

CityArts

A full-page photograph of Alice Gosti, a woman with short brown hair and bangs, wearing a black jumpsuit with a vibrant floral pattern of red, white, and green flowers. She is posed in a dynamic, almost dance-like position, with her arms raised and hands flat against a white wall, and her legs bent. She is looking directly at the camera with a neutral expression. The background is a simple, bright white space.

FEBRUARY 2016

ALICE GOSTI

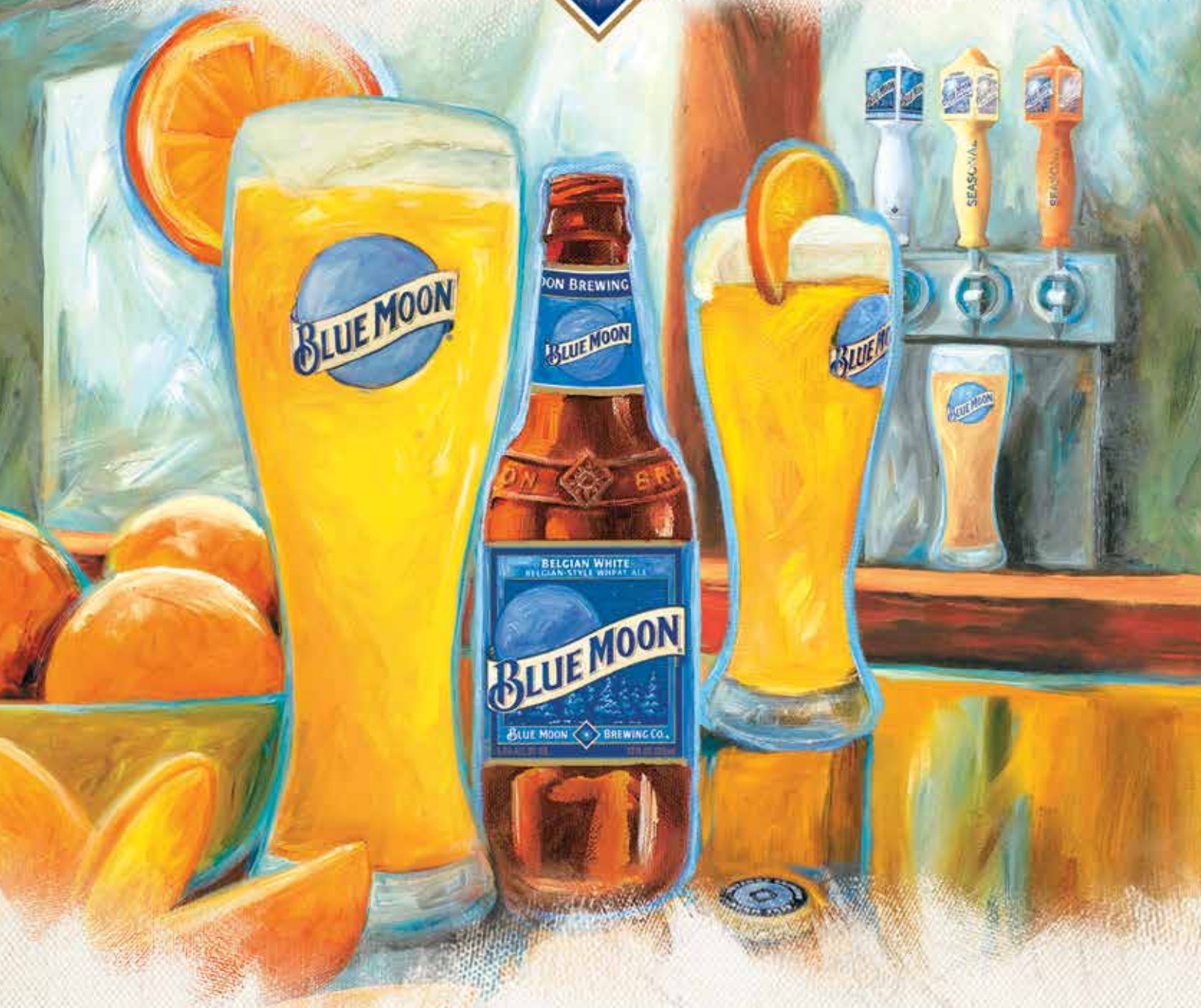
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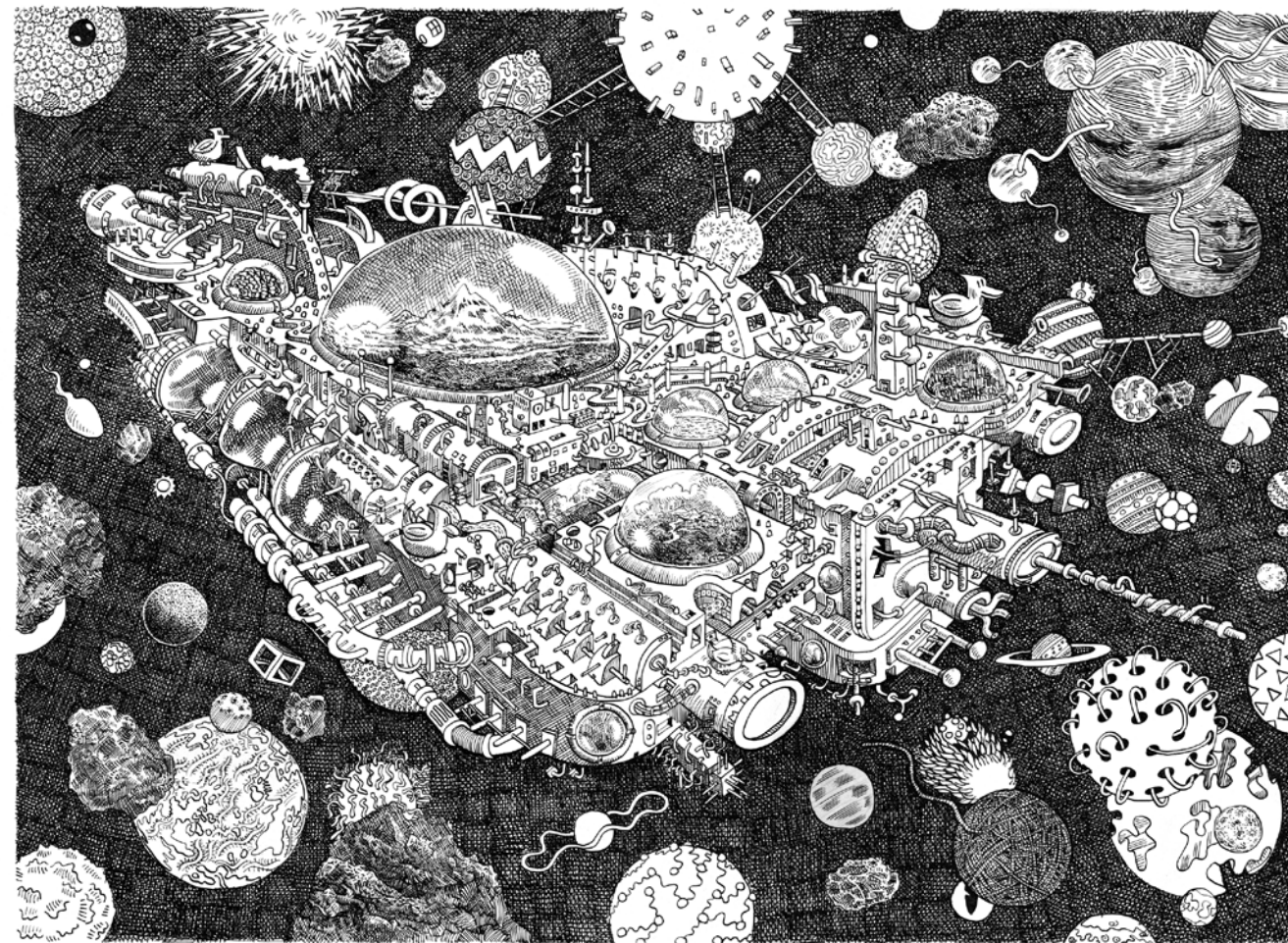
VIVIAN PHILLIPS
ON BLACK
HISTORY MONTH

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Album of the Month: *Die Alone* by Gazebo. PLUS: Attractive Singles, Scarecrow Suggests and the rest of the month in music, theatre, dance, film, comedy, visual art and books.

DONALD TRUMP IS MY BOGEYMAN 46

An essay. BY WILLIE FITZGERALD

COVER

Alice Gosti. PHOTO BY MAKENZIE STONE

▲ SPACESHIP

Georgetown-based artist John Ohannesian fabricates dystopian cartoon worlds on paper the old-fashioned way with nibs, brushes and India ink to unfold the story of workbots, big-eyed bugs and other grown-up characters who exhibit a distinctly wry disrespect for the powers that be. For his exhibit at Dendroica Gallery this month, Ohannesian displays a series of his more expansive drawings and "paintoons" filled with sprawling cities and ships of the future. "I draw these 'fancy drawings' when I feel the need to make something intricate," he says. "I have always been a science fiction fan and I remember the stories about huge spaceships that have entire ecosystems on them."

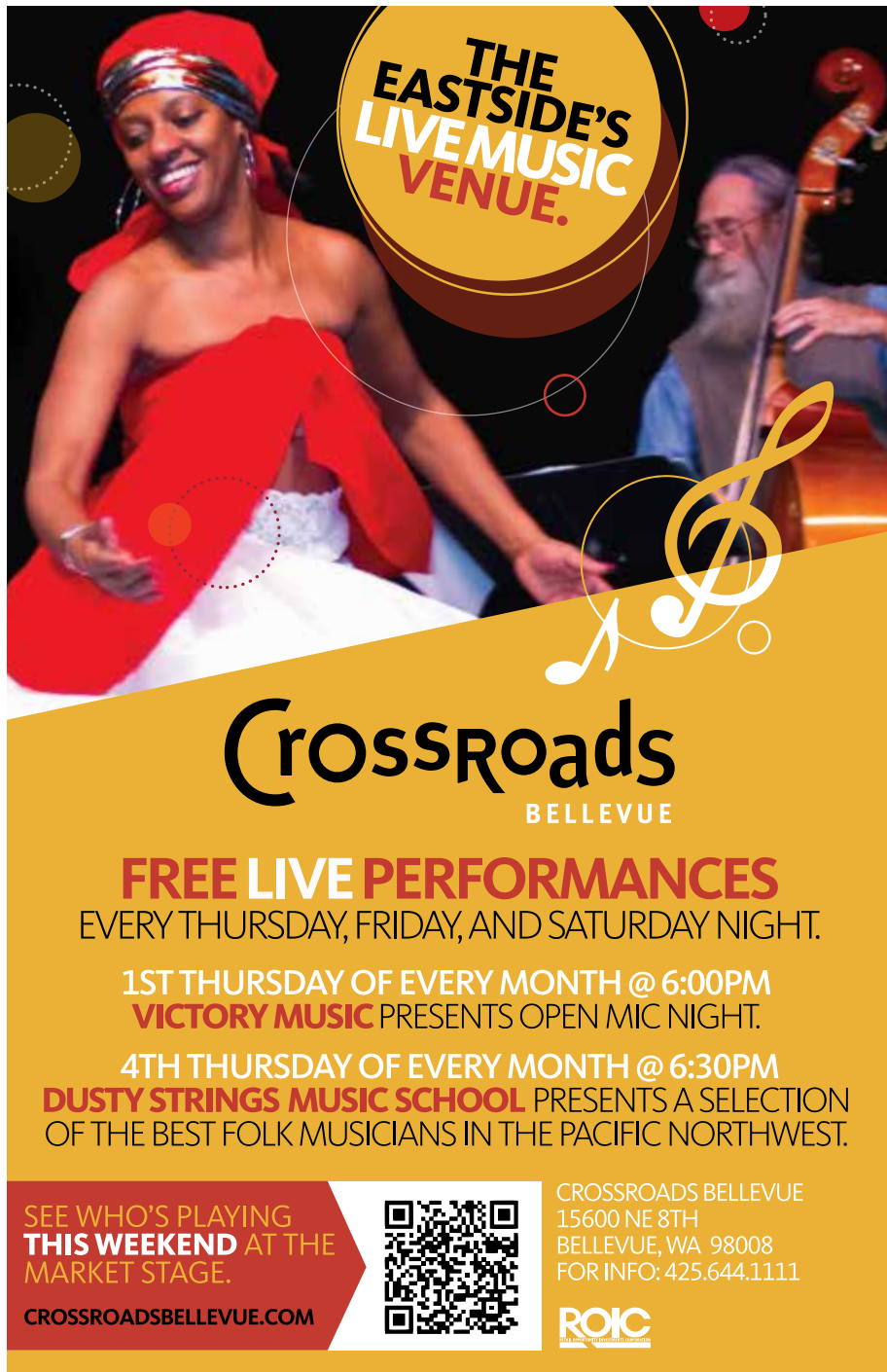
Ohannesian's *Ink & Paint* is on view at Dendroica Gallery Feb. 11 to March 6.



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EDITOR'S NOTE

Plug In, Go Out

When I first stepped into this job five years ago, I was keen to demystify the arts, to pull them down from any pedestals and out of the enigmatic fog that keeps would-be audiences at bay. Sixty print issues and a giant heap of web stories later, my team continues to put a good dent in that effort. But there's always more to do—not just to humanize the creative realm, but to pull the modern human off the couch and into a real, live experience. I love TV and the Internet as much as the next person, but they're no match for the cellular transformation that comes from beholding art in the flesh.

Enter, CURRENT, the whiz-bang web tool we launched on Jan. 23 to help you and yours find and explore arts events all over the Seattle area. Unlike traditional web calendars with their late-'90s search functionality, CURRENT gives a fresh look and app-like feel to the process of figuring out what you want to do. Feeling totally overloaded by your options? No problem. Enter a date and a vibe, and CURRENT will point you in the right direction. Feeling stuck in a rut of the same old stuff? Check out the expert recommendations of artists and tastemakers. Feeling like you already know what you're looking for? Put in your criteria and *poof*: choices. Take it for a spin at cityartsonline.com/current.

See you out there,
LEAH BALTUS
Editor in Chief
leahb@cityartsmagazine.com



For this month's cover shoot, photographer Makenzie Stone built and painted a box just big enough for a person to pose inside. On set here, Alice Gosti arranges her limbs in the confined space.

Correction

"Stable Space," January 2016: The relocation funds Jane Richlovsky and her studio mates used to remodel '57 Biscayne after vacating 619 Western came from the Washington State Department of Transportation, not the City of Seattle.



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HUNTER S. THOMPSON

The Glossary

corybantic \kôr-ê-'ban-tik\ *adjective*, A Corybant was an attendant or priest of Cybele, an Anatolian mother goddess whose cult was spread by Greek colonists of Asia Minor from the 6th century BCE. In Greece, she’s associated with mountains, city walls, fertile nature and wild animals. See page 46.

Fulani \fû-lă-nē\ *noun*, The Fula people or Fulani number approximately 20 million, as one of the most widely dispersed and culturally diverse African peoples. The largest nomadic ethnic group in the world inhabits several territories over an area larger than the U.S. The Fulani share a common language and a code of conduct, *pulaaku*, which emphasizes qualities including patience, discipline, modesty, wisdom, courage and hard work. See page 14.

garret \ger-ət\ *noun*, From the 14th century, and Middle English *garite* for watchtower, a garret is a typically small, dismal top-floor room or attic space, traditionally inhabited by an artist. *Daily Rituals: How Artists Work* by Mason Currey shares the routines of more than a hundred notables—detailing much coffee-drinking and procrastinating. Carl Jung, who worked in a primitive castle called Bollinger Tower, lit oil lamps and chopped wood in between writing stretches. See page 24.

panniers \pan-yər, 'pa-nē-ər\ *noun*, Today a pannier is commonly known as a basket, especially one of two carried by a service animal or attached to the sides of a motorcycle. Historically, it’s one of a pair of hoops used to expand a woman’s skirt at the sides; or an overskirt draped for fullness. First used in the 13th century, the word derives from Old French and Classical Latin for “bread basket.” See page 27.

