

creativeheadlines

**AUDEN AT CENTENNIAL:
POPULAR, AND STILL DEFIANT**

A century after his birth, W.H. Auden "resists the efforts of readers to delimit him or publishers to comfortably sell him.... The poet who makes me go to his beloved OED to find out what those obscure, toothsome words mean is the same poet who demanded that the poems in his first Collected Poetry in 1945 be printed alphabetically according to the first word of each poem rather than chronologically, so as to frustrate readers' preconceived notions about him." *Slate 03/01/07*

**INFLUENTIAL, UNACKNOWLEDGED,
FEMINIST ART GETS ITS DUE**

"As we head into a month full of exhibitions devoted to feminist art — including the opening of the Elizabeth A. Sackler Center for Feminist Art at the Brooklyn Museum, and a major exhibition at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles — a reasonable question might be: Why now? Why, 30 years after the heyday of the feminist art movement, are we putting this work under the lens?" *New York Sun 03/02/07*

**STAGING WOOLF'S 'LIGHTHOUSE':
BAD IDEA. HERE'S WHY.**

"There may be more difficult novels to adapt to the stage ... but Virginia Woolf's 'To the Lighthouse' is right up there with the most intractable. Scant of dialogue and old-fashioned plot, this classic of modernism defies anyone to spin a play out of its flowing stream of consciousness. Berkeley Repertory deserves credit for undertaking the project, though the solutions it advances ... confirm the obvious: Some art — the greatest perhaps — can only be fully appreciated on its own inflexible terms." *Los Angeles Times 03/02/07*

**TURNER PAINTING TO
REMAIN IN UK**

"One of JMW Turner's finest watercolours will remain in the UK after the Tate launched a campaign to keep the masterpiece in the country. The Blue Rigi was sold at auction last June to an anonymous bidder for \$5.8m — a record for a British watercolour. The culture minister put a temporary bar on the painting leaving the country to give the Tate time to raise the \$4.95m it needed to buy it back. The total has now been reached after members of the public donated \$550,000." *BBC 03/01/07*

**PICASSO STOLEN
FROM PARIS HOME**

"Two Picasso paintings with a combined value of 50 million euros (\$33.7m) have been stolen from his granddaughter's home in Paris... There was no evidence of an attempted break-in at the home in the city's seventh arrondissement, police said. The organised crime squad of the Paris police force is investigating." *BBC 02/28/07*

**DID ADVANCED MATH GUIDE
MEDIEVAL ISLAMIC ART?**

"In the beauty and geometric complexity of tile mosaics on walls of medieval Islamic buildings, scientists have recognized patterns suggesting that the designers had made a conceptual breakthrough in mathematics

Continued on page 15

localmasters

Theater Cedar Rapids hits 'the big three'

Hitting three historically dangerous hot buttons for audiences

By Cathy Wilkie

Theatre Cedar Rapids (TCR) began in 1925 when a handful of residents, including artists Marvin Cone and Grant Wood, banded together to bring community theatre to the town. TCR has undertaken some ambitious projects since then, but nothing like their latest endeavor: presenting Tony Kushner's

much-talked-about and often-controversial play, *Angels in America*, in its entirety.

Kushner's play began as a work-for-hire piece when a resident director at the Mark Taper Forum in Los Angeles approached Kushner to write a play about the impact of AIDS on the gay community. The two sections of the play, *Millennium Approaches* and *Perestroika*, present more than thirty characters in eight acts, fifty-nine scenes and an epilogue, and takes six hours to perform. TCR will perform the two installments about two weeks apart.

"We have produced many large shows in our history, but never two full pieces with the same cast back-to-back," says TCR's Richard Barker, who is directing the piece. "I don't recall that we've ever produced a show that has as controversial content as *Angels*. This show hits three historically dangerous hot buttons for audiences, in that it centers on homosexual characters, contains a good

deal of profanity, and deals with religion in many different facets."

