

Theatre without walls

New theatre group brings the stage to rural Iowa



By Katie Mills Giorgio

Photos by Dan Sandersfeld

Some people aren't cut out for retirement. That's what Tom Johnson — founder of The Old Creamery Theatre in Amana — and his wife Meg Merckens — an Old Creamery favorite for the past 31 years — found out when Johnson retired in 2006.

"It didn't take us long to realize we still had a lot of creative energy and a love for the theatre, and that in order to get our work done we would need to start a new company," says Merckens.

Talk of starting a new company got serious in the fall of 2007, and soon after the Iowa Theatre Artists Company (ITAC) — a not-for-profit, 501c3 organization — was born. Johnson and Merckens each have a role — off stage, that is — as administrators of ITAC: Johnson as Executive Director and Merckens as New Projects Coordinator.

"Tom and I don't necessarily agree on every aspect of various artistic or administrative decisions and that, I think, is actually one of our strengths," says Merckens. "We bring different ideas to the table, but because we both implicitly trust each other's ideas and skills, added to the strong degree of respect we

have for each other's experience and creativity, these differences actually lead to a stronger business partnership."

That partnership, in the form of ITAC, has been met with much support and success in just a few short months. ITAC's first produc-

tion — the fun-filled musical revue *Pump Boys and Dinettes* — premiered in February at The Colony Village Restaurant in Williamsburg. The production was a huge hit with audiences, so much so that they extended the run of the show, adding an additional weekend of performances. Not bad for the inaugural production of a new theatre group. Then again, Johnson and Merckens have several decades of experience under their theatrical belts.

The Colony Village Restaurant is not your ordinary theatre venue, nor is it a permanent home for ITAC. The company operates as what Johnson calls a "theatre without walls." They do call South Amana "home," which is particularly fitting given ITAC's mission to reach out to more rural audiences — "a woefully underserved segment of the population" according to Johnson — young people, the elderly, and anyone else geographically deprived of

live theatrical performances.

"Plain and simply, Iowa deserves a vibrant and accessible art scene," says Johnson. "Geography should not hinder arts opportunities for young people or for Iowa's general population. I grew up in an isolated rural Iowa community and I don't want kids today to miss what I missed."

A change of scenery, literally, for each production excites these theatre aficionados. "We love the idea of changing venues, being able to do a variety of stage work," Merckens says. With the first production under their belt, they are actively pursuing other projects and venues. Though they don't have anything in the works locally, Johnson eventually hopes to establish a season of ITAC shows each year.

They also hope to work with other artists passionate about the theatre arts. Another focus of ITAC's mission is to lend assistance to other small theatrical arts organizations trying

to establish themselves as permanent professional theatre companies. Johnson and Merckens' experiences will come in handy.

"Opening a new theatre and producing its first show was a tremendous undertaking, but we just kept facing each task as it came up, always believing that the creation of the company and producing a high-quality show would be worth all of the extra hours and effort," Merckens says. "It has definitely surpassed all of my initial thoughts and expectations in terms of success and now I am so grateful that we just kept plugging away, believing in this dream!"

For more info on the Iowa Theatre Artists Company, call (319) 622-6479 or email itac@southslope.net.



creativeheadlines

this fall. A lounge area will have a full bar and entrees will range from \$12 to \$25. Each of seven auditoriums will have no more than 40 seats." *Seattle Post-Intelligencer* 03/27/08

Controversial Dutch Anti-Muslim Film Goes Online

"Dutch lawmaker Geert Wilders launched a film on Thursday that accuses the Koran of inciting violence and warns that Muslim immigrants threaten the West, prompting the government to appeal for calm." *Yahoo! (Reuters)* 03/27/08

Chicago's Arts Money Man Steps Down

Farrell Frentress spent 40 years raising funds for

top Chicago cultural institutions. "He once aspired no higher than to run a YMCA. But he worked with leaders in Chicago opera as he helped to sustain Lyric's rebound from near-insolvency. He helped reshape the board and culture at the parent of WTTW-Ch. 11 and WFMT-FM 98.7 and finance an ambitious expansion there." *Chicago Tribune* 03/27/08

