still in two minds about it all
but sure about studio membership
This year’s Beaux Arts Ball certainly lived up to its theme. Imaginations ran riot as attendees dressed up in all manner of garb, from high society to some low places — and everything in between.

A large crowd packed the American Legion Hall, Jan. 22, as The Art Studio held its annual fundraiser.

A silent auction drew many bids as an eclectic mix of art and donated objets d’art were available.

Music was provided by the Prime Time Band who supplied a mix of classic soul and dance music which really brought the funk.

Performance artists swung lighted hula hoops and flaming boleros to entertain the crowd.

The event would not have been possible without the help of a variety of donors.

At press time, totals were still being tallied and donations were still being totted up. For a complete wrap, see the March ISSUE.

And make plans to attend next year’s shindig. It’s never too late to get your costume started.

IMAGINARIUM
SMITS RAISES QUESTIONS OF RELIGION'S ROLE IN 21ST CENTURY

“To me, a piece really ‘works’ if it unlocks something the viewer knew, but only at an unconscious level. And for that, you have to reveal your vulnerabilities. Also to yourself.”

Maria Smits, interview with art critic Jean Tuitjer, 2009.

Commentary by Elena Ivanova

IN AUGUST OF 2008, I SAW the famous altarpiece by the brothers Hubert and Jan van Eyck at St. Bavon's Cathedral in Ghent. In fact, the altarpiece was the reason for my trip to Belgium. “You have to make sure you travel to Ghent for a day to visit the Belfry’s cathedral.”

My wife and I were in Hamburg for one week, prior to St. Bavon’s, but after our visit to the Belfry in Ghent, I was again contemplating the altarpiece, this time the central panel. It was Smits’s interpretation of the fifteenth-century altarpiece. Although the cathedral stays open for the evening mass, the section with van Eyck's altarpiece was the reason for my visit. I gleefully nodded my acknowledgement of the rules and set off on my journey.

Eight hours after crossing the border, I was in St.Bavon’s cathedral. I had twenty minutes to take in the altarpiece. All this journey for a single, forty-centimetre-high figure, St. John the Baptist in the upper tier of panels benevolently gazes in quiet adoration at the blood flowing from the Lamb’s neck into the chalice. The scene is surreal and dreamlike.

I was again contemplating the altarpiece, this time the central image of Smits’s altarpiece. Maria Smits was contending the same beautiful vision. “This magnificent altarpiece overwhelmed me by their [sic] clarity in meaning and form...The idea of heavenly and earthy life in this polyptych altarpiece have become the framework for my own ideas about hierarchy and religion,” wrote Smits in her artist statement for the exhibition "Adoration of the Mystic Lamb." The central image of Smits’s altarpiece is the sculpture of Christ the Lamb. The worshippers, arranged in neat groups and as immobile as the clusters of trees in the distance, gaze in quiet adoration at the blood flowing from the Lamb’s neck into the chalice. The scene is surreal and dreamlike.

I believe that a truly profound response to a work of art can be best expressed in the form of another work of art, if it is a painting, or a poem. It was translated into a poem by Maria Smits’s interpretation of the fifteenth-century art work. “Adoration of the Mystic Lamb,” completed in 1432, was inspired by the passage in the Book of Revelation in which the Lamb is a metaphor for the(John the Baptist in the upper tier of panels benevolently gazes in quiet adoration at the blood flowing from the Lamb’s neck into the chalice. The scene is surreal and dreamlike."

This solemn mood is interrupted by the startling nude images of Adam and Eve on two side panels. Painted almost life-size and with unabashed truthfulness, they look like two naked people ready to step off the panel. To increase this amazing trompe-l’oeil effect, Adam’s right foot is painted hovering over the edge of the niche. Even a modern viewer, who is no novice to Flemish who had never seen nude images before, is an altarpiece of shadows, in which the niches once shattered the idea of a harmonious hierarchy between heaven and earth. Upon earth and earth are united in a harmonious, all-seeing hierarchical universe. Each of the characters occupy a specific place. Christ, the Virgin Mary, and St. John the Baptist in the upper tier of panels benevolently gaze in quiet adoration at the blood flowing from the Lamb’s neck into the chalice. The scene is surreal and dreamlike.

