

ISSUE

THE ARTS MAGAZINE OF THE ART STUDIO, INC.

APRIL 2010

BEAUX ARTS BALL COMING APRIL 10

A TECHNICOLOR MASQUERADE

Page 8

INSIDE:
8X10 FESTIVAL,
CONVERSING
WITH GEORGE,
A POET'S VIEW,
AND MORE





From: g_wentz

chatting with henri. nice fella.
told him about art studio.
says he would've been a member.



SEE MEMBERSHIP FORM ON PAGE 3.



ISSUE Vol. 16, No. 7

Publisher The Art Studio, Inc.
Editor Andy Coughlan
Copy Editor Tracy Danna
Contributing Writers Chelsea Henderson
Elena Ivanova, Jesse Doiron, Beth Gallaspy
D. Harris Johnson
Contributing Photographer John Fulbright
Distribution Director Terri McKusker

The Art Studio, Inc. Board of Directors

President Ex-Officio Greg Busceme
Vice-President Angela Busceme
Chair Elizabeth French
Treasurer-Secretary Beth Gallaspy
Members At Large Kimberly Brown,
Sheila Molandes, Andy Ledesma,
Sebastian Ramirez, Stephan Malick,
Heather Eager

The Art Studio, Inc.
720 Franklin
Beaumont, TX 77701
409-838-5393
www.artstudio.org
artstudio@artstudio.org

The ISSUE is a monthly publication of The Art Studio, Inc. Its mission is to publicize The Art Studio and its tenants, and to promote the growth of the arts in Southeast Texas. ISSUE is also charged with informing TASI members of projects, progress, achievements and setbacks in TASI's well-being. Further, ISSUE strives to promote and distribute the writings of local authors in its "Thoughtcrime" feature.

ISSUE is provided free of charge to members of TASI and is also available, free of charge, at more than 30 locations in Southeast Texas.

Regular features include local artists of note and reputation who are not currently exhibiting at TASI; artists currently or soon to be exhibiting at TASI; instructional articles for artists; news stories regarding the state of TASI's organization; and arts news features dealing with general philosophical issues of interest to artists.

Contents

George Wentz Remembered Page 4
8x10 Playwriting Contest Page 5
Jerry Bradley on Poetry Page 6
TASIMJAE Page 7
Beaux Arts Ball Page 8
'Shanama' Page 10
A Tale of Two Mid-Centuries Page 11
Around & About Page 12
Thoughtcrime Page 13

Cover: Torchy and Greg Busceme
at the previous Beaux Arts Ball
Photo by John Fulbright

A View From The Top

Greg Busceme, TASI Director



GEORGE WENTZ, OUR DEAR friend and fellow artist now communes with the great and small artists of the ages.

He is now one of them.

His art retrospective will be presented in July at the Art Museum of Southeast Texas. I am very grateful that our community has a museum that has the facility to preserve and catalog George's work.

He left a considerable volume of

poetry, poetry that will continue be published each month in ISSUE.

According to the editor, we have enough unpublished George Wentz poems for the next decade or so. It comforts me to know that.

George has left an eternal and indelible paint stroke on the hearts and minds of a generation of artists. He was a kind and selfless man whom I was honored to know.

UPCOMING EXHIBITIONS AT THE ART STUDIO

APRIL

TASIMJAE (The Art Studio, Inc. Member Jurored Art Exhibition)
Opening April 3

MAY

Jeff Forster (2009 TASIMJAE Winner)
Opening May 1

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

The Art Studio is looking for energetic people who have a few hours a month to help us in the following areas:

**OFFICE SUPPORT • BUILDINGS & GROUNDS
SPECIAL EVENTS • MAILOUTS**

If you are interested in one or more of these opportunities or if you know of anyone who might be, give us a call at 409-838-5393

Paula "Torchy" Salter, a long-time supporter of The Art Studio and a fixture in the Southeast Texas arts community, died March 14. Torchy organized the most recent Beaux Arts Ball and is on this month's cover. This month's ISSUE is dedicated to her indomitable spirit. Torchy was a force of nature and she will be missed.

BECOME A MEMBER OF THE ART STUDIO

Membership in The Art Studio, Inc., provides invitations to all exhibitions and one year of ISSUE, the monthly arts magazine of The Art Studio. It also gives free eligibility for members to enter the annual membership art exhibition (TASIMJAE) and participate in various exhibitions throughout the year.



Name(s) _____
Address _____
City/St/Zip _____
Phone _____ e-mail _____
Credit Card Type: Visa MC Amex Disc
Number _____
Exp Date _____
Day Phone _____ e-mail _____

SUGGESTED MEMBERSHIP AMOUNT

Individual:	\$35	Patron:	\$500
Family/Group:	\$50	Angel:	\$1,000
Friend/Business:	\$100	Benefactor:	\$2,000
Sustaining:	\$250	Life Member:	\$10,000

for office use
pd _____ \$ _____
in comp _____
issue _____
thanks _____

New? _____ Renewal? _____ Artist? _____ If yes, list medium _____

The Art Studio, Inc. 720 Franklin, Beaumont 77701

A Last Conversation with George



George Wentz

Comment
and photo
by
Andy
Coughlan

THE LAST TIME I saw George Wentz the sun was shining. It has been a pretty crappy winter, but the rain had stopped long enough for the late afternoon sun to shine through the window of his studio space. I had called to let him know I was coming, but as I approached his door I saw that his head was down, dozing, and he was hunched over in his wheelchair.

I wondered if I should let him sleep, but I had urgent business. I needed a poem for the ISSUE. In the years I have been doing this monthly magazine, it has failed to include a poem by George only twice that I can recall, both times when I had so many poems I decided to leave his out for that month (a rare occurrence, by the way. It was always a great comfort to know that I could count on a poem from George for the Thoughtcrime page). I needed the poem and George had told me earlier in the day that he had one he was quite pleased with.

He woke up as I entered. He said that he was tired. Being in the wheelchair, the result of a nasty bout of diabetes, sometimes got him down. Not being able to get out wore on him. I told him I wouldn't keep him long. He passed me a notebook with the poem in it. I tore it out and began to read. I always had to read it aloud, mainly because George's writing was pretty hard to read. Once, I ran a poem with a wrong word that changed the meaning of a line. I wasn't about to let that happen again. So I read it aloud while George listened. He liked to hear his poems read by a different voice than his own. I wrote notes in the margin when I couldn't read a word or two.

When we were done, we chatted for a while, surrounded by the plethora of sketchpads that lined the walls. He told me about the latest pieces he had done (George was prolific, filling pads by the dozens with his playful and vivacious flowers and abstract landscapes. Lately he was working on a series of Native-American inspired ceremonial vases; "I don't know why," he said).

Our conversation rambled on, as it was always prone to do. We talked about art, mainly, and the state of the world. Sometimes we talked about poetry, sometimes we talked music (NPR was an ever-present accompaniment). Sometimes we talked about sex, or jokes, or why so-and-so was doing this-and-that. Sometimes we talked about spiritual things. He said that I understood, when he said we make art, "because that's just what we do." I always took that as a compliment.

But mainly we had fun. George had fun making art and making art was what George did. And talking about art was what George did when he wasn't making art. And talking to George about art was what I did when I wanted to kick back and have some fun.

As the conversation that Friday moved on, George became more and more animated. We were both on a roll. We talked about the "pARTY-cipation" event the previous month at The Art Studio. George wanted to know all about it. It was the kind of event that he loved — a chance for everyone to make art, to be creative and to have fun.

Sharing art was George's passion. He was always quick to praise up-and-coming artists. And it wasn't shallow platitudes. He really meant it. And he would say why he liked it. He would encourage everyone to make art. He encouraged my daughter to be a photographer. When she moved away, there was rarely a visit that didn't involve asking me how she was doing. Did I have any of her latest photos he could see? He loved to see what other people were making. I would often take my paintings to his house just to get some feedback. It was always enlightening.

When I left his house that day, he was full of pep. And so was I. Our conversations left us both invigorated. Ask the other artists who knew him and you'll get the same story.

My friend George died March 6. He was 64.

I am not a mourner. I don't plan to shed a tear for George. His passion and his art demand a note of celebration.

So, if you knew George, or even if you didn't, when you finish reading this, put the paper down and go and paint a picture. Or write a poem. Or make some music. Create something. And have fun.

George would have.

YOUR 8X10 GOES HERE PLAYWRITING FESTIVAL

10 minutes of drama

Scenes from the eight winners, below, of the 2009 Your 8x10 Goes Here Festival

Story by
Chelsea
Henderson

Photos by
Andy
Coughlan

TAKE A BOW THEATRE Company is hosting its second "Your 8 x 10 Goes Here," a 10-minute playwriting competition and festival. Both experienced playwrights and first-timers are invited to take their play ideas, type a script and submit

their entries by May 1.

Eight winners will be chosen by three judges, their plays will be handed over to a director for production, and their "babies" will be performed for two separate audiences. Last year was Take a Bow's most "ambitious effort" for a playwriting contest.

"With eight 10-minute winners, you can run the entire program twice a day," Joanna Clark, Lamar University Box Office Advisor, said. "As we look to expand the festival in years to come, we would want to bring back the favorite shows and then have the new shows. We would really like to see this become a festival that more schools and community theatres get involved in. There are a lot of people out there who want to write a play, and they have good ideas. A 10-minute play is a good way to teach yourself to write."

Clark said that unlike other playwriting competitions, "8 x 10" does not reward winners with money. Winners are rewarded with the festival — the experience of seeing their show and how their writing is perceived by others.

