

# JEF BOURGEOU

A User's Manual

Oakland University Art Gallery

# JEF BOURGEOU

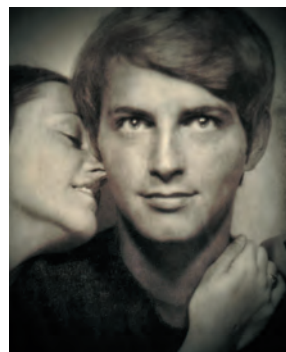
A User's Manual

by Jan van der Marck

**OAKLAND UNIVERSITY ART GALLERY**

College of Arts and Sciences, Oakland University, Rochester, Michigan

This book is the ideal guide for anyone wishing to approach the art of Jef Bourgeau. It is a one-of-a-kind manual providing those crucial parts necessary to reassemble the artist's life and work.



## TO MAE

# FOREWORD

Oakland University is delighted to welcome back alumnus Jef Bourgeau after a hiatus of twenty-one years. In 1986 he showed digital paintings and videos in the Meadow Brook Art Gallery exhibition *Muscle and Machine*. From 1986 to 1990, he worked for Kiichi Usui, director of the former Meadow Brook Art Gallery (which changed its name to the Oakland University Art Gallery in 2006). During his tenure with Usui, Bourgeau gained invaluable knowledge about the everyday operations of a museum/gallery. He was exhibition installer and made trips to and from New York, working with artists, curators and collectors. The gallery contributed significantly to his understanding of how the art world operated and helped foster his subsequent ambition to place his artistic practice within the context of a working museum; in his mind the two are inextricably linked. It is natural, then, that the Oakland University Art Gallery (OUAG) and Jef Bourgeau should be reunited for this auspicious retrospective.

OUAG would like to thank exhibition curator Jan van der Marck for spearheading this important, long-overdue retrospective. His conviction and persistence propelled this project forward, making it come to fruition. As the inaugural director of the Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago and former chief curator of the Detroit Institute of Arts, Jan van der Marck has a profound understanding of how an artist like Jef Bourgeau, often working under challenging circumstances, has achieved excellence both regionally and nationally creating context and opportunity, working in the seemingly incongruous roles of artist, curator and director, all of which have shaped his unique oeuvre.

This exhibition could not have taken place without the support of the Oakland University Art Gallery Advisory Board. Chairman, John Miller and Marianne Fey Miller



*Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* 1968, acrylic on canvas.

have been especially generous in supporting this catalogue. Special thanks also to Dr. Stephan and Marian Loginsky for their generosity in backing this project. Many thanks to Museum of New Art's assistant director, Candace O'Leary, for her diligent editorial work. We also extend our gratitude to the lenders to the exhibition, particularly Alex and Kathleen Bourgeau, Dr. Terry and Meryl Podolsky, Alan and Rebecca Ross, and Sheila and Jan van der Marck.

Jef Bourgeau sends a special posthumous embrace to Kiichi Usui for all his encouragement and council during his tenure as the director of the Meadow Brook Art Gallery. And lastly, he would like to express a deep debt of gratitude to all those art critics and writers who have given a voice to Detroit's art community over the years.

**Dick Goody, Director OUAG**  
September 2007

“The simulacrum is never that which conceals the truth – it is the truth which conceals that there is none.”

Jean Baudrillard (after Ecclesiastes)

## CONTENTS

**Foreword**  
by Dick Goody

**Jef Bourgeois's Legerdemain**  
by Jan van der Marck

**Biography**

**Timeline**

**Doppelgänger**

**Documents**

**Notes**

**Works in the Exhibition**

## JEF BOURGEOU'S LEGERDEMAIN



*Pink Nude* 1970, felt marker on board.