FEATURED CONTRIBUTORS



SHAUN SWICK
Once the wizard behind the curtain of websites for Bumbershoot, Northwest Folklife Festival and Seattle Pride, Shaun Swick now contributes to arts and culture in his native Seattle through his work as graphic designer for City Arts and its publisher, Encore Media Group. Find him on your nearest social network under the moniker Shaunline.



WILLIE FITZGERALD
Willie Fitzgerald is the co-founder and creative director of APRIL, a festival of independent publishing held every year in Seattle. His stories and essays have appeared in City Arts, Hobart, Pacifica Literary Review and elsewhere.



MAKENZIE STONE
Photographer Makenzie Stone, originally from locals-only Leucadia, Calif., is a recent graduate of Cornish College of the Arts. She can often be found writing jams with her squad and snapping fresh pics, including this month’s cover photo of Alice Gosti.

Photos Tagged as “Inappropriate”

by Brett Hamil



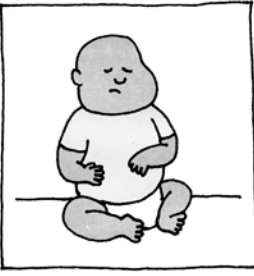
ex-girlfriend enjoying her life



sports car vanity plate



parents draining retirement savings



smug baby

IN CASE YOU MISSED IT...

Alex Gallo-Brown interviewed former longtime Seattle City Councilmember **NICK LICATA** about his new book, *Becoming a Citizen Activist: Stories, Strategies, and Advice for Changing Our World*.

“The first act of activism is to be conscious of one’s political and social conditions. Art opens the door to that consciousness even without taking on that responsibility.”

PLUS *Sketchbook Porn* with this month’s cover artist, Alice Gosti; *Band in Process* with outie-rock duo Pleather; and more everyday at CITYARTSONLINE.COM



IN THE KNOW

On Jan. 23, City Arts launched **CURRENT**, a new way to discover arts and culture in the Seattle area. Loaded with great places and events and fun ways to search, CURRENT features recommendations from artists and tastemakers, including the folks on January’s Future List. Like theatre director Malika Oyetimein, who suggests you hightail it to *Disgraced* at Seattle Rep before it closes on Feb. 6.

“This is a really interesting, complex play that deals with race and identity and belonging,” she says.

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Randerson Romualdo Cordeiro (detail), 2008, Kehinde Wiley, American, b. 1977, oil on canvas, 48 x 36 in., Private collection, Golden Beach, Florida, courtesy of Roberts & Tilton, Culver City, California. © Kehinde Wiley. Photo: Robert Wedemeyer, courtesy of Roberts & Tilton.

NEWS + NOTES

Precise Replica

"I have been long fascinated by the enormous train tunnel running beneath downtown Seattle. I wanted to use this opportunity to create a monumental and compelling sensory experience: I wanted to put a train tunnel in an art gallery! Making completely from scratch something so huge and complex was challenging in virtually every facet of its creation: its size, the parameters and obstructions in the MadArt Studio; the technical aspects of sound, lighting and automation—absolutely the hardest thing I've ever done."

—Rick Araluce, who unveiled a replica of the 111-year-old railway track and its tunnel last month at MadArt Studio in South Lake Union. Parts of the original track are visible in Pioneer Square, from the back decks of the art galleries located there. *The Great Northern* is on view through Feb. 27.

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NEWS + NOTES

A RAUCOUS NOTE

Washington's New Poet Laureate

Ladies and gentlemen, the new Poet Laureate of Washington State, Tod Marshall: “I think of it as a service position as well as an honor,” Marshall says, on the phone from his office at Gonzaga University in Spokane, where he’s a professor of English. “The previous laureates have been amazing in their outreach and I hope to continue that dynamic and take poetry to as many places in the state as I can.”

This proselytizing, Marshall says, is the prime directive of the state poet laureate. His specific focus will be on parts of Washington where poetry—its study, its practice, its benefits—doesn’t have a strong foothold. Marshall will safari to the far corners of the state and lead readings, workshops and other forms of engagement with the twofold goal of connecting people to existing poetry and poets and instilling enthusiasm within the public to create their own works. From those far-flung generative exercises, Marshall plans to produce an anthology comprising new work from budding and established poets for placement in libraries across the state.

“We’re gonna have a poem for every year of statehood,” he says. “You can give yourself a civics lesson and ask how many that will be: 129 poems by the end of my term.” (Washington became a state in 1889.) He’s leaving room for themes to emerge as he culls

the poems, though he also expects the state’s vast and varied geography to influence language and imagery.

Washington’s poet laureate program began in 2007, with poet Sam Green, followed by Kathleen Flenniken and Elizabeth Austen. Prospective laureates are not only talented writers but enthusiastic advocates of literacy and literature,

Marshall’s work is rough-edged and dark-humored, injected with a wry fatalism that projects the urgency and folly of man’s short time in the world against the cold beauty of nature.

willing to travel far and wide to convey the value of poetry throughout the state. The program is jointly sponsored by the Washington State Arts Commission and Humanities Washington. As the outgoing laureate, Austen will officially pass the torch—or rather, the laurels—at a ceremony at Hugo House on Feb. 9.

“People will turn out for poetry in places that might surprise you—Republic, Manson, Dayton, Cathlamet,” Austen

says, “and they really appreciate it when a poet makes the effort to come to their town for a genuine conversation about poetry and its place in our lives.”

Among the laureates, Marshall is the first to be based in Eastern Washington, where he settled to teach at Gonzaga.

“I felt like I won a lotto ticket in getting a job at Gonzaga,” he says. He was born in Buffalo and raised in Kansas, where he also received his doctorate. An avid outdoorsman, Marshall says the scenery of the Northwest paired with Spokane’s emerging arts scene have kept him rooted.

“Spokane is a great city. I know people complain about our cultural offerings compared to larger cites, but I consider myself a culturally active person and it’s more often that I don’t go to events than find myself wanting more.”

Marshall’s most recent book of poetry, *Bugle*, was published in 2014 and last year won a Washington State Book Award. His work is rough-edged and dark-humored, injected with a wry fatalism that projects the urgency and folly of man’s short time in the world against the cold beauty of nature. He mixes classical form with emojis; references to classical mythology with nods to consumer culture. Or as he puts it, “From Lucretius to the Starland Vocal Band. It’s all part of that stuff that we mine out of ourselves and the world to make a poem.” (Read one of Marshall’s poems on page 20.)

“I called the book *Bugle* because I thought it had a

ART IS LIFE January’s First Thursday Art Walk saw almost 2,000 people check out CORE Gallery for the opening of *YOU ARE ON INDIGENOUS LAND*, a month-long group show organized by Tracy Rector and featuring work by Rector and Melissa Ponder, Nahaan, Shaun Peterson, Cheyenne Randall, Joe (wahalatsu?) Seymour, Jr. and Jeffrey Veregge. “Native history is everyone’s history,” Rector says. “Our show is a proud reminder that we are still here on the land of our ancestors despite the American genocide that our relatives experienced.” Throughout the night, Nahaan and his Dak’aweidí Clan sister Aantuhát sang and played percussion, keeping the heartbeat of the show.

pretty harsh music,” Marshall says. “There’s a kind of splat-blat raucous note that the book sounds. I know it’s full of violence and misdeeds but the challenge of making music out of those things is very real for many writing today. There’s nothing in that book that one doesn’t encounter tenfold when you pick up a paper.”

It’s poetry’s ability to convey voice—distilled, direct—that

Marshall is most eager to share.

“I think of poetry as representative of the arts writ large,” he says. “Whether poetry, dance, sculpture or music, people need those things in their lives. And the arts and poetry can provide for a space where we challenge ourselves and where we think about things in a different way. Because we’re being told by many different forces how to

think about things.

“To bring poems to people that challenge how they see the world and understand themselves and navigate their daily joys and pains seems important work to me. And it seems equally important to find the language equal to their own unique understanding and to get them to put that language on paper.”

JONATHAN ZWICKEL

FEB 12
UW Symphony Orchestra with Glenn Dicterow, violin
David Alexander Rahbee, conductor
Works by Tchaikovsky, Barber, and Borodin.
Ludovic Morlot, conductor
Stravinsky’s *Firebird Suite*.
7:30 pm Meany Theater

FEB 22
Music of Today: Garth Knox, viola
Renowned violist performs original music and works by Richard Karpen, Tobias Hume, Thomas Preston, and others. With faculty violist Melia Watras and UW viola students.
7:30 pm Meany Theater

FEB 28
UW MUSIC & PACIFIC MUSICWORKS PRESENT Vivaldi, *Four Seasons*
Stephen Stubbs, conductor
With Pacific MusicWorks Orchestra
Tekla Cunningham, director
2:00 pm Meany Theater

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SUPER CREEPS

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RIP, Dick’s Drive-In co-founder **DICK SPADY**

State Legislature introduces **ANTI-TRANS BILL**

Cai Guo-Qiang’s polarizing **CARS** installation comes down after nine years at SAM

Longtime theatre critic **MISHA BERSON** leaving *Seattle Times*

HUGO HOUSE moving temporarily into building next to, owned by Frye Art Museum

ACT Theatre forms first-ever **CORE COMPANY** of actors

STG launches **RE:DEFINITION GALLERY** at Paramount Theatre

BECKY BENAROYA gifts Tacoma Art Museum with 225 works and \$14 million

REDUCTIVE POPULARITY METER

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SAM: EDUARDO CALDERÓN, ACT: ALABASTRO PHOTOGRAPHY

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cityartsonline.com | City Arts 11

ANIMALS: THEY'RE JUST LIKE US!

NEW REVELATIONS IN BEHAVIORAL ECOLOGY

by Brett Hamil

We humans consider ourselves superior to the rest of the animal kingdom with our higher cognitive functions, tool-making abilities and snarky tweets. But are we really so different? New research suggests that many of the behaviors we consider distinctly human are, in fact, shared with our beastly brethren. Check out these recent discoveries in behavioral ecology.

GOOSE DIVORCE
Some folks take solace in the fact that geese mate for life, seeing the birds' marriage-like commitment as an analogue to human monogamy. But one species has taken its mating practices a step further into the human realm: The lesser crested Empire goose initiates a complicated "divorce" process when a couple decides to call it quits.

The separation is usually precipitated by one of the partners being caught in an act of furtive copulation with an outside goose. The "wronged" party trumpets angrily for days or even weeks, forcing the rest of the gaggle to choose sides. The couple will then painstakingly disassemble and divide up their shared nest, loudly grouching over which mosses, dried grasses and feathers belong to whom.

JADED BULLDOG
Millions of viewers delighted to YouTube videos of Oscar the skateboarding bulldog, and he quickly snagged sponsorships with a wheel manufacturer and a streetwear label. But after attaining fame and success, Oscar became petulant and aggressive. He demanded more and more treats as payment for his performances and the resulting weight gain led to hip dysplasia, forcing him to retire.

After a dark post-career period in which Oscar did several stunts in the dog pound for escaping his yard, biting children and getting into the neighbor's garbage, he underwent clicker training and switched to a strict lamb-and-rice diet. He now lives a quiet life in Loma Vista, Calif., with his puppyhood sweetheart, a sheltie named BooBoo.

HOMOPHOBIC PENGUINS
You might've heard of the famous gay penguins, who incubated and co-parented an abandoned egg at the Central Park Zoo; their case is cited as evidence of the naturalness of gay marriage and gay adoption. But little is said of the anti-gay penguin couple who lived in the same exhibit. These two—a male and a female, of course—spent most of their days glowering at the gay couple, expressing their disapproval with clucks and aggressive beak thrusts. When the two dads hatched their baby, the flightless bigots' harassment escalated so much that they had to be moved to a separate enclosure. An evangelical group has mounted a crowdfunding campaign to transfer the conservative waterfowl to a creationist zoo in Tampa, Fla.

EFFING THE INEFFABLE

Seattle Design Finds a Home

Design is everywhere; design is ineffable. The chair in which you're sitting, the device on which you're reading this story, the building you're inside of—they're all results of design, a creative discipline so seamlessly enmeshed in our everyday existence that it's hard to understand from an objective, layman's perspective. Organizations like the Seattle Architecture Foundation, Design in Public, AIA Seattle and AIA Washington Council exist to educate the public on the role design and architecture play in our lives and to advocate for better urban living through good design.

This month, with the opening of the new Center for Architecture & Design, all four organizations come together under one roof for the first time. The multipurpose Center occupies 4,500 square feet on the ground floor of the National Building downtown, two blocks from the waterfront. With tall plate glass windows, a grand entryway and an adaptable floor plan, its front half is a showroom

for rotating design and architecture exhibits that's open to the public. The back half is office space for staff of the four resident nonprofits. (Briefly: SAF serves the general public with walking tours of Seattle and other educational programs; DIP produces the fall's weeklong Seattle Design Festival as well as other events; AIA is a national professional organization for architects that advocates for progressive design citywide; AIA Washington does the same statewide.)

Flanked up and down Western Avenue by design stores and art galleries and a stone's throw from the offices of some of Seattle's premier architecture firms, the Center anchors a burgeoning design district. Taken together, it's all part of Seattle's rising profile as a design-centric city of global consequence.

"When you look across the spectrum of design, it's incredible the impact Seattle is having," says Lisa Richmond, executive director of AIA Seattle, during a recent walk-through of the space. "Teague does all of the aircraft that fly everywhere the world, and Microsoft designs systems that inform what people are doing

around the world. We have many examples, but people don't think about that as a design identity for the city yet. One opportunity for the Center is to elevate Seattle as a leading world design city."

Richmond says that the AIA and its cohort had been looking for a space since 2007 but the economic downturn hobbled their efforts. The National Building—a historic landmark

"The public can come in and see how design happens and what goes on before things are built."

built in the early 1900s as a railroad warehouse—became available in March of last year and fit their criteria: It was the right size in a building with design integrity, in a walkable part of the city. Once they found the space, the organizations went to work fundraising, generating some \$2 million in a few short months. Most of the funding came from

members of the AIA as well as grants from 4Culture and other foundations. The architecture industry, it seems, not only has deep pockets but a strong desire to give itself a public face.

"The space is a great opportunity for architects to explain the relevance of their profession to the layperson, as a way to engage the public with some of the things architecture means besides buildings as such," says Stacy Segal, executive director of SAF.

Opened in mid-January, the first exhibit at the Center displays 50 or so architectural models, 3-D, 2-D and digital, from firms across the city as well as from students of various architecture programs. Present in the front window, under butcher-paper, was a model of the new Denny Substation by firm NBBJ.

"The public can come in and see how design happens and what goes on before things are built," Richmond says.

Later in the year, *Fit Nation* will focus on health, fitness and active design and *Living Small* will delve into the downsizing of the urban architectural footprint. Each exhibit will feature ongoing informational presentations as well as scheduled workshops and lectures. Future programming will address urban growth, homelessness and architecture for the blind.

"They're topical themes relevant to the city, with multiple angles for the general public, families, design professionals and city officials," says Richmond.

The grand opening of the Center for Architecture & Design is March 5. JONATHAN ZWICKEL

EVERYBODY RISE

Umbrella Project Boosts Local Playwrights
Good plays should be seen. Not just once, or for a few weekends, but over and over, by different audiences who will bring varied perspectives to the work. That's a best-case scenario, but too often promising plays die on the vine. Maybe they get stuck in workshops, or never get the feedback necessary to become production-ready. Maybe they just never find the right theatrical home.

It's a pattern that Norah Elges finds incredibly frustrating.

"We're losing artists all the time—playwrights, actors, directors, companies—because people feel like they hit a ceiling," she says. "Everyone holds a different piece of this new play process but there's no organization built to pick up any slack that's happening. There's no real path that's ever been forged from Seattle to connect to the national conversation."

