs offered to graduate students in an attempt address the issue of how to translate pure talent and rigorous high-level training into a working career.

"They have to be in this really intense area of study to build their performance skills," Rarick says of her students. "However, if they can get out of that from time to time, I've seen that it can really change their thinking about the future and get them excited, motivated and positive about what can be done."

If you are a young artist like Sustaita, the question is a simple one. Now that I have mastered the basics of my art, how do I turn that training into a career? With the help of some very practical assistance, Sustaita seems to have found his own answer. In addition to his position at the Moores Opera Center, the 30-year old conductor is also the newly appointed Music Director of the Min-

nesota Philharmonic, where he has a weekly rehearsal in addition to his work in Houston.

Richard Lavenda is a composer and director of graduate studies at the Shepherd School of Music. He asserts, "As there are more and more alternative career paths, it's not enough to walk out in a tuxedo and play the gig." Lavenda recently spearheaded the overhaul of the program he supervises.

"Dean Robert Yekovich asked me to take a look at the graduate program, and to find out specifically what we are not providing," said Lavenda. The result is a completely unique program with a menu of classes that address everything from pedagogy, to how to speak and write about music, to Alexander Technique and Dalcroze Eurhythmics.

Da Camera Young Artist Program

Another benefactor of the professional development curriculum at the Shepherd School of Music is Craig Hauschildt. In addition to being a freelance percussionist, he is also the Director of Education at Da Camera Houston, and oversees that organization's newly formed Young Artist Program which offers a fellowship program that provides performance opportunities for young artists who are either in a graduate studies program, or have just completed one.

Along with providing its fellows a bridge from universities and conservatories to the professional world, the Da Camera Young Artist Program also challenges its young artists to find new ways of presenting classical music in a unique and engaging way, thereby offering listeners experiences with classical music that are outside of traditional concert models.

"The definitions that people have for classical music are very limited. One of my personal goals is to expand people's understanding of what is classical music," says Hauschildt.

These ideas are put into practice in the "Stop, Look and Listen!" concert series, for which the artists are asked to create inventive programs and pairings of music to be performed amidst the various galleries that inhabit the Menil Campus. There was something inexplicably moving about hearing music by J.S. Bach for unaccompanied flute and violin juxtaposed against the backdrop of the gargantuan, splattered canvases of the Cy Twombly Gallery. The sacred nature of Bach's music was honored, yet attend-



COURTESY DA CAMERA HOUSTON

Cellist Eva Lymenstull, bassist Annabella Leslie and trombonist Benjamin Zilber performing in Cy Twombly Gallery as part of Da Camera's Stop, Look and Listen! event.

ees were free to stroll about the gallery, while listening unconstrained from the traditional concert setting.

Houston Grand Opera Studio

With distinguished alumni such as Joyce DiDonato and Anna Maria Martinez, the Houston Grand Opera Studio is a much more storied young artist program. Laura Canning currently heads the program that has been in existence now for more than 30 years.

"The idea is that we are a kind of bridge between formal training and a full-fledged freelance career. I liken it to an internship at a hospital, you're doing the work as a student doctor, but you've got someone looking over your shoulder to check that you're doing it right, and you've got a safety-net should you be about to do something dramatically wrong," says Canning. "We are also shamelessly elitist. We are looking for the best possible singers with the best possible artistic potential." Despite the self-professed elitism of the program, the singers are anything but pretentious.

"I'm a good musician, but I'm not an amazing one," says tenor Brendan Tuohy, who is a rare third-year participant in the HGO Studio. "School is where you get the fundamentals, but there is no way I could do what I've done this year without a young artist program." He is one of 10 participants who were each chosen from a field of around 600 applicants. Currently, in addition to understudying a major role in HGO's production of Benjamin Britten's "The Rape

of Lucretia," he is singing a separate role in Giuseppe Verdi's "La Traviata."

Soprano Brittany Wheeler, a current HGO Studio Artist, considers getting to be on stage with some of the most successful singers in the business the best aspect of the program.

"You think of these great stars as being perfect, but what you get actually to see is that these amazing singers go through the same process that we do," says Wheeler. Like Brendan Tuohy, Wheeler can be seen alongside Albina Shagimuratova in the current production of Verdi's "La Traviata."

A New Era

To some degree opera singers have always had to create for themselves how to translate their artistry and training into a working career, however, for many instrumentalists this is a seemingly new line of inquiry. Craig Hauschildt says of this new era, "I do think we went through a very short golden age, where you could get a job in an orchestra pretty easily and have a life-long career doing it. I think now that we are past that as the only model, everyone is looking for a way to make a living."

— CHRIS JOHNSON

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





YOUR COMPLETE GUIDE TO HOUSTON ARTS & CULTURE

MUSIC
THEATRE & COMEDY
DANCE
VISUAL ARTS & MUSEUMS
FILM & VIDEO
BOOKS, POETRY & LECTURES
KIDS & FAMILIES
FESTIVALS & SPECIAL EVENTS
SPORTS, OUTDOORS & SCIENCE
FREE EVENTS



haa houstonartsalliance

 PRESENTS
The Branford Marsalis & Joey Calderazzo Duo







Friday, March 23, 2012

Zilkha Hall at
The Hobby Center
for the Performing Arts
800 Bagby St.
Houston, TX 77002
Cocktails at 7pm
Concert begins at 8pm

Tickets are \$35. To purchase
tickets, please visit:
www.TheHobbyCenter.org
or call the box office at
713.315.2525

For more information,
please visit:
www.MusicDoingGood.org

Proceeds from this event
will benefit Music Doing
Good's outreach program.

 PRESENTS
The Art of the Songwriter
Café



Friday, March 9, 2012

Featuring Music Doing Good core artists Ray Yonkin and Aaron Kaufman.
Special guests: Ronny Cox (actor / songwriter), Bill Ward (songwriter), Karen Mal (mandolin / vocals),
Radoslav Lorkovic (piano / accordion), Chris Watkins (keyboard), Brian Brewer (bass)

The Ensemble Theatre | 3535 Main St. | Houston, TX 77002
7pm pre-show party & art auction, 8pm show time
Ticket purchases: \$20 in advance, \$25 at the door
To purchase tickets, please visit: www.MusicDoingGood.org or call 888-647-4942

ALL PROCEEDS BENEFIT our spotlight partner,
HEALTHCARE FOR THE HOMELESS - HOUSTON
www.Homeless-Healthcare.org



Stanton Welch

Houston Ballet's Fast and Furious Choreographer

HOUSTON BALLET'S ARTISTIC DIRECTOR, Stanton Welch wasted no time ascending to world renown as a choreographer. Once he got started, that is.

Most dancers expect to spend years in the studio and on the stage before moving on to a choreographic career. The offspring of professionals in the field usually start clocking their hours even before they can walk.

Nevertheless, Welch, whose parents Marilyn Jones and Garth Welch were both principal dancers with The Australian Ballet and pillars in their country's dance community, managed to grow up without taking more than an arbitrary jazz class until he was 17.

Still, one cannot have dancing parents without a great deal of exposure to the art form. It was the perspective he gained as an audience member that finally drew a teenage Welch into the dance studio, where he began an intense period of training and excelled, making his mother and father progenitors of what would become known as "The Royal Family of Ballet" in Australia.

Before dance, acting captured Welch's attention.

"I did some TV shows as a child and lots of film and acting lessons," he recalls, "even writing plays and films." -- transferable creative skills put to good use when, right away, as part of his dance training, Welch began to choreograph at his parents' ballet school.

"I had always wanted to be involved in the creation as well as performing," explains Welch.

And, create he did. His very first piece, "Hades," made during his initial year of training, won numerous prizes and praise. Therefore, it should not surprise that only four years into his pursuit of ballet, he took on his first professional commission, creating "The Three of Us" for The Australian Ballet and "A Time to Dance" for The Dancers Company (the regional touring arm of The Australian Ballet) in 1990.

Patrons were already buzzing about Welch's work when in 1994 his ballet "Divergence" debuted. A milestone work for the choreographer that con-



PHOTO: AMITAVA SARKAR

Katherine Precourt in the Houston Ballet production of Stanton Welch's "Cinderella."

tinues to delight audiences worldwide, the sultry and virtuosic piece entered Houston Ballet's repertoire on its 10th anniversary. Not yet another decade later, Houston audiences will likely find that the iconic "Divergence" remains as fresh and relevant as ever when it appears again this season in the mixed-bill "Rock, Roll, & Tutus."