"One of the reasons we like to perform the plays in a minimal sense is to give these authors the opportunity to see their work on stage and understand how it is perceived," Clark said. "Always do a run through before you decide you're finished with it. Consider the audience you're writing for. If you think you're writing comedy, then think of some of the funniest people that you know who have a good sense of humor and try to write from the point of view of, 'I'm going to keep them laughing.' What makes them laugh? That will probably make everybody else laugh too."

Clark said she encourages contestants to limit their number of characters and not to do too much. She is against adding subplots, she said, because they cannot be satisfied in the allotted 10 minutes.

"We're now in our third or fourth generation of 'Sesame Street' (and) 'MTV' attention spans," she said. "'Saturday Night Live' has trained us: this is how long you sit still and watch something. With 10-minute playwriting, you've got to have your beginning, middle and end in your story, and don't take side trips."

The eight winners are chosen based on a point system. Clark said that last year the judges based their choices on categories like originality, literary value — if the play was something that could be published in an anthology one day — and other considerations.

"(Judging) is a little subjective except that I had a writer who writes completely from a literary point of view and one who writes from a creative point of view — theatrical and film is all she does," Clark said. "Her point of view is completely different from the English point of view, and the other (judge) is an actor. Each play gets looked at by all three — it wouldn't be fair otherwise."

Out of the eight plays chosen for production, judges were asked to pick their favorite play for a Critics' Choice award. Last year's competition had two critics' choice winners. The judges had a tie for "Moose. Indians." by Kyle Romero, a senior theatre major at Lamar, and "Robotica" by Christopher Dombrosky, a Lamar film-making graduate who, Clark said, is working in the industry locally.

Once the shows are performed twice, the festival ends with an Audience's Choice winner. Audience members vote on their favorite play at each viewing, and the ballots are counted while the author stands with his director and cast. Clark said that the winner last year, "A Single Drop" by Andy Coughlan, is proof for contestants that comedy doesn't always win.

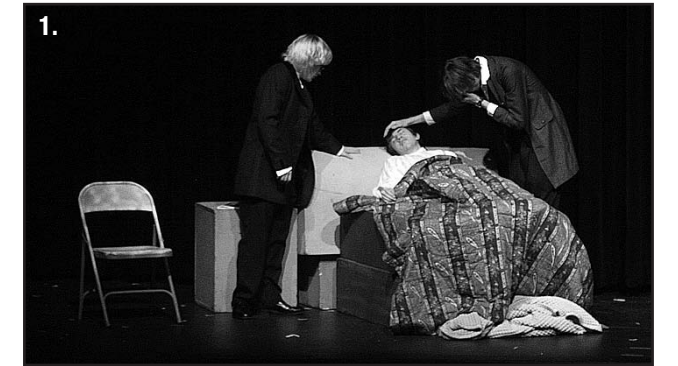
"It was just spellbinding," she said. "It was kind of romantic, and it was a very delicate, well-told story. (In the audience) I saw a lot of local theatre people and people that I usually see attending shows in this area. It was an audience who was more prepared to see fresh, new theatre."

Clark said that the festival, date undetermined, will be in the fall this year to make sure plenty of actors can audition and directors are available. Entries must be submitted by May 1 or by the late submission date of June 1. Winners will be notified by August.

"You don't have to be a theatre person to do this," Clark said. "This was proven by some of the people who won last year. We want people to go ahead and take a stab at it — just really give us a try."

Entries must be typed in a standard playwriting format, the original work of the author, and the proper length for a 10-minute play. Clark said that on stage, one page is about a minute, so entries should be around 10 pages. This is an adult competition, so musicals and children's plays are not eligible.

For more information, contact takeabow99 on MySpace or "alltheworld" on Facebook.



1. "Moose, Indians" by Kyle Romero



2. "Stand Up" by Adam E. Douglas



3. "Robotica" by Christopher Dombrosky



4. "Till All Times End" by Gil Nelson



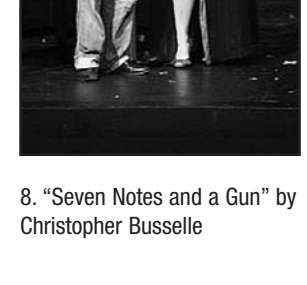
5. "A Single Drop" by Andy Coughlan



6. "The Hat Trick" by Christopher James Murray



7. "Some Assembly Required" by Beth Gallaspy



8. "Seven Notes and a Gun" by Christopher Busselle

WELL VERSED

POET, TEACHER JERRY BRADLEY TALKS POETRY

Interview by
Jesse
Doiron

Photo by
Andy
Coughlan

POETRY IS AN ART form that many people claim to admire but few ever buy. When was the last time you purchased a book of poetry? When was the last time you read one?

Nearly everyone I know has written a poem at some time in his life. So why doesn't poetry have a larger following — like golf? I mean, no one has to be terribly good with a nine iron to enjoy the greens. Even I've hit a dimpled ball before. R.S. Gwynn loves golf. And he's a famous poet.

Both of my kids have tried their hands at sonnets or something that has fourteen lines in it. You probably did too — to a girlfriend in junior high, to the assembled tassels at graduation, to the callow couple tying the knot, to the tired retiree undoing his, to the dearly departed lying in state.

What do third-grade teachers do with all that doggerel anyway?

Poetry is that most intimate and democratic form of literature. After all, how many people do you know have tried composing a novel? Any playwrights riding shotgun in your golf cart? By the way, diaries don't really count as autobiographies unless they get published in hardback, so you can forget Aunt Bonnie.

We think we know what poetry is, but we can't really explain it very well. Most of us probably wouldn't agree on a definition anyway. Robert Frost famously summed up his views on the subject with a quip, "Poetry is the stuff poets write." That just pushed the question to, "Who knows who's a poet?"

TASI Issue explores poetry in every issue we print (see ThoughtCrime on page 13). Back there, you will always find some "stuff" and a few people who call themselves poets. In this issue, we get to talk with a "professional" one, Jerry Bradley, about what it means to be him — or it.

Jesse Doiron: Congratulations on your new book of poetry, "The Importance of Elsewhere." I have heard you say about your previous volume, "Simple Versions of Disaster," that you think poetry is something we carry over from our earliest childhood memories of music and images and moms.

Jerry Bradley: I think that's true because we hear poetry as well as read it. Poetry is a musical art form as well as an image art form. Poetry is after all a kind of literature that we became familiar with early in life — nursery rhymes. Our understanding of poetic principles starts even before we can read. Poetry draws upon our own affinity for images.

JD: Is that how "little" Jerry became a poet?

JB: Looking back, I remember that my mother used to read to me, my brother and

sister from a collection called My Book House. It was a series that had lots of different levels of poetry and stories with nice pictures. One year, we lived with my grandparents, who did not even have indoor plumbing, but I recall a great stack of magazines my mother allowed me to play with. I would cut pictures out and create my own magazines out of the photos and drawings. Most of the stuff I was playing with, of course, I couldn't read because it was all beyond me, but I would write my own stories for the illustrations. I wrote whatever the photographs called to my mind, which probably had nothing to do with the magazine copy.

JD: And this "stuff" you were playing with, was it the stuff Robert Frost talks about — the stuff poets write? Or did it take more time for you to actually begin composing poetry?

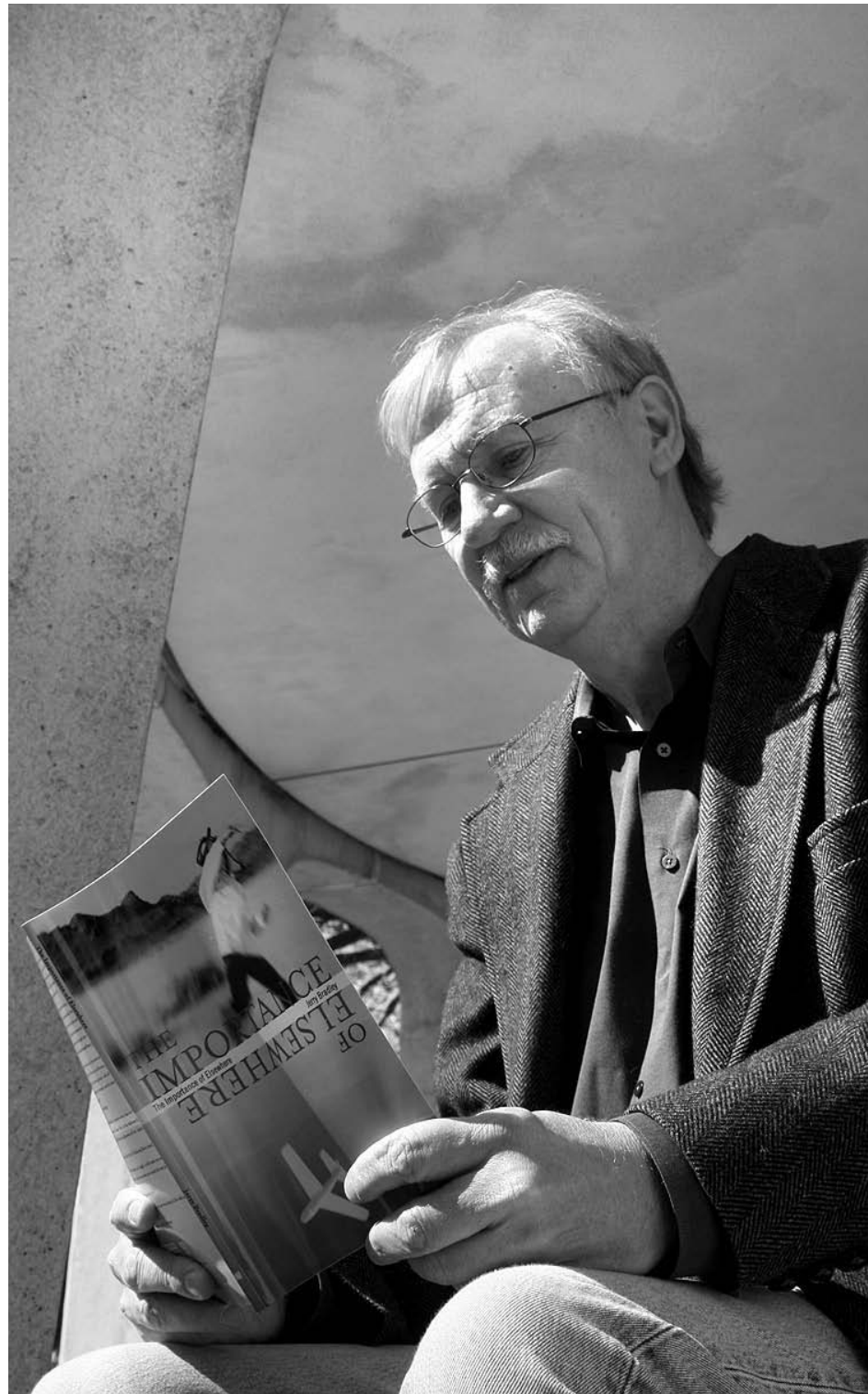
JB: Well, let's see, I remember in the eighth grade, I was turning in a science project when a classmate pointed out to me that I hadn't put mine in a folder. I didn't know I needed one. After frantically searching around, I found an old brad folder, but then the same kid told me that I was supposed to decorate the folder. That got me more panicked. It was in this mood of despair that I went off somewhere and composed a twelve-line poem about the weather — the topic of my science project.