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The altarpiece’s central panel almost literally follows this description. In the middle of the verdant meadow, elevated on the altar, is the serene and majestic Lamb. The worshippers, arranged in neat groups and as immobile as the clusters of trees in the distance, gaze in quiet adoration at the blood flowing from the Lamb’s neck into the chalice. The scene is surreal and dreamlike.

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Amelia Wiggins sits in the corner of her small apartment, sunlight from the window illuminating her canvas as she paints, her blonde hair pulled back with a few loose strands framing her face. The lighting and setting is reminiscent of a Vermeer painting. But a closer look reveals an anachronistic element. To Amelia’s left is a laptop computer, a high-definition video screen, and a few loose strands framing her face. The light- ing and setting is reminiscent of a Vermeer painting. But a closer look reveals an anachronistic element.

“Painting the figure...” Amelia says. “I’ve always loved figure drawing. I’ve been doing it since I was five years old. My mom was a fashion designer for New York and I think that love is the one that has come to me.”

“I paint a few landscapes, but it’s really about the figure, for sure.” The last four years, she has been exploring issues of women, and issues of femininity and the male gaze.

“A lot of that comes out of my art history studies,” she says. A native of Cape Elizabeth, Maine, she spent a year in France studying and exploring before graduating from the Maryland Institute College of Art in 2006. “The trip is probably where the roots of this started,” she says. Her parents are both artists. Her father is an illustrator and creative designer, her mother is a painter and fashion designer. “They tried their hardest to convince me to go on another path but I was stubborn,” Amelia says, laughing. “But my parents are very happy for me now that I actually have a job out of art school.”

She is currently Educator for Public Programs at the Stark Museum of Art in Orange. In the fall, Amelia will attend grad school at the Bank Street College of Art in New York while continuing to work at the museum. In an age where abstraction seemingly rules in tandem with multi- media conceptual art, Amelia seems almost from another age. Her careful- ly rendered figures reflect her studies in art history. It is a contradiction of which she is fully aware.

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In her most recent paintings, her tondos, she is moving away from the women as sex object or object of the male gaze — she sees them as allegory, as angel, as muse.

“Still sentimental images,” she says, “yet sweeten. I’m not quite as critical of them. I’m not thinking of ‘Victoria’s Secret.’”

The round tondos feature women who are on the floor, staring directly out at the viewer. “I want the viewer to be unsure if they are dreaming or gazing or taking a nap — that line between beauty and, Oh, she’s dead” she says. “They are not dead, but the angel has to with death — it has another side.”

Amelia said she doesn’t see the paintings as spiritual.

“I am interested in a woman who is awake and looking at you versus one who is looking away from the viewer and we can just stare at her versus a woman who is non-existent and not living,” she says. “I’m interested in how changes how she becomes more or less objectified based on that.”

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“She sees her art as a reworking of the classical, male representations of the female, such as Michelangelo’s ‘Maddonna’ — a round painting.”

“I saw it in Florence and it happened to be in that circular format and for three years it’s been stuck in my head,” she says. “So even simple things like that, I have to have a way to process my own aesthetic taste — whatever grabs me — and to reinterpret that.”

“Writing a paper on feminism is something else: I am not always being the perfect critic — I don’t always have rational thoughts that add up to something.”

Amelia is also a throwback in her love of oil. In those days of acrylic andfast media, oil painters are almost old fashioned.

Looking at Amelia’s work, one is confronted with the question of beauty. If one celebrates beauty, must it necessarily be accompanied by objectification?

“I am making these paintings for me,” she says. “I am making these paintings for me.”

See WIGGINS on page 11!
"How in a world gilt with love
May I thank you above this human cadence"

**Studio to host open show inspired by poem**

The Art Studio, Inc. is offering artists an opportunity to participate in the art world. Artists are invited to produce a piece inspired by the lines:

> How in a world gilt with love
> May I thank you above this human cadence

This will also be the title of the show. For several years we have played with the idea of a group show where all the work is inspired by a common theme or idea. Emily Coulson said, “The schoolwork sought such that we could finally do it, with enough lead time for people to produce the work.”

Elizabeth French, TAS assistant director, said the lines are by long-time Studio member George Wenz, a welder/artist and poet, who died last year. George submitted a poem to the 2012 succes- sionally since it was first published,” French said. “It seemed appropriate to use something he wrote.”

Artists are asked to commit by entry June 1, with the work to be delivered to The Art Studio by Sept. 1. There is no cost to enter the show, but entrants are expected to be members of The Art Studio. Memberships begin at $35 per year. Memberships should be purchased by June.