So what would possess a community theatre to undertake such a project? Love for the piece, plain and simple. "I've considered doing this show for many years and we never were able to fit it into the season before," says Barker. "It's the best writing around, and I love the fantasy/reality nature of the piece."

Angels is a morality play that uses AIDS, the politics of the '80s, and Judeo-Christian dogma to investigate the human condition. TCR's publicity material sums it up as such: "*Angels in America* is about compassion, AIDS, greed, homosexuality, politics, love, commitment, America, religion, drugs, joy, hatred, visions and angels. It's about time."

Barker says that with that plot synopsis, they were letting their audiences know what to expect, "so they wouldn't spend their money on a show then be unpleasantly surprised by its content."

The play centers on the lives of one male gay couple (Prior, who has AIDS, and his partner, Louis) and one Mormon couple in which the husband (Joe) is gay and the wife (Harper) heterosexual. Louis is having trouble dealing with Prior's disease, and seeks solace in Joe's arms. Through dreams and reality, Harper and Prior also develop a relationship. Characters move in and out of conversations with one another, and these 'vignettes' often overlap and take place onstage at the same time. Eight actors portray more than one character in the piece.

Barker considers TCR fortunate to have a cast who is not only talented, but willing to commit so much time to the show. After casting last October, they immediately set to work memorizing the script; rehearsals began in earnest in January. "We rehearsed the show in blocks that contained scenes from both parts," says Barker, "and we would occasionally tie the scenes together in chronological order for a run-through. I think the most challenging thing for all of us was making sure that we have a clear understanding of Kushner's ideas, and can present the piece with a cohesive point of view."

Barker is aware that audiences might not respond positively. "I think there is a social impact that *Angels* tries to induce in its viewers: Loneliness, love, retribution, transgression, cowardice, hope, faith, and humor in the face of great adversity. I hope those who experience the show walk away glad that they had that experience." ☐

Part I: Millennium Approaches runs March 2-11, and Part II: Perestroika runs March 23-April 1. See www.theatre.org for ticket information.



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Lan Samantha Chang loves Iowa

Going against her parents wishes was the best thing she could do

By Cathy Wilkie

Lan Samantha Chang, director of the University of Iowa Writers' Workshop, wanted to be a writer since before she could read. Despite her parents' dream that she find gainful employment in the medical field, she pursued her own ambitions. She took a roundabout route — first, Yale University as a premedical student and an East Asian studies major, then Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government, before earning her M.F.A. at the Writers' Workshop in the early 1990s. She says it was the best thing she's ever done.

"As immigrants, my parents wanted all of their children to be doctors," she explains. "They had sacrificed a great deal to bring us up in this country, and I spent years telling myself I should go to medical school. To make a long story short, I went against my parents' wishes and, in my mid-twenties, began writing seriously. Since I made the decision to follow



my dream, I have had no doubts about writing as a career."

Lucky for her readers and fans that she made that decision; it's especially lucky for a whole new generation of writers. After former director Frank Conroy passed away in April 2005, the University began the search for his successor. Chang was prime material, having studied under Conroy, later working with him as a visiting faculty member. She was offered the job, and began her tenure in January 2006.

She's taken on the challenge with vigor: she's developed a new Faculty Lecture Series, and is especially proud of her work to increase funding for visiting faculty, financial aid, and postgraduate fellowships for students—all this on top of her regular workshop duties.

"For the last month I've been reading the 746 applications to the Workshop's fiction program, and choosing the class of 25 writers entering next fall. I'm excited to say that once again, there are going to be some really wonderful writers coming to town."

While her own fiction is often informed by her cultural background, she defines herself as a true Midwesterner, born and raised in Appleton, Wisconsin. When she came to the U of I, she found Iowa City to be most welcoming.

"Iowa is a wonderful place," she

says. "I have always felt grateful to the people of Iowa for supporting me and the Workshop at a fledgling stage in my career, when I had no other support except my own determination. My 'big dream' is to make this experience happen for everyone at the Workshop."

