

THE GREATER MILWAUKEE FOUNDATION'S
MARY L. NOHL FUND

FELLOWSHIPS FOR INDIVIDUAL ARTISTS 2008



Greater Milwaukee
Foundation



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2008

XAV LEPLAE

SHANA McCAW / BRENT BUDSBERG

IVERSON WHITE

TATE BUNKER

BOBBY CIRALDO / ANDREW SWANT

FRANKIE LATINA

BARBARA J. MINER

October 9 - December 13, 2009

**Institute of Visual Arts
2155 North Prospect Avenue
Milwaukee, WI 53202**

EDITOR'S PREFACE

When the Greater Milwaukee Foundation decided in 2003 to use a portion of a bequest from artist Mary L. Nohl to underwrite a fellowship program for individual visual artists, it was making a major investment in local artists who traditionally lacked access to support. The program, the Greater Milwaukee Foundation's Mary L. Nohl Fund Fellowships for Individual Artists, provides unrestricted awards to artists to create new work or complete work in progress and is open to practicing artists residing in Milwaukee, Waukesha, Ozaukee and Washington counties.

Nohl, a graduate of the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, died in December 2001 at the age of 87. She rarely exhibited her work, yet she gained national recognition for her art, much of which was housed in and around her home in Fox Point on the shores of Lake Michigan. Her bequest to the Greater Milwaukee Foundation, by supporting local visual arts and arts education programs, keeps Nohl's passion for the visual arts alive in our community.

The fellowship program was designed to provide significant support to artists at two critical career stages, to encourage artists to remain in greater Milwaukee where they can continue to enrich our community, and to create—through the jurying process—an opportunity for curators from outside the area to see the work of local artists. Over the course of six cycles, forty-two artists have received fellowships, the majority of whom have stayed in greater Milwaukee, contributing to its cultural life. Eighteen curators from around the country have come to Milwaukee to view the work of nearly two hundred artists each year, acquiring knowledge of the area's artistic production that would be impossible to gain in other ways. One hundred artists, including many former Nohl Fellows, have received support from the Suitcase Export Fund, which assists with the transportation of artists and their work to exhibitions and screenings outside the area. These artists have traveled to venues throughout the United States, Europe, Latin America, Asia, the former Soviet Union and, most recently, Africa—bringing their work and greater Milwaukee to the world. In difficult economic times, these fellowships and awards have kept artists working and sharing their work with a wider public. It is an impressive legacy for Mary L. Nohl, the Foundation, and our community.

In 2008 as in the preceding years, seven fellowships were awarded, three for established artists and four for emerging artists. This year, two collaboratives were among the recipients: Shana McCaw and Brent Budsberg, and Bobby Ciraldo and Andrew Swant. Therefore, the exhibition documented in this catalogue represents the culmination of a year's work by nine artists: established artists Xav Lepiae, McCaw/ Budsberg and Iverson White; and emerging artists Tate Bunker, Ciraldo/Swant, Frankie Latina and Barbara J. Miner. These artists were selected by a panel of jurors who spent two days reviewing work samples and artists' statements, making studio visits and talking to local artists: Valerie J. Mercer, the first curator of African American art and head of the General Motors Center for African American Art at The Detroit Institute of Arts; Laurel Reuter, director and chief curator of the North Dakota Museum of Art; and Eva González-Sancho, director of the Fonds Régional d'Art Contemporain - Région Bourgogne (FRAC Bourgogne) in Dijon, France.

The Mary L. Nohl Fund Fellowships are administered in collaboration with the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Peck School of the Arts and Visual Arts Milwaukee (VAM!). The program owes much of its success to the volunteers—Milwaukee artists, curators and arts administrators—who established guidelines for the fellowship competition in 2003, and to those who have assisted with the jurying process and participated in the production of the catalogues over the years.

Polly Morris

Peck School of the Arts, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee

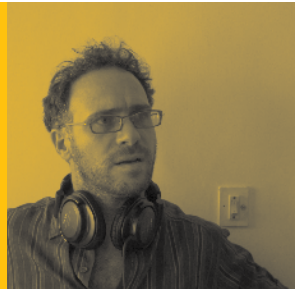
The Greater Milwaukee Foundation's mission is to strengthen communities through effective partnerships. It is made up of over 1,000 charitable funds, each created by individual donors or families to serve the charitable causes of their choice. Grants from these funds serve people throughout Milwaukee, Waukesha, Ozaukee and Washington counties and beyond. Started in 1915, the Foundation is one of the oldest and largest community foundations in the U.S. and abroad.

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ESTABLISHED ARTISTS



XAV LEPLAE

And the Art That Comes Out of Him

I'm only partially joking when I say that Xav Leplae is the most important artist I know. He is certainly among the most inspirational. Xav is a community artist in the best sense: he is selfless and pours as much energy into his friends' creative endeavors as he does his own. For close to twenty-five years he has been crucial to the vitality of Milwaukee's experimental art scene while his enchanted film and video store has served as its nerve center. Whether providing a venue, laboring over a project or connecting artists for collaboration, no one is more generous with their time and talents than Xav. Somehow he manages to do all this without sacrificing the integrity and singularity of his own work.

Perhaps the reason a cooperative spirit is essential to the way Xav works and thinks is that he himself is a composite of cultural and ideological influences. In his extensive travels abroad, the Belgian-born, Milwaukee-raised filmmaker, musician and independent business owner seems to be forever cultivating images and ideas into a nuanced aesthetic that is all his own.

While reflecting on his work over the years many fantastic, at times cryptic, images come to mind: a boy wearing a cotton ball beard; an achingly beautiful love song about milk; a campy space traveler wandering through the mountains of Turkey; an adorably awkward girl in a shower of saffron-colored flowers; a death metal rant about global warming; a brigade of riot gear-clad police suspended in air like ballerinas; a hand painted sign: "Keys Made/Lemonade 50 Cents"; a desperately pouting male fashion model superimposed on a "Wild West" museum display (in 3-D!). No one sets out to create icons such as these. They materialize of their own accord when the artistic intermediary has a mind that is both open and adroit.