"I liken Stanton Welch's choreography to a well-tailored suit; intelligently constructed, refined, and neatly executed, Stanton's choreography expects impeccable technique and beautiful line," says Houston Ballet's newest principal, Danielle Rowe, who as a former dancer with The Australian Ballet has appeared in "Divergence" in her home country.

"Divergence" is not the only work Welch is dusting off in 2012. Though it has not sat long on Houston Ballet's shelf, his darkly romantic (with a feminist twist) version of "Cinderella," created in 1997 for The Australian Ballet, has a revival in late-February.

"Ballet is a living art form," Welch explains. "The ballets don't start to age until I am dead. Every revisit can feel new. Every time it evolves."

Though he created "Cinderella" while still in his 20s, it was not Welch's first full-length ballet.

In 1995, The Australian Ballet gave Welch the opportunity to pour his passion for the opera, "Madame Butterfly," into a ballet. The production received a standing ovation on its opening night and is frequently considered Welch's signature work.

Restaged by not only The Australian Ballet and Houston Ballet (look for it again in 2013), but also by companies throughout the world, "Madame Butterfly" resulted in the naming of Welch as a resident choreographer of The Aus-

tralian Ballet and sparked a prolific period of dance making as his work became internationally sought-after.

Recognized as a choreographic shape-shifter within the dance world, Welch explores classical technique and execution while easily adapting to ballet's contemporary or classical modes of expression -- all with a hint (sometimes more) of rebellion and defiance.

Welch's "Cinderella," for example, is no waif pining for a prince. Instead, a tomboy that in the end -- well, let us not spoil the ending here. To say that it is a fairytale fit for young girls in the 21st century will suffice.

In 1999, Welch created his first work for Houston Ballet, then under the direction of Ben Stevenson. Veteran principal dancer, Mireille Hassenboehler notes that before "Indigo," she had never danced in a ballet with bared legs and midriff.

"I think it was the first time I felt like a strong, sexy woman on stage," she claims.

Probably due to his early acting experiences, helping dancers develop a role is one of Welch's strengths.

"He is very good at communicating motivation and expectation," says Houston Ballet principal, Melody Mennite, who has created roles in several of Welch's ballets, including another strong female -- the title character in "Marie," Welch's ballet about the doomed Marie Antoinette.

Assuming artistic directorship of Houston Ballet in 2003 hardly inhibited Welch's creative habit. He has premiered more than 20 ballets in less than a decade. He affirms that ideas for new ballets sometimes hit him suddenly, while others slowly come to a boil in his imag-

ination.

For the triple-bill, "Rock, Roll, & Tutus," which in addition to "Divergence" will feature the Jagger-inspired, "Rooster" by Christopher Bruce, Welch aims to debut a new piece that is the polar opposite of the other dances.

"I hope 'Tapestry' will be a very different type of work from the high-impact 'Divergence,'" says Welch "I'd like it to be a very subtle, pastel, romantic work."

Now in his early 40s, Welch has been creating diverse and notable choreography for nearly half his life.

"We are preparing to do a newly composed score," he divulges, "This is a new, difficult, and exciting frontier."

It is just one more challenge to meet as he finishes his ninth season as Houston Ballet's Artistic Director. Asked if his work has changed during this time, Welch's answer is matter-of-fact:

"I must focus not just on what I need as a choreographer, but also on what the company and the city needs."

— NICHELLE STRZEPEK

Nichelle Strzepak is a dancer, writer, and the founder and editor of *DanceAdvantage.net* where she covers all things dance and dance training.

nichelledances.wordpress.com

February 23–March 4
"Cinderella"

March 8–18
"Rock, Roll & Tutus"

Brown Wortham Center

www.houstonballet.org

Leaving the Silo

Artists on Seeing Other Disciplines

BEING AN ARTIST IS AN ALL ENCOMPASSING job, with time and money often in short supply. Yet, many leave the studio every now and then to see work outside of their own disciplines. Whether it's inspiration or a break from their own world, it's a healthy sign for any arts ecology. A handful of Houston's outstanding artists tell us what they see and how it informs their own practices.

Jennifer Decker on dance
Artistic Director of Mildred's Umbrella Theatre Company
www.mildredsumbrella.com

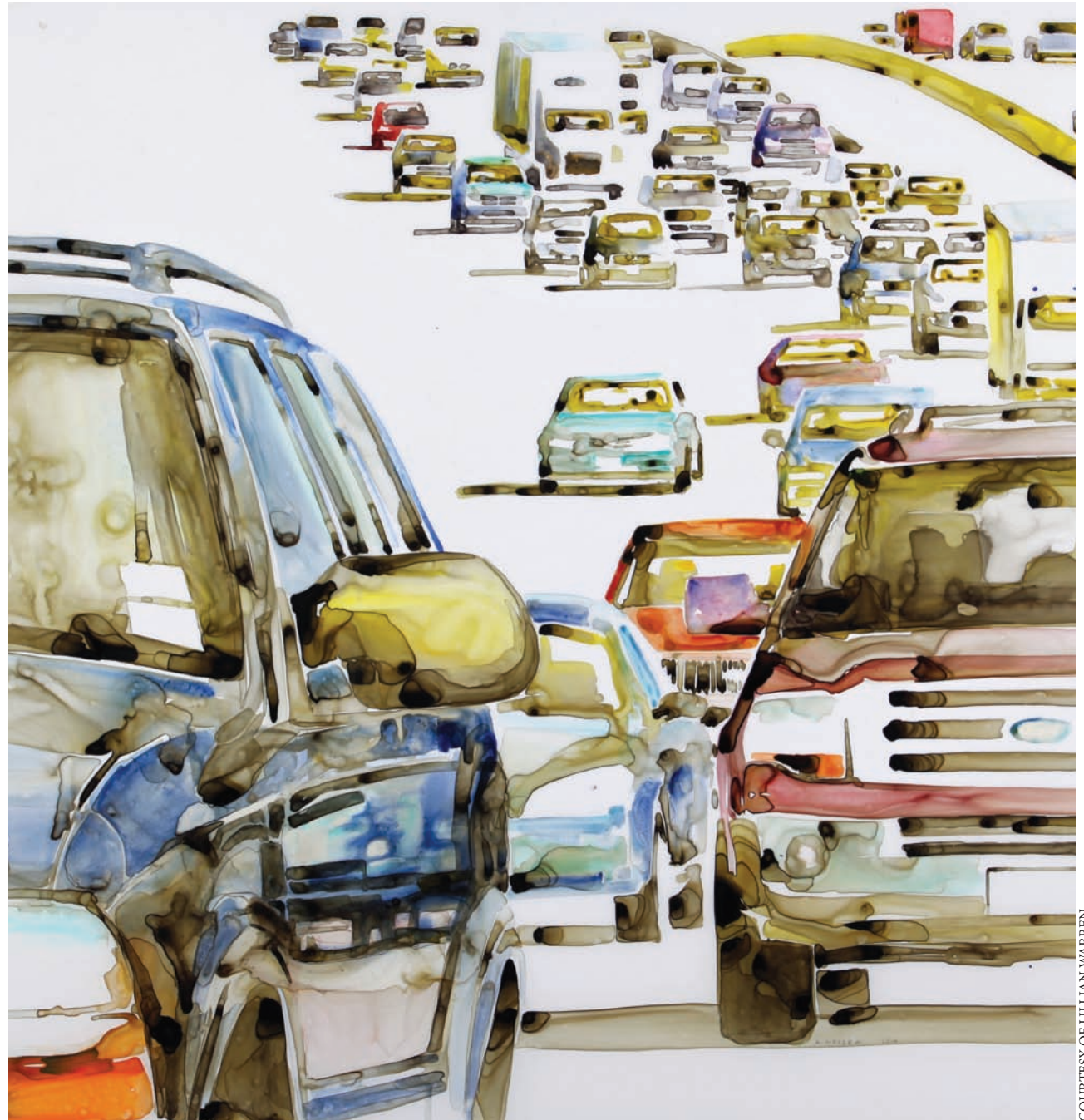
You really have to experience dance with your senses rather than your intellect, which really challenges me, as I'm a person who loves language and vocal expression. Having said that, my favorite dance performance I've ever seen so far was watching Lydia Hance dancing to an actress reading a story. I do prefer words, if I can get them. Although the theater I create is very experimental, when I watch dance, I prefer traditional work, because the most impressive thing about it is watching a person do something that I could never in a million years do myself.