An aspiring artist coming of age in the 1970's is more likely to paint with ironic distance employing chance methods or outright subversion than with patiently acquired skill, Messianic conviction and respect for pictorial tradition. Those who lived through it consciously will agree that the 70's were experienced as a tediously prolonged hangover from the exuberant decade preceding it. Rapid production, seasonally changing fashion and escalating demand slowed down and were replaced by stocktaking, retrenchment and self-flagellation. Broad-stroke pursuits became narrow-gauged, and once fresh ideas were recycled. In a pinched economy, art as concept stood in for art as object and art as idea for art as reality. Even as it raised the volume and level of critical writing, the white cube suffered from empty walls. The interconnectedness of media and their spatial merger abolished their one-time hierarchical order. Pressing everything and the kitchen sink into the service of art had the blessings of Rauschenberg and Johns. Appropriating subject matter as well as style had become, in the world of Warhol, Lichtenstein, Rosenquist and Wesselmann, an artist's bill of rights. With the very concepts of authenticity and originality at stake, was it any wonder that collectors of 1960's art took a pass and new ones took fright?

The 'end of painting' was declared from many lecterns and it echoed in artists' studios. Jef Bourgeois ignored or avoided the issue by focusing on the power of narrative and the magic of the moving image, separately or in combination. He did not endear himself to creative writing and film history teachers by submitting term papers in the form of 8mm loops composed of the opening credits for a feature



An Object like a Painting 1998, mixed media on paper. Private Collection.

film, or discarded leaders of several films combined. He shot linear collages of up to two thousand thematically organized photo-illustrations from books and magazines and then presented them as a form of *cinéma vérité*. The themes Bourgeau tackled in those sequentially mounted stills, verging on animation, were the rising tide of Nazism in Germany, the annihilation of the Jews from the Warsaw ghetto to the gas chambers of Auschwitz; racial struggle in America and the brutality of war whether at Guernica or before Stalingrad, in the streets of Algiers or the rice paddies of Vietnam. Those student essays presaged this budding artist's proclivity for themes of violence and destruction and for subjects considered politically incorrect or socially off-limits.



Yellow Christ (Yawning) 1978, oil and wax on paper.

In those years Bourgeau experimented with film's formal properties as well. He boiled down a standard length feature to just two minutes and reduced his own 30 minute narrative film to seven small frames mounted over the opening credits while giving each credit loop a different tonal soundtrack. In 2006, he took on 1996 Turner Prize winner Douglas Gordon and his slowed-down video presentation of Hitchcock's thriller, *24 Hour Psycho*, with the premiere screening at the Museum of New Art (MONA) of an alleged remake titled *One-Minute Psycho*. A news release full of spin and praise credited the original appropriationist but Douglas Gordon's dealer was not amused calling it a 'spoof'. In response, Bourgeau's alter ego, Cesar Marzetti, admitted having made a total fake as he revisited a work that had already been revisited: "Fast motion is for Keystone Kops, not a murder in a shower. I wanted it to become more terrifying as you laugh." Whether Marzetti is conscious of his successors or not, film makers like R. Luke Dubois have gained public attention just this year for digitally

compressing Academy Award movies down to a minute's duration.

For students of film in the 70's, theory ruled and the filter of semiology was *de rigueur*. Bourgeau was not enamored with Lévi-Strauss, Foucault, Derrida or Lacan, but tempted by the aphoristic Roland Barthes and, in particular, by the provocative Jean Baudrillard. Conveniently, Baudrillard had drawn upon all of the above to distill his own more applicable notions of simulation, virtual reality and hyper reality. "The idea of simulacrum," he argues, "was a conceptual weapon against reality, but it has been stolen. Not that it has been pillaged, vulgarized, or has become commonplace, but because simulacra have been absorbed by reality which has swallowed them and which, from now on, is clad with all the rhetoric of simulation. And to cap it all, simulacra have become reality!"<sup>1</sup> Simulation, to Baudrillard, is now the dominant form of culture. It is not difficult to see that Baudrillard's thinking permeates Bourgeau's every idea and action.



The artist filming on the Oakland University campus, 1969.