She takes pride in the fact that the Workshop is the number one creative writing program, and seeks to continue its tradition of attracting the very best emerging writers. While she does acknowledge the Workshop has a reputation for being ruthless and that the students are very competitive with one another, she says the opposite is true.

"I'm fascinated and amused by the Workshop's reputation. As a student, I found the Workshop offered inspiring, rigorous, compassionate, and honest critique, and I want to keep it that way. Students take their work very seriously, but I have not found them to be particularly competitive with each other. I will say that there is a certain ruthlessness of vision required to make great art. I believe that our students understand this, and take very seriously their role in making each others' work as strong as it can be. If that translates into a reputation, so be it."

Ms. Chang will be appearing at Mount Mercy College in Cedar Rapids March 29 at 7 p.m. She also wants Art Scene readers to know her peer, James Galvin, will be lecturing at the U of I March 23 for the Faculty Lecture Series. ☪

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beginning as early as the 13th century. A new study shows that the Islamic pattern-making process ... appears to have involved an advanced math of quasi crystals, which was not understood by modern scientists until three decades ago." *The New York Times* 02/27/07

GIVING KIDS A REASON TO EMBRACE MUSIC

In America, music education in school is becoming so scarce as to be considered an unimaginable luxury. In Scotland, they throw a two-week festival to celebrate it. "Over the years the emphasis has moved from competition to participation — every entrant is judged by a professional and receives a certificate evaluating their performance." Not only that, but a new national curriculum proposes to increase the amount of art and music education in the daily routine of Scottish classrooms. *The Herald (Glasgow)* 03/02/07

THE OLD BAIT & SWITCH

Connecticut Governor Jodi Rell unveiled her latest budget, many arts groups in the state assumed that they would be in for an increase in funding, based on the formation of a new Cultural Treasures program created by the governor and endorsed by various cultural leaders. Instead, Rell's budget zeroed out traditional funding for nearly all arts programs in the state, catching everyone off guard. *New Haven Register (CT)* 03/01/07

CREATIVE ACTIVITY IN LA, YES. ARTISTIC, NOT SO MUCH.

Southern California's "creative economy" accounted for about 1 million in direct and indirect jobs, generating \$140 billion in sales in Los Angeles and Orange counties," says a new study, commissioned "in an effort to highlight the importance of arts education in schools, and to spur government officials to provide business incentives for arts industry employers." Nonetheless, the arts "represented just 5.8% of creative activity in the region." *Los Angeles Times* 03/01/07

SHOULD THE ARTS EMBRACE MERGER MANIA?

What if orchestras and theatre companies started behaving more like corporations, with the large, healthy groups snapping up and merging with smaller, struggling competitors? "Before the shout goes up about artistic integrity and creative independence, it wouldn't have to mean a Starbucks-style homogenisation of the arts. There would be no need for a safe but dull culture house on every street corner. A better model to consider would be the major record label sheltering several niche labels under its wing." *The Guardian (UK)* 02/27/07

FILMMAKER CLAIMS TO HAVE JESUS'S STUFF

"A Canadian documentary filmmaker revealed at a news conference that he has strong evidence a group of burial boxes unearthed in Jerusalem belonged to Jesus Christ and his family. The discovery could have profound implications 2,000 years after the boxes were placed in the ground, shaking the

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9 March – 22 April 2007

The Space of Freedom

APARTMENT EXHIBITIONS IN LENINGRAD (1964-1986)

Approximately 60 paintings, drawings, and prints from the collection of the Museum of NonConformist Art in St. Petersburg, Russia will be displayed in a fabricated Soviet apartment interior (c.1970).

Organized by the University of Richmond Museum, Virginia, the exhibition and tour have been made possible with generous support from Global Partners, funded by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation.