Novelist Julie Herman on theater
www.mysterygarden.com

Live theater offers me a chance to enjoy a fully realized version of what I am trying to create in my 2D, black-and-white fictional world. My every sense goes on alert when the house lights go down, as I wait to see what creative choices the design team has made — and how the company will bring it to life. All these tiny stitches in muslin and satin, blue/red/yellow light filtering in from stage left, a distant barking dog, or the perfect strains of music, a backdrop of stars, an old bench by a sagging post, a sad-faced man leaning toward a pretty girl — get blended seamlessly into one fat inspiration just for me. I'm taking mental notes all along, even when my brain shuts down and relishes the play. I owe Houston theater for being my respite, an inspiring place to rejuvenate my poor imagination after pounding the keyboard.

Connor Walsh on other art forms
Principal, Houston Ballet
www.houstonballet.org

One of the few things that I always push myself to do is to see more art. Whether it be performance or visual art, it somehow always motivates me to work harder and to reach beyond what I think I am capable of. I just recently began to



COURTESY OF LILLIAN WARREN

Lillian Warren, "Traffic 15," Acrylic on Mylar, 30 x 30 inches.

choreograph, and through that process I'm learning how the arts are interconnected. I need to be emotionally stimulated in order to keep doing what I love doing. As long as I feel something while at a show or in a museum then I can hopefully hold onto that feeling and one day translate that into my own work as a dancer.

Painter Donna Perkins on dance
www.donnaeperkins.com

I've been privileged to be a fly on the wall as choreographers develop new work. The layers of building a new dance are like layers of paint. While I'm ignorant of dance technique and history, I love drawing bodies in motion. I find dance to be about line, gesture and movement.

In 2008 dancer/choreographer Jhon r. stonks and I began collaborations, which resulted in "Entanglements" at Archway Gallery in 2009.

My February 2012 show at Wagner Sousa Modern Art in Galveston will have several Paper Dance sculptures and photographs derived from previous Paper Dance sculptures. These sculptures were first created in collaboration with Jhon stonks' dance events. The Paper Dance sculptures, which hang from the ceiling, will be completed on site. The photographs are close-up images of the light playing across the surface of the paper from which the sculpture is constructed. This photo series is printed on aluminum.

Karen Stokes on visual arts
Artistic Director
of Karen Stokes Dance
Head of the Dance Division at UH School of Theatre & dance

www.karenstokesdance.org

I like to know what is out there — how others are viewing and responding to the world and what materials they are using to create their work. In order for art to work its magic you have to show up. I like thinking about art, be it visual or performance. Some work does not inspire thinking in me of any kind, and this is interesting too. Then I get to wonder why others seem to like the work, and how come I see it differently. Some-

Continued on Page 24

LEAVING THE SILO CONTINUED

times, I go with someone who will with “think back” to me afterwards. It’s great fun to engage in a lively discussion of form, intent, and success/failure of a given work. Going to art, music and theater events informs me about the world in a different way, widening my own thinking and enriching my life. I go in search of transformation, inspiration, wonder. But mostly, I go because I’m curious.

Photographer Lynn Lane on dance www.lynnlane.com

My life has always had involved dance. It moves and transforms me. When I am behind the camera, even when I’m not shooting dance, I look at the human form differently. I think of its potential for motion and when it is static, how dynamic that pause can be. Dance influences everything about me, and this year I’ll step from behind the camera to choreograph new work with two other choreographers. Dance is life...on stage and off.

Christina Carroll on theater Percussionist for Houston Ballet Orchestra

www.houstonballet.org
Theater helps me explore all of life the way music does. Theater and music can be intellectually stimulating, emotionally moving or just plain fun — sometimes all three in one night. Some moments at the theater it’s fun to laugh and be en-



PHOTO: LYNN LANE

TOP: “Dialogues with Dance: Brit Wallis and Catalina Molnari #1,” 2011, Lynn Lane Photography. BOTTOM: Hana Sakai & Domenico Luciano of Dominic Walsh Dance Theater.

tertained, other times it’s important to me to explore new ideas and feel things deeply. I love being a part of a big team that comes together to put on a special experience for the audience. One of my favorite things is to play backstage with an opera ‘banda’ where I have to dodge crew members and chorus and pick up my drumsticks from a table that might also be holding a sword, some wine gob-

lets and some plastic prop food. The theater and the concert hall are special, sacred places to me. The days when I come in the front door holding a ticket refresh and enrich me for the days I head into the stage door to go to work.

Mercedes Smith on dance, opera Flutist for HGO and Houston Ballet Orchestras

www.mercedesflute.com/home.html
I always joke that the hardest part of my job is that I rarely get to see what is happening on stage while I am playing. Only being able to catch an occasional glimpse from my seat in the orchestra pit makes me want to attend as many ballets and operas as I can outside of my work. Houston’s Dance Salad Festival provides me with endless artistic inspiration each year, and I’ve also been known to watch six performances in a row of works that Houston Ballet performs without orchestra — I’m a real ballet junkie. I also find fine art and opera to be very stimulating — no trip to New York City has been complete for me unless I’ve made it to both MOMA and the Metropolitan Opera.

Dominic Walsh on visual arts Artistic Director Dominic Walsh Dance Theater

www.dwdt.org
Over the course of my career, the impact and influence of visual arts in my work as a choreographer has played a formative role in both the concepts I explore and the specific use of sculptural imagery from which the choreographic vocabulary travels to and from. When I was creating “The Trilogy: Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart,” a series of connected ballets on the psychological character of

Mozart and the narrative of his music and personal life, I encountered Libbie Masterson’s photographic series entitled “Norwegian Landscapes.” I instantly felt the melancholic and romantic qualities of icy solitude her landscapes evoked. I also felt her work was relevant to the interior space of a genius like Mozart. I continue to work collaboratively with Nicola Parente. His work has a kinetic energy and a non-linear narrative that I find incredibly inspiring, and off of which I am able to create movement vocabularies that simulate the energy of the brush strokes vivid in Nicola’s work.

Painter Lillian Warren on dance www.lhwarren.com

Dance scares me to death. The very idea of getting out there in front of all those people, performing, putting yourself on the line in such a personal and physical way gives me hives. That fear gave birth to a tremendous respect for those who have that kind of courage and skill. Dance is visceral. When physicality and emotional accessibility is combined with conceptual rigor and innovation it blows my mind. I can enjoy dance with a certain delicious freedom. I don’t feel “responsible.” When I look at work from any discipline within the visual arts, I want to understand its context, its evolution, how the underlying concepts or techniques might or might not influence my work. With the performing arts, I can just let it wash over me.



PHOTO: SHIKAMA TAKASHI

Cultural Warrior:

Inprint's Executive Director Rich Levy

POET RICH LEVY HAS PRESIDED over Inprint since 1995. He holds a MFA in poetry from The Iowa Writers' Workshop, his writings have appeared in numerous publications, and in 2011, he was named Best Poet by the Houston Press.

With its popular Margaret Root Brown Reading Series, (where you can still hear a great author for \$5), packed workshops, Cool Brains! reading series for children, grants to leading writers, Inprint is clearly the city's leading literary organization. Recently, A + C editor **Nancy Wozny** visited with Levy on the porch of Inprint's Menil area bungalow to catch up on the literary landscape.

A + C: What's the secret to Inprint's remarkable longevity and health as a cultural force in Houston?

RICH LEVY: One of the things that gives us stability is that we hew closely to our mission. We are a literary arts organization, we present literary writers — not historians or biographers (even though we love their work). We provide fellowships and prizes to emerging poets and fiction writers, we offer writers workshops in poetry, personal essay, fiction and memoir. Our board appreciates that consistency, and we are fortunate to have one of the best boards in the city — dedicated, generous, hard working. Plus, we have one of the best staffs in the city, small (there are just five of us), and four of us have worked together for more than 10 years. I think the organizations and folks who support us tend to appreciate our fidelity to mission and our dedication to excellence, to the highest standard of quality.