Paradoxically, the one thread that runs through Xav's work is randomness. In his music, performances and films, Xav thrives on a level of improvisation that would make most artists tremble. His projects often begin within an elastic parameter of concepts, visuals and incongruous goals. The imagery that results has a tentative and uncanny beauty. For instance, in the climax of his film *I'm Bobby* we see a deceptively simple shot of a boy and girl running hand-in-hand across a hillside. Without explanation, this image is swapped for a paper cutout of the couple ascending a mountain while a slowly spinning circle of paper painted with waves creates the "special effect" of an animated waterfall. After several such illustrated vignettes, the live action returns—however, the actors have now changed. Though we recognize the obvious illogic of these scenes, we are swept along in the romance without missing a beat. What could be seen as a flaw becomes the work's greatest strength. It is through Xav's dementedly guileless approach to art making that the realm of possibility is blown wide open.

Xav takes risks. His choices are perplexing and unprecedented. He and anyone with the guts to take the plunge along with him bask in the glory or suffer the consequences of adhering to one's true instincts. Whether serving aromatic dishes to his eclectic entourage of friends in the back of his store or capturing stunning and evocative scenes on film, Xav's life *is* his art. Through a combination of vision and determination, Xav has created a world as peculiar as it is inviting. You can witness it or you can live in it but the fact that it exists is more than a bubble of optimism in the face of apathy and shortsightedness. I cannot imagine a more intrepid, whimsical and dynamic artist than Xav Leplae. Fortunately, I don't have to.

Christine Ferrera

American Triathlete & Mother of 8

With respect to the collective voice, here's what some members of Xav's art community have to say about him...

He is very creative and gets totally involved in the project he is working on. He is a pure artist and doesn't care if what he does brings him practical rewards. —Genevieve Leplae

Xav uses the form of collaboration as his medium. In all of his projects, relationships—of the individual to the group, one-on-one and as a community—take precedence and shape the ideas. —Kim Miller

There are few friends' houses in Milwaukee that I could literally eat at every day. Never having had parents, I always love going to Xavier's for one of his famous hoppel-poppel Indian experimental plates that he prepares for his nomad group of friends who are welcome any time to sit down for a warm, home-cooked meal with no invitation necessary. —Frankie Latina

Xav Leplae's fertile imagination defies genre or convention and destroys the putrefying demons of dead air space. —Norman Lasca

It's obvious Xav is someone who naturally cares about whatever he does. In a time when everyone cares more about what they look like than what they're creating, it's people like Xav that remind us (or me at least) of the true purpose behind making art. —Dan Ollman

I always enjoy those moments when Xav is an 'audience member' in disguise and then he somehow steals the show with lots of laughs. —Jinnene Ross

He's always testing the limits of what can be done. Sometimes that's a bad thing but sometimes it's incredibly good. —Didier Leplae

I used to wish that I was DDA, not because I wanted to play the guitar, but because I wanted to spend Christmases with Xav. —Doug Schall

I've always felt Xav's creative inspiration comes from one of the purest places of all the artists I know, not only in his 'art' but in the way he lives his life too. —Chris Smith

Xav defended his crown as the winner of the Riverwest 24 Hour Bicycle Race in 2009 because, on top of riding a whole bunch of miles, he participated in all the community activities that were an integral part of the race. —Renato Umali

Xav doesn't seem to want to make his art/athletics/cooking/shop-keeping look too difficult. —Peter Barrickman

Xav Leplae's creative life is a beacon of hope and clarity in a world addled with commerce and ambition. The communities Xav creates and projects he dives into are so idiosyncratically gorgeous that they should be the norm. Let's clone him, and put one in every neighborhood in America. —Igor Vamos



Please forgive me dad!



SHANA McCAW / BRENT BUDSBERG

A House for the Liquid Reality

A disaster is only a symptom. An impending threat, an indicator of what has already—imperceptibly—occurred. If it weren't for their miniature scale, the architectural settings created by Shana McCaw and Brent Budsberg would evoke horror like the best B movie. Yet, the houses built by the artistic duo belong more in the land of Lilliput than on the cinematic set, and there is a sense of distance and estrangement in their odd, tenuous presence. The dual position the beholder takes in relation to McCaw/ Budsberg's constructions—being both in danger and the danger itself—seems to aptly reflect today's radically distinct, ambiguous attitude to a house.

Long gone are the times when a house and a home could be perceived as synonymous. The precarious dwellings meticulously crafted by McCaw and Budsberg embody this curious divorce of the idea from the physical space. We no longer live as our ancestors did, rooted to a specific place, passing on a house from generation to generation. Contemporary lives are increasingly nomadic: out of desire or out of necessity, people abandon the houses that nursed them and try to carry their homes with them wherever they go. Sometimes, they even give up the idea and become homeless.

Contemporary nomadism (and its middle-class version epitomized by the American lifestyle) is largely an effect of the huge socio-economic and political shifts that have been taking place over the last forty years. As society entered the post-Fordist era, or transitioned from “solid” to “liquid” modernity, the house became as much a burden as a shelter, and as much a liability as an asset. A house can tie you to a place, preventing you from following economic opportunity. A house embedded in the precarious web of the flawed financial system can ruin a family. Those without freedom of movement (intimately associated both with economic means and a particular social status) are increasingly at the mercy of both natural and man-made disasters.

The minute construction of McCaw/Budsberg's dwellings is inherently Midwestern, reflective of a region that for many years has been without hope of economic recovery or growth. The artists' process, determinedly reliant on impeccable carpentry craft, hints at the culture of work that has been continuously threatened by the dynamics of labor markets. The quaint beauty and seeming comfort of their houses are undermined by danger and uncertainty. The choice to remain localized—to dwell in the ancestral place—might appear today unwise, if not perilous.

Yet even the nomads of choice long for a house that is also a home. This longing is more than simple nostalgia, because—as philosopher Vilém Flusser diagnosed—“without [an] habitual place to live, we would experience nothing.”¹ A home/house is absolutely necessary to process the raw, chaotic sense-data received from the bustling, dizzying world into the experience that allows us to map out and safely navigate reality. Without a house, uprooted humanity lacks the axis that defines the coordinates that guide us through life. Despite all the temptations of absolute mobility, the complete rejection of the localized materiality of dwelling is simply unsustainable. The constant tension between going and coming, between abandoning and returning, between shedding the burden and picking it up again, is incarnated by the fragile yet unyielding houses that the McCaw/Budsberg duo build for people on the move.

Dorota Biczal

artist and writer

Notes

The idea of liquid reality is taken from the extensive body of writing of sociologist Zygmunt Bauman, who prefers the term “liquid modernity” (historically following “solid modernity”) to the more traditionally (and frequently) used concept, “postmodernism.”