Left: Robert Arneson (1929-1995, American), *1964* Allot Street Index, 1968, Collage on paper, Grinnell College Art Collection, Charles E. Merrill Trust Grant

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Visions of humanity bounce
from manic to depressive

Katie Kiley, *Pieta VI*



By W. Rob Urilo

Check your lithium levels before visiting Olson-Larsen Galleries' mood-swinging "Figurative Show." Thirteen regional artists present visions of humanity which bounce from manic to depressive like a basketball in a psych ward. The latter have the major share of air time, as artists drip existential angst from their canvasses,

linens, boards, and homemade paper.

Blair Benz works in black and white for the same reason that Ingmar Bergman and Yasujiro Ozu did — color is a distraction when your subject is anguish. Benz' charcoal drawings employ chiaroscuro dramatics the same way those master filmmakers did. *St. Anthony at the Bus Stop* shows the great ascetic grimacing appropriately as he is tempted by devilish visions of bra-strap tan lines and steatopygic butt cheeks. *Am I My Brother's Keeper?* is a cleaned-up version of homelessness. Compared to past Benz drawings of the same subject, the one in this show has had some dental work.

Wendy Rolfe's multimedia sea goddesses seem light, but they're part of the artists' long term obsession with tsunami destruction. Similarly, bookmaker and paper artist Emily Martin appears to lighten things up from a distance, but closer inspection reveals a theme of waking nightmares. Her characters lack feet, too. She has said that they don't need feet because they're an extension of stick men, then she admits to a life-long obsession with shoes: "I was forced to wear ugly corrective shoes while growing up."

Katie Kiley's figures make all these others look light and gay. Kiley wraps the heads and hands of hers like burn victims. While most carry on, dancing and hugging, one isolated figure pushes

Christian legend off the psychic map. *Pieta* embraces herself, as if burned by the touch of her dead and Holy Son.

Other existentialism in the show is subtler. The venerable Cornelis Ruhtenberg has repainted canvasses that have been shown before. The changes are melancholic — a beloved dog has disappeared from a picnic scene, golden landscapes have turned green, and



Kathy Thor, *Harley Goat*

faces have become more ghostly. Priscilla Steele also makes the living-dead thing work, with faceless characters not quite of this world. Scot Ross shows *Adam on his way out of Paradise*, but the minimalist's dazzling colors almost make it look like a happy occasion.

While Bobbie McKibbin and John Page practice their hand at traditional figurative drawing, a few others provide much needed respite from the heavies. Master Byron Burford brought the three-ring magical circus of life; Gretchen Caracas shows self-confident nudes teasing workers; and Jeanine Coupe Ryding chips away at the myth that woodcutting is a limited medium. The most bearable lightness comes from Bill Barnes and Kathy Thor. Though Barnes says that his collages are a sort of unwinding exercise, one of Iowa's most respected art collectors says she thinks they might be as important as his paintings. Barnes uses displacement for fun — transporting an Ellis Island immigrant to the glorious high dessert of New Mexico, for instance. In *Heckled by Thoughts*, *St. Francis* seems to enjoy juggling human heads.

Ceramicist Thor is unapologetically gleeful. Sculptures like *Monkey Lady* and *If Cats Were Human Sized* deal with the angst of personification (cloning) better than any human character in the show. Her animals are also the most autobiographic art in the exhibition. Thor says her goat models (*Harley Goat*, *Flower Goat*, etc.) live in her house and are happy, even without medications: "They get quite indignant, though, when we have to put them in the pen with the outdoor animals."

"Figurative Show" runs through March 31. Olson-Larsen Galleries is located at 203 5th, West Des Moines, (515) 277-6734. ☐

creative headlines

foundations of modern faith and raising Da-Vinci-Code-like speculation that Jesus had a child with Mary Magdalene." *Toronto Star* 02/25/07

HEAD OF CHICAGO MUSEUM TO RESIGN

Robert Fitzpatrick plans to step down next year after a decade as director and chief executive officer of Chicago's Museum of Contemporary Art. *Chicago Tribune* (AP) 03/02/07