How do you see Inprint in the overall ecology of Houston's literary scene, especially its relationship with The Creative Writing Program at UH?

I like the metaphor of the literary scene here as a kind of ecosystem. I don't see it as hierarchical, although some might say that the literary royalty in town resides at the University of Houston Creative Writing Program (CWP), which is nationally renowned and which we support (awarding more than \$2.4 million in fellowships, prizes, support for Gulf Coast magazine, etc., since 1983). Rather, I like to think of our literary milieu as a web of vibrant relationships, cutting across cultures, age groups, income brackets, and the synergistic relationship that we have with the UH CWP enriches it all, makes possible so much of what we do. The faculty, graduate students and alumni of the Program help us to shape the reading series, they interview the visiting writers, they teach

the Inprint Writers Workshops, they lead our memoir workshops for senior citizens at different senior centers across the city, they lead our Teachers-as-Writers workshops for K-12 teachers, they teach creative writing after school to young children at Project Row Houses. And it emanates from there. We arrange for writers from the reading series to give readings at HCC and TSU. The



PHOTO: FELIX SANCHEZ

Inprint Executive Director Rich Levy.

First Friday Reading Series (now in its 37th season) has been held at Inprint for many years, and we have book clubs that bring people together over literature. People get to know each other — writers, readers, audience, funders. It's partly the culture of Houston, which encourages collaboration and openness and all kinds of social and artistic mobility. We think of Inprint as a nexus, as a kind of connective tissue.

The Margaret Root Brown Reading Series continually gains in reputation nationally. Since Donald Barthelme isn't around to call his high profile writer friends any more can you give us an idea of how the series comes together?

We are constantly networking, with New York publishers, the CWP faculty, other writers, folks who attend the readings, anyone who might have a connection that might be helpful. Our intention is to present leading writers who rarely read in Houston, writers of a wide range of ethnic backgrounds (that reflect the rich ethnic mix of Houston), to balance gender and have a mix of genres and basically offer the very best reading series we can imagine — something that we would enjoy and find extraordinary.

Can you talk about the connection between readers and writers?

Reading is still a private act — even though the modality is changing, from

the book to the e-book, reading still essentially happens in our heads. But when we get together in a theater to hear a writer we love read from and talk about her work, the act moves from private to public. We share our passion for that writer, for literature in general, as well as the unique experience of literary performance — someone reading poems to us, or a novel or memoir (which touches that elemental childhood experience of being read to) — all of which stimulates discourse and builds community. It doesn't mean we give up the private acts of reading or writing; life in the literary pond is just richer for this kind of occasional communion.

Salman Rushdie read on Sept 10, 2001 and returned last season. It feels like a full circle moment.

It was great to have Salman Rushdie back again — he's a lovely person, a wonderful writer and a great reader and speaker. The Rushdie reading in 2001 marked several firsts: Rushdie's first book tour since the fatwa had been declared in 1989, the first time a publisher sent us a writer on book tour, the beginning of our first full season at the Alley (our official relocation, after 18 years at the MFAH, to the Downtown Theater District). It was also the first (and probably last) time we were on every 10 o'clock news program (we had a large group of protesters on the steps of the Alley screaming "Death to Rushdie!"),



PHOTO: DAVE EINSEL

Salman Rushdie on stage.

the first time people waited in line for 2½ hours before a reading to get a seat in the theater, and the first season we sold season tickets. The 2010 Rushdie reading also broke several records — our largest audience ever (nearly 2,000), Rushdie's largest audience for a reading, our quickest sell-out, causing us to move to a larger venue, and our first reading at Jones Hall.

What about that line out the door to get into workshops?

Perhaps it's the small class size and the quality of the workshops, the fact that

you don't have to be an experienced creative writer, and partly because Inprint is now known city-wide as a destination for creative writing. Also, since writing is becoming such an important part of our everyday lives, perhaps more people are recognizing the value of practicing the art of writing. After all, if you want to tweet well or write a decent email, letter, resume, report, etc., you need some chops.

Reading needs to be a habit, so I have discovered. How do you spark that reading impulse early on?

We developed Cool Brains! to foster that life-long love of reading and also to give young readers a chance to meet a favorite writer, which can be a life-changing experience. In the seven years of Cool Brains! we've had the good fortune to present some of the world's great children's writers, including Chris Van Allsburg (who signed books for four hours), Katherine Paterson (who did the same), Kate diCamillo, Gary Paulsen, this January Christopher Paul Curtis, and others. We've also featured a few renowned adult authors who wrote young adult books, including Nick Hornby and Isabel Allende. Last fall, Pseudonymous Bosch, the children's mystery writer with the amazing pen name, had two children ("Egyptian priests") come up on stage to wrap a third child in "ancient Egyptian linen" (toilet paper) while he presented his latest book, which focuses on the theft of a mummy in a museum.

If you were not running a literary organization what would you be doing?

Good question. I'd like to have more time and mental space for my own writing, but I do like being out in the world, connected with people, and making things happen. I really like the community-building aspect of what we do. I'd probably be working with or for the written word somewhere, somehow, and it's especially a privilege for me to be an advocate for creative writing. Some people are wood workers, some people are painters. I'm a writer, so here I am.

Upcoming events

Inprint Margaret Root Brown Reading Series

February 27

Rae Armantrout & Christian Wiman

March 26

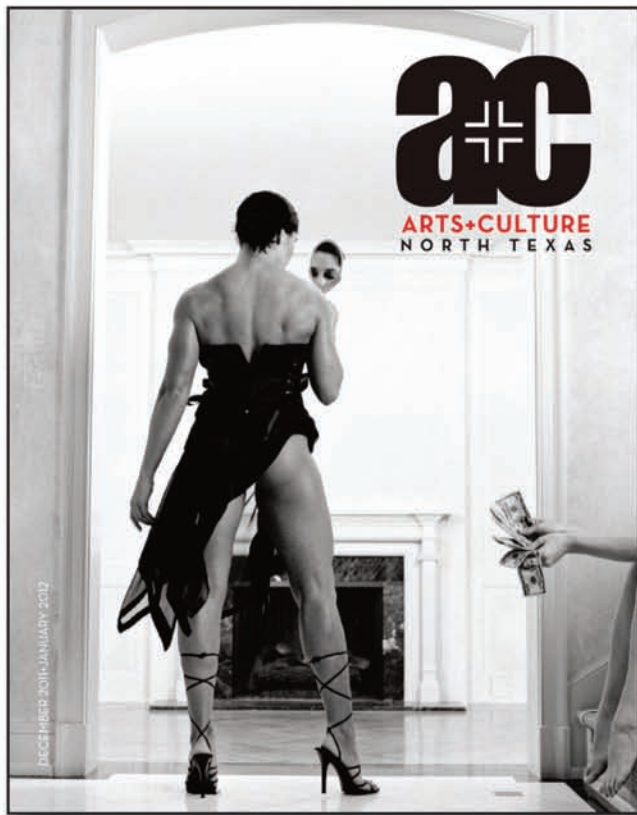
Téa Obreht & Gary Shteyngart

April 23

W.S. Merwin

www.inprinthouston.org

A Tale of Two Cities.



NORTH TEXAS
Dec 2011 Cover



HOUSTON
Dec 2011 Cover

Two Cities. Two Editions.

**Arts+Culture now publishes in the two largest markets
in the state. Twice the audience. Twice the coverage.**

All for one low advertising rate.

For marketing opportunities, contact Ken Villalovos at
214-282-2845 or ken@artsandcultureTX.com

RECENT + CURRENT WORKS OF NOTE



COURTESY DENIS VILLENEUVE

“Next Floor” by Denis Villeneuve.

“Pretty Dark”

Aurora Picture Show

January 12, 2012

www.aurorapictureshow.org

When I think about “dark,” in a general context of genre, my expectation is more often than not, weight or heavy handedness. Filmmakers exploring violence can fall into the trap of excess, and those interested in mystery lean on abstraction or purposeful incoherence, a la Lynch derivatives.

At Aurora Picture Show’s Pretty Dark Shorts Showcase, what separated the exceptional films from the others was the clarity, simplicity, and a lightness in which the filmmakers approached “dark” themes — lightness being the ability to let the images or story speak for themselves, as well as a comic sense of levity.

