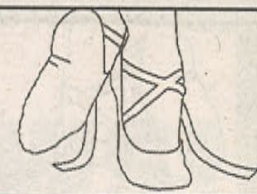


for art's sake

By Elio Iannacci



ART


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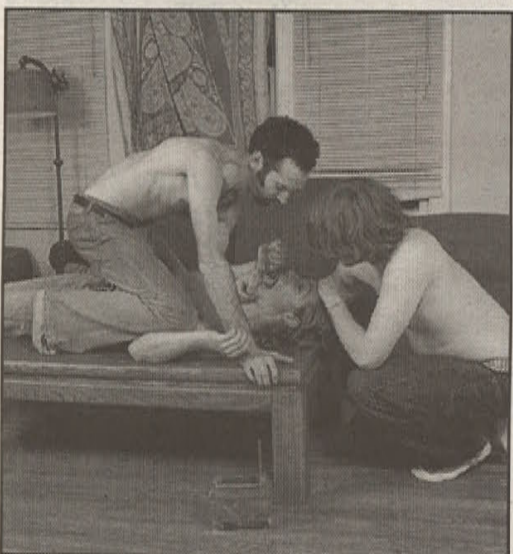
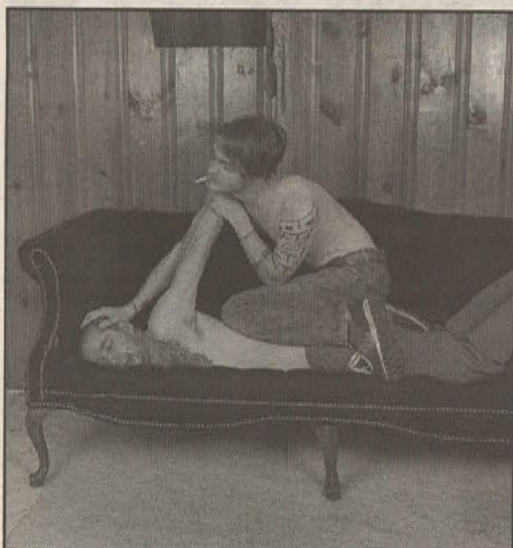
In Chicago's buffet-style art world (over 170 galleries and still growing), art groupies are always at odds with themselves when it comes down to choosing just the right visual diet. Even the strongest palates needn't endure refried concepts and crusty pastiche subjects from works that do nothing but give off the flavor of overcooked cliché.

The best way to avoid emotional and artistic indigestion this summer is to start west of the city. **1R** (119 Peoria, 312/738-3915) — located in the heart of the West Loop's gallery district — has one of the summer's most opulent shows, appropriately titled "Glossing." This highly-charged exhibit (which features eight artists from the U.S. and beyond) caters to both the tasteful and the tasteless art viewer who enjoys trash and class in one viewing. On the verge of both is the show's biggest belle of the ball, Chicago-born photographer Craig Doty. Doty's photographic contributions to "Glossing" ("Fish" and "Wrestle") are bound to elicit some idle chitchat, as they give off a homoerotic-hazing vibe with stylized images of bullying teensters. At the core of Doty's images are slick visions that flaunt powerful color on an *Alice In Wonderland*-type background that tests and questions boundaries of sex and submission in the dorm room.

For more visual splendor, a quick jaunt to the **Museum of Contemporary Art** (220 E. Chicago Ave., 312/280-2660) will reveal some of the most interesting stamp works ever seen in this city (the display showcases artists such as Jas. Felter, C.T. Chew, Picasso Gaglione). Titled "STAMP! — Artists' Postage Stamps and Books from the Collections of MCA & Bad Press Books," this MCA exhibit is filled with post marks that mark and mock what we conventionally stick to our letters, bill payments and packages. The exhibit (through July 27) goes to great lengths and licks to undermine, reinterpret and celebrate the object (and its meaning), presenting viewers with actual albums that are nothing like your granny's collection.