¹ Vilém Flusser, *The Freedom of the Migrant. Objections to Nationalism* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2003), 55.

Artist Statement

A decaying farmhouse waits; a time traveler anchored in an inconceivable world. Through rippled panes of glass, it has witnessed the ever-accelerating arc of change.

Confronting the consequences of our haste toward progress, we look to the past to find models for sustainability. We exist in a new world that inhabits the structures of the old. The voices of our ancestors remain audible, their values and ideals built into the very framing of their sturdy houses. But the solutions they provide are incomplete. Our world is no longer theirs; the lines of communication are crossed.

Acceleration continues. Atoms collide. Cells mutate.

The new inhabitants of the farmhouse have replaced the central hearth with an updated nucleus: the blue glow of the television flickers like a cold candle, or a reactor on the verge of meltdown.

About the Artists

Shana McCaw and Brent Budsberg have collaborated for the past eight years on site-specific sculptural installations and performances. Their recent work focuses on the use of realistic architectural miniatures and their effect upon our perception of space. Both are also founding members of the WhiteBoxPainters, a performance art group specializing in public projects. McCaw received an MFA from Cranbrook Academy of Art in Bloomfield Hills, Minnesota, in 1999. She currently teaches at the Milwaukee Institute of Art and Design and Cardinal Stritch University. Budsberg earned a BFA from the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee in 2000. He is a 3-D lab supervisor at the Milwaukee Institute of Art and Design. He has also worked as a finish carpenter and a set designer for the film and theater industries.

Recent exhibitions include *Descendant*, a solo exhibition at the Wright Museum of Art, Beloit, Wisconsin; *Current Tendencies: Ten Artists from Wisconsin*, at the Haggerty Museum of Art, Milwaukee; *Escapisms* at Galerie Sans Nom, Moncton, New Brunswick, Canada; *Leading Edge* at NML Gallery, Cardinal Stritch University, Milwaukee; *Broken Down* at The Soap Factory in Minneapolis, Minnesota; and *New Work/Emerging Artists* at Inova, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. McCaw/Budsberg will also be featured in a solo exhibition in August 2010 at the James Watrous Gallery at the Wisconsin Academy of Arts and Letters in Madison, Wisconsin.

Checklist

Reaction

2009

4' x 4' x 4'

mixed media

Ground

2009

12' x 32' x 6'

mixed media



Descendant, 2009



Ground, 2009



Reaction (in progress), 2009



Red Light, 2009

IVERSON WHITE

Soulful Voices; Ancient Memories

Neely, Alabama, 1918. The body of a black man hanging from a tree, swaying gently in the breeze. Cut to grave. A woman's hand slowly rises to still the anguish of her grandson as she stands over the coffin of her son. The family is alone. Fear of retaliation kept everyone away. Some of them went north, away from the terror of lynching and toward the promise of greater economic opportunity. Iverson White's *Dark Exodus* (1985) captures a major moment in African American history—the Great Migration.

Before he became a filmmaker, Iverson White was a poet. His poetic sensibility, his way with sound, words and images, defines his aesthetic. Drawing on African American history and his passion for exploring relationships between black women and men, White makes films that are as much intellectual pursuits as they are efforts to refine his craft. Each asks a question. *Dark Exodus* asks: “What specific events sparked the Great Migration?” White answers in this powerful 28-minute film.

White's first feature-length film, *Magic Love* (1992), incorporates elements of the supernatural into the history of the transatlantic slave trade. It's a story about birth and death, reincarnation and redemption. It's also a love story. The two central characters, Jean Claude and Rachel, are haunted by voices speaking from a distant past and by memories of the voyages that took Africans from their homelands. The voices call them back to each other, across space and time, as the reincarnated shaman Nyawi and his beloved Kosi.

The Johnson Girls (1995) is an adaptation of a short story by Toni Cade Bambara. White's interest in the limits of narration and in the challenges of translating literature into film were two of the reasons he undertook this project. Another is the story itself: a difficult love relationship about which four black women speak.

In *Self-Determination* (2008) and his award-winning script, *The Funeral* (co-written with Bill Harris), White privileges the visual over the voice. The woman in *Self Determination* seeks comfort in alcohol as her marriage falls apart. Few words are spoken. Everything the woman experiences is conveyed through visual images: close-ups of her pouring a drink, listlessly going about her day, deciding finally that she has had enough. Words are unnecessary; it's all in her face.

Likewise with *The Funeral* (2009). White gives his characters, Kathy and Sam, enough dialogue to suggest a happy marriage. After Sam is murdered trying to protect his family from intruders, we learn about his mistress. Minimal dialogue and the non-verbal exchanges between the wife and the unwelcome mourner convey hurt, pain and forgiveness. White says that his goal in these films is to minimize exposition. The result is powerful and visually appealing works of art.

White is also a gifted documentary filmmaker. *It's Always Something* (2001) is about insurance redlining in Milwaukee. It focuses on a ten-year battle between the Milwaukee Branch of the NAACP and American Family Insurance Company. It's an important film that deserves an audience beyond the Milwaukee area.

Iverson White's films distinguish him as a unique voice in African American filmmaking. His films offer new ways of telling stories about African Americans. He invites us into the emotional lives of his characters and leaves it up to us to decide how things will work out.

Sandra Adell

Actor/Professor of Afro-American Studies

Artist Statement

I have been writing, directing, producing, acting in, and shooting stills, film, and video for forty years. I expect to be producing work until I die. My work reflects my personal concerns. Among other things, I am concerned with the persistence of racism and combating it. Both *Dark Exodus* and *It's Always Something* reflect that concern in very different ways. I am concerned with sexual politics and the relationships between men and women. *The Johnson Girls*, *Self-Determination*, and my most recent film, *The Funeral*, address those concerns.

About the Artist

Iverson White, a native of Detroit, Michigan, received a BA in Mass Communications in 1980 from Wayne State University. He was a member of the Graduate Repertory Company at the University of New Orleans before transferring to the University of California, Los Angeles's film school where he received an MFA in Theater Arts in 1985. His films have screened both nationally and internationally in the Southern Circuit Film tour, the Pan African Film Festival, the Torino Film Festival and on PBS. White has received numerous awards for his work, including a Rockefeller Fellowship and a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts. Iverson White is an associate professor in the Department of Film at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee.