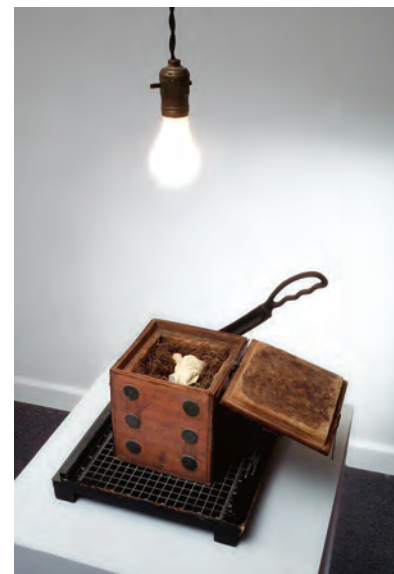
As sound is now an incontestable component of film and as a student of the history of film needs acoustical as well as visual anchorage, Bourgeau favored electronic music with a special preference for Karlheinz Stockhausen. He liked the fact that in this composer's works elements are played off against one another simultaneously and successively to create a sound that moves from isolated notes to a textured blanket of notes and from punctuation and differentiation to uniformity. In his *Kontakte* (1958-60) for electronic sounds, Stockhausen achieved for the first time an isomorphism or a one-to-one correspondence between the parameters of pitch, duration, dynamics and timbre. In mixing the sounds that accompany his films and videos, Bourgeau has taken a lead from the German composer's operational methodology rather than from the ends achieved. While electronic music, by definition, borrows sound not necessarily made by musical instruments, so Bourgeau, on occasion, borrows parts of sound tracks much as he lifts images off of the Internet or utilizes found objects – all that's fair in war, love and art.

Family responsibilities and the unanticipated vogue of neo-expressionist painting during the Reagan years, robbed

<sup>1</sup> *Le Crime Parfait*, Paris 1995, p. 146

Bourgeau of a timely opportunity to test his peculiar form of hyperrealism in the crucible of the market place. He was, and still is, the least aggressive of human beings in a city with an abysmal record of nurturing the arts. But, when Ivan Karp's Birmingham franchise, O.K. Harris Works of Art, beckoned, the 41 year old artist treated himself to a retrospective of unseen work, *Art Until Now*; a title re-used eight years hence for his ill-fated exhibition at the Detroit Institute of Arts. David Klein, the gallery's director, encouraged Bourgeau to transform his space into a rough-and-tumble environment that echoed the improvisational, part bohemian, part anthropological installations at the old Trocadero – themselves inspired by the one time mixing of tribal and Surreal artifacts at the Galerie Charles Ratton in Paris.

It is noteworthy that Bourgeau, forever cognizant of history, opted for this simile complete with some faux dismantling of walls and ceiling, because the objects on display hinted at Dogon architecture and African face-masks mixed in with found and altered objects reminiscent of Dada and Duchamp, and the lot of it given a sprinkling of Picasso. If that were not enough, Bourgeau drafted a declaration (mandatory accompaniment of a vanguard manifestation) which read *Manifesto for an Anachronistic Futurism* and was signed by Cesar Marzetti, the artist's first in a series of fictitious personae. This *manifesto* at the gallery was accompanied by reprints of a vicious and *ad hominem* attack on the exhibition by



The Bait 1991, head from dime-store Venus statue nested in antique bait box and resting on a papercutter. Collection of Ann and Frank Edwards.



Art as Logo 1994, exhibition view at O.K. Harris Works of Art. Photo by Tim Thayer.

Kay Burdell in *Slam*, as well as an interview with the manifesto's author by Peter Krug in *Smart Art*. "Brilliant," was Ivan Karp's comment, "but there is no need to give copies to our customers." Why was Bourgeau at once promoting and shouting down his own exhibition? Because, true to the early twentieth century model, the buzz thus created was an inalienable part of the art, raising it to the status of event. With the help of David Klein who gave him four programmatically organized exhibitions in four consecutive years, Bourgeau's *objects cum video* found collectors in the Detroit area and gallerists from Chicago to New York and from Seattle to San Diego, anxious to exhibit them.

In setting up 'strawmen' discussing or attacking his art, Bourgeau opened a vein soon to be mined for material that allowed him to address and criticize

the very underpinnings of the art gallery and the museum of contemporary art. As for years he had questioned religious pieties, racial stereotypes, sexual taboos, political correctness and societal norms, so in his concept-oriented enterprises following object-centered ones. Bourgeau kicked the tires of the social vehicles meant to propel art. Klein moved into a smaller space just as Bourgeau felt the need to expand the parameters of his activity and to engage his actual and potential audience in ways and with means inappropriate for a commercial gallery. This politicizing of art by taking the mask off its institutions goes back to Courbet and has received periodic reinforcements in the intervening century-and-a-half, particularly during the reign of Dada and the generational watershed of the 1960's. Bourgeau is uniquely political because rather than storming the ramparts, he attacks (and reforms) from within.