Denis Villeneuve’s “Next Floor,” by far the best film in the showcase (also clearly the most financially endowed), shows depraved gluttons incessantly devouring course after course of the most grotesque but uncomfortably appetizing meat plates. The weight of their feasting sends them through the floorboards, down to the next level, only to feast and repeat, over and over again. The rich shots of meat alone are worth watching. “Next Floor” is a funny, dark, and luscious picture of decadence.

I mention Alex Piperno’s “The Inviolability of the Domicile” because of its understated simplicity. In the dim light of dawn, a man prepares himself to be drowned by the mob, and is drowned. The single shot, removed far enough from the action, lets the viewer observe and nothing more, creating moral distance from the scene and an authentic sense of mystery, leaving the mind wanting rather than wondering.

“Poppy,” an animated film by James Cunningham, tells the true story of two soldiers who risk their lives in World War I to save an abandoned child behind enemy lines. It’s a story worth telling that reminds us that even in darkness, there’s a flicker of compassion.

In honesty, these three films are most likely the more well-funded projects shown in the festival, but production value does not equal originality. These films avoided the clichés of “dark” filmmaking, leaving a lasting impression.

— JOSEPH WOZNY

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

“Jade Walker: Contact”

Lawndale Art Center

January 20 - February 25, 2012

www.lawndaleartcenter.org

Sports occupies a prominent place in American popular consciousness in general, and Texans in particular bear an extreme enthusiasm for the game. In the wake of the college football championships, and with Superbowl XLVI around the corner, sports seem to be on almost everyone’s minds. Though athletics and art don’t often intersect (in some ways they seem diametrically opposed), comparisons can be made between the two worlds. Both are concerned with spectatorship; both operate within distinct rules of play; both are competitive; and both have their own players — some who gain MVP status, while others remain on the sidelines, waiting for their lucky break.

As the exhibition title, “Contact,” implies, Jade Walker’s current installation in the large John O’Quinn gallery space

at Lawndale Art Center is suggestive of a contact sport. Like her earlier work, the objects assembled in “Contact” convey Walker’s interest in social constructions of gender and the inevitable deterioration of the human body over time. Walker’s most recent artistic corpus pushes these considerations further, addressing trauma inflicted on the body through sports.

Occupying center stage of the exhibition is Walker’s “Spectator Sport” (2012). In this towering sculptural installation, a set of bleachers like one might see at a little league ballpark acts as an oversized pedestal. On the bleachers, which are covered with a beige pink fabric skin (issues regarding race seem less of a concern in Walker’s work than those of gender), sit 49 individual soft sculptures, made of unusual materials and found objects such as fur, rubber, medical supplies, and sports gear.

Giving new meaning to the term



COURTESY AUSTIN MUSEUM OF ART

Jade Walker, “Spectator Sport” (detail 2), 2009. Full size bleacher set, found objects, fabric, plastic, pitching mound carpet. Site-specific installation: 20’ x 31’ x 21’.

“bleacher creatures,” describing hardcore baseball fans, Walker’s “spectators” are at once familiar and strange. Recalling soft sculptures by Annette Messager, Yayoi Kusama, or Claes Oldenburg, Walker deftly transforms mass-produced, inanimate objects into handmade, organic forms with strong sexual overtones. Painstakingly manipulating her materials with meticulous attention to detail, in this installation Walker puts body politics on display.

Though these abstract sculptures — and

several others on the proverbial playing field surrounding “Spectator Sport” — do not resemble people, the predominantly flesh-toned color palette with red and blue accents calls to mind human anatomy and the circulatory system. Likewise, the materials that Walker uses are extensions of or surrogates for the body, such as jock straps, crutches, hot water bottles, barbells, and what appear to be silicone breasts. However, rather than portraying strength, endurance, and athleticism, Walker’s droopy forms express exhaustion and the fragility of the body. The fabric and thread holding the sculptures together evoke bandages and sutures, treating open wounds.

Playful and disturbing, Walker’s engaging exhibition about sex, sports, science, and spectatorship leaves visitors contemplating who is in the game, who is relegated to the bench, and what injuries are yet to be sustained.

— KATIA ZAVISTOVSKI

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

“Observed Imagined Abstracted”

Hiram Butler Gallery

January 14 - February 25, 2012

www.dbhbg.com

At Hiram Butler Gallery, three different approaches to landscape painting make for an intriguing show of small works that ask us to reflect on our interactions with the Earth.

Although it would be tempting to call Brooke Stroud’s compact works minimalist, this would seem to discount the lush textures evoked by his linear compositions. Composed in horizontal lines of colored pencil on board, each piece evokes a state of meditation and surprise that reminds the viewer of the compact but explosive nature of haiku. This is no accident; for these works, Stroud drew his palette from Japanese woodcuts, which are reflected in titles such as “The Plum Garden” and “Steps to a Shrine.” Bits of board peek strategically through the pencil, adding depth to the juxtapositions of color. The evidence of care and craft in these tiny works gives them a sizable impact.

Anyone who has put in some time on the highways and country roads of Texas

Reviews Continued on Page 28

REVIEWS CONTINUED

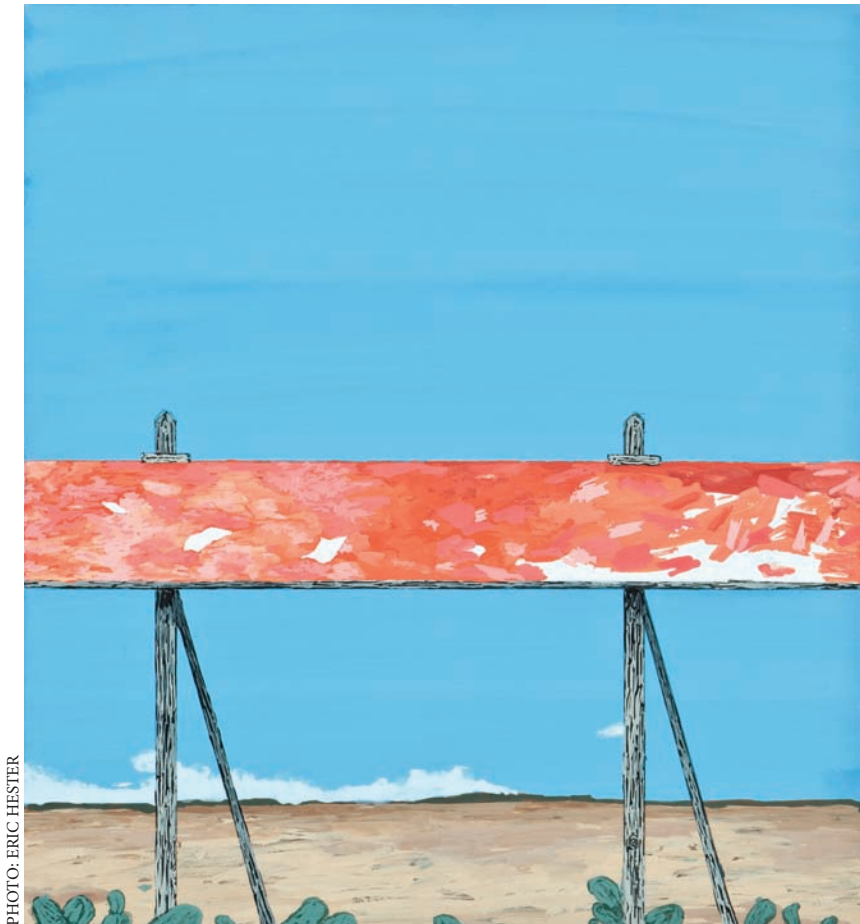


PHOTO: ERIC HESTER

Will Henry, "In Tandem," 2011, Gouache on Paper, 10 1/2 x 10".

will recognize the landscapes presented in Julie Bozzi's paintings. Their strongly horizontal format echoes both a car window and the big sky that dominates the flat horizons of South Texas; the edge of pavement revealed in the foreground of these works speaks to the human imprint on these rural spaces. Bozzi's hand reveals a thoughtful connection with her subject. The scrubby mesquite bushes screening the rusty profile of a railroad track in "Untitled (Mesquite Prairie)" are especially enchanting. Sometimes bright, sometimes foreboding, these works pull us into the strange beauty of moments that pass as quickly as the views whisk by a car window.