So Elges came up with the idea for Umbrella Project, an artistic support system for new plays and burgeoning playwrights, and enlisted fellow dramaturgs and theatre professionals Erin Bednarz (Live Girls!) and Gavin Reub (The Seagull Project) as co-founders. The concept is still being honed, but Umbrella aims to work closely with playwrights to polish nascent plays to production quality and connect them with organizations that might want to produce or co-produce the plays, both locally and, ideally, nationally.

"Our investment is in the play itself," Reub says. "We aren't looking to put up a commercial venture as much as we're looking to create a piece that lasts for the playwright."

Last fall, Umbrella raised more than \$20,000 via Kickstarter and opened their first co-production, Emily Conbere's psychological thriller *Knocking Bird*. Conbere is now one of three playwrights officially working with Umbrella, in addition to Brendan Healy and Benjamin Benne, whose play *At the Very Bottom of a Body of Water* is currently in development.

Umbrella currently has 13 project liaisons, theatre company representatives open to working with Umbrella plays and playwrights, including Seattle Rep managing director Jeffrey Herrmann and Satori Group artistic director Caitlin Sullivan. The next big project, Elges says, is getting more liaisons from outside Seattle and expanding local audiences, and thus, revenue. "We're looking to change not only the way new work is produced but also the way new work is funded."

GEMMA WILSON

Read the full Q&A with the founders of Umbrella Project online at cityartsonline.com/umbrella



Have Theatre, Will Travel

January saw two Seattle-made theatre productions staged at two different New York City festivals: Frank Boyd's jazz-affirming *The Holler Sessions* ran for 11 days at the Paradise Theatre as part of PS 122's COIL festival and Ahamefule J. Oluo's big-band memoir-monologue *Now I'm Fine* ran for five days at the Public Theater as part of Under the Radar. Both performances received enthusiastic reviews from this magazine when they played in Seattle at On the Boards; not surprisingly, the newspaper of record agreed.

"A grand hybrid... that refuses to traffic in false hopes," wrote esteemed *New York Times* theatre critic Ben Brantley of *Now I'm Fine*. Describing the power of *The Holler Sessions*, Brantley wrote, "when we sit in the darkness with the music, sound becomes tactile, and even pop-station babies and longhairs are likely to feel like true believers." Amen.

TRENDING

CULTURE CONDENSED

BY CITY ARTS STAFF

CODENAMES

WORD-ASSOCIATION GAME, NERD STORES
Add this card game to your "ugh, it's gross out and dark by 5" relief rotation. Its gimmick is funny and easy to learn, and like Cards Against Humanity, it scales well with groups big and small—along with any level of inebriation.



ROSE QUARTZ & SERENITY

COLOR OF THE YEAR, PANTONE
Signifying a "mellowing trend" in pop culture, 2016's choices from the market leader in color-matching (see 2015's hue, "Marsala") will usher in a lot of fashion and makeup in these complementary pastel shades, whether you like it or not.



DOUG HREAM BLUNT

FOUND SOUL, SAN FRANCISCO
Doug Blunt was a 35-year-old nurse's assistant when he started his first band in 1980s San Francisco. Late last year, David Byrne's record label Luaka Bop unearthed and compiled his recorded music—slinky, lo-fi funk—on an awesome new album.

THE CENTRAL SALOON

REVIVED VENUE, PIONEER SQUARE
Since Alice in Chains and Soundgarden played the Central in the '90s, good bands have been mostly absent from the elegantly dilapidated 115-year-old dive. New booker Michael Gill has righted the ship in recent months, regularly hosting underground hip-hop and indie rock and offbeat DJ nights—always around \$8.



BRAISING BELLY WARMTH, SKILLET DINER

Every Friday this month, both Skillet locations serve up a special "Deliciously Braised" menu of hearty, super-slow-cooked goodness like venison osso buco, beef short ribs and lamb neck.

INTERNET DETOX

MENTAL HEALTH IMPROVEMENT, YOUR LIFE
Even millennials—like Aussie Instagram model Essena O'Neill—are quitting social media because "it's not real life." Coupled with recent informal studies and viral think-pieces that validate our sense of unease, these public actions show people eager to embrace privacy.

TOWN HALL

COMEDY STORYTELLING GAME SHOW, GALLERY 1412
The weirdos behind the late, lamented *Tiny Baby Talk Show* compete to see who can collect the most shared experiences with the audience. The interactive show is streamed live on Periscope and at-home viewers can participate via Skype. The next installment is Feb. 11.

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Q&A



KATHRYN RATHKE

WALK INTO VIVIAN PHILLIPS' two-story brick home in the Central District and all the touchstones of the African diaspora are there to greet you. Black art adorns the walls, Fulani cloth is draped across tables and an array of books, masks and tapestries showcase a certain Afropolitan décor. Considering the rapidly changing demographics right outside, Phillips' home is refreshingly black.

Currently the Director of Marketing and Communications for Seattle Theatre Group, Phillips is a longtime arts advocate. She previously managed the Langston Hughes Performing Arts Institute, served as communications director for former Mayor Paul Schell and co-founded the Hansberry Project. Last year, Phillips became chair of the Seattle Arts Commission (of which I am also a commissioner). We recently chatted about the state of black arts in this city.

JONATHAN CUNNINGHAM

Is Black History Month still important?

It always will be. It's a time when we get to be unapologetically black. And I don't know, but it feels like those opportunities are shrinking instead of expanding. It feels like we are under attack, all the time.

Have you seen an uptick in the Seattle area of organizations or people doing more for Black History Month than in the past?

Not necessarily. The Central Area was 73 percent African American when I was growing up in this community. There were black owned businesses everywhere. Black bookstores, Black Arts/West [theatre], black artists, black festivals, the black community festival, so there was always a lot happening. It feels more formal now. And when I say formal, I mean a lot of organizations picking it up as an official Black History Month event as opposed to it being February and we're celebrating our blackness at a meter rate that's higher than what we did in January or December.

Is there anything missing from the black arts community that you'd like to see more of? Patronage. There aren't enough black people. How can we get more black people back into the city? Or to be willing to commute into the city for events. It takes investment—the livability, affordability in the city—I get it. I swear I get it. But it's not like we have five boroughs. Or maybe it is.

Cold, Bold and Together

STG marketing director Vivian Phillips explains why Black History Month still matters.

Maybe Kent, Auburn, Federal Way, Tukwila and Burien are now the boroughs of the black community. I've never thought of it that way. But we still need to hold on and support what has always existed in the core of the city. We can't just throw that out. The biggest challenge is loyal patronage, supporting one another with our dollars.

Who are the black artists here that you feel more people should be paying attention to? Gilda Sheppard, as a filmmaker. Rahwa Habte as a leader who can make things happen. I think [painter, writer] Barbara Earl Thomas is under-appreciated. [Theatre director, professor] Valerie Curtis-Newton without a doubt. I'd like to turn our gaze back to [visual artist] Al Doggett. [Painter, poet] Delton Mosby. [Chef] Tarik Abdullah is really intriguing to me. I'm enjoying watching him work. I think [poet, curator] Yonnas Getahun is doing interesting things. [CD Forum executive director] Sharon Williams is doing good stuff and [violinist, professor, producer] Dr. Quinton Morris. If I had to pick just one person I'd say Valerie Curtis-Newton. Watch her. Just pay attention. Because other people *aren't* paying attention.

Are there any black artists from this city that you feel have been forgotten?

Wait, how old do you think I am? [Big laugh] I'm thinking of music specifically. There were lots of music groups. I think about Cold, Bold, & Together (CBT). Tony Gable was the bandleader. Kenny G played with them. Epicenter was big. That was Bernadette Bascom's group. Acapulco Gold. She played with them as well. That was really good music that people don't talk about anymore.

Why aren't there more black professionals on staff at arts organizations in this city?

I think people get tired of trying. They go into these environments, they get fed up and they leave Seattle. People might feel like they are not in a tenable situation if they are going to grow, I mean really going to be challenged and embraced. People don't stay. We're always in the community engagement, outreach, education department, right? That's kind of the three tiers for the black arts leaders in Seattle. And I'm sure that there are systemic institutional issues that lead to that.

STG celebrates Black History Month. For a full listing of events visit stgpresents.org.

LIFESTYLE

Clean Lines

Aran Goyoaga blends utilitarian and ethereal.

BY AMANDA MANITACH

WHO Aran Goyoaga, the 41-year-old author, food stylist and photographer who began publishing original recipes and mouthwatering food porn on her site *Cannelle et Vanille* in 2008 and has twice been a finalist for the James Beard Award for Best Individual Food Blog. The Basque native hails from a long line of chefs and spent her childhood days in a family-owned pastry shop in Bilbao, Spain. She made her way to Seattle in 2013 after spending a decade in Florida. In the past year, Goyoaga photographed the cookbook *Eating in the Middle* for best-selling author Andie Mitchell (it hits bookstores in March) and taught food styling and photography workshops in Australia, Portugal and New York City.

THE LOOK "I am quite utilitarian in everything I do and wear, but I do love a touch of [the] ethereal. When I lived in Florida I was more feminine. Seattle has brought out the masculine in me. Night and day looks don't differ much in my life. A nice coat is where I tend to invest in fashion, so for going out, a statement coat and red lipstick. I work a lot of double denim when I am shooting or cooking."

ICONS "I will always love the classic look of the '60s mods: Jane Birkin, Françoise Hardy, the Velvet Underground and Balenciaga. Very simple lines and bangs. I have always dreamed of Jane Birkin bangs, but my unruly curls have never allowed it."

UP NEXT Goyoaga is remodeling her studio kitchen to allow for more video shoots and planning a workshop at the Photographic Center Northwest in June. She daydreams of eating her way through Japan and Bolivia in 2016, as well as returning to Basque Country to document the elusive and emotional aspects of a cuisine that tie her family together.

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A Storm Is Brewing

Now's the time to try locally made sake.

BY JONATHAN ZWICKEL



THAT TICKING SOUND you hear is the count-down to Seattle's impending sake boom. Currently there's only one licensed sake brewer in the state of Washington, a ruddy, bearded-and-bald-spotted *gaijin* named Jeff James who runs Cedar River Brewing out of a renovated garage off Greenwood Avenue. But talk with James—and you should, because every Saturday he opens his door to the public, and he speaks on sake in the humble, cultivated way of a country doctor—and he'll point out that his friend Andrew Neyens, another former homebrewer turned sake aficionado, will open Tahoma Fuji Sake Brewing Company later this year in Ballard. At that point we can call Greelard the city's unofficial sake district.

And then there's the Japanese family

who's relocating their generations-old sake production operation from Fukushima to Woodinville. But I'm getting ahead of myself.

Chances are that even adventurous tipplers have never delved deep into sake. Understandable: The traditional Japanese beverage comes with millennia of lore chronicled in a foreign alphabet. America has assimilated countless spirits from around the world, yet sake remains mysterious and misunderstood. Seattle's sizable Scandinavian population brought with it a cozy tradition of bathtub aquavit, but perhaps because homebrewing is all but illegal in Japan (only 1 percent alcohol or lower is permitted), Seattle's Japanese expats have yet to establish a culture of domestic sake production. Instead, many of us experience sake as

sushi's default accompaniment, served hot in a white ceramic bottle, slight and tangy, as generic as tap water and punchy as supermarket chardonnay. Not surprisingly, there's a lot more to it than that.

In its production process, sake is closer to beer than wine. Beer and sake are both made with grains, meaning a brewing process is required to get at the starches inside the kernel that are converted to sugars for fermentation. But the concept of sake as "rice wine" isn't a total misnomer, as its alcohol content—usually around 15 percent—and its mouthfeel and flavor profile resemble a supple, minerally white. James' *junmai*—the most common type of sake found in Northwest restaurants and bars, and Cedar River's flagship brew—is silvery-gold in color, standing strong astride dry and sweet. Its body is hefty but mellow on the tongue, with low acid and notes of tropical fruit spiked by a beckoning, yeasty funk. Elegant stuff, which James serves chilled in small ceramic cups, its nose and palette revealing themselves as the sake inches toward room temperature.

Junmai, James explains, translates to "pure rice": the standard of quality sake, devoid of extra flavorings or added alcohol to fortify flavor and aroma. He begins with California-grown Calrose rice, the same variety you buy at the supermarket and cook for dinner. The longer the rice is milled—the more the grain's outer layers have been ground away to reveal the starch-rich inner core—the better the sake will be, though extra milling requires more time and more rice to produce the same amount of sake. James' rice is milled to 60 percent, which he

TASTE TEST

WITH

ZACK BOLOTIN

Growing up in Woodinville, Zack Bolotin was obsessed with music, coffee and baseball. Things aren't much different these days: He owns and operates Porchlight Coffee and Records, a cozy, six-year-old café on Capitol Hill; releases a record or two a year—on vinyl, of course—on his Porchlight Records label; and sells boyish accessories of his own design via his online boutique, Close By.



PHOTO: DAVID WENTWORTH

PRESS ON

"HERKIMER is my favorite coffee roaster in Seattle and the kind I serve at Porchlight. They do specialty coffee without any pretension. They do all their roasting on Phinney Ridge and they have cafés in the U-District and in South Lake Union."

LIT LIFE

"I found out about this book, *Hard Rain Falling* by DON CARPENTER, from one of the employee recommendations at Elliott Bay. Carpenter was on the fringe of the Beat era and was friends with Richard Brautigan but never as famous. After I found that book I went on a rampage of reading everything I could find by him."



TOUGH SHIRT

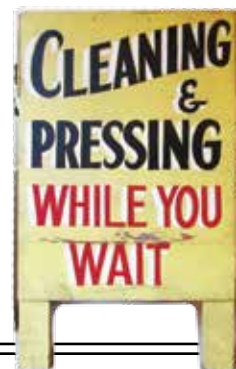
"My favorite button-up shirt is from FREEMAN, which is a store on Capitol Hill that makes all their stuff in Seattle, which is pretty rare. They fit me great and feel way sturdier than other button-ups."

LUNCH BREAK

"JUICE BOX has a beautiful space two blocks from Porchlight. I get their potato-spinach sandwich a couple times a week. It's a burrito-style sandwich, with egg and cheese and peppers in it—healthy, substantial stuff that doesn't taste like it came from a juice bar."

SIGN LANGUAGE

"The SANDWICH BOARD from my great-grandfather's pawn shop, which was downtown on 1st and Spring, is my prized possession. It's a hand-painted A-frame sign from the early '50s."



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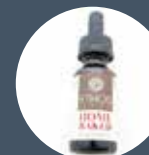
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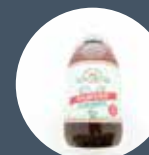
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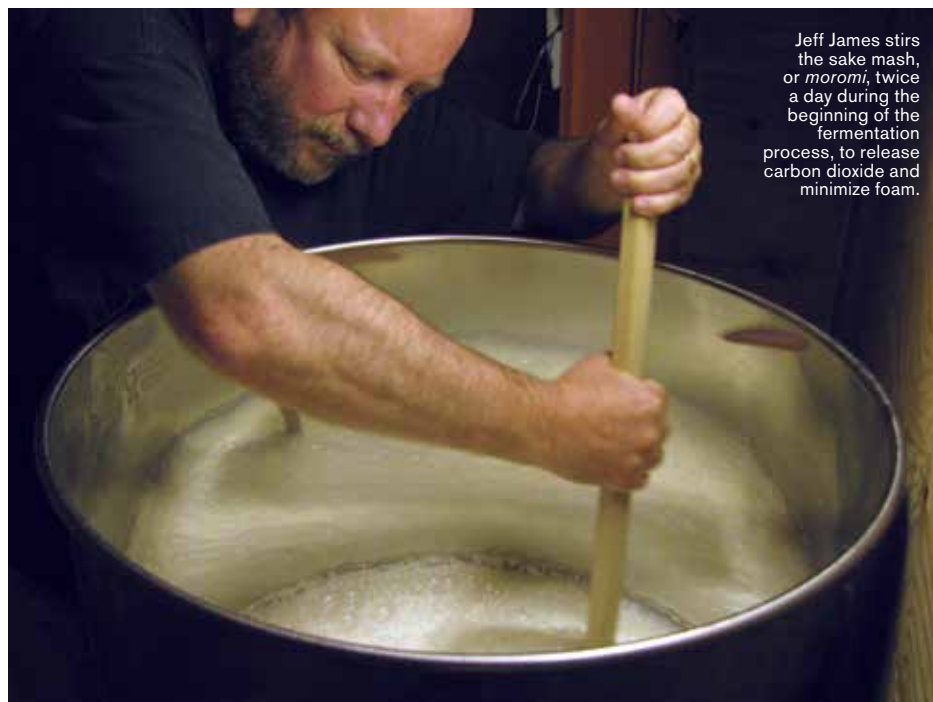
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SILENT SKY
BY LAUREN GUNDERSON

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Jeff James stirs the sake mash, or *moromi*, twice a day during the beginning of the fermentation process, to release carbon dioxide and minimize foam.

soaks and then steams to soften. From there he adds *koji*, a type of fungus, which aids in breaking down the rice starch to ready it for fermentation. (Koji, also used to make miso and soy sauce, is the “national fungus” of Japan.) After a couple days in James’ temperature- and humidity-controlled koji room, which is lined with cedar wood to resemble an elfin sauna, the koji rice is ready for fermentation.