“We want the contributors to have plenty of time to really think about what they want to do, how the words resonate with them,” French said. “But we also need to plan ahead so we can work out the space. That’s why we are asking for artists to commit by entry June.”

In order to have a consistent theme, dimension- al work should not exceed 24x30 inches. Sculptures should not exceed 30 inches in any dimension. Limit one piece per person.

“This is really an exciting project,” Coulson said. “It is such a substantive thing and I expect a really diverse body of work, one that will illustrate the wide variety of styles and interpretations that are possible.”

The lines were selected to afford the widest pos- sible interpretations. For more information, call 409-838-5293.

**Film, music fest set for Feb. 25-26**

The date of the annual Boomtown Film and Music Festival has been moved to Feb. 25-26 from late Spring. Festival organizers hope that scheduling the event within the school semester will encourage greater student involvement. 2012 will mark the volunteer run festival’s fourth year in Southeast Texas.

Each year “BoomFest” showcases dramas of musical acts in downtown Beaumont and screened sources of independent films. According to Christopher Donohue, the festival’s film programmer, they’ve received entries from all over the world for this year’s event, including countries such as Great Britain, Germany, Sweden, India, Israel, and many more.

A pledge drive is currently underway to raise funds for the nonprofit festival at Kickstarter.com, an online site devoted to supporting community arts projects. In addition, a festival pre- view night is planned for early February that will also serve as a benefit to raise funds. The festival preview will be open to the public and free to attend. It will coincide with the kickoff of a 48 Hour Video Race that Lamar University’s Communications Department is hosting as part of BoomFest 2011.

A lineup for the 2011 Boomtown Film and Music Festival has yet to be announced, but information on bands that will perform, that will be screened and special guest speakers will be posted in the coming weeks on www.boomtownfestival.com.
**The MERCHANT OF VENICE** is a monthly travel- ing production that circles various locations throughout Southeast Texas.

Each merchant sells handmade, rehabili- tated, or rescued Reps. The next event is scheduled for Feb. 10 from 5 p.m. - 9 p.m., at The Art Studio. The venue will feature musical guests We Were AdULATION. Admission is free.

For more information, contact Larena Head at 409-501-0951.

**LAMAR UNIVERSITY UNIVERSITY THEATRE** will inaugu- rate the HARBOR SERIES Feb. 17-20, with William Shakespeare’s ‘THE TEMPEST.’ Billed as “Short Shakespeare,” this fantastical adaptation by Don Fleming is designed for young audiences and adults (middle school age and older) and will run about an hour.

Widely recognized as Shakespeare’s farewell to the stage, “The Tempest” depicts the adventures of Italian royalty, including his brothers, crashes on the island.

Guest artist Nathanael Johnson, a Yale graduate and professional Los Angeles-based actor, will direct the Lamar campus in Beaumont.

**STARK MUSEUM OF ART** will host the LANDS FIT FOR THE CAMEL: IMAGES FROM THE MEXICAN BOUNDARY SURVEYS. This exhibit explores landscape imagery resulting from the United States-Mexico border surveys of 1850, '51, '52, and '53. William H. Emory served as an artist and surveyor for the Mexican Boundary Commission, During the Years 1850, '51, '52, and '53. William H. Emory served as an artist and surveyor for the Mexican Boundary Commission, During the Years 1850, '51, '52, and '53. William H. Emory served as an artist and surveyor for the Mexican Boundary Commission, During the Years 1850, '51, '52, and '53.

**VALERIE FISHER** will perform a solo show of her work titled “In the Studio.” The opening reception will be held on February 11 from 6:00-8:00 PM at **Images From The Stark Museum of Art**. This exhibition features the collected body of work by Valerie Fisher, a professor of photography at Lamar University. The show will be on display from February 11 through March 25.

**FOR KITTY, THE KARAOKE QUEEN**

The G above the wordle C never
was a wedding dress
It isn’t for my high notes.

By Kitty, the Karaoke Queen

**Untitled**

Little steam flows for Slow fire-cook long
Levelling in its oldest form
like the fine snow, line after line

**Une Lutte Dans Le Jardin**

This one is true.

Or to pervert Marianne Moore’s distant a real dream with an imaginary rodent in it.