Three works by Will Henry also capture Texas landscapes, this time those of West Texas' desert terrain and expansive blue skies. Bright skies against dark sand lend these works an aura that both attracts and puts the viewer on guard. Each painting comments on human presence and absence; in "Spaghetti Western," an aged wooden sign without text dominates the foreground, while the white spokes of a wind farm are just visible in the distance. In between, a flurry of sand dances in the air. In "In Tandem," a faded red sign dominates the work, yet tells us nothing. A sense of humor is reflected in Henry's painterly approach to these subjects, capturing both arrested motion as the desert reclaims itself from

our intrusion.

— TRIA WOOD

Tria Wood is a writer who lives and works in Houston, Texas. She teaches English and creative writing at San Jacinto College South and through the Writers in the Schools program.

"Perspectives 177: McArthur Binion"

Contemporary Art Museum, Houston

January 6 - April 1, 2012

www.camh.org

"Perspectives 177: McArthur Binion" is one of two recent exhibitions to open at the Contemporary Arts Museum in Houston. Organized by senior curator Valerie Cassel Olivier "McArthur Binion" features 12 new paintings created specifically by the artist for the occasion of his first solo exhibition at the Museum and the first showing of his work in the city.

Installed in the lower level of CAMH, the works illustrate an engagement with modernism that is easily identifiable. From afar the works appear to display the typical concerns of modernist painting from the preoccupation with issues of color and shape to the minimal installation of the exhibition itself. Binion posits himself as following a trajectory of artists that includes Kazi-

mir Malevich, Piet Mondrian and Mark Rothko though his own practice signals a marked departure from the aforementioned. Antithetical to Modernism's insistence on an art that concerned itself solely with formal issues, Binion's works bear witness to an autobiographical and cultural history.

Many of the works are titled with an amalgam of the names of the artist's son and daughter, Stella and Luca while two others ("GhostWillie" and "Ghost Rhythms: for Thomecat") pay homage to Binion's deceased brothers. The works' surfaces are often divided with clear delineations between sections with extremely tactile, rough-hewn surfaces, the result of the repetitive build up of applications of stational crayon. The materiality of these works embodies a corporeal quality that for the artist, harkens to the African scarification rites and the branding of slaves that occurred during slavery. The juxtaposing flattened areas of the paintings are comprised of a series of grids (another testament to the influence of modernism on the artist's oeuvre) that are stained with color.

The artist's employment of the grid is a nod to West African textiles and to the practice of quilting which figures largely in African-American histories. The artist's own mother was a quilter, and Binion has remarked on her skill in the design and assembly of the complex array of shapes and measurements that were required in the construction of a quilt, despite her lack of formal education. The "gridded" sections of each piece are formed from the repetition of imagery derived from a range of sources. The works "Driving Through Mississippi in Chicago" and "Stellucca: One" incorporate handwritten pages from a phone while others such as "Stellucca: VI" and "All About Stella" appropriate fraught images such as that of a lynched man or a racist caricature of black person found on a European fruit wrapper, attesting to the troubled history of visual representations of the black body within various forms of Western visual culture.

— SALLY FRATER

Sally Frater is currently a fellow in the CORE Critical Studies residency program at the Glassell School at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston.

"Where Will We Live?"

Glassell School of Art

December 16, 2011 - February 26, 2012

www.mfah.org/visit/glassell-school

If Kafka and John Burger had a baby, it would be New York-based artist Matthew Buckingham, whose work is full of pith and wit. An impenetrable bronze box states "May be opened after August 10, 3007;" a video projection of a Dan-

ish monument, to be shown until the projector lamp melts; a note describing a letter that reached its intended recipient, despite the fact it was dropped out a window and never mailed — such is the stuff of Buckingham's survey exhibition "Where Will We Live?" on view (December 16, 2011–February 26, 2012) at the Glassell School of Art, and organized by Core Residency Program associate Director Mary LeClère and Yasufumi Nakamori, MFAH associate curator of photography.

One piece, a vinyl floor sign entitled "Narrative" (2000), reads "1.Undisturbed state 2. Disturbance 3. Struggle 4. Deadline 5. Disturbance Eliminated," a list that may well describe a cinematic plot device, the mental process of an artist, or the seemingly inherent compulsion of "civilized" man to upend and rebuild, even at the risk of everything that came before. This propensity of man is echoed in other Buckingham works. "The Six Grandfathers, Paha Sapa, in the Year 502,0002 C.E." (2001), a timeline text and a digitally altered photograph, tell us the story, both past and future, of the area we know as Mount Rushmore — undisturbed for millennium, sacred to the Sioux, wrenched away in broken treaty after broken treaty, carved but never finished, and despite all the strum und drang, ultimately destined to erode back to its original state.

My favorite is "Likeness" (2008). Here we have a cave-like enclosure, built of the detritus man no longer desires — storage crates, antique chairs bereft of seats, books whose titles have begun to fade — and within a video projection of a dog, a detail from Velasquez's painting of the Infante Felipe Prospero. Narrated in Spanish, and dubbed in English, Buckingham's poetic thoughts on portraiture remind us of the mesmerizing power of art. "You make me stand in a certain place. You ... make me listen, though I know you will never speak. ... You look at me."

— BETH SECOR

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

"RachFest 3 - Rach 2"

Jones Hall

January 22, 2012

www.houstonsymphony.org

It is a rare occasion when the Houston Symphony invites a single artist to perform in residence for three consecutive classical series concerts. The recent festival of music by Sergei Rachmaninoff, dubbed "RachFest," called for a special kind of soloist and it should come as no surprise the 32-year-old Russian pianist

Kiril Gerstein was the person chosen for the job of presenting four of the most beloved piano concertos in the repertoire.

The most recent recipient of the prestigious Gilmore Artist Award, Gerstein approached the piano with jocular ease as he tackled the audience favorite of Rachmaninoff's concertos, the "Piano Concerto No.2 in c-minor." Although Gerstein delightfully contrasted the piece's luscious chocolate melodies with robust and rhythmic counterpoint, the highlight of the final concert of the "RachFest" was an unexpected juxtaposition of this grand symphony for piano and orchestra with an encore consisting of the slow movement from Rachmaninoff's "Sonata for Cello and Piano." Joined by Principal Cellist Brinton Averil Smith, Gerstein showed the audience exactly how far his talents extend. His supple and delicate approach to this most intimate of musical expressions made it difficult to believe that the music was being played by the same person. It also made impossible to care about anything that happened after that. I heard there was a performance of the Rachmaninoff's unruly "Symphony No.3," but I was still basking in the glory of what had come before it that it seemed as though all too suddenly the audience was applauding and the concert was sadly over. Here's hoping the Maestro Gerstein will return to Houston quickly and frequently.

— CHRIS JOHNSON

"The Toxic Avenger"

Alley Theatre

January 13 - February 12, 2012

www.alleytheatre.com

Musical theater has, as of late, taken some strange turns. Movies beget musicals that beget musical movies, but none, thus far, have been as surprising as "The Toxic Avenger," based on the cult classic film of the same title, which received its Houston premiere at the Alley Theatre. The musical takes place in the dregs of the fictional Tromaville, New Jersey, where toxic dumping runs rampant. The play's hero, Melvin Ferd the Third, is your typical wimp, who vows to his beloved blind librarian to "clean up this town." When he gets dumped into a barrel of toxic goo and transforms into Toxy, a mutant with superhuman strength and rippling abs, the play is off and running.

At its finest moments, "The Toxic Avenger" was laugh-out-loud funny, sprinkled with a few choice, surreal scenes and an abundance of pop culture references (although, surprisingly not one "Jersey Shore" joke). Despite a small cast of five, a plethora of different characters appeared and disappeared through extraordinarily rapid costume changes. Nancy Opel, the actress who

played both Melvin's mother, as well as Tromaville's nefarious mayor, had an outstanding, over-the-top scene in which both characters appeared on stage simultaneously.

The main character, Toxy, portrayed by Tony Nominated/"American Idol" famed Constantine Maroulis, was the weakest link, by far. His utter lack of self confidence, despite his new found ability to tear the limbs off of his adversaries, felt forced, and his heart-wrenching musical solos fell flat.