CHARO? YOUR SECOND ACT IS CALLING

"Madison Avenue is taking a cue from the

adage that history repeats itself first as tragedy and then as farce. In a trend perhaps also inspired by the popular 1980 movie 'Airplane!', agencies are hiring venerable actors, once known for serious straight roles, to display cleverly self-mocking sides of their personalities in campaigns aimed at younger as well as older consumers." *The New York Times* 03/01/07

REMEMBERING ROSENBLUM

Forty years ago, a young art historian published his first book, and changed the way scholars and art lovers looked at neo-Classical art. Robert Rosenblum, "who died in December at 79, went on to become the most consistently edifying art historian of his generation. With a combination of icono-

clasm, faultless lucidity and wit, he smashed aesthetic prejudices the way physicists smash atoms. There ought to be a Nobel Prize for that sort of achievement." *The New York Times* 02/28/07

A LONGFELLOW RENAISSANCE

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow would have turned 200 this year, and celebrations are planned across the U.S., especially in Longfellow's hometown of Portland, Maine. "With the rise of modernism toward the middle of the 20th century, Longfellow lost much of his luster... But there have been signs of a reversal over the past decade or two amid renewed respect for his poetry and a focus on other aspects of his life." *Boston Globe* 02/27/07

exhibitions show



Kent Shankle's "Untitled"

By Julie Russell-Steuart

Catch up with this unapologetically politically controversial show in March in Storm Lake, and you'll be witnessing democracy in action.

Back in the spring of 2006, when an anti-war viewpoint wasn't as prevalent, artists and non-artists alike had the opportunity to make their voices heard.

Cedar Falls' Hearst Center for the Arts' "First Fifty" call for artists was simple and egalitarian: be one of the first fifty people to show up with artwork, and you were guaranteed acceptance. Much to everyone's surprise, 30 people submitted protest pieces.

Joan Webster-Vore and Pam Echeverria, two artists in the group, unofficially organized the protest. In talking about how fellow artists and friends reacted to the challenge they threw out, Echeverria says there was something about "get up early and stand in line," that called to artists with an urgency that translated into action.

Webster-Vore clarifies that, "Many people who participated in this project don't normally use war imagery, but felt compelled, due to the state our country is in."

It echoes of the protests in the Vietnam era, with more than a slight whiff of a peace rally, and as Echeverria so poetically puts it, "We stood in line, holding our words in our hands." Both agreed that it would have been much harder to organize a group show like this without the appeal of a guaranteed voice in a local, well-known museum.

Since then, the exhibit has been on the road. It went to Minneapolis to the Altered Esthetics Gallery, where it was included in another group

News travels

War protest
exhibit makes
the rounds in
Iowa and the
midwest



Crit Streed's "There No Spring in a War Zone"

show called "Guerrilla Art: Art as Activism." The Witter Gallery marks the exhibit's third appearance and it is slated to move on to the Luther College Library in Decorah, Oct. 27-Dec 13, 2007.

Why a college library? It can be hard for museums to offer the public current, of-the-moment exhibitions when shows are booked years in advance.

"If you were to propose a war show — that would take a few years. Maybe a two-year waiting period, assuming it was accepted," Echeverria explains.

The exhibit was recently turned down by a publicly-funded Iowa art center which called a special meeting to debate the pros and cons of displaying it. While many on the board of directors were in favor of it, they ended up thinking of public reaction, and the potential impact on their funding.

Luckily for viewers, Witter and Luther gallery directors risk negative reaction in favor of the spirit of freedom of expression, and perhaps, recognition of a growing sentiment. As Franklin Roosevelt said in 1939 at the dedication of the new Museum of Modern Art building, "The conditions for art and democracy are the same."