When The Props Steal The Show

"The experimental show has been called many things - a sculptural installation, a performative composition, a piano piece without pianists, a play without players, a no-man show. Its attention is on the objects that would usually form the background, the props or parts of the set." *The Guardian (UK)* 03/27/08

London Theatre Ticket Prices Now Exceed Broadway's

"The West End is now officially more expensive to see a show than on Broadway. Top price tickets to see the original production of *Hairspray* in New York are currently \$110 (\$55), whereas it costs £60 to see the same show at London's Shaftesbury Theatre. Ditto the Royal Opera House, which is already the most expensive opera house in the world." *The Guardian (UK)* 03/27/08

Opening Night Blues

"First nights are ghastly ordeals for actors. A recent study indicates that the stress endured is equivalent to being involved in a minor car crash, and that's without the intervention of

the utilities. Everybody there is willing you to succeed or fail, and the only reaction from the darkness of the auditorium is the forced laughter of friends and family or the equally deafening silence from critics and bitter rivals." *The Times (UK)* 03/27/08

National Gallery's New Chief Talks Straight About Museums

Nicholas Penny: "The increasing importance of exhibitions within museums and galleries is beginning to change the fundamental purpose of those institutions. Even if I were against all temporary exhibitions, which I'm certainly not, it's now a question of to what extent you control it. We won't put on exhibitions just because they will be popular, and we'll do them with consideration of the needs of the

Continued on page 14

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Featured Events



Keokuk Cultural & Entertainment District

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Switchback Residency & Concert

April 24

Working in partnership with the Keokuk Art Center's Artist in the Schools Program, the Cultural District will present an evening concert by the Irish Band, Switchback.

After completing a three day residency in Keokuk's five elementary schools, musical duo Brian FitzGerald and Marty McCormack will perform at the historic Grand Theatre on April 24 at 7 p.m. Tickets are \$10 for adults and \$5 for elementary-age students. This concert is supported, in part, by the Iowa Arts Council and the National Endowment for the Arts.

Back Alley Bandfest 2008

May 23

Keokuk's Cultural and Entertainment District will come alive on Friday, May 23, when eight district homes host the second annual Back Alley Bandfest. Garages throughout the District will become venues for a variety of live music ranging from pop/rock to old standards. Kick off the Memorial Day weekend strolling along the river bluffs in Keokuk's historic district enjoying this free live concert. The event begins at 3:30 p.m.



Ames Community Arts Council

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Tune In to Main Street Summer Concert Series 2008

May 29 to July 31

The Ames Community Arts Council is proud to present its fifth season of Tune In to Main Street Summer Concert Series. Held on Main

Street at Tom Evans Park every Tuesday evening, from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m., from May 29 to July 31, the festivities feature a wide variety of music (soul, folk, blues, jazz, rock, etc.), food and children's activities! Major sponsor for the series is Target.

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New opportunities at Marion Art Festival

Community involvement makes experience unique



By Ruth Paarmann

drawn more than double the number of artist applications as they received in 2004. Of 50 artists, 30 are completely new to the Marion Arts Festival.

"If artists are having a good time, making a profit and enjoying the atmosphere, that means the community is having a good time, too," says Bailey. "The community's support allows us to attract artists that in turn give the community what they want to see."

Bailey attributes some of the Marion Arts Festival's success to being named 2007's #1 festival of its size in a 13-state Midwestern region by *Art Fair SourceBook* of Portland, Oregon. "Nationally, for our size, we ranked #6. When compared to any festival, we were #53 out of 800."

Professionally, Bailey holds a Masters in Social Work, but personally, her artful pursuits include making jewelry. While in college, she exhibited in small shows across Iowa, but pursued a career in human service administration and family therapy until her friends suggested she "try a happy job."

"Making art accessible to everyone is a type of human service — it's a quality of life offering," she says.

"We are the only free, open to all, come as you are, cultural and visual arts event," Bailey notes. "See fine art, interact with the people who make it and receive a little education, all while wearing flip flops and drinking something sweet and frozen. That is a unique experience!"

"The Marion Arts Festival also serves as proof positive that you can actually grow up to be a real working artist," she says. And who wouldn't raise their frosty glass to that?

For further info on MAF's special programs, 5K race, and artist line-up, visit www.marionartsfestival.com.