On a whole, "The Toxic Avenger" was entertaining, but perhaps not quite of the same caliber as its comedy-musical contemporaries. The music was catchy and upbeat yet unmemorable. This production has its sights set on Broadway; it will surely make it, once it works out a few of the kinks.

— ABBY KOENIG

Abby Koenig is a Mass Communication's professor at Houston Community College, a creative writer and playwright. She writes about all things art and culture for the Houston Press' Art Attack blog. www.blogs.houstonpress.com/artattack

"Voyage"

Main Street Theater - Chelsea Market

January 12 - 29, 2012

www.mainstreettheater.com

If almost anyone — even a good friend — came up and asked you to sit still while they read aloud nine hours worth of imagined conversations between 19th century Russian intellectuals, nobody would blame you if you suddenly found a pressing need to see a man about a horse. If the invitation came from Tom Stoppard, however, the playwright renowned for melting frigidly academic themes into his characteristic frothy-yet-heady brew, a piqued curiosity might win out. At least that's the gambit Main Street Theater has made in devoting a hefty chunk of their spring calendar to a new production of Stoppard's 2002 trilogy "Coast of Utopia."

And the curiosity-piquing doesn't end with Stoppard's distilling of decades of intellectual fervor onto the stage, seeing as MST has had to undertake the similarly daunting feat of carving down the epic scope of the play's production requirements to fit their necessarily intimate venues. But if all the logistics loom in the abstract, it is in the details of the performances that the production seems less and less like a gambit and more like a sure thing — and an enjoyable one, at that. "Voyage," the first part of the trilogy and chronologically the earliest plot-wise, introduces us to the less-than-household-names of philosopher Mikhail Bakunin, literary critic Vissarion Belinsky, and poet Nikolai Stankevich, among others, and revels in their youthful follies of both



PHOTO: JANN WHALEY



PHOTO: WWW.RICORNELPRODUCTIONS.COM

TOP: Constantine Maroulis as The Toxic Avenger in the Alley Theatre's production of "The Toxic Avenger." BOTTOM: (L to R) Nicholas Ogarev (Kregg Dailey), Vissarion Belinsky (Joel Sandel), Alexander Herzen (Joe Kirkendall), and Michael Bakunin (Guy Roberts) in Tom Stoppard's "Voyage."

the philosophical and romantic variety as they pass back and forth between the Bakunin family's country estate and the ballrooms and squalid living quarters of Moscow and Petersburg.

Much credit goes to Guy Roberts in the lead role of Bakunin; his relentless energy brings the character to life as the type of manic man-child that, had "Voyage" been conceived as a Mel Brooks film four decades ago, Gene Wilder would have been the shoe-in for. Joel Sandel likewise stands out as the simultaneously weary and tireless Belinsky. The staging uses the compact space of MST's Chelsea Market location wisely: the scene-changes pass fluidly between upper crust parlors, lowly hovels, and street-side cafes, as the plot leaps through a decade's worth of revolutionary waxing.

MST has given "Voyage" almost a month to let audiences wet their toes in Stoppard's esoteric tide-pool before the remaining two parts ("Shipwreck" and "Salvage") begin their run. Now the waters ahead, though deep, no longer seem overwhelming or unnavigable — bring

on the "Shipwreck!"

— DAVID A. FEIL

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

"Zoe|Juniper: A Crack In Everything"

DiverseWorks

Through February 2012

www.diverseworks.org

The intensity of the dancing proved the most striking aspect of Zoe|Juniper's "A Crack in Everything," and that's saying a lot, as the installation, spanning photography and video designed by Juniper Shuey, offered a stunning environment for the piece. Loosely based on Aeschylus' Greek Trilogy, "The Oresteia," fragments of a narrative floated about anchored in a climate of serene authority. With translucent scrims lining a lighted white corridor set between opposing audience seating, the piece felt both tightly contained and airy. A sense of looking through the proceedings lightened the pervading gravitas. With the dance sequence paced in five to 10

Reviews Continued on Page 30

REVIEWS CONTINUED

minute intervals, a sense of pervading drama loomed, as if the characters were carrying out a sacred ritual. Tiny steps, hands clutching imaginary objects, and plies so deep they seemed to go through the floor, evoked a relentless tension between the psychological and emotional tonality.

Zoe Scofield's highly detailed choreography combined live and filmed work in a seamless partnership. The dancers, including Kristen Frankiewicz, Kara Newton, Christiana Axelsen and Raja Kelly, performed with resolute conviction, grounded, yet exuding a nobility of purpose. Potent moments of harmony occurred when they accompanied the ghost-like projections, as if existing simultaneously in the present and past. Matt Starritt's droning electronic score added to the epic atmosphere. Erik Andor's sleek gray dresses offered earthy texture and contrasted the shimmering gold leaf framing the dancer's faces.

The audience was invited to mill through the space to observe the dance from numerous viewpoints in a surround sound/movement experience. Performances continue with local dancers on Saturdays in February at 1 p.m.

— NANCY WOZNY

"La Vie a Pleines Dents"

Hope Stone Dance Company with Mercury Baroque
January 12 - 15, 2012
www.hopestoneinc.org

In an empty second floor retail loft in the Houston Pavilions, Hope Stone Dance Company has set up a pastiche of dining room table chairs, settees and carpet squares flanking a portable dance floor, ensuring no two seats are the same, literally. Artistic director and choreographer Jane Weiner assembles eleven dancers, accompanied by almost forty musicians and singers for "la vie a pleines dents" (to bite life with all of one's teeth.)

Featuring special guests, Mercury Baroque and the Houston Boychoir, "la vie a pleines dents" is epic in scale and girth. Sans the limits of a traditional theater, the dancers are free to run circles around and through the entire space, often bounding right into the audience. With a rushed athleticism, the dancers eat up all the space they can consume. Weiner's choreography does not allow for anything to settle for long, the movement pushes itself forward with aggressive flicks, tosses and endlessly cascading gestures.

Effortless partnering is a signature of Hope Stone, but noteworthy is a brief, yet tender duet between company veteran Joe Modlin and newcomer Jesus

Acosta. Despite their height difference, they maneuver in and out of dynamic lifts. Dancer Brit Wallis brings a vital and wild edge to "la vie a pleines dents," her movements undulate between vulnerability and chaos. Mercury Baroque's music infuses a weight and urgency into Weiner's choreography and Weiner's dancers lace Mercury Baroque's music with humor and pertinence. Almost sounding otherworldly paired with Mercury Baroque's soprano Ana Trevino-Godfrey, the Houston Boychoir joins the performance near the end of the evening with a dramatic entrance from behind the audience.

The jungle gym like set of wooden shipping crates designed by David Graeve serves as an interactive backdrop. Performers climbed up and across the set, perching and resting as quiet voyeurs of the dancing unfolding below them.

Weiner carves out a truly interesting and intricate space for "la vie a pleines dents," and while themes of perseverance, intimacy and loss hang around the dance, Weiner's main point remains elusive — and that's alright.

— ROSIE TRUMP

Rosie Trump is a dance choreographer and filmmaker, the Dance Program Director at Rice University and the editor of the blog readingthedance.wordpress.com.

"Goodbye"

Iranian Film Festival - Museum of Fine Arts Houston
January 20, 2012
www.mfah.org

In 2010, Mohammad Rasoulof, along with the fellow Iranian auteur Jafar Panahi, was arrested on charges of collusion against the Iranian government. He is currently under house arrest. Goodbye," the "last film he made before his arrest, is an intimate but cold sort of modern tragedy. It's the story of Noura, a beautiful, young female lawyer, who is barred from practicing law. Her dissident husband is in hiding from the government. She is completely alone in her society, unable to visit doctors, check into hotels, or pick up passports without the accompaniment of her husband. Her ability to argue for her situation in society falls upon deaf ears and she grows impatient. She feels like her only option is to flee the country, a dangerous and difficult task.

"Goodbye" crawls on at a reluctant pace, inducing subtle dread. There is no warmth in the camera lens, there is only a muted, claustrophobic view of Noura's life and struggle. As this cold intimacy drags on, fear builds and an otherworldly sense of violence lingers in the background. It is not a visceral, physical violence, but the slow grinding of existential terror. As she grows impatient with the process of escape, Noura



PHOTO: SIMON GENTRY

Hope Stone Dance's "La Vie a Pleines Dents."

becomes cold as she loses faith in the ability to hold on to her husband and at some points, potentially her unborn child.