The Japanese have logged only 20-some varieties of sake-appropriate yeast strains, of which James uses Number 9. The main fermentation process, which happens in small tanks in James’ cold room, takes about 30 days; the whole production process takes about eight weeks, plus at least two months of aging, in either the tank or the bottle. All sake is filtered—James uses cotton bags to strain the rice lees, or particulate, from the liquid—though he makes *nigori*, which is filtered less than junmai, resulting in a cloudy brew with a milky mouthfeel. And most sake is pasteurized, though James makes an unpasteurized junmai, called *nama*, which is brighter and more unctuous than the pasteurized stuff.

James, who’s a commercial property manager by day, has been brewing sake for only two years, but he’s reached an astounding level of quality. It’s out of obsessive passion: Like most people, he was unschooled on sake, until several years ago he ordered junmai on a whim. This was his awakening. He started homebrewing sake along with the beer he’d geeked out on for years. When the opportunity came to launch a brewery,

either beer or sake, he chose the road less traveled.

His process, which he describes as “old-school,” is very hands-on, no heavy machinery or automation involved. His knowledge came primarily through trial and error, though he credits Yoshiaki Kasugai, a brewer for YK3 Sake in Richmond, BC, for sharing his expertise. In December James’ junmai took home a gold medal from the World Wine Championships in Chicago.

“I don’t know if it’ll take off or pan out,” James says. “It’s a lot of work. Basically there’s a lot of rent going into each bottle. But when people discover us they’ve been excited about it.” He recently hired a business manager and marketing manager, expanding his operation. You can buy bottles of Cedar River sake at Beer Junction in West Seattle and Sake Nomi in Pioneer Square. Even with my limited sake experience, I found James’ junmai, *nama* and *nigori* profoundly delicious. Most of all

I enjoyed his *taru*—junmai aged for two weeks in cedar. James says he might be the only brewer in North America making this traditional style. (“Though that’s not saying much—hardly anyone here is making sake.”) The chilled *taru* carried familiar notes of light fruit but also whiffs of cinnamon and clove and wet wood—Christmas spices, suggesting both a cold, crisp winter morning and a warm, welcoming hearth. ■

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— Richard Connema, Talkin’ Broadway

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— Robert Stromberg, Oscar-winning production designer for Avatar & Alice in Wonderland

“Really out of this world! There is no word to describe it... if I had to, the words might be ‘divine,’ ‘reborn’ and ‘hope.’ You have to see it to believe it.”

— Christine Walevska, Goddess of Cello, watched Shen Yun four times

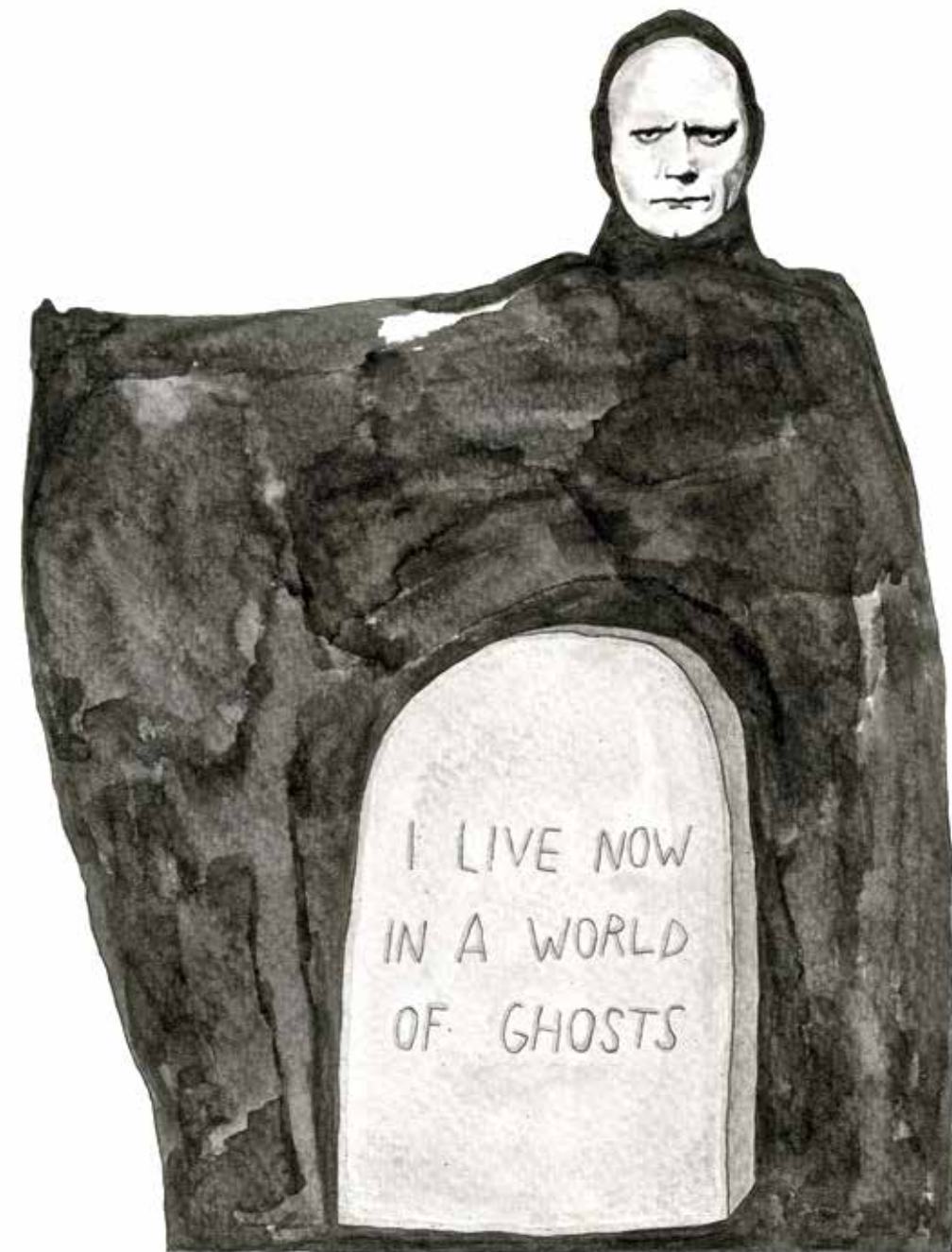
“I just wish there is a way I could cry out to mankind, and say they owe it to themselves to experience Shen Yun!”

— Jim Crill, veteran producer watched Shen Yun 3 times

You'd Scream Too

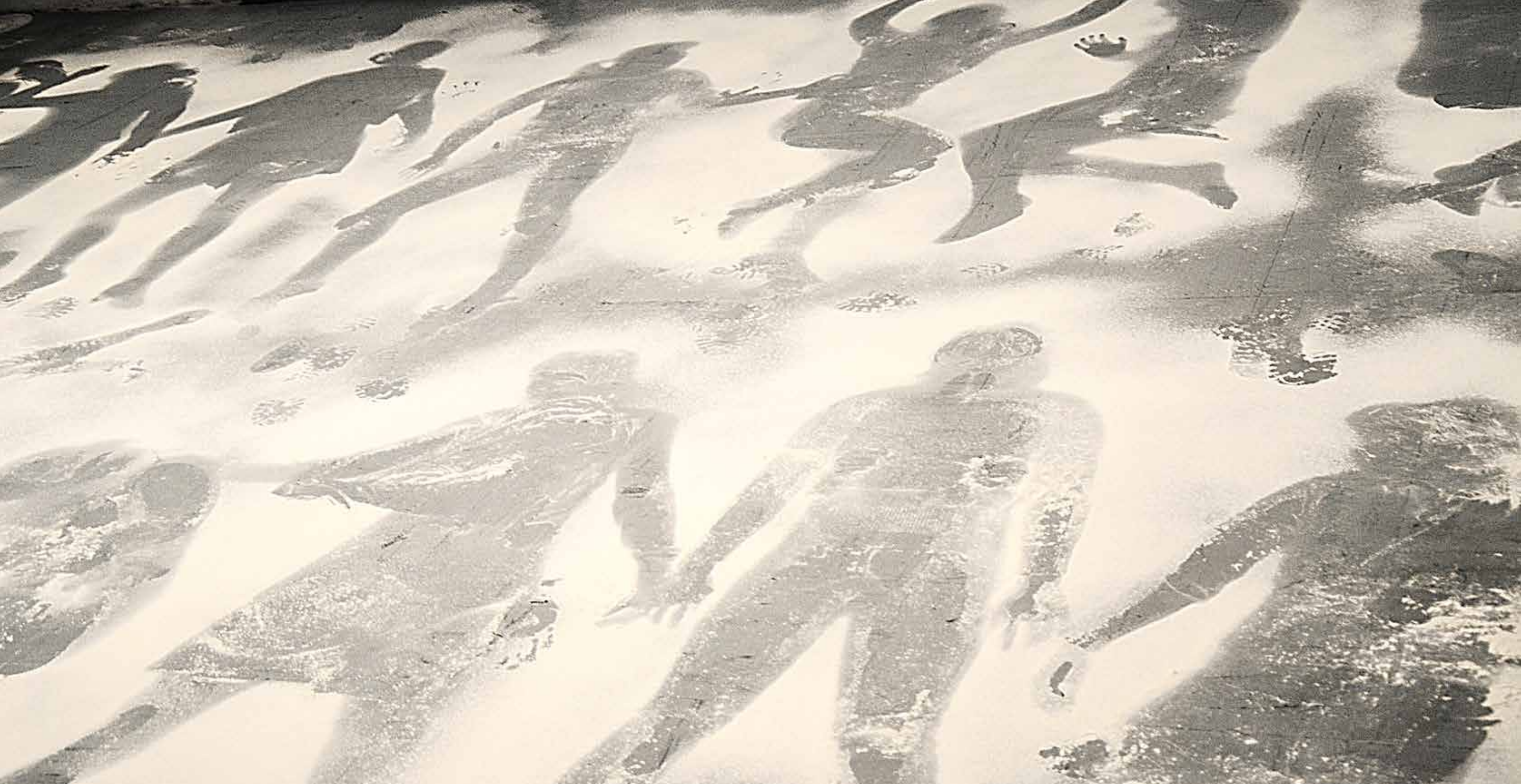
We'd dropped baskets, rancid silver salmon heads for bait, which led to the boiling, the salt and butter, warm sourdough bread, too much wine, and the discussion of Dungeness versus Rock, how the stronger crabs would struggle longer, what defined conscious life. A bit buzzed on white wine, Luci continued, "And did you read about the lost traps? Thousands of them in the Sound, and the crabs crawl in after fish heads, and then starve and die, and then become bait for more. It's a death machine." Bill, her husband, wouldn't make eye contact with any of us, two other couples invited for a few days of relaxation, sailing in the San Juans, but nothing much happened, which is how things usually end, and the next day we saw Orcas, massive cargo ships headed for Japan, and a porpoise swam alongside the boat, arcing over and under the surface. In September, Bill drove to the harbor to clean up a mess from otters nested beneath the boat cover; they'd soiled the deck, stained mahogany—he scrubbed and scrubbed but couldn't get it clean, and then left out poison and drove home only to find, when he went back to dry dock the boat for winter, something worse, a rotting otter under the life raft, bloated from arsenic. Luci's meds had taken effect in October, and she folded a cocktail napkin into irregular triangles as Bill later told us this story over drinks at happy hour, and she only spoke once to say that she preferred her soda without ice, and I thought about whether, when we have to pull up the crab trap, care is enough to keep away the claws and whether you'd be dropping or hurling everything into the waves.

—TOD MARSHALL



WHY DO SOME PEOPLE ALWAYS HAVE GOOD LUCK, WHILE OTHERS NEVER DO?
BRANDON VOSIKA

Pencil and watercolor on paper, 8 x 10 inches, 2015
Vosika's solo show *Life Is Great* is on view at Joe Bar through Feb. 8.



IT'S ABOUT TIME

Alice Gosti's performance art insists on risk and human connection.

by **AMANDA MANITACH**

▲
HO SEMPRE VOLUTO
REGALARTI UN
ELEFANTE ROSA
Live performance with
flour tracings created by
Alice Gosti with Devin
McDermott, Anh Nguyen
and Amiya Brown,
performed at Centro per
l'Arte Contemporanea
Trebisonda in Italy.
PHOTO BY ANDREA MEDRI

The first time I saw Alice Gosti perform, I felt like I would throw up from a blend of terror, excitement and visual overload. To be specific, I got a migraine I was so stressed out. But I stayed until the end.

The piece was called “I will follow you” and lasted three hours. Staged at Hedreen Gallery in the hot summer of 2013, Gosti began nearly undressed, in a pair of plain white panties and a bra. Nearby she’d placed two miniature red chairs, almost toy-like in their smallness, and a ream of industrial toilet paper—the kind of cheap, flimsy stuff that comes on gargantuan rolls and

falls apart too easily. She began wrapping herself, one limb at a time, gracefully at first, increasingly awkward as time went on and her body became mummified in layer upon layer of tissue. Eventually she was so buried she couldn’t see or hear. A cardboard tube connected to her mouth allowed her to breathe under 18 inches of toilet paper. It was laughably absurd but terrifying. Her head became heavy and sagged under the weight. When she spoke, her words were muffled and communication staunch. Sometimes she might’ve been crying.

Taped to the floor by her feet was a message

written on a piece of paper. “Tell me a story,” it read. Over the course of those three hours, visitors came to sit beside her on the tiny chairs. Gosti couldn’t hear their intimacies whispered against her giant cotton head. Some tried to feed her sips of water or clear the tube to help her breathe.

A high pitch of anxiety and an odd sense of community marked the interminable passage of minutes. A few times I was afraid for her health—perhaps her life.

At the end, an assistant signaled Gosti with a burst of loud music and she tore out of her paper prison. Shredded, it felt like a frayed wedding ►

dress around her. Makeup streaked her eyes. She gasped for air.

During that time, Gosti had passed through stages: the naked 20-something girlish dancer poised to entertain, then the bizarrerie of her material, the humor of which was gradually subsumed by the horror of an imperceptibly slow self-strangulation. Without the help of strangers, she would have hurt herself. When she emerged, like a soft, vulnerable thing reborn from a chrysalis, the emotional electricity in the room exploded with a collective exhale of applause. To varying extents, Gosti had taken her viewers through an ineffable experience that didn't make much narrative sense and lured us into an uncertain waiting game, a countdown that made time ache.