Gathered together in one space are themes ranging from citizen's rights to the war as depicted in the media. The piece, *Interference*, by Nikki Wilson, has creepy-crawly plastic bugs on wires listening by pig's ears. Wiretapping shows a more insidiously mundane face in Warrentless Wiretap by Scott Hudson, which features a plain answering machine and an audio message. The sublime is present in Crit Streed's *There No Spring in a War Zone*, a sumi ink painting that looks like a smoke bomb, but reveals a landscape of houses and trees, all liquefying upwards into the pure white of the paper. Contrast Kent Shankle's *Untitled*, which is about as controversial as you can get, with its cross shape, toilet imagery (above a US flag), and Bush's persona as a gunslinger. ☐

We Protest is at the Witter Gallery in Storm Lake through March 30. Reception is March 8, 6:30-8:30 p.m. Info: (712) 732-3400 Witter Gallery, 609 Cayuga Street, Storm Lake, Ia 50588, www.thewittergallery.org.

book review

Swofford, author of *Jarhead*, disappoints with *Exit A*

Anthony Swofford's debut novel is titled *Exit A* (Scribner, \$25), but the letter that comes to mind when reading the book is "B." As in "B movie." Swofford, a graduate of the UI Writers' Workshop, earned heaps of deserved praise for *Jarhead*, his memoir of his time as a Marine during the Gulf War. In contrast, his novel is a disappointment.

The book's setup isn't too bad: on an air force base outside Toyko, Severin Boxx defies his overzealous football coach — the base's commanding officer — for the love of the coach's daughter. Boxx attempts to save the girl from the criminals with whom she has fallen in, only to get her inadvertently arrested. This first third of book, running the gamut from melodramatic to downright quirky, works fairly well, though the

coach vs. player motif seems lifted from John Grisham's *Bleachers*.

But from the moment of the bust, the book takes a turn for the worse, both stylistically and in terms of plot. Throughout the novel, bursts of dialogue — much of it stiff and unnatural — seem disconnected from the narrative around them. The novel's middle section is devoted to a laughable psycho-sexual drama, complete with a twist ending worthy of a schlocky late night movie.

The book's final section finds the hero attempting to make peace with the coach, the girl, and the past by granting the dying coach's final request. The result is stilted and predictable. The clichéd story of redemption can't redeem *Exit A*. — Rob Cline

Riverside Theatre, Iowa City

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March: Brought to you by the Cedar Valley Cultural Alliance

So Much to Do ... So Little Time

A Summer of Fun in the Cedar Valley.

On May 4th, "Crème de la Crème 7," a showcase of outstanding Cedar Valley talent, will be performed at the Gallagher Bluedorn Performing Arts Center. Cinco de Mayo, May 5th in downtown Waterloo, will include a parade and family fun in Lincoln Park, followed by a dance and celebration. Main Street Waterloo presents Friday'Loo in Lincoln Park with live music and food, select Fridays beginning May 18th. June 1st, the Cedar Falls Community Theatre opens "Pippin" and Theatre UNI presents "The Anatomy of Melancholy." The Waterloo Community Playhouse will present "Footloose," July 6th – 28th.

Summer festivals include My Waterloo Days, May 31st - June 3rd, featuring live music and food and a Christian Concert at Byrnes Park. Sturgis Falls and Cedar Basin Jazz Festival, June 22nd - 24th in Cedar Falls, features a carnival, parade, flea market and non-stop music. The Waterloo-Cedar Falls Symphony will perform a free Pops concert June 25th in Overman Park in Cedar Falls. And don't miss the Waterloo JayCee's Fireworks July 7th and BBQ'Loo and Blues, Too!, July 20th and 21st.

June 4th - July 1st, UNI Gallery of Art presents "Echoes and Apparitions: Works by Scott Hudson." The sculptor will present five original installations taking as inspiration the biodiversity, sociobiology, and archaeology of prairie landscape.

The University Museum takes flight with "Paper Wings: The World of Kites," opening June 11th, highlighting the art and science of kites from around the globe, and the Cedar Falls Historical Society commemorates the Civil War with an exhibit and related events throughout the summer.

The Hearst Center for the Arts, Cedar Falls Community Main Street, and the Gallagher Bluedorn Performing Arts Center host "Movies Under the Moon" beginning June 29th in Overman Park. The free movies begin at dusk. Bring a blanket or lawn chair!