Even after 15 years, the Marion Arts Festival has a lot going for art enthusiasts, artists and the community. On Saturday, May 17, the 16th annual festival provides access to artists from across the nation. Plus, festivalgoers can watch as a master airbrush artist customizes a motorcycle, and they can even get their hands in the clay and help create a masterpiece for the City of Marion.

The festival's director, Deb Bailey, is excited about multiple enhancements to the programs and events.

"We developed a completely new community art program," says Bailey, explaining that the art teacher who introduced the Empty Bowls fundraiser suggested it be retired.

Now, the Marion Arts Festival is teaming up with the Cedar Rapids Museum of Art (CRMA) for a new program, dubbed "My Kid Could Do That." During Family Fun Day at the CRMA on May 3, kids and their families will be introduced to various printmaking processes. They will create art pieces to take home; they'll also print up a series of postcards. These postcards will be packaged in groups and sold at the Marion Arts Festival as a fundraiser for children's nonprofits.

"We hope this will feel satisfying in the same ways as our previous program," Bailey says.

With a goal to help young and old have "a more artful and sophisticated" experience, the 8-year-old Art in the Depot community art project will feature internationally known ceramicist Jim Kasper. Kasper will help budding artists craft customized clay tiles, while small children can sculpt salt-and-flour clay items to take home.

"We'll produce ceramic tiles that can be cut from slab clay, and we'll press the tiles," explains Bailey. "Once fired, those will be assembled by Jim Kasper into an obelisk type sculpture that will find its home in Marion's City Hall."

"The objective is to get everyone involved in creating a public art piece. This community involvement is part of what makes the festival unique."

The Festival is excited to have



permanent collection." *The Guardian (UK)* 03/27/08

Iraq National Symphony Plays On Despite Odds

"That the symphony has kept playing appears nothing less than heroic to the outsider. Aside from location, Karim Wasfi has to worry about the audience, orchestra members, instruments and sheet music, funding, punctuality, electricity, bathrooms, air supply — every aspect of the job. He is also the orchestra's solo cellist. Many essential professionals have fled the country, from musicians to technicians." *Wall Street Journal* 03/27/08

Boston Ballet Moving To New Home

"After more than 30 years performing at the city's biggest and most opulent theater, on Tremont Street, Boston Ballet has signed a long-term deal to move its season into the recently restored Opera House, beginning in 2009. The move ends a sometimes contentious relationship between the ballet and the Citi Performing Arts Center, which oversees the 3,600-seat Wang Theatre, where the ballet has appeared for decades." *Boston Globe* 03/27/08

Austrian Minister Demands Cooperation On Looted Art

"Austria's culture minister said Wednesday she was seeking 'clarity' regarding an art collection that allegedly contains works stolen by the Nazis... Culture Minister Claudia Schmied said she expected the (Leopold Museum Private Foundation) to 'open up' by early April and approve an independent examination of its collection by two researchers paid by the federal government." *San Francisco Chronicle (AP)* 03/27/08

ROM's Controversial Crystal A New "Wonder"

"Many a critical stone has been cast since it opened last year, but this week the Michael Lee-Chin Crystal at the Royal Ontario Museum got a very big boost when *Condé Nast Traveler* magazine named architect Daniel Libeskind's controversial creation one of the 'new seven wonders of the world.'" *The Globe & Mail (Canada)* 03/27/08

Toronto Equity Theatre Shuts Down

"A cash flow crisis has forced the closure of (Toronto's) Equity Showcase Theatre after 47 years of serving the theatre community. Founded in 1960... it was created to keep actors in the game when performing jobs were hard to come by." *Toronto Star* 03/27/08

Standing Up (Loudly) For The Music Consumer

"Bloviating about the (music) industry's shortcomings is Bob Lefsetz's shtick. It's made him famous, and infamous, as the sharply opinionated author of the widely read *Lefsetz Letter*, which has become a viral sensation... Yet his acumen draws readers who include some of the most powerful figures in the music business." *Washington Post* 03/27/08



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Sunday, May 11, 2 pm
Cyro Baptista is a dazzling percussionist, and with Beat the Donkey he has put together what the New York Times calls "an assemblage of musicians and dancers in outrageous costumes, banging on drums for all they're worth... It makes a ruckus, and it's wild, vivid entertainment." On Mother's Day, enjoy a hand with a distinctly Brazilian flavor seasoned with a world of musical ingredients.