JD: The rain in Spain.

JB: I don't think it was that memorable. It wasn't until graduate school that I wrote a real poem. I was lucky to have studied with Betsy Colquitt, who passed away a year or so ago. She was a woman you just could not say no to. She came to me one day and said, "Well, Jerry, now you write poetry don't you." I really didn't, other than a few attempts for student publication, but I answered her, "Yes, I write poetry." So she told me that she needed one of my poems by Friday to enter it into a contest, the first year of an annual contest to be sponsored by the Texas Association of Creative Writing Teachers. I went home knowing that I couldn't disappoint myself by disappointing her. I worked and worked on the poem which I consider the first real poem I ever produced — "Adultery in the Retirement Village." I had to read it in front of all these esteemed faculty members from across the state. It was then that I thought, "Wow! Maybe I can do this." I thought the poem was good enough to include in my first book. I got the idea by fretting over what to write about so much that I pulled out the Yellow Pages and told myself that whatever I opened the book to was what I would write about. I opened it to "Retirement Homes." The scenario immediately followed in my mind with a retirement home filled mostly with old women who had survived their husbands and one lucky old healthy man. I imagined what his life might be like. Unfortunately, I may find out what it really is like sooner than I might wish.

JD: You write in a number of styles and forms. R.S. Gwynn has noted that your previous book, "Simple Versions of Disaster," has "an interesting range of formal strategies, from open-form stanzas to cinquains and sonnets."

JB: I like to mix my formal approach with free verse. Some of my poetry is set up that way, and some sneaks around. I'll stick some-



Jerry Bradley reads his latest book of poetry, "The Importance of Elsewhere."

thing in, maybe a rhyming couplet to conclude. Sonnet length poems open many possibilities. I think they are the right length for me to sustain an image and convey a feeling. Beyond that length, it becomes an academic exercise for me to rhyme.

JD: Is rhymed poetry any more difficult to accomplish for you?

JB: You are putting in place rules that you agree to abide by and you cannot break them because you made them. Your language is always handcuffed by something, whether it's your inability to come up with the right word or to catch the mood of the language and make it come out the way that you want it to. There are problems, difficulties in any kind of form, even if you choose free form stanza. The way a poem looks is important to me. When I hear someone read, I want to see the poem. If it's a really good poem, I want to see how it looks. I think that some poems benefit from that visual aspect. For example, take rhyme again. The rhymes may be so subtle that you wouldn't notice them listening to the poem, but you might see them and appreciate them more by seeing them. You can't tell whether the rhymes might be internal or at

the end of a line without looking at the poem.

JD: So how many poems have your written?

JB: Maybe 300. I am not terribly prolific.

JD: That's 300 that you've finished or published. But you must have more in the nursery?

JB: I am not one of those poets who writes every day. It would be nice to do that. I tend to write late into the night, and that is not always convenient — because I still have to get up early to do the other things.

JD: How do you hold on to the poetic moment once day breaks?

JB: You may be able to get something done with your work, editing and filing, but for writing I need to get something down on paper, some portable form that I can take with me. I need some way of capturing the thought so that I can then insert or delete other thoughts. But I have to get the initial idea out of my head and onto paper.

JD: Do you work on one poem at a time?

JB: No, when I run aground on one, I'll

See BRADLEY on page 14

TASIMJAE

THE ART STUDIO, INC. MEMBERS JURORED ART EXHIBITION

SHOW PROMISES ECLECTIC MIX OF WORK

VIDOR ARTIST CHARLES STAGG has been named juror of The Art Studio, Inc. Member Jurored Art Exhibition (TASIMJAE) opening with a free reception 7-10 p.m. April 3.

Jeff Forster of Kingwood won last year's show, jurored by Xenia Fedorchenko, and will be the exhibiting artist at The Studio in May.

TASIMJAE regularly draws an eclectic group of artists working in all media.

TASI director Greg Busceme said that the exhibition is a chance to showcase the work of The Studio's membership.

"We get people to show work they haven't shown before and we are also interested in getting new memberships from the constituents out there," he said.

First prize is \$100 plus an exhibition of the artist's work in May 2011. Prizes are also awarded for second and third places.

Membership in The Art Studio begins at \$35 for adults. Student memberships begin at \$20 with valid ID.

"We really encourage folks to enter the show," Busceme said. "It's really important that artists of all kinds — be they established or up-and-coming — show their work and get feedback from the public.

"We especially encourage Lamar students to enter. Being in a show is an important part of the growth of an artist.

The opening reception will feature most of the exhibiting artists and offers visitors an opportunity to talk with them about their work — and to get involved with The Studio's community arts efforts.

For more information, call 409-838-5393.



"Device" by Jeff Forster, above, was the winning entry in TASIMJAE 2009. Artist Andy Ledesma, top, examines a piece in last year's member show.

BEAUX ARTS A TECHNICOLOR



Story by
Beth
Gallaspy

Photos by
John
Fulbright

COME BE YOUR MOST colorful self. Your most glamorous self. Your hidden untamed self. Or some other self you want to explore for one unforgettable night. Opportunity awaits you at Beaux Arts Ball: A Technicolor Masquerade.

Encouraging creative expression has always been at the core of The Art Studio, Inc.'s mission. At Beaux Arts Ball, the non-profit organization's premiere fundraiser, everyone gets a chance to put creativity and individuality on display.

"You can wear anything you want to wear. You can be anybody you want to be. You can dress up and have a good time. And it benefits a great cause - The Art Studio," said Elizabeth French, chair of The Art Studio board of directors and Beaux Arts Ball committee member. "It's always been a great party."

This year's Beaux Arts Ball will be 8 p.m. to midnight Saturday, April 10, at the American Legion Hall Post 33 in downtown Beaumont, near the port and only a few blocks from The Art Studio. Entertainment will be provided by the John Evans Band.

Evans, who lives in Austin but has a devoted Beaumont fan base, is a perfect fit for the ball, committee member Kimberly Brown said. "He's a blast. He's loud and fast and fun," she said. "Even if you don't dance, it's going to make you want to dance. You can't not dance to John Evans."

With strong ties to Beaumont and to arts organizations, Evans said he is looking forward to playing at the ball. He attended Lamar University in the late 1980s and was quarterback on the last Lamar football team in 1989. He first started toying with writing songs in college. In Houston, where he lived for many years after college, he frequently played events for arts organizations, including the Art Car Parade.

"Most of the music that I play has always been original music. I've always taken an artist's stand on it. I've been more about being an artist than I have been necessarily a commercial success," Evans said. "Meeting other artists that are kind of in the same mind frame has always interested me, and I think

WHAT:
WHEN:
TIME:
WHERE:

Beaux Arts Ball
Saturday, April 10
8 p.m. to midnight
American Legion Hall
Post 33
1320 Pennsylvania St.
Beaumont
\$50 each

TICKETS:

Available at The Art Studio and at the door

HOW TO HELP:

Silent auction items are still being accepted. If you would like to donate artwork or other items, please call or come by The Art Studio 409-838-5393, 720 Franklin St. in downtown Beaumont.



Scenes from the last Beaux Arts Ball



BALL MASQUERADE

artists are more interesting anyway."

Although commercial acclaim has not been his primary goal, Evans has found success. His album "Lollygagging" has maintained a strong position on the Americana music charts this year. He describes his music as "a high-energy, roots, honky-tonk, rockabilly band. It's a lot of fun. It's upbeat. It's good music to dance to. And there's a lot of humor in the songs."

Along with a rocking good time, Beaux Arts Ball attendees will be able to enjoy delicious hors d'oeuvres and a cash bar with beer, wine and setups available. Everyone should plan to come early to take advantage of the silent auction, which will remain open from 8 to 9:30 p.m. The auction will offer an array of art and other unique items.

The theme of this year's ball, "A Technicolor Masquerade," was chosen as a contrast to the theme of the most recent ball. When The Art Studio revived the Beaux Arts Ball tradition in 2008, the theme was "Back in Black" to recognize its return after an absence of several years. This time, the committee wanted no-holds-barred color.