Checklist

The Funeral, 2009

Film/Digital, 13:00

Iverson White's work will be surveyed in *An Evening with Iverson White* on December 2, 2009 in the UWM Union Theatre. The screening, part of the *Locally Grown: The Nohl Fellows* series, will feature several works by White including *The Johnson Girls* (1995), *Self-Determination* (2008) and *The Funeral* (2009).

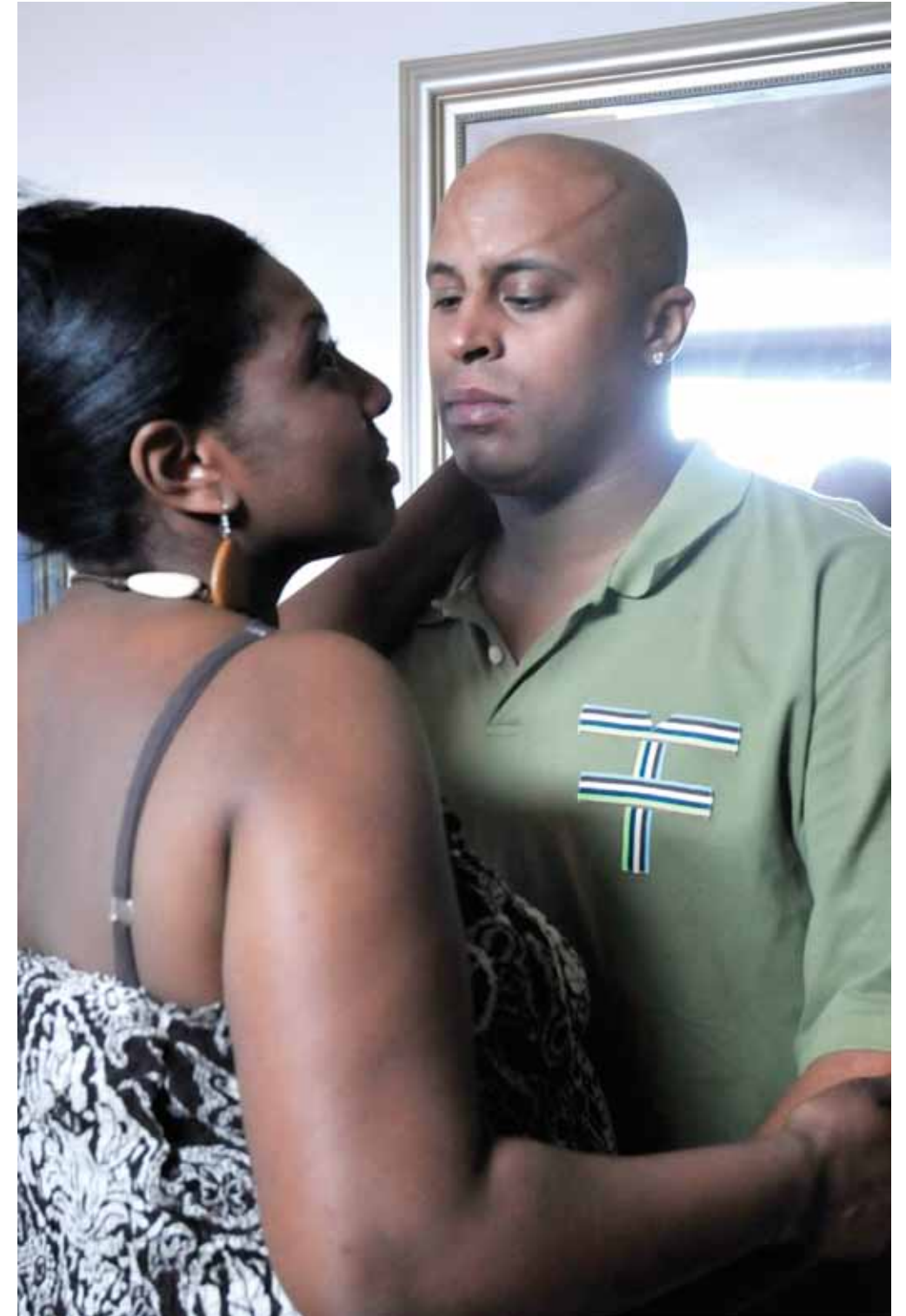


Self-Determination, 2008

Self-Determination, 2008



The Funeral, 2009



The Funeral, 2009

EMERGING ARTISTS



TATE BUNKER

The Everyday Fabulist

Tate sits across the table from me. I have never met him, and I am entranced by his energy. If auras came in celluloid, his would be layers of Bergman and Kubrick behind Godard and Herzog atop Wenders and Murnau. He incorrigibly believes that everyone has a film inside her- or himself—and that there is no reason not to make it. He gives me copies of his short films, and I sit transfixed by *The Hermit Crab* as an elderly man, trapped in time, climbs stairs upon stairs as if caught in an Escher print.

Tate sits across the table from me. He screens *Starlite* for a group of teenagers. One asks, “Why does the guy run around in his underwear?” To feel inspired and alive? Or to escape the ambition that consumes his existence and comprises his being? This struggle remains a theme in Tate’s films: finding a balance between the thing that simultaneously feeds and eats you.

Tate sits across the table from me. He wants to make a second feature, a contemporary *Little Red Riding Hood*, a fantasy with universal appeal, because we all long for one great adventure and instead succumb to our own Big Bad Wolves every day. We travel to Florida where a pier transforms into a forest, a drive-in church provides salvation, and two girls bloom like *Resurrection Ferns* while crossing the threshold into adulthood.

Tate sits across the table from me. He has met a mesmerizing woman—Mickey Burgermeister—his next muse and a roller skater extraordinaire. Impervious to the youthful demon stalking her, she skates lap after lap around paradise stopping only to appeal, arms outstretched, to the orbital force guiding her. Though ensnared in life’s rotation, she glides blissfully: not yet an angel and still a little girl.

Susan Santha Kerns

Film Studies Instructor

Artist Statement

I attempt to merge the beauty of common moments with the mythical to create an innovative style in which neo-realism meets magical realism. I try to discover a film instead of simply creating it: at times, my process requires working from a loose script so that I can fully explore the aesthetics of image, sound and narrative as they materialize during filmmaking. I have employed this process in both short and feature-length films that mix linear stories with dreamlike moments during which reality becomes fantastic or fantasy de-familiarizes the habitual. I appreciate honest, simple stories that nevertheless expose the bizarre, random or chaotic nature of everyday worlds and spaces. These tales excuse me from being tied to realism in my films: they free up narrative possibilities for confusion, disorder and the unpredictable.