I use the little niece at the boundary of the vegetable garden, near a worn-out tomato.

To want to reveal his bravery but a length of step cord was wrapped around his neck. Could I free him or should I kill him? Then I saw another mother cat and her little lynx. The lynx pounced on the rodent’s neck with a loud roar. Somehow, during the thrashing, the rodent extricated himself from cat and rod and slid the harrow.

The vulnerability of the rodent was no sign of inherent weakness. Perhaps my careness— or that of another human on the place was true. I was relieved to witness the rodent’s escape.

**Bowing on a dandelion he makes a wish He knows he will never come true.**

Not dead, but sleeping.

Fighting for the broken pencil
Which renders perfection in absence
Of colors drawn in white.

**Audubon on the Purple Grackle**

The corn rows are ripe with once and desperate flirtation
Countless crows shake the field
With their calls while laying waste
to the crop in a sharpshelled early harvest.

Months before they saved farmers the labor of picking gobs from the new growth, but cemetary men are quick to forget fathers, so... Eliji, the planter’s youngest son, stands beside me, the bosh of us armed
For our own harvest.

We have different roots. Eliji wants to plump pots with grie, and I wish to pin wings forever on the page.

I know the art isn’t animal, and their shapes will come out crooked and malformed, their feathers robed of the coppery hue of sunshine, but we are all greenbeasts, this boy, these birds, and mine.

Killing them isn’t much of a sport. I once saw a cockeyed ploughman split six in a shot.

They are black air when gathered like this. It seems a crime to clear them.

I always change when the first one falls, but Eliji is ecstatic.

His laughter sounds like their language, wild and questioning.

My rifle’s report bursts the flock

**An Agnostic Acrostic to a Former Eleanor Poetry Award Winner**

Did she change the bread and wine? Each, reverently, save me, Belowed, and took it in my hand. Blood and body, all agree, Inside her loaves of love.

Eucharistic poetry?

Inside her loaves of line.

Blood and body, all agree.

**Fragments From An Abandoned Poem**

One by one they disappeared. They who would be obstacles to dreams. The man in the piece and the lightning cat Smooth the path for fantasies kindled. But the maid is the key.

Looking down he dreams in pools of green.

**Spelling B**

This one is true.

Or to pervert Marianne Moore’s distant a real dream with an imaginary rodent in it.

I use the little niece at the boundary of the vegetable garden, near a worn-out tomato.

To want to reveal his bravery but a length of step cord was wrapped around his neck. Could I free him or should I kill him? Then I saw another mother cat and her little lynx. The lynx pounced on the rodent’s neck with a loud roar. Somehow, during the thrashing, the rodent extricated himself from cat and rod and slid the harrow.

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I always change when the first one falls, but Eliji is ecstatic.

His laughter sounds like their language, wild and questioning.

My rifle’s report bursts the flock into the shadow of itself.

The mates answer in a tongue of jagged stones.
Dishman reveals collaborative friendship

Review by Andy Coughan

When Justin Varner and Jakob Christmas were students at Lamar’s Art Department, their teacher was Steve Hodges. As the pair’s career progressed, that relationship turned into a friendship, one that allowed the three of them to exchange ideas and philosophies. The relationship, Varner said, changed from master to student, to one of friends and equals. It was a relationship that each valued and used to explore ideas that progressed their respective works. Hodges died in 2008, but Varner and Christmas continue to work, and in doing so, Hodges’ legacy lives in the three-man show “The Specious Instant,” on display at the Dishman Art Museum through Feb. 18.

Hodges casts a long shadow over the show, not just in his legacy but in the work of his students. His death meant a faster-than-expected retirement for the three artists who had often worked together. The shows they exhibited in 2008 were completed in the past three years — knew the debt to Hodges.

When he moved back to Southeast Texas after graduate school in Iowa, he found himself floundering and examining the archetypes of Greek or Egyptian art. “I was inspired by the urban grittiness of the graffiti he encountered around Hodges’ home, and sought to find a way to connect with the area and the people there,” Hodges said. His new work features a series of charcoal drawings that seem to base urban sensibilities with echoes of German expressionism. The twisted figures have a contemporary immediacy that fascinates. “Birth of Appossum Cynthia” features a woman who is at once beautiful and ugly — in the way that black and white photos of urban decay and seamy beauty.