The municipal bands perform June 5th - July 19th: Tuesdays at Overman Park and Thursdays at Byrnes Park. Larry O'Brien & the Glenn Miller Orchestra will perform at the Oster Regent Theatre June 13th.

The Grout Museum of History and Science presents the Annual Gorgeous Gardens Promenade Walks, June 30th and July 29th.

The Waterloo Center for the Arts hosts Rooftop Jazz & Blues June 30th; Jazz on the Cedar July 25th and August 22nd; and Riverside Cafe in their outdoor sculpture plaza June 21st, July 19th and August 16th. Don't miss the Grand Opening of the Phelps Youth Pavilion. Discover Caribbean Kinder Island for the youngest visitors as well as Grant's Farm, Art History Time Travel, Artist's Studio, Fun Stage, Art Across Culture. Shop in the new gift store and lunch in the new Cafe!

The College Hill Arts Festival, July 20th & 21st, is a juried show presenting original works and demonstrations in various medium. In August highlights include the Cedar Trails Festival.

For more information about these events and many others, visit: www.uni.edu/cedarvalleyculture.

Looking for something interesting to do?
Contact Iowa's cultural alliances for ideas.

Ames Community Arts Council
Kathy Stevens, (515) 232-5331
www.amesart.org

Grinnell Area Arts Council
Lesley Wright, (641) 236-3203
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Metro Arts Alliance
Tracy Levine, (515) 280-3222
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Burlington Area Arts Council
Bobby Wilson, (319) 754-8461
bwilson@thehawkkeye.com

Iowa Cultural Corridor Alliance
Joe Jennison, (800) 650-ARTS
www.culturalcorridor.org

Perry Cultural Alliance
Justine Zimmer, (515) 465-2518
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Cedar Valley Cultural Alliance
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Keokuk Cultural and Entertainment District
Tom Seabold, (319) 524-7651
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Quad City Arts
Glenda Huntsman, (309) 793-1213
www.quadcityarts.com

Fairfield Cultural Alliance
David DuBois, (330) 612-2773
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Marshall County Arts and Culture Alliance
Beth Burkemper, (641) 754-5616
www.artsandculturealliance.org

Winnebago County Convention & Visitors Bureau
Brenda Balk, (800) 463-4692
www.decoraharea.com



★ Stunk - Go back to the studio ★★ Nice - I'll buy their next album
★★★ Excellent - Gotta see 'em LIVE ★★★★★ Stardom - Time to make a video
★★★★★ Grammy - Hope they remember Iowa



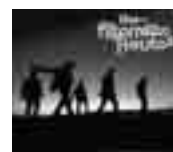
The John Butler Trio *Grand National* ★★★
Sounds like: Jack Johnson (w/banjo), Marc Broussard, with a touch of Jason Mraz

Who would have thunk it — a bluegrass/jam band from Australia. John Butler and the boys have two platinum albums to their credit down under, and are hoping to continue that success here with their fourth studio album. Most of the tracks are, as my father would call them, toe tappers. This is the kind of music you'd put on to motivate you to clean the house on Saturday morning or for a Sunday afternoon barbeque. I love the way these guys pump up their brand of bluegrass with some funk and blues — Nashville meets New Orleans. And it works.



Ruthie Foster *The Phenomenal Ruthie Foster* ★★★
Sounds like: Joss Stone, Tracy Chapman

Ruthie's fifth album is a nice mix of the softer, "honey turn down the lights and bring me a glass of wine" soul, and upbeat bell-it-out blues and gospel. Yes, I said gospel. Track four will have you doing the stomp/clap and trying to harmonize, as if you're in a Southern church full of ladies in big hats. Beaver Creek Blues is rootsy fun, Mama Said is more in the revival spirit, and as referenced above, People Grinning in Your Face is a slice of acapella thunder. This is one of those cds that can change the mood you're in.