About the Artist

Tate Bunker has directed over thirty films in the last ten years, and his lush images and mastery behind the lens make him one of Milwaukee’s premiere cinematographers. Bunker’s award-winning career in film and television includes an Emmy for his production work on *Gumbo TV*, two additional Emmy nominations, two Milwaukee International Film Festival “Best Milwaukee Filmmaker” awards and a Paris Film Festival “Best Cinematography” prize for his short, *Starlite*. Bunker balances freelancing with teaching film production at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee and directing his own films.

Checklist

Starring Mickey Burgermeister, 2009

digital video / projected

15:00 (looped)

Tate Bunker will also screen *Starlite* (17 min., 2006) and *The Albatross* (13 min., 2008) on December 9, 2009 in the UWM Union Theatre as part of the *Locally Grown: The Nohl Fellows* series.



Starring Mickey Burgermeister, 2009



Starring Mickey Burgermeister, 2009

BOBBY CIRALDO / ANDREW SWANT

Special Entertainment

The Internet has put new venues and distribution channels beyond the control of classical communication systems—the entertainment industry, the art world. Of course the Internet is a system too but it’s sufficiently inchoate that, for the moment at least, within its context such designations as “artist” and “entertainer,” “good” and “bad,” turn fuzzy; once again technological innovation has unsettled categories. To be an artist of this new medium first involves, then, innovating forms and practices that are authentic to it; these, to be authentic, will be mapped onto the distinctive freedoms the Internet bestows.

In their creative partnership Bobby Ciraldo and Andrew Swant pursue this goal at, appropriately, both the macro and micro levels. Ciraldo has spoken of “treating the IMDb [Internet Movie Database] as a medium,” and the production model that he and Swant are constructing is indeed aggressively protean. The duo has created YouTube music videos that have drawn over twenty million viewers. They’ve co-directed two documentaries—one of a post-modern ballet danced to William Shatner’s sprech-singing, the other an “industrial,” commissioned, about prison life. They’ve co-produced a comical exploitation flick filmed in Super 8. For the past five years they’ve toiled away at a version of *Hamlet* shot entirely before a green screen. They contribute to a late night experimental television program broadcast monthly to the Milwaukee market. (Their decision to work from Milwaukee—a city where a creative mind can advance without concern for the approval of powerful cultural gatekeepers—promotes their production model’s flexibility.) Each project delivers as business stratagem and self-amusement. Ciraldo & Swant do not participate in the romantic tradition of the tortured artist; they measure success in the populist terms of showbiz and the Internet. Granted, in those projects over which they’ve exerted complete creative control their stuff does display a consistent look (a stripped down, Internet-friendly artifice derived from video games and cartoons) and method (they identify formal and thematic conventions of popular TV and film product, then modify or warp these to deliver something smarter, wilder and more transparent), yet we shouldn’t locate their real innovation in these; ultimately the subject of their videos and films might have been any subject, the style of them any style. Their real interest—their real medium—is, as Ciraldo’s remark indicates, neither film nor video but, rather, the vast, globe-encircling media-scape that these popular formats engage (and of which the Internet is most emblematic). They aspire to be players without sacrificing the spirit of play.

Are they artists? They appear ambivalent. Ciraldo, who brings a computer programming background, resists the art world’s elitist bent. Swant, although more comfortable with art’s aims, shares his partner’s preference for using cultural languages that can reach as many people as possible. Still, calling them “entertainers” is too simple. Their attitude toward entertainment product is too conceptual, detached and ironic. If they are artists, they arrive at their version of artistry by manipulating entertainment’s texts and tones to create smarter entertainment—a paradox, and one arising from the new conditions of the Internet, within which context it seems altogether at home.

David Robbins

Artist/Writer

Artist Statement

We have been collaborating since 2003 because of a shared interest in exploring and bending the rules of art and entertainment. We are drawn to unusual and experimental themes, but we also love big audiences, especially when they’re laughing. We strive to make our work as accessible as possible through the use of humor, eye-catching imagery and the common language of a particular medium. Our motto is “Experimental AND Accessible!”

While our work tends to be time-based and visual, we are not committed to a particular medium. We try to pick the medium that will best fit the idea: a viral video, a web site, a live performance, a documentary film, or a narrative film.

We’ve been working on a partially animated feature-length film called *Hamlet A.D.D.* for many years. The project is representative of our work in a number of ways—it involves appropriation, powerful visuals, satire, and it attempts to destabilize the de facto hierarchies of art and entertainment by blurring the lines between “high” and “low.”

About the Artists

Bobby Ciraldo is a video artist and former computer programmer who attended Grinnell College and later collaborated on the creation of ZeroTV.com, a precursor to MySpace and YouTube.

Andrew Swant is a writer and filmmaker who studied film at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee and art at the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire. He was a Sundance TV Lab finalist and has exhibited work in New York and abroad.

Working as Special Entertainment, their titles include *The Robot Mousetrap*, shown at White Columns gallery in New York; the award-winning *Studying the Lie*, with artist David Robbins; *Zombie Killer*, a music video for the band Leslie & the Lys with guest vocals by Elvira; and the legendary YouTube video *What What (In the Butt)*, which was featured on the television show *South Park* in an extensive shot-for-shot re-creation.

Current projects include *Hamlet A.D.D.*, a feature-length comedy based on Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* with live-action characters in an animated universe; *Something Theater*, a television show that airs in the Milwaukee area; and *William Shatner’s Gonzo Ballet*, a documentary featuring William Shatner, Ben Folds, Henry Rollins and the Milwaukee Ballet that has screened at numerous film festivals to critical acclaim.

Checklist

Special Artifacts: visible and invisible props, and related video clips, from *Hamlet A.D.D.*

Bobby Ciraldo and Andrew Swant will also screen an excerpt from their work-in-progress, *Hamlet A.D.D.*, on November 18, 2009 at the UWM Union Theatre as part of the *Locally Grown: The Nohl Fellows* series.



Hamlet A.D.D., 2010



Hamlet A.D.D., 2010

FRANKIE LATINA

Hyper Cinema Auteur

With the much anticipated, long-time-coming debut of his latest film, *Modus Operandi*, director Frankie Latina has emerged from the nadir of anonymous struggle into the seminal fringes of national notoriety. Since 1999, Latina has made about a half dozen films. As he’s dryly observed, “None of them went anywhere except into my shoebox.” But his latest film has landed in the star-studded (mingling with Dennis Hopper, Jon Voight, Willem Dafoe and Danny Trejo—who makes a substantial appearance in *Modus Operandi*) realm of the CineVegas Film Festival where *Modus Operandi* received a very enthusiastic reception.