Gosti calls herself an "architect of experiences." Drawing from an increasingly popular artistic approach that uses time as a medium, she has spent the bulk of the past five years honing her version of durational art. Some of the pieces she designs last for hours, others for days. While some involve feats of strength, the tedious completion of tasks or time-wasting absurdities, the format differs from traditional performance in that it's not a passive experience. Whether by contributing their presence over an extended passage of time or being actively involved in the proceedings, the audience is involved.

When successfully plotted and executed, durational work creates a quickened sense of time itself, often invoked by an intense emotional or physical connection between the viewer and performer that's established by prolonging the performance. A sense of risk and sometimes excruciating uncertainty are

built into the structure of the event, transcending mere theatricality. Durational art has been part of the fabric of performance since the '60s, but in recent years has increasingly become popular among artists and even edged into pop culture. Last year, Jay-Z and Lady Gaga each collaborated with the godmother of durational performance, Marina Abramovic, augmenting their art world caché.

This fascination with durational work points to the fact that we—artists, rock stars

Gosti had taken her viewers through an ineffable experience and lured us into an uncertain waiting game, a countdown that made time ache.

and everyday audience members alike—have lost track of time, and we will go to extremes to find our way back. Gone are the days we measured out our lives in coffee spoons, as per T.S. Eliot's famous "Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock"; our lives are measured by a stream of bytes, meetings and Netflix binge and chill. If in the era of Eliot the appreciation of time was a subject worthy of the greatest bards, now

it is even more so.

"I'm thinking of durational work as a political statement in a time when time and space are such a commodity," Gosti says.

Gosti arrived at the form gradually, but she was born into art, the daughter of a painter and an architect. A dual citizen of the U.S. and Italy, she grew up in Perugia, a "sister city" to Seattle and the capitol of the region of Umbria.

Now 30, Gosti returns to Perugia when she can afford to. In late December, she was home for the holidays, seated at a desk in a cluttered art studio, Skyping with me for an interview. The studio occupies a centuries-old wood-working shop converted to a live/work space by her parents. From the video feed I can see what looks like an artisan's garret straight out of a novel, stuffed with easels, scraps of canvas, tables filled with paintbrushes. A large abstract painting hangs behind Gosti, painted by her mother decades ago.

Gosti points her laptop out the window toward the gray Umbrian morning. The remains of a partial stone wall are visible. It's pre-Roman—Etruscan—winding around the perimeter of the city. This romantic scene is not where Gosti grew up.

"I was raised in a low-income housing area in the richest part of Perugia—a sort of design fuck-up," she says with a thick Italian accent. She leans into the screen, wearing a colorful plaid shirt and tortoiseshell-rimmed glasses. "They built an entire building for recovering addicts and people under house arrest all in one building in the center of a town. All the other buildings in the area are so old they're owned by the aristocracy."

While Gosti's parents lacked financially,

they compensated by passing down a devotion to the arts. Gosti's mother, Jodi Sandford, was an American student at Evergreen studying art history and Italian. At the tail end of an exchange program to Italy, she met her future husband, a young Italian architecture student named Valter Gosti, at a party.

"Their story sounds so cheesy," says Gosti, laughing. "She liked his voice. He spoke no English." After Sandford returned to the U.S. to finish her courses at Evergreen, she reunited with Valter in Italy as soon as she could. When Gosti was three, her parents scraped up the money to put her in a dance class.

"In Italian culture, if you're a little boy you play soccer; if you're a little girl you do dance," she says. "It took many years for me to realize what a commitment it was for them and for the economy of my family to put me through those classes."

At age 18 Gosti applied to the University of Washington's dance program, attracted to the size of the school and the variety of studies available there—the opposite of the stultifying, concentrated dance education of European conservatories.

"I felt American, but I never lived here," she says. "But when I lived in Italy everyone always told me I was American, and so there was this weird thing—I needed to learn what it felt like to be an American, how that side of me would feel like."

By the time she graduated in 2008, the Italian economy was slumping and Gosti knew she wouldn't be able to afford to work in dance if she returned. She had better odds of scraping an artistic life together here. Diving into the dance-festival circuit, Gosti was bothered by its standardized time format, which generally requires pieces to clock in at 20 minutes or less. Premeditated choreography in general bothered her. Her first work in the early 2010s provided the rumblings of something that might break those boundaries.

Spaghetti CO. Saga, a dance performance with three "chapters," quickly made Gosti a name in the local art scene with its striking imagery of red sauce, slippery and splashing through the air, slapping the faces of three young women. Simultaneously familial, violent and colorful, Gosti's vision of ritualized dinner—Italian-style—examined the messy relationships of women and feminism while harkening the old-world traditions for which Gosti was homesick.

She had yet to consider duration in her work but was nevertheless creating events that began to play with chance, and with choreography that was more situational than stringent. The sheer chaos of *Spaghetti CO.*—with its unruly, sloshing food and deliberately unpredictable environment—offered a glimpse of the possibilities.

"It was the first time I felt alive performing, excited by the possibility of things breaking and falling apart and being surrounded by people who had to solve problems," she says. "The hyper-awareness that created was fascinating for me. I started thinking about things that are irreversible, where you cannot control the time. Things like ice melting, liquids being absorbed, a glass falling to the ground, breaking,

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scattering. I got obsessed with the sensation of feeling something real could happen.”

Inspired by artists like Abramovic, Matthew Barney, Gina Pane and Yves Klein—all of whom push the limits of the body, mind and endurance—Gosti organized the first Yellow Fish Epic Durational Performance Festival in 2013. The month-long festival (named for goldfish conspicuously made spectacle in his glass bowl) debuted work by local and international artists experimenting with the durational format, with some performances lasting up to 48 hours, executed in Seattle’s art galleries and dance venues, free to the public. Counting grains of rice, counting time, nonstop dancing: The festival meted out minutes in a smorgasbord of performative increments and iterations. Visitors were invited to come or go, to

The fascination with durational work points to the fact that we—artists, rock stars and everyday audience members alike—have lost track of time, and we will go to extremes to find our way back.

take it in, in their own time. Yellow Fish has since become an annual event.

In 2015, Gosti was commissioned by Velocity Dance Center’s Made in Seattle program to produce a new piece, bigger than anything she’d previously attempted. *How to become a partisan* debuted at Saint Mark’s Cathedral on April 25 last year. It was another turning point, one that would finally reconcile Gosti’s Italian roots with her American present.

“History and politics have always been in my work,” she says. “But before now not in a way I would clearly understand.”

In post-WWII Italy, partisans comprised the pro-Allied citizens who formed resistance groups in opposition to the Italian Fascist regime. They fought in squads and brigades, in the countryside and in cities, employing guerrilla strategies, labor strikes and extensive propaganda campaigns. Women played a significant role in the movement, with more than 50,000 female members—mostly in their 20s—serving as couriers and organizers, occasionally taking up arms.

In her teens, especially during the George W. Bush presidency and the Iraq War, Gosti organized political protests with friends. She backed off when she arrived in the States to study.

“When I made the decision to move to the U.S. it was very contradicting at first,” Gosti says, “the idea that I would continue my

political journey, since it was so much against the place that would give me bread and let me follow my dream. It was hard for awhile just because I was silencing a part of me that had been really important.”

How to become a partisan reached back to her political origins in more ways than one. It began in Italy where Gosti interviewed WWII resistance fighters and based the premise of the piece on them—with an emphasis on the “invisible” and forgotten partisans, especially the women who played a significant role in the nation’s history. The performance premiered on the 70th anniversary of Italy’s liberation from fascism—a lucky coincidence. The final piece was an immersive, five-hour event at St. Mark’s Cathedral created in collaboration with Seattle composer Hanna Benn. Like Yellow Fish, visitors were welcome to come and go as they pleased.

Over the course of those five hours, the cathedral was flooded with sound and movement. The centerpiece was Benn standing atop a tall riser, which was hidden by her gown, its long skirt stretched taut over rigid panniers and pooling on the floor beneath her. For hours Benn stood caged in the panniers, singing, while blocks of ice dyed with red pigment were piled around the hem of the dress. As they melted, color seeped upward until it stained the white garment to the neck. In the foreground, a “herd” of seven female dancers, snorting and contorting, spilled through the aisles, gently stampeding, their necks slashed with blood red marks. It was Gosti’s wake-up call against a numbing to political past and present. In the same way we are out of touch with time, she suggests, we’ve forgotten we can effect change.

In December Gosti scouted locations in Italy where she could re-mount *How to become a partisan*. Back stateside in January, she began a residency with the Cornish Playhouse Arts Incubator program, a space provided at Cornish College of the Arts for performers to explore concepts rather than final products. As part of that residency she’s teasing out future iterations and new chapters of *partisan* planned for the summer. In March she collaborates with ritualist Timothy White Eagle for City Arts’ *Genre Bender*.

For Gosti, performance is a means to combat forgetting and the chronic whitewashing of history. There’s also, according to the rules she’s been gradually forging, a way to arm the audience with an agency of which they weren’t aware. She calls that dynamic a “democracy of the audience.” It unfolds in her work, as the minutes and hours tick by and viewers are forced to interact on their own terms.

“I’m interested in what happens when the audience chooses to be active or inactive,” she says, musing on the potential of performance in the broader scheme of art, activism and her work. “I want to set up a situation where there’s a choice to engage, and if you don’t engage then I failed—or you *think* I failed because I didn’t entertain you properly. But I’m not interested in that dynamic of power; I’m more interested in what are you going to make of this, the decisions are you going to make.” ■

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KEY CHANGE

How organizations like Seattle Youth Symphony Orchestras are moving the needle on music education in Seattle schools, and what that means for our city’s future.

by **GEMMA WILSON** ■ photo by **STEVE KORN**

High school classrooms have a distinct din, an aural miasma of voices chattering, papers shuffling, school bells ringing. In a large, fluorescent-lit room in Chief Sealth International High School, that ubiquitous, low-grade racket is joined by the astringent whine of student violinists and the tentative rumble of someone noodling on a double bass.

At Sealth, in West Seattle’s Delridge neighborhood, this musical sound is relatively new. Six years ago Denny Middle School, with which Sealth shares a campus, partnered with Seattle Youth Symphony Orchestras and seven area elementary schools to provide professional coaching to students learning string instruments. When SYSO started there, Denny had 39 kids in the orchestra. Now they have three orchestras and a total of some 160 participating kids. As Denny’s orchestra grew, more graduating eighth graders wanted to continue their musical education, increasing demand for an orchestra class at Sealth. So Sealth added an orchestra class, the Denny orchestra teacher became the Denny/Sealth orchestra teacher, and string orchestra joined the school’s official music classes. (A dedicated teacher had been leading and fundraising for the schools’ bands for more than a decade.)

While Sealth’s band and orchestra are growing, they still pale in comparison to the leading examples of music education in Seattle Public Schools: Garfield and Roosevelt High, whose jazz bands and orchestras have placed among the top in the country for decades. Those award-winning programs are outliers in the city’s complicated, imbalanced arts education ecosystem. That imbalance has deep systemic and societal roots, and they’re not unique to Seattle. But questions of equity and arts education on the rise nationally—in 2012, U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan declared our country’s arts opportunity gap a civil rights issue. Denying children music as part of their education puts them at a quantifiable disadvantage, and now the district’s offerings are being reevaluated and reinvigorated by forces within the district and without.

The benefits of music education aren’t up for debate. Hundreds of studies show that music education has a positive benefit on school performance and in life. Kids who get music education have higher

grades, then higher salaries. They even vote more as adults. Mastering an instrument requires a particular discipline that is also an excellent teacher of perseverance.

“There are a lot of kids that don’t believe in themselves, if they’ve often hit failure,” says Kathleen Allen, who was the school district’s Community Arts Liaison before becoming SYSO’s Director of Education, Communications and Partnerships. “Research has shown that this, even more than doing well in school, is a critical component of success: the opportunity to know that if you work hard things will change.”

As Sealth’s orchestra class warms up, orchestra teacher Jorge Morales helps 20-some kids tune their strings and hands out music before stepping up to his podium to conduct. Daniel Mullikin, a professional cellist and music coach with Seattle Youth Symphony

Orchestras, aids in tuning. He moves around the room working with individual students, making corrections and giving tips on technique. He’s a longtime SYSO coach and has worked with some of these kids since they were in elementary school. As the kids move through different scales, with Morales announcing note corrections and Mullikin adjusting fingers, the improvement in tuning is audible—and the kids can clearly hear it too, playing louder and more confidently by the minute.

“Having coaches there helps make more meaningful time of the class,” Morales says. “When I didn’t have that, it was 10 or 20 minutes of tuning some days, to then play for 10 minutes and spend half the time talking. It was a rough, rough learning process for me.”

Coaches also help with time-consuming instrument repairs, which

Morales previously dealt with himself. (They also help Morales, who’s primarily a pianist and composer, improve his own string skills.) When it comes to something as specialized as playing a string instrument, nothing beats one-on-one instruction. Finally, these once-struggling school orchestras are beginning to thrive.

SEATTLE YOUTH SYMPHONY ORCHESTRAS, COLLOQUIALLY KNOWN as SYSO, was founded in 1942, and is now one of the largest youth orchestra programs in the country. Today the group is comprised of four different orchestras: Symphonette, Debut Symphony, Junior Symphony and the prestigious flagship group, Seattle Youth Symphony. That top group performs annually at Benaroya Hall and is coached by



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In Seattle Public Schools, students can choose to start playing an instrument in fourth and fifth grade, says Allen. It's a pull-out program, which means that kids leave their regular classroom for music lessons during the school day, and it's taught by instrumental-music specialists sent from school to school by the district. These teachers, Allen explains, are on part-time contracts that allow each kid to get about a half-hour of music instruction a week—not nearly enough to make progress.

"Schools are allowed to buy more time," Allen says, "and so certain schools can get more music, either through fundraisers or passing the cost back to the parents." From the get-go, schools with wealthier students, whose families can already afford things like quality instruments and private lessons, get more arts education. Those at a lower socioeconomic level go without.

SYSO is addressing this systemic imbalance with the newest iteration of its SYSO in the Schools program, which works in partnership with public schools to amplify music education. The first iteration, which launched 25 years ago, was the Endangered Instruments Program, which still sends professional musicians to middle schools and encourages kids to try out less-common instruments—to switch from violin to viola, for example, or from flute to French horn. Not only can kids can find instruments they love, and thus will stick with, they may ultimately have more opportunity to play in an orchestra because, as SYSO's Director of Advancement and Sustainability Josef Krebs point out, "You cannot play Beethoven 9 without the bassoon."

Six years ago, a grant from the Wallace Foundation helped SYSO launch its Southwest Seattle Strings Project, bringing string coaches into eight schools, including Denny and Sealth. Teachers get much-needed help in the classroom and kids get specialized, sometimes one-on-one coaching, from a consistent roster of professionals, for free.

But funding's the trick: Donations made to the Endangered Instruments Program augment schools in the Southwest Strings program that can't otherwise afford extra instruction. "Systemic inequity is a big deal, and it's an issue that in our time we have to confront," Krebs says. "This is a purposeful strategy, because everything else in the system is designed to help rich families preserve their own assets around arts education." SYSO, a private nonprofit, staffed by specialists and unfettered by the funding woes, broad focus and red tape of the school district, can send professional teaching artists and necessary supplies, like shoulder rests and rosin, directly to the kids that need them most.

SYSO IS JUST ONE PARTNER IN AN ARTS education system that is dizzyingly collaborative. Seattle Repertory Jazz Orchestra, which provides band coaches where SYSO provides string coaches, is another major Seattle Public Schools partner, along with Arts Corps,

Seattle Symphony, Seattle Art Museum, Seattle Opera and Seattle Repertory Theatre. These organizations and many others are working with the Creative Advantage Initiative, a public/private partnership begun in fall 2013 (also seeded by a Wallace Foundation grant) between the school district, the city and countless outside partners, from community arts organizations to individual teaching artists.

"There's no ego in this," says Gail Sehlhorst, the visual and performing arts manager at Seattle Public Schools. "What leads the work is equitable access to the arts."