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Rubberbandance Group

Saturday, June 14, 2 pm
Victor Quijada—nicknamed "Rubberband"—danced on the street and in clubs growing up in Los Angeles and then in Twyla Tharp's company and Les Grands Ballets Canadiens Montréal. He's taken all of those influences and created Rubberbandance Group, an ensemble with moves that are electric and, yes, elastic. Your family will be in the perfect "Spot" when Quijada and Rubberbandance Group hit the stage.

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11th Annual Spring Arts Show

Make plans to attend the 11th Annual Springs Arts and Crafts Show at Carver-Hawkeye Arena in Iowa City on April 13.

Over 150 talented exhibits will be presenting and selling thousands of unique creations.

The show is a production of Callahan Promotions, Inc. and offers patrons the opportunity to enjoy original, affordable arts and crafts. Among the various items presented at the show are leather goods, fine oak furniture, paintings, ceramics, jewelry, metal art sculptures, pet products, etched and stained glass, yard art, pottery, blown glass, candles, clothing, floral wreaths and many more original products. All items offered for sale to the public are handmade by the exhibitor. Most exhibitors at the show will accept special order requests from the public. So if you are looking for something extremely specific to fit your needs, this is a show that you will want to attend.

Admission to the show is \$3, with anyone 10 years and under free. Parking is always free, too. Show hours on Sunday are from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. For additional information call 563-652-4529.

Englert Theatre, Iowa City Randy Newman

What do the movies Pleasantville, Toy Story, and Seabiscuit have in common? Here's a clue: it's something they also share with Monsters, Inc., Cars, and even Three Amigos! Still don't know? They all feature music by hit composer and performer Randy Newman, who will be performing at The Englert Theatre Gala Fundraiser May 5 & 6 at 8 p.m.

Considered one of America's greatest singer-songwriters and film composers, Randy Newman has over 40 albums to his name, including the most recent The Randy Newman Songbook, Vol. I, his illuminating first effort for the Nonesuch label. The eighteen-song set finds Newman singing and playing piano on powerful new solo versions of his early classics ("I Think It's Going To Rain Today," "Sail Away," "You Can Leave Your Hat On"), his more recent gems ("The World Isn't Fair," "The Great Nations of Europe") as well as a few examples of the Oscar-winning composer's film music (themes from *Avalon* and *Ragtime*, as well as "When She Loved Me" from *Toy Story 2*).

Don't miss this rare opportunity to hear the legendary songwriter perform some of these songs and other favorites in this can't miss Gala Fundraiser. All proceeds directly benefit The Englert Theatre's operations, and a portion of your ticket price may be tax deductible as a donation.

Tickets at (319) 688-2653 or also available online by visiting www.englert.org

Warming to his topic

Steve Semken and Ice Cube Press of North Liberty, are committed to authors, books, and a sense of place

By Rob Cline

Two important things to know if you have a book you're considering submitting to Ice Cube Press in North Liberty: Steve Semken will want to be sure he likes you as much as he likes your book, and if he does, in fact, like both of you, he'll give your book thoughtful and careful attention. The soft spoken and humble Semken is committed to doing work both he and his authors can be proud of.

Semken founded Ice Cube Press in 1993. He had been working in customer service for a cable company in Lawrence, Kan., and writing on his lunch break or whenever he could snatch a bit of time.

"My goal has always been to live the writer's life," he says with a chuckle in a conversation in Iowa City's downtown Java House.

Sensing that his catch-as-catch-can approach to writing wasn't going to work for him over the long haul, he eventually decided to be more proactive.

"The press started with me publishing my own writing," Semken says. His first book, *River Tips and Tree Trunks*, was the first in a multi-book commitment he made to himself.

"I resolved I would do three books, no matter what."

He strongly suspected that might be the end of it. "I didn't think, 'Wow, I'm going to be a publisher someday.'"

Fifteen years later, however, Semken is still publishing books related to themes that are important to him. Each Ice Cube Press book includes a statement (with a few variations) explaining that the press is committed

"to focus on how to best live with the natural world and understand how people can best live together in the community they inhabit."