Shot on Super 8, *Modus Operandi* is a relentless, invigorating and ultimately crowning homage to cult/exploitation films of the super seventies. These historical, glowing cinematic artifacts have infused Latina with a passion and vision that he has made his own. This film is exclusively his, not a ghostly adjunct preying on films past, nor an unimaginative regurgitation. Filled with ever-deepening intrigue and sinister characters in a covert CIA-type operation, *Modus Operandi* is a sensational re-imagining of the glory days of cheap and unruly exploitation flicks brought forth in hyper-realization.

Each shot is a filmic delight: whether in innovative composition, retro-stylistic costuming, compelling set design or just a general explosion of cinematic bombast. And almost every scene seems self-contained, hermetic in its singularity, yet obliged to serve a narrative sensibility even when linked to its predecessor by a thin, sometimes nearly invisible, thematic flow.

And there is no doubt that Latina loves his city—Milwaukee—as lavishly showcased throughout. (The film also takes a literal jaunt to Tokyo.) *Modus Operandi* is not only the work of an undeniably talented auteur but also a product of community effort. Family and friends rallied around Latina, fueled by Grandma Shirley’s home cooking on the Northwest side of Milwaukee. So many talented people gave so much to the film, like Mark Escribano, the director of photography, who couldn’t resist Latina’s determination and worked on the project over the course of several years, and Nicole Johnson, who provided sultry vocalizations attuned to the sensual and violent combustion of human interaction on the screen.

Throughout the production, Latina embodied the tough-minded, perseverant attitude one needs to stay in the full-throttle game of grunge narrative filmmaking. Storyboards always in hand, his preparedness and enthusiasm ensured a continued dedication to the project. Here was a distinct leader with a distinct plan, but also a generous human being who genuinely cared for those around him.

This is an exciting time for Latina and his compatriots as his trajectory continues its ascent into the cinematic firmament. One of the great questions—and most thrilling anticipations—one can ask about Frankie Latina is, simply, “What next?”

Mark Borchardt

Writer/Director

Artist Statement

To me, the appeal of cinema lies in its ability to enable a person to escape their reality for the length of a film while they sip their soda and eat a bucket of popcorn. The structure of my work is a collage of old architecture that will probably get demolished and vivid October color. Story lines and ideas come to me from life experiences, daydreaming, photographers like Helmut Newton and influential filmmakers such as Jørgen Leth, John Cassavetes, David Lynch, John Waters, Wes Anderson, Stanley Kubrick, Francis Ford Coppola, Quentin Tarantino, Wong Kar-wai, and Jean-Pierre Melville. I would like to reach a point where I can work full time on filmmaking and not worry about being able to afford milk for my cereal. Beyond this, the only thing you can count on in life is uncertainty, although one thing I am certain about is that I will remain humble through the highest and lowest points of my career. Throw your trash away after you watch your next film—I could be the usher who has to clean it up.

About the Artist

Born: 14 July 1978

Birthplace: Milwaukee, Wisconsin

Died: N/A

Best Known As: The director of the art house epic *Modus Operandi*

Name at birth: Frankie Latina

Frankie Latina began as a sales clerk in video rental stores across the city of Milwaukee, shooting experimental films on the weekends with friends and family. Eventually he crossed from experimental work to narrative storytelling, blurring the line between the two along the way. In 2009 his grand and colorful film, *Modus Operandi*, was hugely popular and established him as the leader of the so-called Milwaukee Tidal Wave movement. Latina’s attitude was summed up in part in his statement: “Filmmaking is my only weapon against impermanence.”