Committee member Sheila Molandes has big plans to drench the hall in color and also created colorful artwork for event publicity, based on a black-and-white drawing by Victorian illustrator Aubrey Beardsley. Using a Beardsley drawing for Beaux Arts Ball has become an Art Studio tradition. In a broader sense, of course, the tradition of the Beaux Arts Ball goes back much further, to the elaborate, end-of-term costume balls thrown by art students at Ecole des Beaux Arts in Paris centuries ago.

Those attending The Art Studio's Beaux Arts Ball are encouraged to be as elaborate and creative in their attire as they would like. Costume, cocktail and vintage all are welcome. As the invitation says, attire is evening wear and limited only by the color of your imagination! To commemorate the night, ball-goers will be able to have professional photos taken.

"It's a chance to see good friends, have a good time and raise money for The Art Studio," said Stephan Malick, a committee member. "The Art Studio is a very important part of our community, and it needs the community's help."



'SHAHNAMA' LITERARY PERSIAN TREASURE

Story by
Elena
Ivanova

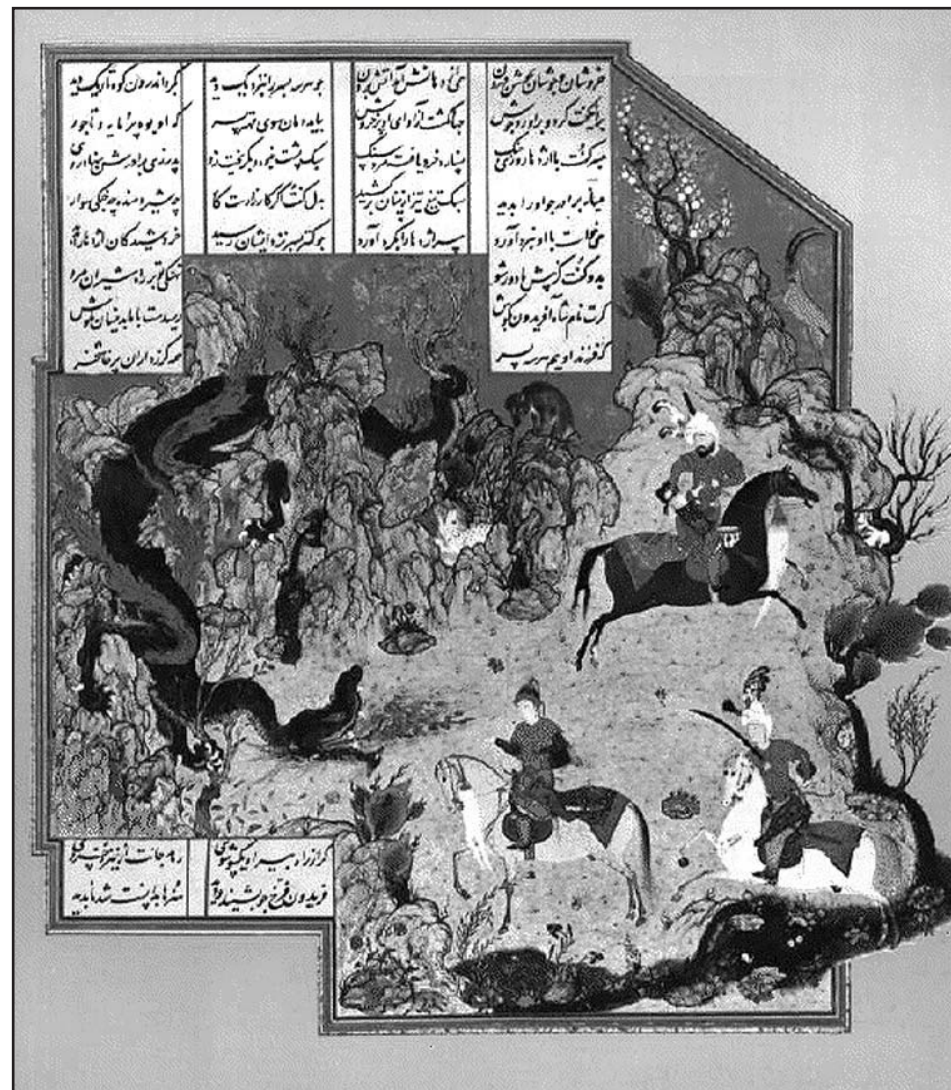
AUDIENCES IN EUROPE AND America are undoubtedly more familiar with such names as Aladdin and Ali Baba than Rostam and

Sohrab. For centuries, westerners shaped their romanticized vision of the distant land called Persia by reading "The Arabian Nights." This collection of fairy tales, loosely bound together by the narrative of a resourceful young bride whose storytelling talent keeps her alive for one thousand and one nights (and we are still wondering what happens on the one thousand and second night), continues to titillate imagination and reinforce outlandish stereotypes of the inhabitants of Central Asia today, mostly through the magic of cinematography.

Regardless of the dubious authenticity of some of its best known stories (most likely, written by Frenchman Antoine Galland who was the first European translator of the text), "The Arabian Nights" overshadowed in western minds the real treasure of Persian culture — "Shahnama," or "The Book of Kings." The year 2010 marks the thousandth anniversary of the Persian epic: it was precisely on March 8, 1010, that the poem was presented to Sultan Mahmud, to whom poet Firdawsi dedicated his work of 35 years.

On Feb. 21, Museum of Fine Arts, Houston celebrated this remarkable landmark with the lecture, "A Thousand Years of 'Feast and Lore': The Shahnama of Firdawsi," presented by Francesca Leoni, assistant curator of the Arts of the Islamic World and one of the leading scholars on the subject. In her brilliant presentation, Leoni discussed the literary and artistic afterlife of Shahnama and the reasons why it remained so revered over the thousand years.

It is ironic that Shahnama became inextricably linked with Islamic culture, and even more ironic that Firdawsi sought patronage of an Islamic ruler for the poem which was intended to celebrate Persian national pride and cultural independence against the increasing Islamization of the region. Shahnama is a history of the Sassanian dynasty of Greater Iran during the centuries that preceded the Islamist conquest of Persia in the 7th century. However, for centuries after Firdawsi's death, Shahnama's stories provided an inexhaustible source of inspiration for the Islamic world;



Courtesy photo

Faridun tests his sons, attributed to Aqa Mirak, from "Shahnama" or "The Book of Kings."

artists created sumptuous illuminations to accompany the verses, ceramists incorporated the Farsi calligraphy in tiles and vessels, and architects decorated buildings with the scenes from the famous epic.

Consisting of about 60,000 lines, Shahnama is one of the longest epics in world literature. It is seven times longer than Homer's "Iliad" and eleven times longer than "The Song of the Nibelungs." As with all ancient epics, historical fact, myth and lore are intertwined in a poetic narrative, where people fight demons and commit acts of unbelievable heroism, treachery, passion, kindness and cruelty. It is a tale of eternal struggle between good and evil, both in the outside world and in the hearts of men.

One of the famous Shahnama stories involves one of its principal characters, warrior Rostam. Impressed by his bravery, the king's daughter desires his love. A night of passion follows, and before they part, Rostam gives her an onyx, which the child of their union should always wear as a mark of his or her identity. Sohrab is this child; he grows up to become a

respected warrior himself. However, as fate would have it, Rostam and Sohrab meet in battle without knowing that they are father and son, and Sohrab is mortally wounded. Before dying, he warns his vanquisher that he is the son of Rostam and that his father will avenge his death. As a proof, Sohrab shows the onyx which he is wearing on his arm. This tragic moment was a popular subject in paintings, which typically show the dying Sohrab exposing his arm with the onyx bracelet and Rostam tearing his robes apart in an uncontrollable rage and despair.

Shahnama's stories are also didactic, although sometimes the moral lesson may be obscure. Take, for example, the story of king Bahram Gur and his favorite slave girl Azada, also a very popular subject in painting and decorative arts. Bahram Gur and Azada are hunting, and the girl challenges Bahram Gur to show his prowess by transforming a female gazelle into the male and vice versa, which he does by shooting the horns off the buck and placing them on the head of the doe. The next challenge is to shoot a gazelle

through the ear and the hoof with one arrow, which the king successfully accomplishes. But the capricious girl is upset and accuses Bahram Gur of cruelty, so the angry king tramples Azada with his horse.

In miniatures, ceramics and other decorative arts, the scene typically portrays all these events as if they were happening simultaneously. Bahram Gur and Azada on horseback, with the slave girl sitting behind the king, are in the center of the composition, surrounded by the three afflicted gazelles and the body of hapless Azada under the horse's hooves. Sometimes, the representation becomes almost abstract, with highly ornamented figures incorporated into a curved profile of a vase or a flat surface of a textile.

Despite its entertaining contents, Shahnama had a serious purpose: to teach princes the wise principles of governance and traditional ethical standards. It was a "mirror for princes," to be contemplated from the standpoint of the moral lessons conveyed in its stories. No less important in the education of a future ruler was practicing meditation on the subtleties of the book as a work of art.

Wars and conquests shaped and re-shaped political, economic, religious and cultural life of the region once known as the Greater Iran. However, Firdawsi's archetype continued to be used to celebrate kings whatever their religion and culture. New rulers succumbed to the power of the Book of Kings and adopted its legacy as if ancient kings of Persia were their own ancestors. In 1330, one of the oldest still surviving copies of book, the Great Mongol Shahnama, decorated with 200 lavish miniatures, was produced. 50 illustrations, dispersed through various collections around the world, still survive today. About two hundred years later, another magnificent copy, the Shahnama of Shah Tahmasp, decorated with about 258 miniatures (today also dispersed) was brought as a gift to the Ottoman ruler Sultan Selim the Second. It was about that time that Shahnama started to be infused with the Islamic ethos.