Rasoulof's vision points out the shallowness of "Hollywoodized" suspense. Fear doesn't only exist in the fight or flight moments of escape and action- there is another kind of a fear, a more real one, that lurks in the moments of everyday life. Her tragic interactions with society are only one part of her struggle. The time she spends building boxes in which the pain of not knowing sink in. The film doesn't ask for sympathy- it shows us life as it is, for better or for worse, for a woman in Iran.

I find it strange to imagine this film, showing in theaters across the world without the director to speak after it. It's difficult to remove "Goodbye" from the social context of the director's condition, but that's the state of Iranian cinema. While the film moves at a slow pace, the complete context is a sense of urgency. There are things that need to be done for the filmmakers and the people of Iran, and it's important that these films be screened.

— JOSEPH WOZNY

"La Traviata"

Houston Grand Opera
January 27 - February 12, 2012
www.houstongrandopera.org

It's rarely a good sign when your ghost appears before your death. So it goes for opera's most beloved courtesan, Violetta Valery, the heroine/fallen woman of Verdi's "La Traviata," brilliantly re-imagined by Houston Grand Opera (HGO). The opening sequence, with Violetta

confronting her ghost self, sets the tragic tone for the entire evening, amplifying the opera's doomed trajectory to new emotional depths.

Making her role debut as Violetta, Russian coloratura soprano Albina Shagimuratova is a powerhouse. The clarion-voiced soprano fully inhabits the role, from her days as Paris' "it" girl to her fading flower days. Her rich and vibrant sound, combined with her swift acting, made for yet another memorable milestone for this rising opera star and former HGO Studio artist.

Bryan Hymel, making his HGO debut, made a robust love struck Alfredo. Full of love at all costs furry, Hymel delivers a highly-charged performance.

Daniel Slater's direction possesses a driving pace, making the party scenes come alive with a pulsing action. The chorus, under the direction of Richard Bado, assume the role of a single entity. They slither about, creating a claustrophobic crowd force, again a reminder of the lover's unsustainable predicament of a world closing in on them.

Desmond Heeley's painterly interiors also point to a fragile world, grand, but not realistic. Much like Violetta's life and choices, they seem to fade as Violetta's life energy drains. Michael James Clark's lighting design casts a haunting glimmer, especially during the ghost scenes. Patrick Summers conducted the HGO orchestra with his usual precision.

In the final hour, even the half-draped chandelier has fallen, as Verdi's "fallen woman" joins her ghost double through the beckoning curtains.

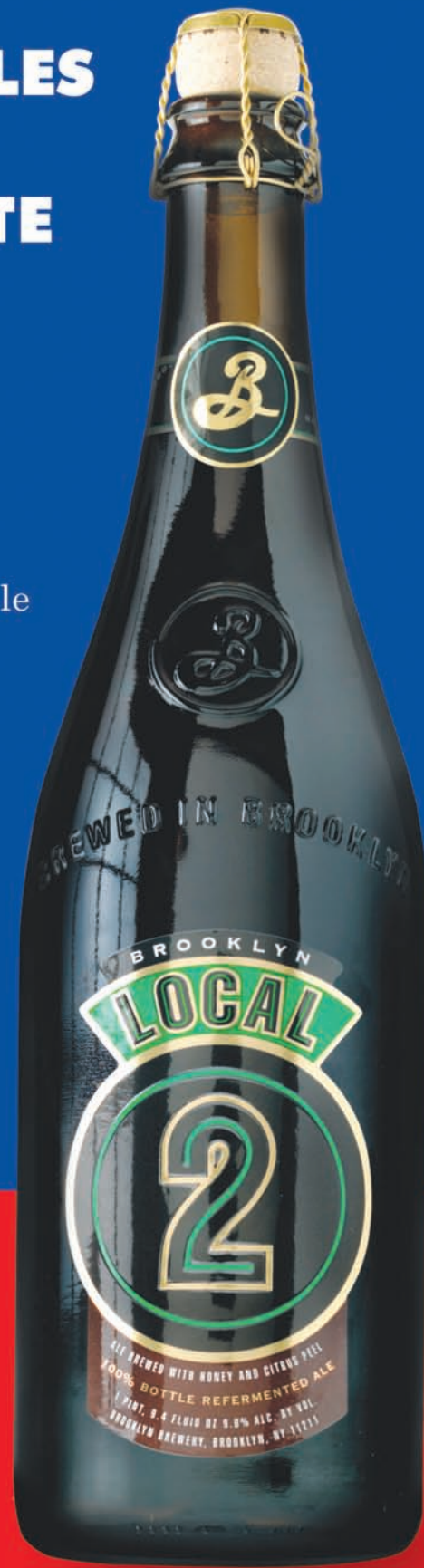
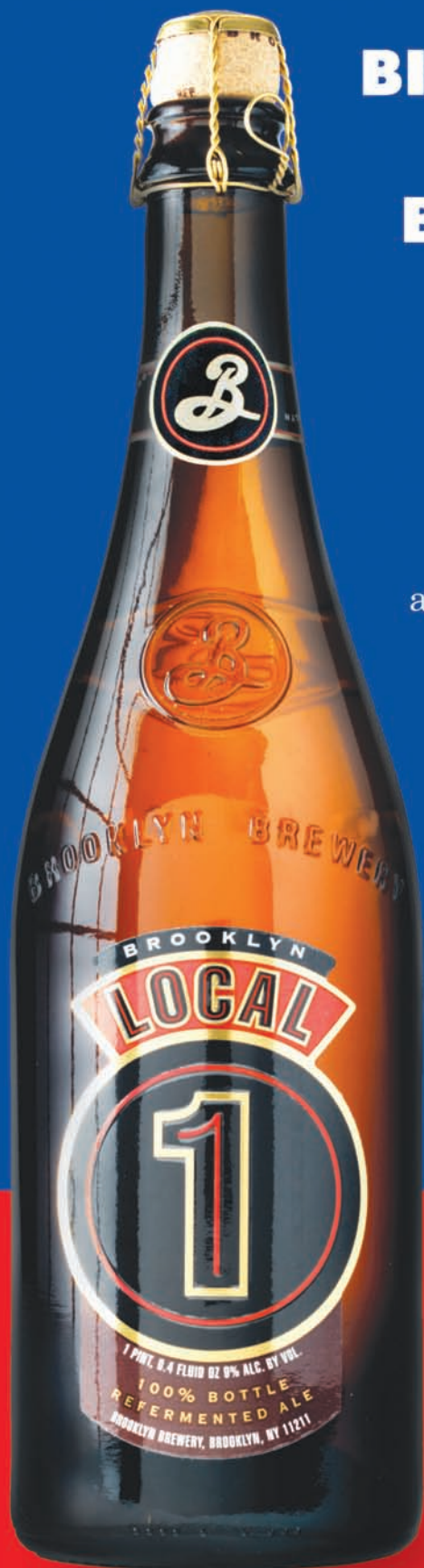
— NANCY WOZNY

SIZE MATTERS

**BIG BOTTLES
FOR A
BIG STATE**



Brooklyn
LOCAL 1
& **LOCAL 2**
are now available
in Texas.



Brooklyn Brewery 79 N 11th St, Brooklyn NY 11249 brooklynbrewery.com [facebook.com/thebrooklynbrewery](https://www.facebook.com/thebrooklynbrewery) [@brooklynbrewery](https://twitter.com/brooklynbrewery)



艾未未

AI WEIWEI'S

CIRCLE OF
ANIMALS /
ZODIAC HEADS

ARRIVES
MARCH 2012

HERMANN PARK
HOUSTON, TX

Internationally acclaimed Chinese contemporary artist Ai Weiwei has recreated the 12 bronze animal heads that once adorned the fountain at Yuan Mingyuan (Old Summer Place) in Beijing. A major public sculpture installation that tells a story of looting and repatriation, The Circle of Animals / Zodiac Heads is the centerpiece of a global, multi-year touring exhibition that will be presented in the

United States, Europe and Asia.

 houstonartsalliance