Checklist

Hack, 1999-2005

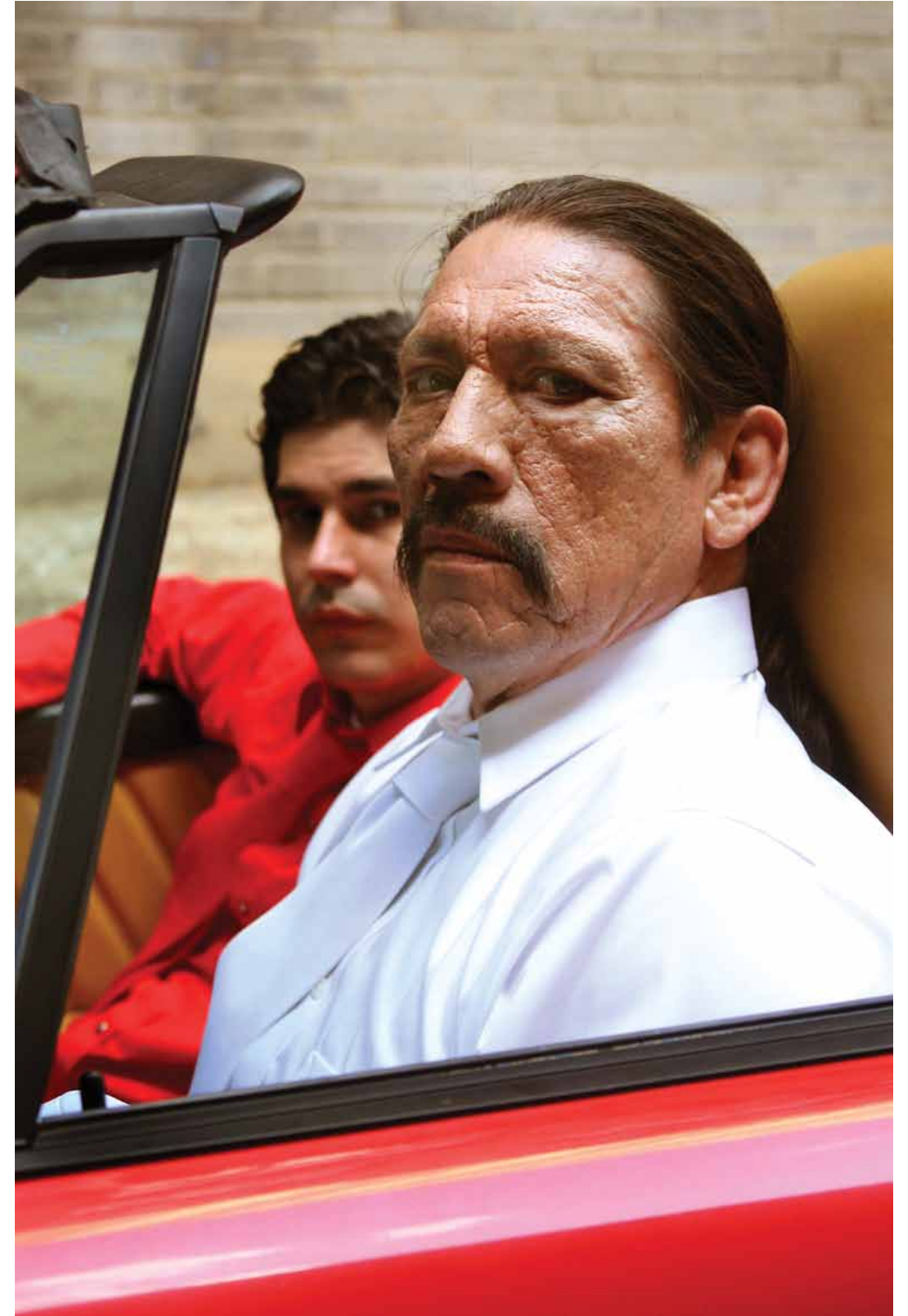
Super 8, 16mm and Mini DV on DVD, 15:00

Hack documents “the five failed films of Frankie Latina” which embody Latina’s six-year struggle to legitimize himself as a filmmaker in Milwaukee. Despite never-ending financial trouble, tragedy and constant self-doubt, Latina and his filmmaking family refused to quit. Having recently released *Modus Operandi* to festival success, Latina’s *Hack* has become especially poignant as a retrospective of the challenges that must be overcome to succeed not only as an artist and a filmmaker, but as a human being.

Frankie Latina will also screen *Modus Operandi* (Super 8 on DVD, 77 min., 2008) on November 18, 2009 at the UWM Union Theatre as part of the *Locally Grown: The Nohl Fellows* series.



Modus Operandi, 2008



Modus Operandi, 2008

BARBARA J. MINER

Anatomy of an Avenue

Barbara Miner’s project to photograph the entire length of Milwaukee’s North Avenue began as an exploration. A trained journalist, Miner put down her pen and took up her camera to interrogate this arterial route and its inhabitants. The result is a group of empathetic, nuanced and aesthetically complex black and white images that together create an affecting portrait of bounded communities.

Beer made Milwaukee famous in the nineteenth century; segregation, concentrated poverty and unemployment have made Milwaukee infamous in the early 21st century. Despite the civil rights gains of the late 1960s, Milwaukee still suffers from many of the same problems that motivated the local branch of the NAACP Youth Council to take to the streets and march over forty years ago. Those activists crossed North Avenue on their nightly marches from black Milwaukee into the white south side. And if they had instead taken their route west and traveled along North Avenue, moving from the city into the suburbs of Wauwatosa and Brookfield, what would they have seen? The story that Miner’s photographs tell of that journey west reveals more than the stark, black and white narrative of haves and have-nots presumed to describe the contrast between inner city and suburb.

If the care that the Brookfield homeowner on his riding mower takes to tend his lawn is unsurprising, than neither should be the gardens and fruit trees that Larry and Sharon Adams have planted to help remake the Walnut Way neighborhood in the central city. Near Walnut Way, Miner made a photograph that depicts urban warmth inside Jake’s Delicatessen: two employees stand behind the counter, wearing bright white aprons and smiling broadly. Similarly, we encounter the large smile of a mustached parade participant miles down North Avenue traveling on the suburban stretch of the route. In between the two, at the corner of North and Fond du Lac, Miner inserts an image of a Hmong farmer sorting his produce at Fondy Farmers Market, which addresses urban poverty by making fresh, local foods more accessible in an area underserved by large supermarkets.

While these images and the journey they represent challenge some assumptions, they leave others intact. A man in silhouette at a bus stop looks up at a building with boarded windows. The dilapidated façade and the empty street show a corner of the city still in need of attention. Milwaukee’s economic and racial segregation is rooted in past practices that include redlining, racial covenants and blockbusting—efforts that channeled wealth out of the city and into the suburbs. The inequities that these practices created continue because adequate resources still have not been allocated to the central city.

Miner’s photographs show that despite these inequalities, many Milwaukeeans pour their hearts and souls into their homes and neighborhoods. Sociologists and economists have argued that urban and suburban prosperity are interdependent. As scholar John A. Powell suggests, we all have a shared fate. No matter how tall the gates are that ring suburban subdivisions, North Avenue and other thoroughfares remind us that we are interconnected. Barbara Miner’s *Anatomy of an Avenue* allows us to begin to recognize those links—block by block.

Jasmine Alinder

Historian

Artist Statement

Anatomy of an Avenue begins at the Milwaukee lakefront and ends sixteen miles later as North Avenue dead-ends in the formerly rural, now exurban town of Pewaukee. I chose North Avenue because it connects more neighborhoods, communities, cities and counties than any other major thoroughfare in the metropolitan area. It is a microcosm of who we are as a community—both what unites us and what divides us.

The photo essay is designed as a visual spur to challenge assumptions—for instance, that the central city is defined by black poverty and crime—and to encourage people to explore neighborhoods that may seem as distant as far-away countries but that are, literally, only down the street.

About the Artist

Barbara J. Miner has been a reporter, writer and editor for more than thirty years, with an increasing focus on photography. Her writing has appeared in publications ranging from the *New York Times* to the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* and the *Nation*. Miner has a bachelor’s degree in journalism, a master’s degree in English literature and an associate degree in photography. Her approach to photography is perhaps best summed up by essayist John Berger: “The way we see things is affected by what we know and what we believe. The relation between what we see and what we know is never settled” (*Ways of Seeing*, 1990).

Checklist

Anatomy of an Avenue: a photo essay of sixty 14” x 9” black and white prints displayed side-by-side over 70 feet, as if one were traveling along North Avenue from east to west. The photographs were taken in 2008 and 2009.