River North's **Schneider Gallery** (230 W. Superior St., 312/988-4033) explores the art of night with "Sleepless," a group collection of exquisite photography that ranges from landscape to unconventional portrait work. The show's premise is simple: photographer can't sleep, so he/she shoots the night away. The results are extraordinary, as the stars of the show include such fantastic characters as afterhours club divas, brooding industrial-tinged sunsets and frightening midnight drives through suburban wastelands (think *Twin Peaks* all over again). Photographer Deborah Wian Whitehouse's series, "Saturday Night," makes it easy to see why Whitehouse describes her subject as "the big night out in American culture where all are compelled to lose themselves in search of fun."

Last but not least is "Depiction," the latest show at **Gallery 400** (400 S. Peoria, 312/996-6114). With paintings, drawings, photography and sculptures, this all-in-one, multi-artist show tackles the huge, done to death question — "what is the meaning behind art?" — with complete tact. Luckily the answers, created by artists such as Pablo Vargas Lugo (with his stunning paper work "Cross-Eyed View") and Rosy Winterer (with her untitled mixed media on canvas work) are far from commonplace — they're actually obscurely beautiful enough to obliterate the question entirely. 



"Wrestle" and "Fish" by Craig Doty

scene/heard

Mark Your Calendars...

July 18-August 22: As part of Absolut Vision 8: A World of Art in Chicago, **FLATFILE** photography (118 N. Peoria, 312/491-1190) displays photos from Ann Simmons-Myers with video work from Joan Truckenbrod in a show called "Undercover."

August 9: The 14th Annual Poetry Slam Finals Night Championships at the Skyline Theatre complete with finalists taken from 63 national poetry slam teams. Tickets are available at the Chicago Cultural Center Gift Shop. For more information, call 312/744-6630.

August 9: The Art Institute of Chicago (111 S. Michigan Ave., 312/443-3600) hosts a talk on "Intimate portraits by Renoir, Cassatt, Beaux, and an Unknown Maker" in Gallery 201.

Short & Sweet...

Name: Brian Dettmer

Place of birth: Naperville, Illinois

Current work on display: Part of a group show entitled "Politics as Usual" at the Aron Packer Gallery (118 N. Peoria, runs until August 16); also part of a group show entitled "If you don't follow the creative process you mess up" at the Glass Curtain Gallery (August 1-September 1).

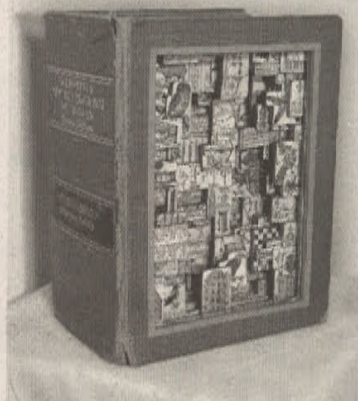
How would you describe your artistic process? Most of my work explores a commutative object's unrealized functions. I work mainly with books, but I also create sound pieces, collage work, and sculptures from a variety of sources. In my recent book pieces, I find a book and seal the edges, then carve through the top. I excavate pages until a previously unrealized 3-D collage emerges inside of the book. I don't move anything or add anything. I just subtract.

What do you feel is one of your most unexpected works? An audio work titled "ReAddress" [which can be viewed in the Aron Packer Gallery] in which I have taken excerpts from George W. Bush's 2002 State of the Union address and dissected each word into a separate audio track. The tracks are played at random causing new word chains, phrases, and meanings to emerge.

Are there artistic criteria you use when choosing subjects? I try not to be autobiographical. I feel that the world is full of interesting objects and functions just waiting to be devoured and explored. I don't express my emotions through my work, but I do try to create work that can evoke an emotional response. I am interested in materials that are created with an assigned, communicative function.

Where do your ideas come from? I try to find ideas wherever I can. Science, architecture, math, and music influence me as much as art, if not more. I am interested in expanding functions and perceptions in the world around us. Science and architecture have traditionally been more successful with this than art.

What do you hope for viewers to leave with after seeing your work? Whenever I create a new piece my goal is to create something that will make the viewer or listener see an object or a media in a new way. I am satisfied if a viewer enjoys or feels they have gained an interesting experience from witnessing my work. I never try to create a "this means this" or a "that symbolizes that" type of a forced situation. It's most interesting to me when someone tells me they see my work in a way I had never thought about.



Brian Dettmer's "New International Dictionary"