Firdawsi did not live to enjoy to benefits of the royal patronage. According to the story, as the sultan's messengers were entering the city to deliver the long-awaited reward to the poet, his coffin was being carried away to the cemetery. Isn't this yet another moral lesson from the Book of Kings, about the gratitude of rulers?

Elena Ivanova is chief educator at the Stark Museum of Art in Orange.

A TALE OF TWO MID-CENTURIES

BEAUMONT HERITAGE SOCIETY MERGES OLD, NEW AT CHAMBERS, FRENCH MUSEUMS

Story by
D. Harris
Johnson

Mid-Century Modern is the new rave. Pick up any magazine and trends in architecture, textiles, jewelry, art, and furniture are referenced as "Mid-Century Modern." This style is made more popular by the hit television series "Mad Men."

If the adage "Everything old is new again," is true, then the Beaumont Heritage Society is taking it to a new level. "Mid-Century Modern; Frontiers and Fifties" presented by the Heritage Society will celebrate the periods from the 1850s and just prior to the 1950s with a glimpse into the early '60s.

The John Jay French Museum and the Chambers House Museum represent the different periods. Free tours of the Chambers House and the French Museum will be available April 16 and 17, from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.

"It's quite an honor to be able to present two different historical museums that represent two distinct eras to the public," said Darlene Chodzinski, Beaumont Heritage Society executive director.

Both periods rank high as turning points in the world at large in reference to advancements and changes in society and industries.

The community-minded event will begin at the Chambers House Museum, 2240 Calder Ave., on April 15 with a pre-show and sale of 1950s and early '60s antiques from local dealers. Antiquing around the well-manicured museum grounds and listening to records played from a vintage jukebox will certainly bring back memories of times past. Special exhibits showing period furnishings and accessories, along with vintage cars, will serve as a backdrop. Beer, wine and Coca-Cola, along with Drive-In diner food will be available. Poodle skirts and blue jeans are welcome.

Over the last several years, BHS and the overseers of the C. Homer and Edith Fuller Chambers Charitable Foundation have worked to restore the home and its contents to reflect the period from 1920-1945.

The French Museum, located on French Road in Beaumont, represents the colonial period.

"When Texas was admitted into the United States Union in 1846, Beaumont was a small developing community and the county seat of the newly formed Jefferson County," Melissa Edwards, BHS president, said. "Some of its earliest residents were the Travis and French families who settled this area as a frontier."

Built in 1845, the John Jay French Museum is the oldest extant home in Beaumont. The home was built by French in the simple Greek revival style. It was one of the premiere two storey painted homes, and the first built from milled lumber as opposed to logs which was common in Beaumont at the time. According to museum literature, "The home demonstrates the daily life of a prosperous frontiersman and his family. The time period we represent is from 1845 to 1865. Most visitors are amazed at the simplicity of creature comforts, as well as the amount of work needed to live on the frontier."

The Bevil Rangers, a living history reenactment

group, will dress in early-century garments, sport flintlock rifles and cook in iron pots over fires started with flint rock and steel strikers during the April 17 event. The group will also demonstrate blacksmithing, gun building, tommyhawk throwing and leather working in a tented village on the museum's grounds. Present-day frontiersmen will not go hungry as there will be plenty of food items and soft drinks for sale.

Reflecting on the two mid-centuries and the French and Chambers House museums, Edwards said, "From Beaumont's infancy, through the mid 19th and 20th centuries, we grew into a fully developed town with important lumber and rice mill industries. Also, the discovery of oil brought important growth and wealth during the first fifty years from the 1900s to the 1950s. Visitors touring our museums will have a first hand look at the vast technological and cultural changes our city has made."

Entering the Chambers House is like stepping back in time. The house is a treasure trove of furniture, personal items, artifacts, paintings, china and childhood toys that belonged to the Chambers sisters.

"I am excited about the excellent real-time opportunity for writers and researchers to examine authentic period pieces as far as crafting historical and period novels is concerned," D.J. Resnick, founder of the Golden Triangle Writer's Guild, said.

Chodzinski said the mission of BHS is historical education and preservation.

"We strive to educate everyone about the rich history of Beaumont and the role this community has played in shaping the country as it is today," she said. "Preservation of historical landmarks and artifacts are the most significant means of achieving this goal."

Businesses along Calder Avenue are joining in the festival.

Rodney Cooley's Urban Chic, an antique store at 3685 Calder, is a new shop and he said he is happy to

have a place to show off his retro aluminum chairs and vintage burlap coffee sacks that he uses to upholster furniture. Julie Burns, owner of Burns Antik Haus, also located on Calder, said she loves the opportunity of partnering with the Chambers Museum and jumped at the chance to get involved and coordinate her store hours with the event. Burns will also have an array of vintage jewelry, accessories and small furniture pieces on the Chambers grounds.

Lloyd Frank, who owns an upholstery shop on Martin Luther King Parkway off Calder, is also joining the BHS event. Frank will show popular mid-century modern styles by famous makers of that era. "Samsonite, the luggage maker, designed furniture for one year only in 1950 and I will have those rare chairs for sale," Frank said. He will also have some uncommon Henry Miller chairs, as well as Duncan Phyfe sofas which are his personal favorites.

Michael Mathews, owner of The Tattered Suitcase at 2590 Calder, will feature some of his store's collection of antiques at the Chambers House.

From Frontier Days to 1950s and Mid-Century Modern, it seems the BHS has it all.

Carol Weishampel, a local author, will be on hand to sell her book about the Civil War.

"I heard about the Frontiers and Fifties from a friend and decided to get involved; it is unusual to have something the entire family can go to for free," Weishampel said. "I've decided to make quills from duck or chicken feathers and let people dip in ink and sign their name to a paper representing the Declaration of Independence."

This is the first time BHS has hosted this event and Edwards said she hopes for a good turnout.

"We have wonderful facilities in the French and Chambers museums and we want everyone to feel welcome and come out and enjoy them," she said.

For more information, contact the Beaumont Heritage Society at 409-832-4010 or 409-898-0348.



Tootsie Crutchfield, left, Melissa Edwards, Darlene Chodzinski and Merle Booker of the Beaumont Heritage Society, model some hats from the 1950s in advance of "Mid-Century Modern; Frontiers and Fifties," a program of events scheduled for April.

Photo by
D. Harris Johnson

Around & About

If you come across any interesting exhibitions, museums or other places on your travels, share them with us. Call 409-838-5393, or contact us through our web site at www.artstudio.org. Be sure to include the location and dates of the subject, as well as any costs.

Winners of the **BEAUMONT ART LEAGUE NATIONAL SHOW 2010** were announced at a reception March 13.

First place was awarded to Nathan Jones for “Twisted Revisited.” Second place was awarded to Stephanie Williams for “Playful,” and third place went to Richard Tallent for “Le regard de la dryade.”

The Crowder-Bowman Purchase Award went to Roy Drasites for “Gallery Rich.” The BAL Memorial Purchase Award was awarded to Alice Powell for “Passing Time,” and the BAL Purchase Award went to Stan Kaplan for “Old Neighborhood.”

Honorable mentions were awarded to Dennis Ford for “Wood Vase,” Carl Clark for “Un peu de bleu” and Cindy Brabec-King for “Tickled Pink.”

The **BEAUMONT ART LEAGUE** will host the **NECHES RIVER FESTIVAL SHOW 2010, “NECHES NATURALLY,”** April 17-28.

Entries are due April 7-14, 10 a.m.-2 p.m., with a reception to be held 2-4 p.m., April 18 (Earth Day weekend). All entries must relate in some form or fashion to the Neches: its beauty, ecology, biodiversity, etc.

Entries are open to all artists (18 or older). All work must be original and completed within the past two years.

Entries are limited to three per artist. Cost is \$7 per entry for members, \$10 for non-members.

Prizes will be awarded for Best of Show Purchase and first, second and third places.

For more information, call 409-833-4179 or visit www.beaumontartleague.org.

BAL is located at 2675 Gulf St. in Beaumont.

The **STARK MUSEUM OF ART** will screen the documentary, **THE CURIOUS MISTER CATESBY**, April 25, 4:30 p.m. to 6:30 p.m., in the Education Center, located at 812 Green Avenue in Orange.

The book, “Natural History of Carolina, Florida and the Bahama Islands,” produced by Mark Catesby between 1731 and 1746, is considered one of the greatest accomplishments in art and science relative to North America, Elena Ivanova, Stark chief educator, said.

Refreshments and viewing of the exhibition “Blooms: Floral Art in the Stark Collections at Stark Museum of Art” follow the screening.

The event is free to the public. For more information, visit www.starkmuseum.org.

The **SPINDLETOP FOUNDATION** will present **EUFORIALIVE**, an event to benefit the STMHMR Autism Program, 5:30 p.m. to 9 p.m., May 8 at Lamar University’s Gray Library.

“Witness a world of color coming to life. Experience and feel the warmth and magic of Euforialive, featuring internationally renowned artists Rolando Diaz and Seth Simmons,” Maria Guillory, the foundation’s executive director, said. “Imagine a blank canvas. At the end of our event, the artist will create an oil to canvas masterpiece that we will auction to benefit Autism research. During the time, Rolando is painting, Seth will be playing original compositions on a baby grand piano. That is Euforialive.”

For more information, contact Guillory at 409-839-2221.

ANNE FRANK: A HISTORY FOR TODAY will be on view at the Museum of the Gulf Coast April 3 through May 31.

On loan from the Anne Frank Center in New York, the exhibition features 25 panels that tell the story Anne Frank and her family juxtaposed against world events before, during and after the rise to power of Adolf Hitler and the Nazi party.