Blue Judith 1998, mixed media. Private Collection.

As art-as-concept-as-art goes, the one work this artist admits to be proudest of is that of having created a virtual gallery followed by a virtual museum which morphed into an actual museum for new art (MONA). It is a matter of speculation whether Bourgeau's participation, along with dozens of his

colleagues, in the 1995 exhibition *Interventions* at the Detroit Institute of Arts (each artist claiming squatter's rights in a gallery of his or her choosing) encouraged him to intervene in the established order on a larger scale. After keeping an open studio in a Pontiac walk-up space, Bourgeau moved into a storefront on Lawrence Street and called his new gallery *Jane Speaks Modern Art*.

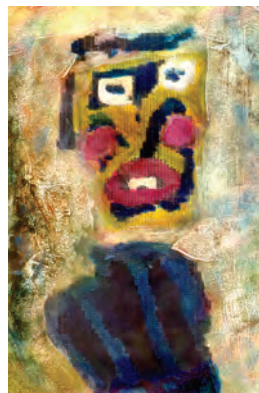


*A History of Black People (After Basquiat)* 1984-85, mixed media. Private Collection.

Eschewing Perrier and canapés in favor of punch and cookies, *Jane Speaks Modern Art* opened its single-panel storefront door in September 1996. Visitors could pick up a printed interview with Jane Speaks by Richard Mann headed by her picture. The interview with Jane never changed, but her picture showed a different woman from one week to another. They also met Jef Bourgeau welcoming them on Jane's behalf and willing to show them (and explain, if necessary) his works on exhibition. Where and, more importantly, who was the no-show host and owner? Bourgeau claimed to have patterned her on a celebrated Manhattan dealer. A well-connected gallery owner has a better survival rate than any artist in her stable and captures as many lines in print, so why not shine the spotlight on her? The name on the shingle reassures collectors even if the art within does not. To artists who feel manipulated or marginalized by their dealers, Bourgeau demonstrates that the shoe can be put on the other foot. An unstable identity allows Jane Speaks to become a medium for the artist to conflate the traditional distinction between maker and promoter. It also upends the conventional wisdom that business deals with reality and art with fiction. Walk-in customers who expect to meet the dealer are perform unsettled when greeted by the artist.

Prompted by the necessity of making a living, not just as a lark, Bourgeau deconstructed the artist-dealer relationship,

as later he would do for the museum and its constituents. As a rogue operator in a tightly coded world he has tweaked, confused, challenged and offended those who stand guard over the proper functioning of art institutions. A gallery or museum so singularly focused, however tiny and remote, is liable to cast its negative shadow over the 'real thing'. Bourgeau believes that he or she who owns the gallery today has usurped the power and authority, innovation and panache that once was the artist's. Jane was more idealistic than hard-bitten though: "I only presume to offer my visitors the chance to see again with all five senses, so that the installations here both shout and whisper, laugh and cry, bleed and heal."



*Frida in Detroit* 1983, mixed media on paper. Private Collection.

Just three months after her gallery's opening, Speaks was involved in a boating mishap off the Cape Verde Islands. Although her body had not been recovered, she was presumed dead. An obituary that ran in *The Oakland Press* prompted one local gallery owner to chime in with what a horrible loss it was for the Detroit art community. As it turned out, she had never met Jane nor had she ever bothered to set foot in her dead colleague's gallery. When Jane's estate was settled, a generous endowment became the rationale for converting the gallery into a museum of contemporary art. Few people knew that Richard Mann had been her husband. Now a widower, he assumed leadership of the Jane Speaks Foundation and in 1997 took the helm of the Museum of Contemporary Art. Cesar Marzetti joined his pal Richard as chief curator and Peggy Kerr was appointed assistant director. Unafraid to stake out their position with regard to vandalism



*The Shroud (after Yves Klein)* 1994, oil, acrylic, and tape on paper with antique wringer.