The Milwaukee Inner City Arts Council: Past and Present, 2008



Fondy Farmers Market: Fresh Kale, 2008



Jake's Deli: Two Workers, 2008



Brookfield July 4 Parade: A Jolly Good Time, 2009

The Suitcase Export Fund was created to increase opportunities for local artists to exhibit outside the four-county area and to provide more visibility for individual artists and their work as well as for greater Milwaukee. In its sixth cycle, the Fund provided assistance with shipping, travel and promotion to twenty-one individual artists. These artists—six of them past Nohl Fellows—work in a range of media. Their exhibitions took them to Alabama, Delaware, Florida, Indiana, Kentucky, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Missouri, New York, Tennessee and Washington in the United States, and to Germany, Italy, Mexico, Nigeria, Taiwan, Turkey and Vietnam.

**THE GREATER MILWAUKEE FOUNDATION'S
MARY L. NOHL FUND
SUITCASE EXPORT FUND FOR INDIVIDUAL ARTISTS**

2008

Marna Goldstein Brauner and **Hai-Chi Jihn** will travel to Taiwan for the opening of *Frippery: Peculiar Bijoutry or Curiously Adorned*, a seven-artist traveling exhibition. Both artists created new work for the exhibition at the Kaosiung Museum of Fine Arts. Brauner and Jihn will speak in Kaosiung and offer workshops at Tainan National University of the Arts.

James Charles traveled to Rehoboth Beach, Delaware, to install a solo exhibition of his work at the Heidi Lowe Gallery.

Cecelia Condit, a Nohl Fellow in 2004, presented a program of four videos at the International Eskisehir Film Festival at Anadolu University in Eskisehir, Turkey. She also offered a two-day workshop, *Experimental Narrative: Experimental Documentary*.

Santiago Cucullu, a Nohl Fellow in 2006, was invited to create a solo gallery project at Emerson University's Huret and Spector Gallery in Boston, Massachusetts. This was Cucullu's first exhibition in Boston.

Studio THO in Ha Noi, Vietnam, hosted a solo exhibition of work by **Lawrence D'Attilio** last spring. The more than twenty photographs were drawn from a project about poor rural women in Vietnam who start businesses with the help of micro loans. D'Attilio, who is actively building a fine art photography movement in Vietnam and developing artistic exchange between Ha Noi and Milwaukee, attended the opening and offered free seminars and a portfolio review.

Paul Druecke exhibited *A Public Space: Hopkins Plaza* at Artscape, Baltimore's arts festival. This is the fourth installment of *A Public Space*, a five-city project that invites people in a community to photograph the same public space.

Bridget Griffith Evans took ten large paintings to St. Louis for *It Came From Milwaukee*, a group exhibition at the Mad Art Gallery, an alternative exhibition/performance space.

Gary John Gresl, a 2007 Nohl Fellow, and two of his large assemblage sculptures traveled to Purdue University Galleries in West Lafayette, Indiana for *Urban Legends and Rural Myths*, a national juried group exhibition.

Ariana Huggett will travel to Mexico for a solo exhibition of her oil and watercolor paintings at Ex Convento del Carmen, a state-run gallery in the historic city center of Guadalajara. The state of Jalisco is a sister state to Wisconsin.

Yevgeniya Kaganovich is creating three large inflatable pieces for *The Body Politic*, a major thematic sculptural exhibition at the Richmond Center for Visual Art at Western Michigan University. She will travel to Michigan to install the work, which will float twenty-five feet above the ground.

Annie Killelea screened *Faces*, a film-in-progress she made during her 2007 Nohl Fellowship, at the Memphis College of Art in Memphis, Tennessee. She also offered a talk about her work.

Kay Knight shipped two large collage drawings to *Build Me Up, Tear Me Down*, a group exhibition curated by Almitra Stanley in the Platform project space at Denise Bibro Fine Art in New York City.

Faythe Levine, a Nohl Fellow in 2007, attended the first European screening of her documentary, *Handmade Nation*, as part of *Girl Monster*, a series of events presented by Chicks on Speed at Kampnagel Theatre, an international cultural institute/arts space in Hamburg, Germany.

Dan Ollman, a 2007 Nohl Fellow, will travel to the New Africa Shrine in Lagos, Nigeria, to screen *Suffering and Smiling*, his film about African singer and activist Fela Anikulapo Kuti. The New Africa Shrine, created by Fela Kuti's son Femi and his family as a venue to bring political awareness to the community, sponsors free weekly musical events and screenings. The film will be released in conjunction with Femi Kuti's new record, and Ollman will distribute the film through a variety of media channels in Nigeria.

Gina Rymarcsuk flew to the *Aviation Art Show*, the first annual Southeastern Aviation Art Expo, organized by Jennifer Harwell Art and the Southern Museum of Flight in Birmingham, Alabama, where she exhibited fourteen prints.

Roy Staab created an on-site work from brush and saplings for Sculpture Key West, an annual juried exhibition of outdoor sculpture that takes place every winter in Key West, Florida.

Marcelino Stuhmer traveled to Bergamo, Italy for his solo exhibition, *Get Ready to Shoot Yourself*, at the Jade Art Gallery. He offered a lecture/performance that explored the connection between his project—based on the Orson Welles film, *The Lady from Shanghai*—and cinema at the Bergamo Film Meeting, an international film festival.

Sonja Thomsen participated in *Pause, to Begin*, a juried group exhibition of fifteen contemporary photographers curated by Ethan Jones and David Wright at Booksmart Studio in Rochester, New York. Thomsen showed *lacuna* (2008), an installation of twenty-eight photographs, and gave a talk at the opening.

Lynn Tomaszewski delivered a gallery talk at the opening of her solo exhibition at the Cochenour Gallery, Georgetown College, Georgetown, Kentucky. The show included paintings, drawings and a video projection.

Christina West travelled to Seattle, Washington to install her solo exhibition of large-scale sculptures at the Pacini Lubel Gallery.

The Institute of Visual Arts

Since 1996, the Institute of Visual Arts (Inova) at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee has established an international reputation as a contemporary art research center. The mission of the Institute of Visual Arts is to engage the general and university publics with contemporary art from around the world through exhibitions and programs. The Institute is recognized for the high quality of its programs and for the opportunity it offers artists to experiment in the creation of new work. Inova is committed to educating audiences by presenting artists who are shaping our visual culture in the present and for the future.

arts.uwm.edu/inova

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Visual Arts Milwaukee (VAM!) links local visual arts organizations to increase the quality of local artistic presentation and production as well as to bring greater local, national and international attention to Milwaukee's institutions and artists. The Mary L. Nohl Fund Individual Artist Fellowships and Suitcase Export Fund are the major projects of VAM!.

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