Meanwhile, Semken himself has had a couple of his own books published by other publishers. While he felt compelled to send his work to other houses to avoid the stigma sometimes attached to self-publishing, he didn't have particularly great experiences during the publication process of *Pick Up Stick City* or *The Great Blues*, even though the latter was picked as a "Notable Book of Kansas."

Those negative experiences, however, redoubled his commitment to his own authors.

"It taught me a lot about being a publisher, that's for sure," he says.

As a result, he is able to apply the lessons learned to each book he works on. "I know what would be important if I were the author of that book."

Semken does quite a bit of work by the hour — books such as family histories and other personal projects — that keep him busy and helps pay the bills. He only puts out four books each year at his own financial risk. That means he picks

very few books pitched to him via query letter.

"I'm really, really picky because I don't have money to burn," he says.

But once he finds a book that appeals to him and has assured himself that he can build a good relationship with its author — "I almost have to like them before I'll agree to do a book for them" — he sets to work, paying careful attention to finding the right font, designing an appealing cover, and the like.

Semken is proud to be doing his work in Iowa and to serve as a role model to demonstrate that "publishing doesn't only happen in New York City." He values that sense of place as much as he values his connection to his authors.

In 2008, Ice Cube Press will release *Under A Midland Sky* by Thomas K. Dean, *The Liberation of the Concentration Camps 1945: The Des Moines Survivors* by Adele Anolik, and *A Cook's Journey: Slow Food in the Heartland* by Kurt Friese, as well as a new edition of *The Desert Pilgrim: En Route to Mysticism and Miracles*, by Mary Swander.

Visit www.icecubeypress.com for more info.



Bemis Center for Contemporary Arts, Omaha

Therman Statom: *Nascita*

For over twenty-five years, Therman Statom has been recreating the way people look at glass. The artist creates site-specific installations that are simultaneously architectural, sculptural and engaging. The Bemis Center for Contemporary Arts is pleased to present the artist's latest visual experiments with large-scale installations in the solo exhibition *Therman Statom: Nascita*, on view April 11 – August 16, 2008. An Opening Reception takes place on Friday, April 11 from 7 – 10 p.m., with a Gallery Talk by the artist on Saturday, April 12, at 12 noon. The public is warmly invited to attend both free events.

Nascita, or "Origin," functions as an ambitious visual art experience. Statom transforms intractable glass into a surprisingly expressive medium that engages viewers in conceptually unprecedented ways. He uses the space as a gallery, studio and laboratory. The dynamic installation process will change continually throughout the exhibition's run giving the viewer a glimpse into the creative process.

For more information contact www.bemiscenter.org or (402) 341.7130.



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Sheslow Auditorium - Drake University, Des Moines

Ahn Trio

Civic Music Association presents the Ahn Trio sisters, Maria, Lucia, and Angella on Friday, April 11, at 7:30 pm in Sheslow Auditorium, Drake University.

Born in Korea, the Ahn Trio are redefining the art and architecture of chamber music. The Juilliard-trained sisters blend superb technique, exquisite sound, and contagious excitement. The Ahn Trio offers fresh and exhilarating performances of edgy classical music.

Appearing in *People Magazine's* Most Beautiful People Issue in 2003, violinist Angella, and the twins, pianist Lucia and cellist Maria, capture the intellect, hearts, and souls of all who hear them. According to the *Los Angeles Times* "A dominant musical gene has obviously left its imprint on the sisters Ahn." In addition to their many concerts each season, the Ahn Trio conduct workshops and master classes for children and adults all over the United States, Europe, and Asia. Wherever the Ahns perform, they share their innovative spirit and ever evolving vision of music.

The Ahn Trio will conduct a workshop/performance for students at Merrill Middle School at 9:30 am on Friday, April 4, 2008. During this workshop the Ahn sisters will work with middle school strings students on effective practice and performance techniques. Tickets at www.iowatix.com.

Henry Moore Tapestries

Mother and Child: Henry Moore's West Dean Tapestries opens on April 12, 2008 and will run through January 11, 2009. The exhibition will contain eight large tapestries woven in a collaborative effort between Henry Moore and the West Dean Tapestry Studio between 1975 and 1979. This is the first time that the tapestries have been displayed in the United States.