Boston-based Christmas, on the other hand, shifted from photo-based naturalism to a hybrid of pop art and abstract expressionism. Christmas said that while in grad school in Iowa, he found himself pondering and sought a process that was fast, simple and direct. He said that all of his pieces were completed in two to four hours. Maybe because of the process, the collection is slightly uneven, but each piece has its own appeal. Some incorporate barbed-wire elements (crude), it should be stressed, that is deliberate and is backed with the skill of an accomplished technician. Others are simply abstract. The two-panel “Narcissus” and the three-panel “Black Comedy” evoke the spirit of the American Civil War.

Varner, Christmas and Hodges would send each other ideas and messages through this process, they pushed each other in new directions. All three artists share a common work ethic and love the idea that anything is possible. Together, they said, they were able to bring a lot of energy to their work. Varner and Christmas said they believe the show represents some of the best work of the artists they’ve worked with. Today, even toward the end of his life — all of the work in the show was completed in the past three years — knew the debt to Hodges.

“Street was abandoned and the girls scattered,” Hodges said. “It was more than money. It was as if the decorative features on the outside wall — a shield with a winged tire on it. Not a modern tire, but a narrow, spoked tire of the 1920s and 20s from the B.F. Goodrich tire company. This was an early tire center, in the heart of building downtown just over from the trolley car on Royal Street.”

From B.F. Goodrich to soothing substation to Jackson Pollock abstract painter. When he moved back to Southeast Texas after graduate school, he visited Hodges’ home in Port Lavaca and MLK Pkwy., on the Lamar University campus.

The reference librarian and Lamar associate professor, who has a bachelor’s in directing and a master’s in theater, has honed his acting skills since high school. With the directing skills he has in his left hand, Saur said he can truly appreciate the precision of working with expert sound and crew. Hodges, who starred in “Black Comedy” evokes the spirit of the American Civil War.

When Hodges visited the Portland, Oregon, artist’s home, he was struck by the beauty of the landscape. “I was inspired by the urban grittiness of the graffiti he encountered around Hodges’ home, and sought to find a way to connect with the area and the people there.”

He said that when Hodges had a problem he needed to solve, he would copy something. Hodges would work his problem out through examining the content of his art. “The Specious Instant” is a fine tribute to Hodges as an artist, as a teacher, and as a friend: His legacy continues in Varner and Christmas is fitting. Even without the structure of an art program, one that they all still call home, they are pushing the boundaries of their art. The three-man show “The Specious Instant” is on display through Feb. 18. The Dishman Art Museum is located on the corner of E. Lavaca and MLK Pkwy., on the Lamar University campus.
When you support The Art Studio with your membership, you receive ISSUE, Southeast Texas’ and Southwest Louisiana’s alternative press as well as class schedules, invitations to opening receptions and various Studio functions.

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These people are the life blood of our organization. WE COULDN’T DO IT WITHOUT YOU!

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- **CENTRAL/WEST END**
  - BASIC FOODS 229 DOWLEN
  - BEAUMONT VISITORS BUREAU IH-10
  - CHRISTIAN MYERS-RMT 6755 PHELAN BLVD 24 E
  - COLORADO CANYON 6119 FOLSOM
  - FOREVER YOURS FLORIST HWY 105
  - GUITAR & BANJO STUDIO 4381 CALDER
  - LOGON CAFE 3805 CALDER
  - THE MASSAGE INSTITUTE 2855 EASTEX FRWY, SUITE 1
  - @ DELAWARE
  - NORTH END CYCLE HWY 105
  - PACESETTER COLONNADE CENTER
  - QUIZNOS 3939 SUITE 9 DOWLEN
  - RED B4 BOOKS 4495 CALDER
  - REED’S LAUNDRY 6025A PHELAN @ PEYTON
  - STUDIO 77 6372 COLONNADE CENTER
  - TIP-TOP 7271 EASTEX FRWY
  - TRENDY’S 5905 PHELAN, STE. E
  - WEST END MEDICAL PLAZA 2010 DOWLEN
  - WILSON CHIROPRACTIC 7060 PHELAN BLVD.

**ISSUE**

**JOIN US**

FOR ART OPENINGS ON THE FIRST SATURDAY OF THE MONTH

**THIS MONTH:**

**FIGURING THE FEMININE**

PAINTINGS BY AMELIA WIGGINS

**FEBRUARY 5**

GALLERY RECEPTION IS 7-10 P.M.

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