and art, these two officials engaged in a polemic with the Editor of *Flash Art*, Giancarlo Politi. Poor Peggy is blasted in print: "I shall leave it up to you then, sweet innocent art bureaucrat, to defend a condition of art and culture that has only ever existed in romantic fiction and within your assistant director mentality in Detroit. The true artist has always been in the front line, ready to be sacrificed for her ideas, not sat behind a desk preparing biographies and critical notes on works locked in store rooms." Two months later, a letter from Peter Krug, President of the Board of the Museum of Contemporary Art Detroit, appears in *Flash Art* reporting that Peggy Kerr, crushed by the Editor's



Installation view of *Hatrack* 1991 (child mannequin with wood hat mold and dropped panties) and *Origin of the World* 1992 (plywood, drywall, fluorescent lights, wool stockings, tacks, and darning egg).

bewildering response to her letter had resigned her position, reevaluated her life behind a museum desk, and decided to step out onto the front line as a radio Shock Jock in Escanaba. This letter written by the museum's highest authority was essentially pooh-poohed by the Editor who in his equally wordy response concluded that, "a good DJ is more useful than any art critic with blinders on."<sup>2</sup>

Remarkable about this bizarre exchange not only is that *Flash Art* fell for it but that the Editor sounded more like Jef Bourgeau than his fictional hirelings. Here is the real

<sup>2</sup> *Flash Art*, March-April & May-June, 1999, "Letters to the Editor"

<sup>3</sup> *Selected Writings*, Stanford University Press, 2001, p. 254

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* p. 231

<sup>5</sup> Roger Shattuck, "What is Pataphysics?" *Evergreen Review*, no. 13, Grove Press, New York, 1960

<sup>6</sup> *Collected Fictions*, Penguin Books 1999, p. 68

enigma: how can a hoax claim its bonafides? Perhaps Baudrillard will come to the rescue, so it may be useful to re-read his essay *The Illusion of the End*: "On the eve of the 1990s, in the midst of some unexpected events and with an eye to others just as unpredictable, there formed, among a number of friends, the idea of an agency which would itself be invisible, anonymous and clandestine: the Stealth Agency...for gathering news of unreal events in order to disinform the public of them."<sup>3</sup> We are in the era of the first Gulf War, the one that "did not take place," as Baudrillard has claimed elsewhere,<sup>4</sup> for it was entirely a media event staged for television. "Simulation," according to the author, "is precisely this irresistible unfolding, this sequencing of things as though they had a meaning, when they are governed only by artificial *montage* and non-meaning." Baudrillard admired Alfred Jarry, belonged to the Collegium Pataphysicum (over which his friend Enrico Baj presided as the Grand Satrap) and doubtless took his inspiration from Dr. Faustroll's science of imaginary solutions. In his *Exploits and Opinions of Dr. Faustroll*, Jarry argues: "Instead of formulating the law of the fall of a body towards a center, why not give preference to that of the ascent of a vacuum towards a periphery?"<sup>5</sup> A similar paradox energizes *Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius* by Jorge Luis Borges, relating the story of the author's search for the missing four-page signature in volume XLVI of the *Anglo-American Cyclopaedia* that deals with the country of Uqbar, not on any map, its language Tlön, apparently extinct, and a yet to be written survey of an illusory world tentatively titled *Orbis Tertius*.<sup>6</sup> Are we falling down the rabbit hole with Alice?

Is it any wonder that the Detroit Institute of Arts bought trouble when, innocently enough, its curator of modern and contemporary art wishing to mark the end of the century, invited the Museum of Contemporary Art to present a series of installations in twelve one-week installments from November 20, 1999 until February 13, 2000. The one gallery made available was small, hence the idea of rotating these thematic exhibitions and punctuating their Wednesday through Sunday duration with a reception each Saturday aimed