In an Oct. 2015 study by the University of Washington's Center for Reinventing Public Education, Seattle's public school system was revealed to be one of the least equitable in the

Denying children music as part of their education puts them at a quantifiable disadvantage.

country. An example: Over 34 percent of white students in Seattle attend an elementary or middle school with reading tests scores that rank in the top 20 percent of schools citywide, compared to 3.4 percent of black students. The barriers to achieving basic educational equity are myriad, and when it comes to the arts they become even more complex, ranging from funding issues to rigid graduation requirements for high schoolers.

Schools with robust PTAs can fundraise to fill that funding gap. Sehlhorst explains that schools without fundraising PTAs can instead pay for arts classes using federal funds (called Title 1 funds) that go to high-need schools based on the percentage of their student body receiving free or reduced lunches, among other criteria. But there's a problem: These funds *can* be used for arts, but they don't have to be, and schools with tight budgets may need them for other education basics. Plus, some large schools fall in the middle—they might have 40 or 50 percent of their students getting free and reduced lunch, but still don't qualify for Title 1.

If you discuss public school music education on any systemic level, you'll hear the word

"pathway" used *a lot*—meaning the route a child takes from elementary to middle to high school, and the resulting linear growth in skill-building. These problems of funding, equity and access are certainly not unique to music education, but music, particularly instrumental music, has an undeniable technical progression. You can begin learning fundamentals of drawing at any time in your life, but if you don't start learning instrumental technique in elementary school, you won't be able to play music at a middle school level, which puts you behind on the path to play at the high school level and beyond. Pamela Ivezic, the school district's K-12 music coach (it's worth noting that music is the only discipline with a specialist on staff at the district level), remembers that when she started her job eight years ago, 23 of 52 elementary schools offered music education. That number is now 39.

"A really important component of this work is creating a cultural shift," says Lara Davis, education manager for the Office of Arts & Culture. "There's been a de-investment in arts education for the last 30 years, so as we make these decisions around increased certificated arts instruction, materials and partnerships, it's really about engaging school leadership."


Pathways aren't just about developing skills; they're about changing the makeup of the city's decision makers. "If a person hasn't had an art experience in their life, then they don't have anything to connect to in terms of the relevance of art in a student's education," Sehlhorst says. "Right there you're also looking at the gaps in who has historically had access to the arts in their public education and in their outside life. We need to help people see the connective tissue between what happens when a student is engaged in art-making and their initiative."

Another huge part of fighting inequity is challenging assumptions about music in certain communities: that kids at schools with stellar music programs are somehow more passionate or more talented rather than wildly more advantaged.

When it comes to growing arts education, no one can do it alone. While Creative Advantage chips away at the holistic, systemic level, partner organizations and teachers can address immediate classroom needs and communities can rally to show political and financial support. The common goal is access and growing the capacity of each school to provide quality arts education to all kids. It's important to be strategic, but it's also important to act fast. "Every year we don't invest," says SYSO's Krebs, "it's another couple hundred kids who don't get music, who don't think they can make change."

In the Sealth orchestra room, scales have given way to a sight-reading exercise, from which emerges the halting strains of a simple concerto, punctuated by muffled giggles whenever someone biffs a note. Morales stops the kids for a quick conversation about key signatures and relative majors and minors, and they catch on fast. These students are learning and improving in real time—because they've been given the chance. ■

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Musical Emancipation

Xolie Morra is a gifted singer-songwriter staking a claim for neurodiversity.

By DAVID SCHMADER Photo by STEVEN MILLER

XOLIE MORRA HAS THE KIND OF VOICE YOU FEEL lucky to hear. Huge, emotional and capable of shifting from a warm purr to a full howl without Morra breaking a sweat, this voice is showcased by Morra's songs—melodic folk

tunes typically devoted to matters of the heart and revved up to alt-country toughness with aggressive guitar and drums.

In November, I got to watch the voice of Xolie Morra blow away a packed house at McCaw Hall, where Morra was appearing as part of the 2015 TEDxRainier conference. Performing with her band the Strange Kind, Morra sang "C'est L'Amour," an original tune that features some cool tricks, like a verse in French and a pair of trumpet solos. It took everyone a minute to note that Xolie Morra's band does not feature a trumpet player; her "trumpet" is her mouth. If there's a gimmicky aspect to Morra's mouth trumpet, it dissipates in seconds, its uncanny expressiveness becoming just another dazzling facet of her voice.

This voice and the music behind it have opened doors for Xolie Morra and the Strange Kind. Over the past few years, the band has opened for John Mayer and Crosby, Stills & Nash, and been featured at the 2010 Lilith Fair. But the biggest break came in 2014, when the band performed on *Jimmy Kimmel Live*,

closing out the show with "Over My Head," a Morra original that captures everything she does so well.

Morra's powerful onstage presence is made all the more remarkable by her demeanor offstage, where she's likely to be reserved, soft-spoken, halting in word and deed. If she's feeling stressed or overwhelmed by outside stimulus, her tics emerge—hard blinks, temporary stretches of closed eyes, and a general jamming of her language channels, with words seemingly fighting their own expression before leaping out in a stammer. By her side you'll usually find her dog, a medium-sized Mexican Hairless kept warm by tiny jeans and a denim jacket. Before long she'll happily explain everything.

"I have autism," Morra tells me. "I'm a musician, first and foremost, and autism is a huge part of who I am."

Morra received her autism diagnosis six years ago—when she was 30. "As a child I was too high-functioning to be diagnosed," she says smoothly, the only hint of her tics being

the special earplugs she wears to limit the power of outside stimulus to overwhelm her. "I had all the social difficulties you'd expect of someone on the spectrum. I didn't pick up on vocal cues and body language, I took things very literally and I obsessed on topics that have stayed pretty consistent to this day—mostly dogs and music. I had so many spectrum traits but no one could put a name to it."

As she moved into her late 20s, Morra's physical and verbal tics intensified to the point of making communication a challenge, fueling her hunt for an explanation. Eventually she got her diagnosis: Asperger syndrome, or, as it's called now, autism spectrum disorder.

Getting a name for her condition was a life-changer, a lens that brought confusing parts of her life into focus and helped others understand her. "Before my diagnosis, people just thought of me as being really hard to work with because I was so particular, and I didn't know how to express things."

Prior to her diagnosis, Morra's coping maneuvers could be misconstrued as just screwing around. Years ago at a recording session, she was feeling overwhelmed in the studio, so she took a break to focus on the contained, controlled world of a video game—a reliable fix, in her experience. "The producer saw it as me being unprofessional," she says.



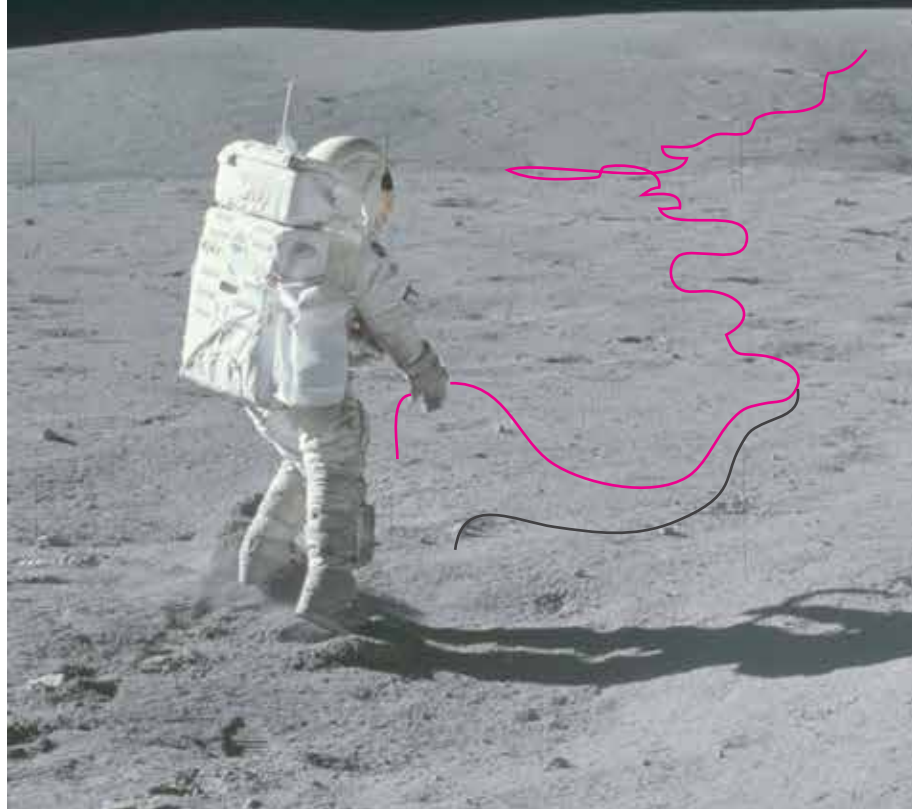
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“But for me, it was a way to get *back* to being professional. Now that I have the diagnosis, I’m having an easier time being taken seriously.”

Born into a family of music-makers in northern California, Morra has always been immersed in music. “When I was a kid, my mom would take me to the Dixieland Jazz Festival in Monterey and we’d meet a lot of people who knew my grandfather,” she tells me. “I never got to know him, but he had a band when he was alive. My mom introduced me to some of the people who knew him, and I would get to hear the music.” Beyond jazz was a wealth of other influences. “My dad was into folk and bluegrass, my mom was into Motown and my uncle Jim loved classic rock.” Morra absorbed it all.

Along with music came a love of wordplay, instilled by her mother, who got her started on rhyming games as a kid. As a teen, Morra crafted new lyrics to other people’s music and eventually wrote songs of her own. As she tells

Morra’s powerful onstage presence is made all the more remarkable by her demeanor offstage, where she’s likely to be reserved, soft-spoken, halting in word and deed.

me, these first songs were heavily indebted to her favorite artists at the time: the Cranberries, Tori Amos, Ani DiFranco. As she moved through her 20s, Morra found her own sound, which immersed the folky melodies and open-hearted lyrics of her influences in the racket of a full band.

When I ask what role her autism spectrum disorder might’ve played in her musical development, Morra cites the often fraught task of translating the perfect vision in her head into the world. “I have a constant radio going on in my head,” she says. “When I write a song, I hear something fully produced, from beginning to end, and I know exactly where things will go. But I’m not so particular that there’s no artistic input on the part of the performers. When I work with people, I encourage them to find their own parts, to come up with something that’s gonna blow what I’ve got in my head out of the water.”

Crucial to her collaborations is a shared understanding that her quirks aren’t flaws to be corrected but key components of what she brings to the band. “Instead of surrounding myself with people who want to change how [my brain] works, I’ve made a choice to surround myself with people who can understand that and not take it personally.”

Finding collaborators who wouldn’t try to “fix” her was only one of Morra’s goals. “I also wanted a band where everyone in the band is a performer,” she says. She found her ideal bandmate in Brett Hutchinson, an expressive drummer who answered Morra’s Craigslist ad four years ago and soon found himself starring alongside Morra in the Strange Kind. “When Brett plays, you can just see what he’s feeling,” Morra says.

Hutchinson’s pleasure at making music with Morra is evident to all who see him onstage, where his blissed-out grin hovers placidly above the tornado of hands, knees and elbows below. Still, there are challenges, he says, citing Morra’s motor tics, social anxiety and an obsessive connection to the perfect sound. “She’s an amazing musician who makes beautiful music, so that helps,” Hutchinson says with a laugh. “We butt heads, but we eventually come to an understanding. We’ve been working together for four years and we’ve gotten very good at communicating.”

A key point of communication for Morra and Hutchinson for the past two years: *The Great Social Experiment*, the debut full-length release by Xolie Morra and the Strange Kind, recorded at Shoreline’s London Bridge Studio and Seattle’s Red Room Recording, and currently being mixed and mastered by producer-in-chief Morra at her home studio in advance of a spring 2016 release.

The kinetic chemistry between Morra and Hutchinson is dramatically evident on “Break Away,” *The Great Social Experiment*’s first fully mastered track. It’s an expertly hooky classic-rock number made special by the interplay of Morra and her drummer, who offsets Morra’s great warm wail of a voice with a prickly beat that changes to meet each line of the lyrics and moves the song to musical places beyond the reach of so many singer-songwriters.

Hearing the music, it’s easy to forget about Morra’s days spent navigating tics, overstimulation and compromised communication. “Singing and playing guitar gives me a release,” she says. “It also causes me to switch off the tics, because music bypasses all the misfiring locations.”

Morra would love to share that freedom with everyone, especially those on the autism spectrum. Along with ripping the world’s heart out with her music, Morra’s goal is to change the popular perception of autism.

“The thing that needs to be cured is not the autism,” she says. “What needs to be cured is the neurological side of things, the vocal and motor tics, and the thing that make people unable to talk and [become] trapped inside. There are so many barriers in place—lifting all those barriers is the thing that helps people understand what autism really is. It’s not a disease, it’s a difference.” ■



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CALENDAR

BY RACHEL GALLAHER, ALEX GALLO-BROWN, BRETT HAMIL,
TONY KAY, PHILIPPA KIRALY, RACHEL SHIMP, GEMMA WILSON
AND JONATHAN ZWICKEL

ALBUM OF THE MONTH



WHAT A CRAZY time to be alive: melting ice caps, astronomical rents, social unrest at levels to rival the mythic '60s. It's enough to make you cry—or howl, à la Allen Ginsberg. Turbulent times breed great art. On their debut album, *Die Alone*, existentialists par excellence Gazebos confront this absurd, uncaring world with seven idiosyncratic originals (and two telling covers) that render confusion and chaos into inspiration and, yes, entertainment.

"I'm sitting on Earth/playing my part/is this real life or is it art?" wonders singer Shannon Perry on the climactic "Boys I Like." Who says the two are mutually exclusive? Certainly not Gazebos, who swap girl-meets-boy pop-song sentiments with bruised truths: "I don't like the boys who like me/And the boys I like don't like me back." To paraphrase the oddball "Ere Specka," there is no reliable road map to happiness, and trying to follow one makes for a bumpy, lonely trip, as Perry underscores by oscillating between staccato hiccups and longer, drawn-out phrases.

Animating inner monologues with unpredictable sounds, Gazebos eschew easy categorization; the most "punk" thing about this quartet is the abundance of fucks-not-given for following rules. On opener "Just Get High," guitarist TV Coahran weaves piercing tones reminiscent of prog-rockers King Crimson, underpinned by a goofy, rhythmic bounce that evokes the theme from *The Munsters*. Likewise, "Maintenance" pulsates with a syncopated beat that recalls

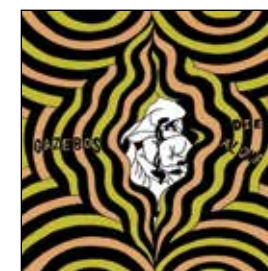
Phil Spector's girl-group variations on Latin rhythms, yet Coahran's flanged guitar imbues the track with heavy psychedelia. Their cover of "Not Allowed," originally by early-'80s Long Beach art punks Suburban Lawns, is the most straightforward track on the album, but with its exaggerated tempo shifts and contrasting boy-girl vocals, it could easily pass for their own composition.

Perry's vocal musicianship rivals her instrumental cohorts' in its versatility. Her showstopping rendition of "There Are Worse Things I Could Do," Rizzo's big number from *Grease*, is the quintessence of cool—if the key to cool is not caring whether you seem cool or not. (*Grease* may have yielded more than \$400 million worldwide, but it's still a corny musical, and Perry brings as much heart to her rendition as any teenaged talent show contestant.) If that turn's not enough to make some talent agency snap her up for acting and voiceover gigs, her shape-shifting elocution on "Blend" and "Sauna" is.

While tech investors dream of unicorns, Gazebos are busy making chimeras and griffins; their songs cavort like fantastic beasts bolted together from spare parts, too strange and strong-willed to care about consorting with princesses. *Die Alone* feels ridiculous, scary, playful and all-too-real, sometimes all at once...a lot like life.