“Through the family’s story, themes of scapegoating, bullying, anti-Semitism, racism, ethnic cleansing, and genocide are explored,” a museum release states. “The exhibition introduces visitors to the events leading up to World War II, and the government directed killing of Jews, Gypsies, the disabled, Slavs and others. The exhibit depicts individuals who chose to join the Nazi party and become perpetrators, those who were bystanders, as well as those who were willing to resist the Nazi tyranny. In addition, the Museum of the Gulf Coast will supplement the traveling exhibition with objects from its own collection as well as the Holocaust Museum Houston.”

The museum will host a free event in recognition of Holocaust Remembrance Day on April 11 from 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. The event will feature a special guest presentation from the Holocaust Museum Houston. HMH volunteer docent Sandy Lessig will present “Through Their Eyes: A Survivor’s Story,” an interactive multimedia presentation based on the videotaped testimony of her father, a Holocaust survivor.

The museum will also host a variety of other public programs in association with “Anne Frank: A History for Today,” including film screenings on select Saturday afternoons at 2 p.m. and a bus trip on May 1 to the Holocaust Museum Houston and the Museum of Fine Arts Houston.

The museum is hosting a Youth Art Competition inspired by the Holocaust Museum Houston’s Butterfly Project. Open to middle and high school students, the competition calls for students to create butterflies as part of a project that seeks to remember the 1.5 million children who perished in the Holocaust with a collection of 1.5 million butterflies. An estimated 400,000 butterflies have been collected by the HMH so far. Competition entries will go on view and winners will be announced at the reception on April 11. School groups are encouraged to tour this exhibition.

School tours are always free at the Museum of the Gulf Coast. However, schools are urged to schedule their tours as far in advance as possible as the spring calendar fills up quickly.

The museum is located at 700 Procter Street in downtown Port Arthur. For more information, visit www.museumofthegulfcoast.org or call 409-982-7000.

The **ART MUSEUM OF SOUTHEAST TEXAS** has announced the winners of its **PROTÉGÉ 2010 COMPETITION**.

First place was awarded to Katie Birdwell of Bridge City High School. Second place went to Layla Simon of Nederland High School, and third place was awarded to Tricia Vice of Orangefield High School.

Honorable mentions were awarded to Samantha

East, Hamshire-Fannett High School; Caitlin Gunter, Orangefield High School; Skyler Porras, Port Neches-Groves High School; Jaime Posey, West Brook High School; Kim West, Bridge City High School.

Other accepted artists include Sydnie Anderson, Bridge City High School; Alex Cassell, West Brook High School; Jeanna Gonzales, Bridge City High School; Rachel Hinson, West Brook High School; Devan Knowles, Lumberton High School; Angelique Ladd, West Brook High School; Kami Morvant, Port Neches-Groves High School; Kelly Keith Royal, Bridge City High School; Kelsey Tapp, Little Cypress-Mauriceville High School; Daniel Weston, Bridge City High School; Alison Yu, Orangefield High School.

The Protégé 2010 Exhibition, featuring these artists’ work, was on display at AMSET through March 28 and is traveling to selected area schools and other venues for further exposure and outreach in the Southeast Texas community.

For more information, call Melissa Tilley, AMSET public relations coordinator, at 409-832-3432.

The **2010 BEAUMONT JAZZ AND BLUES FESTIVAL ART COMPETITION** is seeking entries. Submission deadline is April 20.

“Submit your Jazz and Blues themed artwork and you could win a One-of-a-kind Fender Guitar signed by the performers at Beaumont’s 2010 Jazz and Blues Fest, including John Lee Hooker Jr.,” according to a release.

Submit a picture of your entry to the Southeast Texas Arts Council by April 20 either by email at suebard7@yahoo.com or by mail at P.O. Box 3925, Beaumont, TX 77704.

Exhibition space is limited so all entries will be subject to pre-judging. Contestants chosen will be responsible for shipping their artwork and will be contacted with further information.

The 2010 Beaumont Jazz and Blues Festival will be held at the Jefferson Theatre on Fannin Street in Beaumont on May 8, starting at 1 p.m. Final judging will be a people’s choice vote.

Lamar University’s **DISHMAN ART MUSEUM** will present **EXTREME SENSIBILITY: TAIWANESE CONTEMPORARY VIDEO ART**, April 9-23, with a free reception 7-9 p.m., April 9. From 6-7 p.m., there will be curator’s talk in the auditorium to introduce the works.

Curator Charles Liu, writing in the exhibition catalog, states, “Video art started in Taiwan in the 1980s and advanced rapidly in the 1990s with the advent of more affordable equipment. As an island infused with information technology from all around, the up and coming artists showed a high degree of interest in expressing themselves in the new media of digital, animation and interactive arts. It became so much of a passion that it was reflected in their everyday lives prompting some to excel in these new expressions.”

The show will feature 17 pieces by 15 artists. Liu states that among the themes presented are, “space/time concepts, family, territorial issues, immigration matters, the weak vs. the strong, humanitarian concerns, individual vs. society, and religion.”

The museum is located on the corner of MLK Pkwy. and E. Lavaca on the Lamar University campus.

For information, call 409-880-8959.

Cloud’s Play

If I could, like a cloud,
play high upon the sky,
and tiptoe over rooftops,
while the sun was hiding by,

I never would be cross,
or rude, or mean to any friends.
Instead of being petulant,
I’d try to make amends.

So when time came to end the games,
no matter who was winning,
I’d not complain nor say a thing
about my turn beginning.

And what is more, were I to cry,
if even then at all,
it’d only be some silly rain
into the wind would fall

Jesse Doiron

Meghan’s New Shoes — for Keith Carter

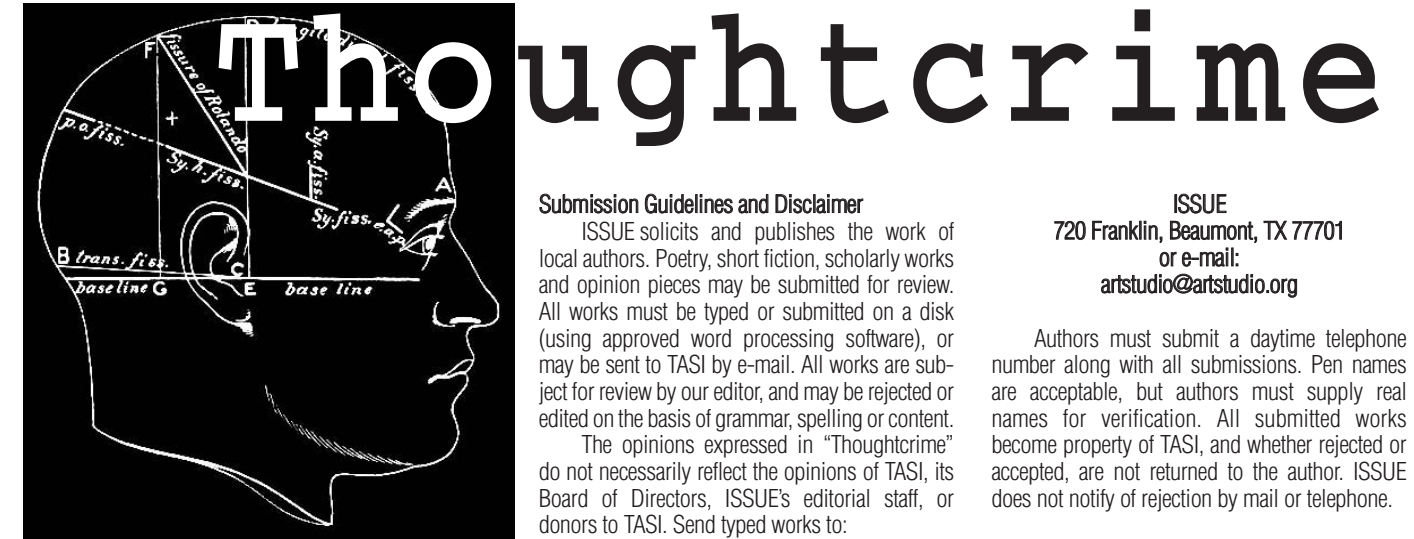
when smoke relaxes
it comes back
tired of leaving the world
its top opens
like present string
and falls away

when light wakens
it falls all at once
grown old in the flash
of its first moment

on my birthday
I rose like smoke
aching to be grown
but when the light
of these Mexican sparklers folded
I fell back like gravity
into the world
and into these new shoes

Jerry Bradley

Reprinted from “The Importance of Elsewhere” with permission of Ink Brush Press.



Submission Guidelines and Disclaimer

ISSUE solicits and publishes the work of local authors. Poetry, short fiction, scholarly works and opinion pieces may be submitted for review. All works must be typed or submitted on a disk (using approved word processing software), or may be sent to TASI by e-mail. All works are subject for review by our editor, and may be rejected or edited on the basis of grammar, spelling or content.

The opinions expressed in “Thoughtcrime” do not necessarily reflect the opinions of TASI, its Board of Directors, ISSUE’s editorial staff, or donors to TASI. Send typed works to:

ISSUE
720 Franklin, Beaumont, TX 77701
or e-mail:
artstudio@artstudio.org

Authors must submit a daytime telephone number along with all submissions. Pen names are acceptable, but authors must supply real names for verification. All submitted works become property of TASI, and whether rejected or accepted, are not returned to the author. ISSUE does not notify of rejection by mail or telephone.

Ecstasy In Your Eyes

Under Heaven’s stars we are prisoners of wild desire
Bodies warm with passion’s heat —
pressed together erupting with fire.

Masculine hands finding all the wondrous places
that bring me pleasure
Sweet surrender to love’s seductive call —
the aching need for you I can no longer endure.

Chains of love bind us tight
Passion building....
Sending us on an exotic flight.