"This marks an exciting new direction for the Figge and for the local community," said Executive Director Sean O'Harrow. "For educational purposes, to present these important works is a unique opportunity. Few have had the opportunity to have access to these monumental two-dimensional interpretive tapestries, alongside the drawings that inspired them. We are extremely appreciative of Mary Moore, who has been instru-

mental in bringing these important works to the Figge, as well as the Henry Moore Foundation for their assistance."

Throughout his working life Henry Moore constantly returned to the theme of the mother and child, a fundamental element in his art which he continually explored. The 'mother and child' theme dominates many of the tapestries, the drawings for which originated in the 1940s, inspired by the birth of Moore's only child, Mary. The decision to translate the drawings into tapestries coincided with the birth of Mary's own child.

Moore had previously worked with weavers to produce textile designs and, at the suggestion of his daughter, commissioned 8 tapestries to be woven at West Dean Tapestry Studio. They were exhibited in a highly acclaimed show at the

Victoria and Albert Museum in London in 1980. In all Moore commissioned 23 tapestries, 10 of which now hang at the Henry Moore Foundation in Hertfordshire, England.

All of the tapestries were made from Moore's direction, some as many as 10 times the size of the original drawing. The array of media used by Moore in his drawings presented some interesting challenges to the weavers. The tapestries represent charcoal, wax crayon, pastel, chalk and felt-tipped pen washed over with watercolor. The result is an accurate and pleasing translation of Moore drawings interpreted in wool, cotton and silk.

The museum is located in downtown Davenport at 225 West Second Street. www.figgeartmuseum.org.

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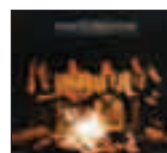
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Van Morrison — Keep it Simple

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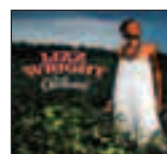
Van Morrison's latest collection sounds like something you might hear if you stumbled across an after-hours club frequented by musicians not yet willing to call it a night. There are blues to sway to, soft acoustic songs to help you reminisce about love lost, and tunes to help you sort through end of day thoughts... all written as if looking over one's shoulder at the long road that's just been traveled. There are only two up-tempo songs in the set, *That's Entrainment*, and *School of Hard Knocks*, so if you love Van Morrison for his hits, this might not be for you, but if you love Van Morrison for his music, you need this one.



Need to Breathe — The Heat

★★★★

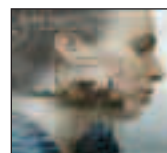
The sophomore effort from the South Carolina band fronted by brothers Bo and Bear Reinhart is co-produced by Collective Soul's Ed Roland and is a great blend of pop melodies and rock and roll power, with just a touch of southern vibe to give it some soul. Bear's distinctive vocals convey a subtle plaintive tone that pulls you in and helps you connect immediately with each song. When brother Bo chimes in with harmonies, it's heaven. *More Time* and *Looks Like Love* beg for a second chance, the title track speaks of desire, and *Signature of Devine* is a celebration of spirit.



Liz Wright — The Orchard

★★★★

Daughter of a Georgia preacher, Wright started singing gospel in church, but found her voice in the world of jazz and blues, where she is now a rising star. She could be the love child of Annie Lennox and Tracy Chapman. *The Orchard*, her third release, contains original material as well as superb covers of tunes made popular by Ike and Tina Turner, Patsy Cline, and Led Zeppelin (her version of *Thank You* is worth the price of admission alone!) Her voice is confident and strong, yet warm and intimate, flowing as effortlessly as water downhill.