KURT B. REIGHLEY

Listen to *Die Alone* at
CITYARTSONLINE.COM/ALBUM



DIE ALONE
GAZEBOS
(Hardly Art)

MUSIC

Feb. 1

Ladysmith

Black Mambazo

For years Ladysmith Black Mambazo has visited Seattle and played in grand performance halls, most frequently Meany Hall on the UW campus. Tonight the superstar South African ensemble takes the stage of the Triple Door, a relatively intimate space that should provide an especially memorable experience. If you've never seen Ladysmith, this is the time: Their luminous a capella choral arrangements of traditional Zulu songs and pop standards are moving and the group's delivery warm-hearted and effervescent. We promise goosebumps on top of goosebumps.

TRIPLE DOOR

Feb. 6

Tribute to

Allen Toussaint

We mourn the loss of Allen Toussaint—pianist, composer, singer, songwriter, producer—the New Orleans eminence who died last November after a lifetime of sharing his grace and talent with fans around the world. Here in Seattle, a slew of accomplished musicians, including Grace Love, Skerik, Sarah Rudinoff, Thaddeus Turner, Jeff Fielder, Andy Stoller, Eric Eagle, Naomi Siegel and Michael Stegner, gather tonight to pay tribute to the man behind classic songs like "Working in a Coal Mine" and "Mother in Law." This is a who's-who of Seattle soul, funk, jazz and pop luminaries honoring one of America's all-time greats.

ROYAL ROOM

Feb. 13

King

Comprising twin sisters and a longtime friend, King flows like sweet syrup between Sade-smooth '80s R&B and woozy, of-the-moment chillwave. The LA-based trio has been bubbling online for the last few years, their lustrous, synth-heavy singles called out by tastemakers such as Erykah Badu and Robert Glasper. Their self-produced, self-released debut LP—out this month—is a proper introduction to their subtle, sensual style, but even better is watching what they do in person, which you can do tonight when they visit Seattle for the first time.

BARBOZA

Feb. 19

Dead Prez,

Chimurenga

Renaissance

This double bill harkens back to a time when hip-hop was truly revolutionary, a vehicle for disseminating attitudes and perspectives. Dead Prez is the decades-old East Coast duo of MC-agitators stic.man and M1, thunderous proponents of socialism, political activism, veganism and personal fitness; Chimurenga Renaissance comes from Seattle with international roots, first-generation descendants of African immigrants with deep musical legacies, whose own music straddles the old world and the new. Both bands will expand your horizons if you let them.

NECTAR

Feb. 20

Cave Singers

And now we express our gratitude for the

ATTRACTIVE SINGLES

Five can't-miss songs from the PNW
By JONATHAN ZWICKEL



BEN ZAIDI, "Hollowed By You"

After studying music and creative writing at Harvard, Ben Zaidi returned home to Seattle and self-released a record of soulful, ghostly digi-folk last summer. In its asymmetrical groove and spacious synths, "Hollowed by You" plays like a passionate ode to toxic romance.

INVISIBLE HAND, "Sweet Action"

Another late pass, please: Invisible Hand's third album, *I'm Here Right Now*, came out last July but we're only now falling under its spell. "Sweet Action" finds the quartet balancing its power-pop and psych-rock sensibilities in an urgent, elevated jam that's equally tight and expansive.

PALE NOISE, "A Coward Reachin' (for a Hero's Gun)"

Spencer Kelley is the brains behind some of our favorite Northwest bands (Wallpaper, Basemint) and a true student of classic rock 'n' roll songwriting. Pale Noise is his latest endeavor, blending Small Faces jangle-pop and *Exile on Main Street*-style blues-rock with a distinctly Kelley-ish twist, as heard on this swaggering anthem of authenticity from the band's debut, *Some Crude Grace*.

SPECS WIZARD, "Golden Eagle"

Seattle's answer to RZA, Specs Wizard built this track's bed of spaghetti Western guitar and game show synth, then rolled across it with an unwavering vocal delivery. The veteran producer/MC/graff writer/comic book author will release a new EP—co-produced by Truckasauras' Adam and Tyler Swan—this month.

MASZER, "Roar"

From start to finish, this aptly titled single from psych-rock trio Maszer never lets up. Singer Katie Blackstock pierces a blistering squall of guitar and drums with a voice both soothing and feral—two minutes, 30 seconds of perseverance at a very high volume.

Hear this month's Attractive Singles at
CITYARTSONLINE.COM/SINGLES

artists who constantly, consistently hone their craft, who are most comfortable in the act of creation, who take their role seriously but live to share the fruits of their labors. We thank specifically the Cave Singers, who, some eight years into their existence, self-release their fifth album this month. *Banshee* sways between beer-guzzling groove and introspective psychedelia, Pete Quirk's inimitable voice leading through the folk-rock terrain, dark but comforting, that's made them one of Seattle's favorite modern bands.

NEUMOS

Feb. 27–March 12

Mary Stuart

The clash of religions goes back centuries, and Donizetti's opera *Mary Stuart* highlights England's powerful—and Protestant—Queen Elizabeth I in a battle for the English throne with her Catholic cousin Mary, Queen of Scots. Jealousy, pity, doubt, menace, exaltation and remorse run rampant in Seattle Opera's new production, along with sumptuous costumes and virtuoso singing. Many of the singers make debuts here, but many will remember Mary Elizabeth Williams, who sings Elizabeth, from her superb portrayal of Serena in *Porgy and Bess* some years ago. Both casts are excellent.

MCCAW HALL

Feb. 28

Natasha Kmeto

Finally a chance to catch Natasha Kmeto live! We've been casual fans of the Portland-based musician for a while, but her most recent album, *Inevitable*, which came out last summer, totally sold us. Kmeto's brand of vocal-heavy electro-soul is daz-zlingly sensual—the modern EDM equivalent of Roberta Flack's come-hither R&B. Kmeto's voice is warm and close, her lyrical perspective distinctly feminine and queer—which makes it all the more personal.

NECTAR

Feb. 29

Itzhak Perlman

One of the world's great violinists returns to Benaroya Hall for a recital with his long-time collaborator, pianist Rohan de Silva. The composers they will play span two centuries, from LeClair in the early 18th to Ravel in the early 20th, with Beethoven and Brahms in between. Perlman is a beacon for many, demonstrating that disabilities need not clip one's wings. He's used crutches or a wheelchair since polio in childhood, and is a superb and sensitive musician who's risen to the top of his field.

BENAROYA HALL

MORE MUSIC

Feb. 4

Lettuce

SHOWBOX

Feb. 4, 5

Kris Orlovski

SUNSET

Feb. 5

Dr. Dog

NEPTUNE THEATRE

Feb. 5, 6

Built to Spill

SHOWBOX

Feb. 9

Fat Tuesday Fest

feat. the Meter Maids (Wayne Horvitz, Jeff Fielder, Mike Stone, Bob Lovelace) and special guests Naomi Siegel, Ray Larson and Skerik

ROYAL ROOM

Feb. 11

Theoretics, Real Don Music

SUNSET

Feb. 12

Kevin Gates

SHOWBOX

Feb. 12

Motopony, Maldives trio

NECTAR

Feb. 13

Fred & Toody Cole of Dead Moon, Mommy Long Legs, Acapulco Lips, The Gods Themselves

EL CORAZON

Feb. 14

Budos Band

NEUMOS

Feb. 15

The Donkeys

SUNSET

Feb. 18

Starfucker

NEUMOS

Feb. 20

Sumac

FUNHOUSE

Feb. 23

Parquet Courts

NEUMOS

Feb. 26

Galactic

SHOWBOX

DANCE

Feb. 4–6

Trisha Brown Dance Company

After moving to New York in 1961, Trisha

Brown found herself deeply involved in Judson Dance Theater, a group of avant garde experimentalists breaking away from modern dance. A true performance revolutionary, the Aberdeen-born dancer and choreographer sought to celebrate the beauty of everyday movement and pushed dance into a new frontier. This month Brown's eponymous dance company performs a retrospective of her work, including 2003's aerial-centric *PRESENT TENSE*, and 1995's *You can see us*, featuring costumes, sound and visual design by artist Robert Rauschenberg.

MEANY HALL

Feb. 5–14

Roméo et Juliette

One of ballet's most romantic stories, *Roméo et Juliette* features choreography from the iconic Jean-Christophe Maillot. Famously premiered and oft-performed by Les Ballets de Monte-Carlo, this ballet focuses less on the opposition of the warring families and highlights the nostalgia, heightened emotions and internal conflicts of adolescence. The story is Shakespeare's: Two young, star-crossed paramours are fated to die for their love, but the tender moments and electrifying scenes are intensified with dance. Painter Ernest Pignon-Ernest mirrors the complexity of the show with his abstract scenic design.

MCCAW HALL



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Feb. 13, 14

CHOP SHOP: Bodies of Work

The largest and most exciting dance event on the Eastside returns for the eighth year, upping the ante with its collection of regional performers. Drawing from local companies including Spectrum Dance Theater and the Stone Dance Collective and reaching from Washington to Portland, Boise and Montreal, *CHOP SHOP* brings together artists making innovative strides in the contemporary dance community. Not just for dance lovers, *CHOP SHOP* mixes styles to appeal to a wide audience.

THEATRE AT MEYDENBAUER

down. In celebration of his 75th year, the Utah-born dancer and choreographer performs for two nights with guest artist Don Halquist. Evans helped put Seattle on the modern dance map in the '70s and '80s with his Bill Evans Dance Company. Known for his impressive tap-dancing skills and development of the Evans Modern Dance Technique, the lifelong performer is a legend in the field of performing arts—and a must-see.

VELOCITY DANCE CENTER

THEATRE

Through Feb. 20

The Birds

Strawberry Theatre Workshop presents Conor McPherson's 2009 stage adaptation of *The Birds*, based on a 1952 short story by Daphne du Maurier on which Alfred Hitchcock's 1963 horror film of the same name was loosely based. McPherson, an Irish writer famous for plays like *Shining City* and *The Seafarer*, brings his masterful prose to the story of two strangers seeking refuge from masses of attacking birds in an abandoned New England house. There's no electricity and little food, a nearby neighbor who may still be alive and watching them, and soon enough, a third arrival who throws off their delicate balance.

12TH AVENUE ARTS

Feb. 20, 21

Bill Evans 75th Birthday Tour

Bill Evans is on his way to proving that age won't bring him

Through Feb. 21

Constellations

With some help from concepts like string theory and quantum mechanics, this two-person play by Nick Payne tells the story of one relationship with infinite possibilities. The two people are Roland, a beekeeper, and Marianne, a Cambridge University academic specializing in theoretical physics. The short play clocks in at just over an hour and is woven from a fugue-like series of vignettes through which Marianne and Roland's relationship unfolds over and over again across time and space, with each

variation sending their relationship in a new direction.

SEATTLE REPERTORY
THEATRE

Through Feb. 21

Amadeus

Before playwright Peter Shaffer wrote the screenplay for the 1984 Oscar-winning film *Amadeus* based on the (fictionalized) lives of composers Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart and Antonio Salieri, he penned the stage play *Amadeus*, which took home the 1981 Tony Award for Best Play. Told in flashback, the play is narrated by an aged Salieri, who recounts the story of his life, always living and working in the shadow of the manic,

irrepressible—and in the pious Salieri's mind, immoral—genius of Mozart.

SEATTLE PUBLIC THEATRE

Feb. 3–21

Buzzer

Tracey Scott Wilson adds some welcome torque to the seemingly ubiquitous stories of gentrification that pepper the media landscape. In Wilson's play *Buzzer*, central character Jackson is moving back home to the poor neighborhood of Brownsville, Brooklyn, not because he has any fond memories of the place, but because Jackson, who left Brownsville for the tonier climes of Exeter, Harvard and Harvard Law, is

seeking an affordable, spacious New York apartment with his white girlfriend—with tense results. An old friend looking for a place to crash ramps up the tension even more. Presented by ACTLab and AJ Epstein Presents.

ACT THEATRE

Feb. 4–7

Thatswhathesaid

This one-person performance, created and performed by Erin Pike, written by Courtney Meaker and directed by HATLO, is built around a fascinating construct: it uses only female dialogue from the most-produced plays in America. Billed as “a brutal theatrical

CHOP SHOP: Bodies of Work



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exercise in isolation," the show explores what happens when a female character from today's theatre has no male protagonists to support her, as a way to distill and clarify "the modern theater's intended role for women," which is a worthy and vital theatrical experiment.

GAY CITY ARTS
CALAMUS AUDITORIUM

COMEDY

Feb. 4-6

Kyle Kinane

When you become a big enough draw as a comedian you move up from clubs to theatres, replacing a paycheck predicated on five weekend shows with a single, more lucrative performance in a larger venue. Kyle Kinane ascended to that level long ago, which is why it's noteworthy that Tacoma Comedy Club managed to lure him back to the smaller stage. They've been steadily booking theatre-packing names for the past year, proof they're definitely doing something right. Thus with Kinane you have five opportunities to see one of the best in the business.

TACOMA COMEDY CLUB

Feb. 12-14

Ted Alexandro

Ted Alexandro has two Comedy Central specials, has appeared on all the late night talk shows and opened for Louis C.K. at Carnegie Hall and Jim Gaffigan at Madison Square Garden. Comics like Bill Burr, Lewis Black and Dave Attell praise him as a comic's comic *par excellence*. He's also an outspoken progressive, feminist and Black Lives Matter activist. In an industry riddled with misogyny and racism as well as subtler hallmarks of oppression, it's nice to know that you can be as respected as Alexandro and be righteous, too.

TACOMA COMEDY CLUB

Feb. 19

Joel McHale

If Joel McHale isn't the most famous Seattle comedian, he's definitely in the top three. He started his career with Unexpected Productions—the improv theatre behind the gum wall—and became a cast member on the almost-funny local TV sketch show *Almost Live!* He went on to helm E!'s *The Soup*, star on NBC's *Community*, host the White House Correspondents' Dinner in 2014 and raise the 12th Flag at CenturyLink Field this year. For one night only, one of Seattle's favorite sons returns to grace us with a little homegrown fame.

PARAMOUNT THEATRE

Feb. 25-27

Ron Funches

Former Oregonian Ron Funches has blown up big time in the past couple of years, appearing on modern comedy staples like *Drunk History*, *Bob's Burgers* and *Kroll Show*, writing for movies like *Get Hard* and starring on NBC's *Undateable*, a sitcom that made waves in primetime by switching over to live episodes last fall. It's strange to see Funches, once a regular at alt-shows all over Portland and Seattle, make the ascension to bankable on-screen talent. But it's no surprise. Hollywood discovered what we knew all along: the dude's a one-of-a-kind messenger of joy.

TACOMA COMEDY CLUB

Every Wednesday

Laughs open mic

There are many, many open mics in Seattle, but the best one lies over the bridge in Kirkland. Most of our in-town cattle calls stretch well past two hours, a grueling test of endurance. The list for the Laughs mic is short and selective, giving preference to working pros and club regulars with later spots for newbies

who bring audience. Because of this, the mic is well attended and runs the accepted allotment of time for a comedy show: 90 minutes. It's the best-run assortment of talent and non-talent you'll see for free on a Wednesday night.

LAUGHS COMEDY SPOT

VISUAL ART

Feb. 4-March 12

Fabrice Monteiro: Maroons

A background in fashion—with its emphasis on beauty, movement and change—gloriously informs the photography of Senegal-based artist Fabrice Monteiro, back at Mariane Ibrahim Gallery after 2014's *Gorean Summer*. That exhibition showed vibrant life on the beaches of a Senegalese district known as a memorial to the slave trade. The new studio portraits of *Maroons* are stunning depictions of shackled men, the devices they wear based on historical documentation of those once used to subdue and punish. Taken in Monteiro's hometown of Benin, the confrontational images remind the viewer of the greed-driven inhumanity we're capable of.