Forging bonds that tie your heart to mine
As the dawn of the morning sun now shines.

Bound to each other forever — body and soul
Swept up in an avalanche of arousal that flows and flows.

With one last thrust our bodies tremble and quake
Like the ocean waves slamming ashore make.

As we lay under the beautiful morning sky
I see.....

Ecstasy In Your Eyes.

Marie LeBlanc

Editing

It isn’t easy, watching
my children die –
they squirm
under careless fingers,
eyes staring – black,
cold at their executioner.
“Can’t we just keep
this one?” I plea.
But layout
has no mercy
and deadline
can’t be pushed.
Stripped naked,
they shiver
in obedient inches.

Lluvia Rueda

I pray in Solitude

He came to me one Sunday evening
Bearing the widow’s mite.

I was leery, not offended,
When he told me
That he was coming to pray with me.

I reflected that
I have become quieter,
Not less intense,
Expressing my spirituality, and that I prefer to
Pray in solitude.

We sat at the dining table and
Loved each other while we
Talked quietly and smoked cigarettes.
He comforted me by
Unveiling his heart in the
Warmth cast by lamplight and
Darkness of a winter night.
I filled the potted vessel with jasmine tea,
Our balmy souls calmed by the peacefulness
Of our sharing.

And before he took leave
We paused, still seated at the corner of my red table,
Folded our hands and
Bowed our heads
While he prayed to God for the
Provision of our daily bread
During our fretful journey through this land.
I heard my grandmother’s voice as he
Invoked the power of God in my life,
Asking for relief and sustenance
To grace my efforts
While fulfilling my call in this life.

Cathy Atkinson
(For George)

BRADLEY from page 6

turn to another to keep writing, to keep my momentum. I am always making discoveries. Blending scraps. Taking one and moving it to two. While I am writing, I am probably writing more than one poem, even if I don't know it or notice it. I'll work on the poem for hours and then go to something else. Like Jell-O, the ideas need to sit awhile. A poem in draft form has to sit and settle. Sometimes they sit for years. I have files full of thoughts. The germ of the idea is still there. I can usually remember what the genesis of a poem was — whatever I was thinking at the time, but the work can move a long way from that beginning by the time it gets to the finished product. Sometimes it's a word, sometimes it's an image, sometimes it's a theme.

JD: This sounds a bit messy. Have you gone electronic with this process?

JB: At first a poem will just be in my head, but later I'll start sounding it out, writing it out, and thinking about all those technical things; line breaks, enjambment, internal or external rhyme. The first drafts, the first ideas, I may write on scraps of paper, on back of envelopes. I throw them in stacks. If I still like them after a while, I'll convert them to a computer file. At times, I'll go through that file to see if I have made any connections. Sometimes a poem will languish there. It doesn't have a place to be yet. Later, though, I may discover something. Poems can take turns, sharp-angled turns that I didn't see or anticipate. At times, the delay is because my own experience has to catch up with the poem.

JD: The experiences you portray in "The Importance of Elsewhere" sometimes seem as if they have not only caught up with you but overtaken you.

JB: We always drink from the well of our own experience. The Greek tragedy tells us that we all suffer in our own ways, yet we all suffer. We know the smack of misery. We feel alienated and isolated at the time because of pain. We are all under the misunderstanding that we are doing this suffering privately, but it is universal.

JD: That sounds like therapy.

JB: Once you have committed a feeling to a poem, you are coming forward with it. When one goes to a therapist, one speaks to his therapist. In one of my poems, I talk about rolling the bruise of childhood into a ball in some way to make it a matter one can deal with as an adult.

JD: You have mentioned your childhood before. You seem to drink from that well of memory often. Does your family figure in your poetry often?

JB: The first poem in the book is about my father, he died in 1973. The death of a father is a good topic for a poet. One might feel as if he owes his father a poem. I had written my father a poem before, but then I realized that more than thirty years later, I hadn't written him another one. I thought, "What does that say?" It is not as though I never think of my father, that is, of course, not true. The poem indicates — through the speaker of the poem — one always thinks of his father.

JD: But you do not wait for occurrences to write a poem.

JB: This depends. Sometimes a poem writes itself. I don't think that is a testimony to whether one is better than another, it's just

that a poem comes about in lots of different ways.

JD: How did "Meghan's New Shoes" (from "The Importance of Elsewhere," reprinted here on page 13) come about?

JB: There's an interesting story behind that. In fact, I wrote that in Beaumont, before I had moved to Beaumont. Keith Carter spoke at the Texas Association of Creative Writing Teachers and showed some slides of his work. He put one up, and he challenged everyone to write a poem about it. The slide became the cover of one of Keith's books. I started working on my poem at the time but didn't finish it at the meeting. Some time later I went back to it. I remembered the striking image, so I later finished the poem.

JD: That would seem to make it a rather artificial genesis. But for me, "Meghan's New Shoes" sounds as much like you as the more obviously autobiographical "I Never Think of My Father."

JB: Do they sound like me? Because I never know. I think when one starts writing poetry, one tries out all sorts of voices. In time, one may settle into two or three that feel most comfortable or natural.

JD: Which voice were you trying out with those two poems?

JB: It was one of those voices that I think is mine — the sober contemplative voice. There's another voice — the cynical, questioning wise-ass voice. Those are the main voices I have, and they sort of alternate in my work. Sometimes I don't know where a poem is going really until I find the right voice for it. The poem might come slow because I have picked the wrong voice for it.

JD: Have you ever had to draw back from some dark place that a poem wanted to take you to but where you didn't want to go?

JB: I am willing to look at the dark side. In "Bart's Night Out," I say "even a school-boy knows that things really are darkest just before they go completely black." I try to stop myself all the time from writing something that is vapid because it's easy to do that. The problem with writing is that it is hard to say something of value. We do not want to appear more foolish than we are.

JD: Give me a feel for the voice you're talking about. Could you read "Bart's Night Out" for me? (As any real poet would, Jerry speaks his poem readily, as if it were one of those scraps of an idea hoping not to languish anymore in files of envelopes and self-service receipts.)

JB: That voice is the observer of the bleak world. The poem is an actual experience I had when I was teaching in Southern Indiana; the son of one of my colleagues, a college student, had his first heartbreak. My colleague thought it would be a good idea to take the boy — he was 21, old enough to drink — take his son out and let him drink his sorrow away. The three of us took him to a bar. My notion was "I don't know if this is such a good idea."

JD: Yet it's filled with wryness.

JB: It is not one of the darkest poems I've written. That would be perhaps "The Missing." That one I seldom put into a reading because it puts a pall upon the moment. In it, I speak of that kind of awful unknowable part of life. We never know when violence is going to flash out or where it's going to come from. We walk around as if we have some sort of tacit agreement with the universe that things are supposed to turn out OK. But every day we have reminders to the contrary.

JD: Those reminders are what you like to observe in your poetry.

JB: You see yourself in a mirror, a flat image of yourself, but it is not you. It is not how others see you. Think about how startling it is to get on one of those elevators with polished reflections of yourself in all directions.

JD: Do you see others in those multiple mirrors as well?

JB: I wrote a poem about my junior-high girlfriend; it was published in "Simple Versions of Disaster." It was a heartbreak poem. She asked me once, "Why didn't you send it to me?" I answered, "I didn't want you to see yourself in such a sad light." It had to do with the time I once visited her, years after school. She had invited me to Montana, and just before I arrived, her husband had walked out on her. It had nothing to do with me, or my visit, but she was obviously in a great deal of pain during that time. Sometimes there is not much you can do to help a friend. You can be there; you can listen; you can commiserate, but you cannot remedy the pain. Anyway, I didn't want her to see herself as an object of pity. One can tolerate almost anything but pity.

JD: You seem to get around the pity part with humor. It suits your boyish demeanor. The class clown kind of kid.

JB: I get this a lot. People who know me will say, "Your words say one thing, but your expression says another." That is probably a defense mechanism I have cultivated. In the classroom, one can say the sternest message but not offend if one approaches the topic from a sideways angle. In that way, you can be very blunt, say the darkest thoughts without the harshness harming much.

JD: So the "Aw shucks" attitude extends to your verse?

JB: Well, yes, I suppose so. I have quite a few poems that have humor as a motivator or a meaning. But there is darkness in comedy, too. Sometimes, the humor may be predicated on miscommunication or broken expectations. A poem can thus hinge on such an idea. It can turn funny or dark. In "Burning Love," I relate a true story about a fifth-grade friend who burned the name of his sweetheart into his wrist with match heads he'd lined up and ignited. Her name was Sue, and she dropped him. Thank God he didn't fall for a girl named Elizabeth. One can see a kind of humor in the darkest of moments. Whatever the prevailing mood is, I am looking at it with my head cocked, thinking about which way it will go eventually.

JD: Some of your poems are rather spiritual if not prayerful. Am I detecting in those transcendental poems another voice of yours?

JB: Perhaps so, I don't really know if I would call what you see a "religious" influence. Phillip Larkin said that we are often surprising ourselves with a desire to be serious. Our talks with ourselves are almost always serious. But when we talk with our friends and family we are seldom serious. And people are often made uncomfortable by other people talking seriously. Religion allows us a structure within which to be serious in a public manner. But were you to talk to people about religion in some other venue, they would resist it. This is why we react sometimes rather negatively, when someone col-

See BRADLEY on page 15

**Mission Statement**

Founded in 1983, The Art Studio, Inc. is devoted to: providing opportunities for interaction between the public and the Southeast Texas community of artists; furnishing affordable studio space to originating artists of every medium; promoting cultural growth and diversity of all art forms in Southeast Texas; and providing art educational opportunities to everyone, of every age, regardless of income level, race, national origin, sex or religion.