The Alternate Routes *Good and Reckless and True* ★★★★★
Sounds like: Train, The Fray, Augustana

From the slower ballads to the up-tempo rockers, there was not a track on this cd that I didn't like. This is a great collection of songs about the varied emotional states that being in love will take you through. The production is not overdone or cluttered, bringing out clear vocals and crisp guitar work. This will definitely end up in my "great for road trips" stack. These guys from Connecticut have the goods, and I hope they don't get lost in the shuffle as records companies throw band after band at us, hoping just one will stick... The Alternate Routes are dripping in Elmer's!



Patty Griffin *Children Running Through* ★★★★★
Sounds like: Bonnie Raitt, Norah Jones (on steroids), Emmy Lou Harris

I've never advocated buying a cd for one song (thank goodness for individual downloads), but the lead-off single Heavenly Day is worth the price of the entire cd. Thankfully, the rest of the album is exceptional as well. Patty takes her folksy R&B sound to a new level. She has the kind of voice that can convey emotions that words can't. Most of the songs are immediately familiar, as she continues to paint vivid pictures and tell compelling stories with her music. A great addition to any cd collection.

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blind critic

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.



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Mission Statement: To display and sell fine art created by local and regional artists.

The Show: 'Grand Opening,' featuring works by John Pregler & Cheryl Steckel, Alda Kaufman, Sharon Krapfl, Robert Reeves, RoseAnn Wilgenbush, Odra Eberhart, Cynthia Nelms-Byrne, Linda Pratt, Gene Tully, and others.

The grand opening show served as an introduction to Dubuque's newest gallery space, located in an early 19th century renovated church. The pieces displayed were the work of numerous local artists in several different mediums, meant as a representation of the types of work the gallery will feature. Of particular note was the photography of John Pregler and Cheryl Steckel, located in the portion of the facility that houses the bar (yes, there is a full bar in the gallery). These photos of landmarks in the Dubuque area are exceptional, and definitely worth a look. For the painting enthusiast, there are watercolors, pastels, oil on canvas, acrylic, and oil/collage. In addition, I would recommend taking a closer look at the metal sculpture by Gene Tully, particularly the very cool lizards on the wall in the area that used to be the chapel.

The welcome: Just inside the door, I was greeted not only by a member of the staff, but also by Gene Tully's imposing "Warriors." His two seven-foot-tall metal soldiers stand guard in the lobby and draw visitors into the gallery right from the start.

The accessibility: The lounge and gallery are open to the public Wednesday through Saturday from 4 p.m. on and by appointment at other times. It's a very welcoming atmosphere for those who are just looking for a quiet drink at the bar, as well as for the serious collector. Information on the pieces and their creators are scattered throughout the gallery, and there is always staff on duty.

The ambience: This Blind Critic just adores this building! Complete with some of the original stained glass windows, was a restaurant for several years, but has been reinvented into a great gallery, lounge space, and events center available for weddings and parties. With the works hung on all available walls and sculpture and pottery tucked in among the paintings, there are great things to look at while you're having a drink. It is enough to keep you occupied for 45 minutes to an hour as you wander through the various spaces.

The nosh: The food at the opening event was outstanding, and very plentiful. With fresh fruits and vegetables, small sandwiches, meatballs, cheeses, crackers, and complimentary beer and wine, there was something for everyone. It should also be noted that in addition to the complimentary house wine, the gallery also hosted a great little wine tasting in one of the rooms, featuring some of their better vintages.

The sale: Nearly everything in the place is for sale. The only items listed that weren't for sale were the "Warriors" in the foyer. Prices range from about \$100 to about \$500 for most of the pieces, and the gallery has put together a great packet with information on the artists and the works.

The final thought: All in all, the Galleria Lounge and Fine Arts Gallery is worth checking out, even if it's just to stop in to have a drink or to check out the live music on selected evenings. The staff is friendly, the atmosphere is comfortable, the drinks are reasonably priced, and many of the works of art are outstanding. ☺

Lowbrow

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.

Middlebrow

Highbrow

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