MARIANE IBRAHIM GALLERY

Through Feb. 13

Matt Sellars: Energie

Through sculpture, Matt Sellars wants to convey a sense of the energies that pass between a person and a place: "One might stand in a sacred building and sense the energy of the hands that placed every stone, adobe brick or timber," he writes. We bring ourselves to a space when we inhabit it; what emotions do we bring to a gallery, full of objects referencing the emotions and memories of those who created them? Showing from Feb. 18 are new photographs by Ross Sawyers, who uses models of

contemporary buildings and concepts of space (particularly, home) to similarly contemplate his surroundings.

PLATFORM GALLERY

Through April

Healing in Flames

The Museum of Glass' *Hot Shop Heroes: Healing with Fire* program began last September and culminates this month with an exhibition of work produced by the soldiers involved. In the '40s, arts and crafts programs were implemented across military bases to raise morale, while today they're seldom publicized but highly valued as therapeutic agents. Many of the artists creating work for *Healing in Flames* served multiple tours in Iraq or Afghanistan. Along with pieces showcasing technical glass working skills, on view are their deeply felt creations that speak about war, military life, cultural differences and those they lost.

MUSEUM OF GLASS

Through Feb. 7

Body Parts

For a primer on dissociation, body dysmorphia and psychological suffering, you might simply thumb through any women's magazine in the supermarket. For an artful investigation, see *Body Parts*, which features contemporary work from Daniel Gordon, Thomas Hirschhorn, Eva Kot'átková and Wangechi Mutu, in which bodies are carefully considered, placed, annotated, pulled apart and reconstructed. Like works of Dr. Frankenstein, these pieces from the Henry's collection, bound together by their collage methods and approaches to figurative representation, reveal as much about their subjects as the world their creators live in.

HENRY ART GALLERY

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SCARECROW SUGGESTS

BY SPENSER HOYT, MATT LYNCH AND MARK STEINER

Staff at the famous video store and nonprofit archive highlight the best in this month's new releases.

Feb. 2 Bridge of Spies

A New York lawyer (Tom Hanks) is asked by the U.S. government to conduct the legal defense of accused spy Rudolph Abel (Mark Rylance) before he gets involved in an elaborate game involving the prisoner exchange of U-2 pilot Francis Gary Powers. Steven Spielberg's latest film is a simple moral lesson, executed with an unobtrusive formal economy that reinforces its sober idealism. **ML**

**Feb. 16
The Challenge**
In this little-seen action thriller from director John Frankenheimer (*The Manchurian Candidate*, *The Train*), Scott Glenn plays a mercenary hired to smuggle a priceless sword into Japan, where he runs afoul of Yakuza, ancient ninja clans and corporate bad guys, including the great Toshiro Mifune. Despite some '80s action silliness, Frankenheimer's formidable power behind the camera elevates the material to something exciting and strange. **ML**

**Feb. 23
 Fargo: Season 2**
Even better than the first season, the second season takes us back to late '70s, during America's so-called "crisis of confidence." A turf war between a Fargo crime family and a Kansas City mob syndicate is escalating rapidly. Caught up in the violence are a pair of capable, under-supported cops and a couple whose conflicting ambitions are pulling them apart. Packed with distinctive characters, evocative '70s rock tunes, crisp photography, plot twists and dark humor, *Fargo* transcends cable TV and plays more like the best, longest movie of 2015. **SH**

L'Inhumaine
Ninety years after its first theatrical run—during which fans and detractors engaged in fistfights—Marcel L'Herbier's dazzling science-fiction melodrama has been restored from the original nitrate negative. In an endeavor to synthesize the modern arts into an organic whole, L'Herbier enlisted opera singer Georgette Leblanc, painter Fernand Léger, glassmaker René Lalique, composer Darius Milhaud, architect Robert Mallet-Stevens and others to contribute to the production. New admirers are calling the film a "manifesto for Art Deco." **MS**

**Through Feb. 27
At Large**
A fine representation of gallery artists, including Susanna Bluhm, Robert C. Jones, Thuy-Van Vu and Mark Thompson, show large-scale paintings, unified by their strong sense of color but distinct in their materials, subject matter and level of abstraction. The dark horse of the show is Thompson, whose oil on canvas representations of frozen lakes and impassable winter roads transmit a palpable quiet when placed alongside the comparably neon-bright shades used by Bluhm and Jones, and the landscapes and structures depicted by Vu, highlighted by all the negative space Thompson's greyscale skies obscure. **G. GIBSON GALLERY**

**Through Feb. 28
The Figure in Process: de Kooning to Kapoor, 1955–2015**
Although this is the first and only advertised exhibition at Paul Allen's Pivot Art + Culture, which closes to the public following this show, it should be a doozy. Twenty works include those sourced from Pacific Northwest and international collectors as well as Allen's own contributions, which include Francis Bacon's "Three Studies for a Self Portrait," Lucian Freud's "Large Interior W11 (after Watteau)" and Giacometti's sculpture "Femme de Venise III." In *Art News*, curator David Anfam ties the show into appropriately Big

Ideas that "mirror the changing sense of self—from the desolation of the 1940s through postmodern deconstruction to cyberspatial recreation." **PIVOT ART + CULTURE**

BOOKS & TALKS

**Feb. 5
Hedgebrook/Cave Canem Reading**
Hedgebrook is a Seattle-based literary organization that offers writing retreats for woman on Whidbey Island; Cave Canem (pronounced *ca-vay can-em*) is a Brooklyn-based literary organization that offers writing retreats for African Americans in locations on the East Coast. These three writers are graduates of both: Anastacia Tolbert is well-known within the Seattle's writing community for her performance and activism; she's currently writer-in-residence at Hugo House. Kamilla Aisha Moon is an award-winning Brooklyn-based writer and educator whose poems have appeared in several prominent publications, including *jubilat*, *Callaloo* and *Harvard Review*. Arisa White is the author of a forthcoming full-length collection of poetry, *you're the most beautiful thing that happened* (Augury Books), and on faculty at Goddard College. **ELLIOTT BAY BOOK COMPANY**

**Feb. 12
What Goes Around Comes Around**
Hugo House's reoccurring literary series, in which two well-known out-of-town writers,

a local (or localish) emerging literary star and a musician respond to a cliché—in this case, "What Goes Around Comes Around"—continues with a bang. Poet D.A. Powell's most recent collection, *Useless Landscape, or A Guide for Boys*, won the National Book Critics Circle Award in 2012; his work, by turns formal and experimental, investigates aspects of gay American life. Acclaimed novelist Heidi Julavits is co-founder of *The Believer* magazine; her most recent work, *The Folded Clock: A diary* (2015), riffs on the personal diary form. Sierra Nelson, a local poet, is the author of poetry collection/choose-your-own adventure story, *I Take Back the Sponge Cake*, and co-founder of poetry collective Vis-à-Vis Society. Music will be courtesy "post-genre" hip-hop-inspired musician OCnotes. **HUGO HOUSE**

**Feb. 18
Alexander Chee**
Alexander Chee is such an omnipresent figure in the online literati-sphere that one forgets that he's also a novelist. A frequent tweeter, prolific essayist and ambassador for all things literature—notably, he was a contributor on the MFA side of *MFA vs. NYC* (2014), the influential anthology documenting the parallel cultures in contemporary American publishing—he's also the

author of *Edinburgh* (2001), a devastating novel about a Korean-American boy recovering from molestation in small-town Maine. His new novel, *Queen of the Night*, is a historical work set in 1880s Paris about an opera singer cast in a new production mysteriously based on her own past experiences. **HUGO HOUSE**

**Feb. 25
Joshua Roman and Tracy K. Smith**
In an inspired pairing, Seattle Arts & Lectures and Town Hall bring together Tracy K. Smith, the Brooklyn-based Pulitzer prize-winning poet known for her idiosyncratically cerebral work, and renowned cellist Joshua Roman, artistic director of Town Music at Town Hall. Roman will conduct soprano Jessica Rivera in a musical piece based on Smith's poetry and then engage Smith in conversation. Roman is known for his creativity within the classical genre and his advocacy work to make classical music more accessible. Smith, a graduate of Harvard and Columbia and professor at Princeton, explores subjects as disparate in her poetry as outer space, popular culture and the African-American experience. **TOWN HALL**

FILM

**Through Feb. 4
Hitchcock/Truffaut**
For a week in 1962, French auteur François Truffaut sat down with Alfred Hitchcock in

Hitchcock's Universal Studios offices, talking at length about film in general and Hitchcock's filmmaking in particular. The resulting 1966 book, *Hitchcock/Truffaut*, proved instrumental in the re-evaluation of Hitchcock's filmmaking canon. It also became a bible for a couple of generations of film directors. Director Kent Jones' documentary is peppered with audio excerpts of those interviews as well as plenty of insights and worship from Martin Scorsese, Wes Anderson, David Fincher and others. **GRAND ILLUSION CINEMA**

**Feb. 5–7
The Automatic Hate**
Director Justin Lerner's 2010 debut *Girlfriend* centered on a taboo romance involving a young man with Down Syndrome, but beyond the raw honesty of lead Evan Sneider, there wasn't a lot to distinguish it. Lerner's sophomore effort, a SIFF 2015 favorite, is a riveting leap forward. *The Automatic Hate* cross-pollinates another taboo romance (this one between cousins) with a gradual reveal of the history and faults of a dysfunction-scabbed family. Lerner mixes this cocktail of awkward humor and wrenching drama with assurance and a surprising amount of suspense. **NORTHWEST FILM FORUM**

**Feb. 5–8
Iraqi Odyssey**
At two-and-a-half hours, *Iraqi Odyssey* more than earns its name in the run-time department, but it's an absorbing view every second of the way. Director Samir follows his progressive Iraqi-descended family through Iraq's political underground and the sometimes-forced exodus of several members to different corners of the globe. It's a revealing look in microcosm at the concerns of many Iraqis, and the

director presents this gallery of real-life characters—including, significantly, several strong free-thinking females—with a storyteller's sense of mastery. **NORTHWEST FILM FORUM**

**Feb. 12–14
Chocolat**
Few first-time directors demonstrate the sure hand that Claire Denis exhibited for her resonant, now-classic 1988 debut. Through flashbacks, *Chocolat* (no relation to the 2000 Lasse Halström rom-com) follows the childhood of France, the daughter of a French family living in 1950s colonial Cameroon, and her family's black servant, Protée. It's alternately simpler and more complex than that blanket description, addressing racism and French colonialism with restrained honesty and finding all the complexity inherent in the unconsummated but palpable sexual tension between Protée and France's mother, Aimee. **NORTHWEST FILM FORUM**

**Feb. 13
The Best of VHSex**
For a few years now, the Grand Illusion's VHSex compilations have served as a subversive, hilarious alternative to Valentine's Day's dollars-driven litany of hearts and flowers. Past VHSex entries have served up head-scratching highlights from 1950s classroom hygiene films, nudist-camp features, disco-fied '70s raunch, aerobics videos, sex-therapy hobbit Dr. Ruth Westheimer and lots of God-knows-what. Whatever makes the final cut in this best-of, it's sure to offer a trip through the backwaters of sexual mores that's WTF-bizarre and funny as hell. **GRAND ILLUSION CINEMA**

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FEB. 20 & 21, SEATTLE CENTER EXHIBITION HALL
The eighth-annual epicurean experience connects producers to enthusiasts featuring a number of talented authors, chefs, brewers and winemakers from across the Northwest. The weekend's culinary immersion includes two events: POP! Bubbles & Seafood and the Seattle Wine and Food Experience Grand Tasting.



WHISKEY & CHOWDER FESTIVAL
FEB. 4, THE FOUNDRY SODO
A selfless celebration of shellfish, the Seattle Whiskey and Chowder

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LUSH US: GAY CITY ARTS SHOWCASE

FEB. 6, TOWN HALL SEATTLE
Gay City presents *Lush Us: Gay City Arts Showcase* featuring artists from Gay City Arts Season 3 and special guest performer Mary Lambert.



NOM NOM! DINE OUT FOR KID'S HEALTH

FEB. 25, VARIOUS RESTAURANTS
Nom Nom is a one-day dine out fundraiser benefiting four Seattle-area nonprofits empowering kids to live healthy lives: Pike Market Child Care and Preschool, Beecher's Pure Food Kids Foundation, Green Plate Special and Upower. Visit purefoodkids.org/nomnom for participating restaurants.

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Donald Trump Is My Bogeyman

BY WILLIE FITZGERALD

I RECENTLY ENTERED into an agreement with a friend of mine: Every Friday he texts me and asks whether I wrote on four out of five mornings that week. If I have, nothing happens. If I haven't, I'm honor-bound, if that's the right word, to donate \$100 to Donald Trump's presidential campaign.

The specifics of this arrangement were my friend's sadistic idea, but the motivation behind it was mine. I needed, as people say, to get my butt in the chair. I asked my friend to help me because he's always been tremendously disciplined. Discipline, he explained to me over the phone, is less a matter of mental strength and more a matter of habit. I may have been wearing a bathrobe during this conversation, pale late-afternoon light falling on my unmade bed.

Habits, especially those formed late, don't manifest out of sheer will. My friend thought I needed something so repugnant that I couldn't not fulfill the task I'd given myself. Enter the threat of supporting White America's corybantic id made flesh.

Certainly there are some artists for whom such an arrangement is unnecessary, for whom putting the butt in the chair (or in the practice space or the studio) is a given. Some of them may have *fun* working on their art, and may even look forward to it.

I envy them. I belong to the group of people for whom it is always better to *have worked* than to *be working*. My writing life, in many ways, has been spent in pursuit of that past tense. I've tried many different avenues: I've written with friends, written alone, written on drugs, written drunk and edited sober (and vice versa). For a brief spell I believed writing with a hangover was best because, in my dehydrated and vaguely nauseous state, everything seemed unbearable and therefore important. Really I just needed to eat some toast and lie down.

My expertise with regard to artistic practice, in case you can't already tell, pertains mostly to writers, a group of people who seem to spend far more time complaining about their inability to write than actually writing, a tradition to which I suppose this essay belongs. But I suspect most artists loathe some part—or maybe even all—of their artistic practice.

All artists wish making work was easier, that the work was better, that their mistakes might, just

for once, be the last thing they notice instead of the first. Like gamblers, they want to recreate exactly the circumstances that surrounded their last victory and then fall into a miasmatic depression when they cannot. They leave things unfinished because something unfinished can never truly be considered a failure, and failure is terrifying.

I am terrified of failing partly because every failure seems to contain all my preceding failures. Failure has a linear narrative that suggests its perpetual propagation. Success, on the other hand, often feels like an aberration, a statistical outlier. Put in basketball terms, failure seems like it stretches over whole quarters, success over a single fast break. It's tempting to sit out and wave your towel at other people's highlights.

And I did, for a long time, sit out. My fear of failure assumed—and still assumes!—the kindly guise of procrastination. It's so much easier to fold laundry, or wash dishes, or watch people play Super Mario World on Twitch (don't ask), or look up what *autochthonous* means or what Mark Hollis is up to these days than it is to work. Procrastination, then, is mental diffraction in the service of fear.

The ridiculous arrangement I've made with my friend has helped rein in this fruitless multitasking by putting pressure on the moral center of my brain. Instead of taking the long view on failure, I'm forced to take it one week at a time. It's working, too—I've yet to donate a dime to the Trump's ongoing George Wallace karaoke set, and on the days when I don't write in the morning (let's say I sleep in, or have an early meeting) I feel fidgety and coiled up, like a swimmer missing the pool.

It'd be romantic to say that barreling past my fear of failure and sitting down to work produces a vertiginous energy, something freeing and exhilarating. More often than not, though, working is dull. Small discoveries bring with them minor setbacks. A word I'd fallen in love with—like “corybantic,” let's say—suddenly feels out of place. I rework, rearrange and generally putter around. But at least now I putter every morning, with my two pieces of toast, my two cups of coffee and the growing sense that fearing failure is just as bad as failing, and so I might as well get comfortable and get to work. ■

My friend thought I needed something so repugnant that I couldn't not fulfill the task I'd given myself.

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