PURPOSE

The purpose of The Art Studio, Inc. is to (1) provide educational opportunities between the general public and the community of artists and (2) to offer sustained support for the artist by operating a non-profit cooperative to provide studio space and exhibition space to working artists and crafts people, and to provide an area for group work sessions for those artists and crafts people to jointly offer their labor, ideas, and enthusiasm to each other.

GOALS

1. To present public exhibitions
2. To provide educational opportunities
3. To provide accessible equipment for artists
4. To provide peer feedback through association with other artists and crafts people

OBJECTIVES

1. To present 10 art exhibitions per year
2. To maintain equipment for artists in a safe working environment
3. To provide better access to artists for the public
4. To offer regularly scheduled adult and children's classes
5. To develop and maintain public activities with all sectors of the community
6. To develop and maintain equipment to aid artists in their work
7. To provide a display retail outlet for artists
8. To expand programming and activities with increased facility space

SOUTHEAST TEXAS Arts COUNCIL This project is funded in part by the Texas Commission on the Arts, Dishman Trust, Entergy, HEB, and the Vic Rogers Foundation through the Southeast Texas Arts Council

BRADLEY from page 14

lars us on a street corner, and asks, "Do you want to talk about Jesus?"

JD: You don't seem bothered with being serious. Nor do you seem bothered about being religious.

JB: I remember once when a little old man knocked on my door; he was selling religious video tapes. He was probably around 75. He asked me, "Haven't you ever wondered what Adam and Eve looked like in the Garden?" Afterwards, I thought, "Maybe I should have bought those videos."

JD: You could get a reputation that way. But then don't most poets have a sinister reputation of sorts?

JB: There is that perception. We're alien creatures.

JD: Or supernatural beings.

JB: We can pass among you.

JD: So do people think of you as angelic or devilish?

JB: I have no clear idea. When I hear an opinion of myself,

I am always shocked what people think. I guess we all try to figure out how other people are looking at us. Maybe it's time I should give that up.

JD: So you wouldn't say there is a poet's profile for the police to use in spotting suspects.

JB: The poet is like any of your other friends except he's the one that's paying attention to how you are abusing your life. He's the one that is fundamentally dissatisfied with the world no matter how much fun he may be having.

JD: That means my mechanic could be a poet.

JB: Absolutely!

JD: But not a full-time poet.

JB: I would not put down as an occupation "poet." In fact, I am somewhat embarrassed when people label me as a poet, unless it's at a reading where one might logically expect such a title. Even then, when that happens, I feel like someone who plays around at home with a guitar suddenly finding himself

introduced as a guitarist. Poetry is something I do. I don't feel it is something I am.

JD: Why is that?

JB: It harkens back to something I read once — how many thousands of people put in their passports the occupation poet? It was an astounding number. I've always felt it was rather brazen to call oneself a poet. I read poetry. As an editor I am reading the work of poets all the time. And I read poetry for fun too. I don't think of poetry as my profession. I think I am a poet but I don't go around proclaiming it. What have you said when you call yourself a poet? A mechanic? Or anything? The mechanic's work will speak for itself as will the poet's.

JD: But you are a professional poet in every sense of the title whether you like me using it or not. As such, do you eat and drink poetry?

JB: Well, like professional baseball players when they aren't playing, they're probably watching someone else play. When I'm not writing, I'm reading — it might not be poetry, but I am reading — newspapers, magazines.

JD: You are always working. You are always a poet. That's the biggest part of you.

JB: What I mean is that I just like language and how it works. I may be watching a movie and I hear a grammatical error and I nudge whoever is next to me and say, "That's not how you say it." I may be looking at a menu or a poem and notice how the description of the material flows accurately or not. I tell you that the biggest part is the actual writing process because writers will do almost anything to avoid writing. They will distract themselves with editing; they will rework material. Most good writers read, if not their competitors, they are reading something.

JD: Is it hard work for a poet?

JB: W.B. Yeats said that "a finely crafted sentence has to appear effortless" even though it might have taken hours or days even to get the phrasing just right. Yes, it can be hard work to write a fine poem.

JD: Do you see yourself as an artist the way a painter or sculptor might be considered artists?

JB: There's always been a close tie between poets and graphic artists. I just visited with a colleague of mine from Indiana University Southeast, John Guenther, with whom I worked on a collaborative art synthesis show. He was working in clay monotypes. You can only get one print from these monotypes. For the show, I would write a poem in response to one of his pieces, or maybe I'd write the poem, and then he'd create the monotype. We had a lovely joint exhibition in a Louisville gallery. John's a serious, professional artist, from Purdue, working in a unique, obscure medium. He also is a ceramicist with his own kiln in his studio.

JD: Is that a mark of good poetry — a visual component?

JB: I like poetry that is visual, that has an image of some thing standing some place on the world, a moment in time. I want a poem to be authentic, and a real place gives that. I've sent students out to places and told them "Experience the place and write it. Respond to it"

JD: So your audience is the same audience that any painter would desire?

JB: Well, my imagined audience is not a practicing poet nor is it a practicing painter. That is not my audience — never. My audience is conscious of language. I would want my reader to know, both intellectually and emotionally, that my poem is true because it resonates in his experience. I want my reader to feel that for a moment I have pulled him out of himself and then let him fall back into himself, taking some part of me with him. I want the reader's senses, all of his ways of apprehending the world, to approve the poem. I think that is what happens with the best works of art in any medium — that we see ourselves in the art and thus we see ourselves in the world.

Jesse Doiron teaches English at Lamar University.



WE WANT YOU FOR BAND NITE

Hear original music by local musicians at



For upcoming gigs, visit

www.myspace.com/artstudio

\$5 admission All ages welcome • 21 and up BYOB and have your ID.



720 Franklin, Beaumont, Texas 77701

Non-Profit Org
U.S. Postage
PAID
Permit #135
Beaumont, TX

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

INSIDE

- 'BEAUX ARTS BALL'
- THOUGHTCRIME: MUSINGS FROM AREA POETS
- JERRY BRADLEY ON POETRY
- GEORGE WENTZ REMEMBERED

ISSUE

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.

Volunteers

These people are the life blood of our organization. WE COULDN'T DO IT WITHOUT YOU! To volunteer, drop by The Art Studio, Inc., or call 409-838-5393.

- Bryan Castino
- Katy Hearne
- Heather Eager
- Benee Bernard
- Clint Dearborn
- Rhonda Rodman
- Sue Wright
- Cyndi Grimes
- Rhonda McNally
- Andy Coughlan
- Renee Coughlan
- Olivia Busceme
- Uriah Keneson
- Les Warren
- Torchy
- Colleen Bonnin
- Beth Gallaspy
- Lige
- Joanna Clark
- Chris Dombrowsky
- Terri McKusker
- Willie McKusker
- Sheila Molandes
- Deborah Ragsdale
- Colby Duhe
- Beau Dumesnil
- Karen Dumesnil
- Tosha McKusker

JOIN US
FOR ART OPENINGS ON
THE FIRST SATURDAY
OF EACH MONTH

THIS MONTH:
TASIMJAE
 The Art Studio, Inc.
 Member Jurored Art Exhibition

APRIL 3
 GALLERY OPENING IS 7-10 P.M.



SOUTHEAST TEXAS



This project is funded in part by the Texas Commission on the Arts, Dishman Trust, Entergy, HEB, and the Vic Rogers Foundation through the Southeast Texas Arts Council

THE ART STUDIO INC. ISSUE DISTRIBUTION POINTS

DOWNTOWN

THE ART STUDIO, INC.	720 FRANKLIN
ART MUSEUM OF SOUTHEAST TEXAS	500 MAIN
THE BARKING DOG	493 PEARL STREET
BABE DIDRIKSON ZAHARIAS MUSEUM	1750 IH-10E
BEAUMONT CONVENTION & VISITORS BUREAU	801 MAIN (IN CITY HALL)
BEAUMONT ART LEAGUE (FAIRGROUNDS)	2675 GULF ST
NEW YORK PIZZA & PASTA	790 NECHES
SETAC (IN JULIE ROGERS THEATER)	PEARL STREET @ FORSYTHE
TATTOOMANIA	601 PARK

SOUTH END/LAMAR UNIVERSITY

BOBCAT	1535 E. CARDINAL DR.
CARLITO'S RESTAURANT	890 AMARILLO @ COLLEGE
DOS AMIGAS	1590 FRANKLIN
KAMPUS KORNER RESTAURANT	4637 CALLAGHAN
KOCH'S FLOWERS & GIFTS	2270 AVENUE C
LU ART DEPARTMENT	DISHMAN ART MUSEUM

OLD TOWN

HAIRY BUSINESS SALON	2121 MCFADDIN
JASON'S DELI	112 GATEWAY SHOP CNTR
JEFFERSON CO. DEMOCRATIC PARTY OFFICE	CALDER
KATHARINE & CO.	1495 CALDER
RAO'S BAKERY	2596 CALDER
SIGN INTERNATIONAL EXPRESS	2835 LAUREL
SUNRISE	2425 S 11TH
SWICEGOOD MUSIC CO.	3685 COLLEGE
THE TATTERED SUITCASE	2590 CALDER

CENTRAL/WEST END

BASIC FOODS	229 DOWLEN
BEAUMONT VISITORS BUREAU	IH-10
CHRISTIAN MYERS-RMT	6755 PHELAN BLVD 24E
COLORADO CANYON	6119 FOLSOM
EARLY BIRD CAFE	5955 PHELAN
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

PACESSETTER	HWY 105 COLONNADE CENTER
QUIZOS	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.

PARKDALE

RAO'S BAKERY	4440 DOWLEN
--------------	-------------

ORANGE

STARK MUSEUM OF ART	712 GREEN AVE.
---------------------	----------------