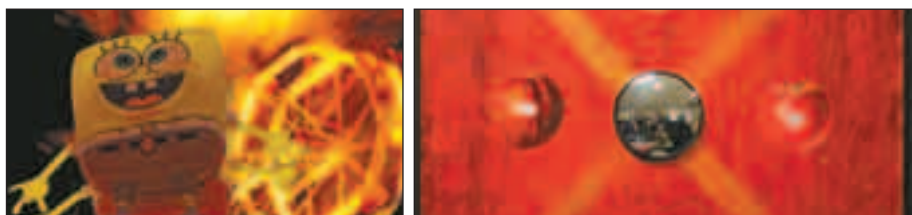


Yael Naim (& David Donatien) — Yael Naim

★

The self-titled debut from Naim, an Israeli singer now living in France, may tempt you, especially if you just can't get enough of *New Soul*, the song used in the Apple MacBook Air commercials. If you succumb, yes, you will find more listless meandering pop folk tunes that will make you yearn for a top-down drive along a sunny country road, but (I must warn you) half the songs are sung in Hebrew. My suggestion? Spend your money on Ingrid Michaelson's *Girls and Boys*. It's much better and will give you about the same end result.

The opinion of the Blind Critic is to be an electric conduit for honest and forthright feet-to-the-fire gallery experiences. As information flows, the critics' opinion generates interest or disinterest, validates or alters perceptions and glorifies or vilifies artists' works and presenters' exhibitions.



**ATOMS VS. BYTES
ZANZIBAR'S COFFEE ADVENTURE • ART BY KEVIN C. HOUSE**
OPENING RECEPTION MARCH 16, 2008 • 2723 INGERSOLL AVENUE, DES MOINES
WWW.ZANZIBARSCOFFEE.COM • ON EXHIBIT THROUGH APRIL 13

Gallery Statement:

From Zanzibar's Web site: "Talented local artists provide the ever-changing eye candy. The pieces always make good conversation, and if you become attached, many times the work is for sale. If there is no price, just make an offer, and you could be the proud owner of the next Mona Lisa."

The Show:

Nearly twenty pieces — all fairly small — adorned the one wall provided for artwork. Works varied slightly with everything from digital prints, digital collage, Gicleé prints, and mixed-media on illustration board. The most interesting were the mixed media; one could actually see the different ephemera the artist had assembled. Collecting rare old images from eBay, garage sales, and Goodwill shows House's innovative thought process. One piece, titled *June Is Dairy Month*, had an old-fashioned ice cream scoop at the top, with the single word "scoop," below was an old photograph of four nude women and one cat. Another piece, *Martini Time*, used letters from an old anagram board game. Other mixed-media included sheet music, ticket stubs, and many fortune cookie fortunes, like the ones used in *The Three Fates of Geronimo*.

The Welcome:

Upon entering, our eyes were met by everyone behind the counter. The owner stepped right up and offered us coffee. After locating the artist, he introduced himself with a warm handshake and handed out the most unique business card we've ever seen. House uses antique cigarette cards, with his information on the back. He claims to have over a thousand at home.

The Accessibility:

Getting close enough to inspect the art proved a little tricky, as the wall is lined with tables and chairs, providing a mini-blockade between art and viewers. Luckily, people were polite and would either move to accommodate the viewer, or not be bothered by the viewer looking over their table. Zanzibar's is a great place to see new art from up and coming artists. For the artist, they provide a stress-free environment without taking a cut of the sales — that is, if you can wait your turn. House was on the waiting list for three long years.

The Ambience:

There's no getting past the fact that this is a coffee shop, and not exclusively a gallery. The noisy machines and employees cleaning up were a bit distracting, but overall, it was a lively scene with many people discussing art and mingling.

The Nosh:

There was plenty of delicious food and drink: a table full of nice crackers and breads that you could load up with classy cheeses, herbs, or a garlic sauce; also, a giant bowl of fresh strawberries, some cashews, wines, beers, and bottled water. In the back there were superb sweets provided by Sweet Binney's of Clive.

The Sale:

It didn't appear that any pieces sold at the opening, but a few people were talking about pieces by the artist that they already owned. One viewer had a favorite he had wanted for a while, but couldn't seem to talk House out of letting go of an obvious personal favorite.

The Final Thought:

House's work is fun and thought-provoking. He leaves interpretation wide open for the viewer, he appears to enjoy making his art, and he has endless supplies just waiting to be assembled. As far as Atoms Vs. Bytes goes, my money is on the atoms.

Lowbrow

Middlebrow

Highbrow

Definitions: Highbrow art is said to appeal to an informed (aristocratic) taste; Middlebrow to an inquisitive (upwardly mobile) taste; Lowbrow to an uninformed (poor) taste.



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