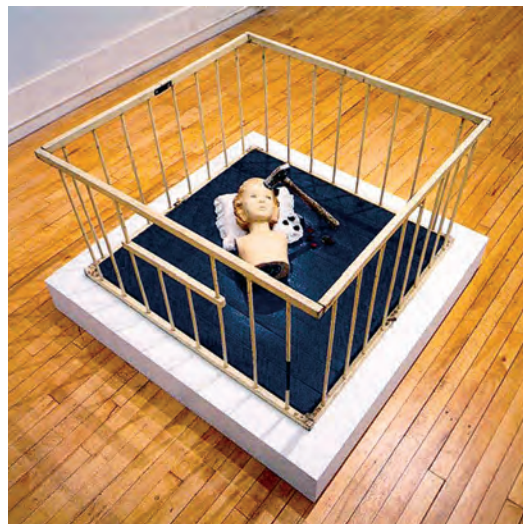


*Bathtub Jesus* 1995, detail.

at attracting artists and their friends. Starting with *Van Gogh's Ear* (coinciding with *Van Gogh: Face to Face*, the blockbuster featured in the museum's main galleries), Bourgeau had laid out a series of thematic exhibitions, each with title and description, but just short of actual content listings. All pertinent information reached the Modern and Contemporary Art Department through normal channels but there was nary a review or response. Individual titles such as *The Wrong Show*, *Naked in the Nineties* and *Closet Art* might have raised red flags but since none were raised, the artist, who for this occasion was recycling themes tested on his own turf, assumed that the museum's curator already had viewed those works in Pontiac. A warning sign not perceived by either party was the forced removal, at the request of the Friends of African-American Art, of Kara Walker's five-panel silhouette of an ante-bellum plantation scene, just months before, and four years after its original acquisition.

In a highly polarized city where what is perceived to be a racial slur is just as inflammatory as the semblance of blasphemy, Graham Beal, the new director who had just moved there, was caught between an artist whose work he did not know and a member of his staff who should have done her homework, i.e. set the bar for what the institution could permit itself to show and then negotiate entries and labels accordingly. *Van Gogh's Ear* exposed the cult of personality with allusions to and similes of the works of Andres Serrano, Piero Manzoni, Vanessa Beecroft, Janine Antoni, Yves Klein, Tracey Emin and Damien Hirst, among others. Ninety percent of the works were bought within a five-mile radius of the artist's home at dime stores, gag-and-gift stores and even a fruit market. A lack of signage, the public being unfamiliar with vanguard spin, apple cider vinegar looking like urine, red corn syrup being mistaken for menstrual blood, and a banker's rubber thumb protector for a condom, all added up to the hue and cry of obscenity and not from the mouth of those who had seen the exhibition, but from those who had heard about it from others who had heard about it. The decision to close the exhibition and cancel its eleven-part follow-up was unfortunate but understandable. The director was on the spot because it looked like censorship. The artist was disappointed so with his work barred from

view, the closing and the alleged censorship, bouncing back and forth in the press for at least two months, turned show into event. Neither party deserved much blame. On the positive side, Bourgeau was rewarded as a guest curator with a honorarium, which he subsequently invested in keeping his Pontiac operation going for another few months. What could not be seen in Detroit was exhibited at the Museum of Contemporary Art in various guises and installments.



*American Beauty (Sleeping)* 1997, mixed media. Private collection. Photo by R.H. Hensleigh.

There is no denying that Jef Bourgeau has presented us with some wickedly entertaining assemblages that are difficult to erase from memory: *Hatrack*, *Picasso's Baggage*, *Push me, Daddy*, *A History of Black People (after Basquiat)*, *American Beauty (Sleeping)*, *Bathtub Jesus* and *Blue Judith*, to name a few. Similarly, he has distilled other artists' favored subjects to their schematic essence, presenting them as readily recognizable black and white 'logos': a screw, Mickey Mouse and clothespin for Claes Oldenburg, a cactus for Georgia O'Keefe, a pipe for René Magritte, etc. Since Bourgeau believes that

proper 'branding' is elemental to the promotion, sale and recognition of art, he posits and proves that an artist's name is more recognizable when set in the type his or her dealer prefers. For one of his exhibitions he printed up black and white panels, each with the name of a famous artist set in the type in use by that artist's gallery. A little twist made the point: Baselitz, who favors feet up and head down portraiture, stood out because his name was exhibited upside down. He evokes *Chappaquiddick* with a red and black take-off on a SLIPPERY WHEN WET road



*Adam and Eve* (triptych) 1993, mixed media on canvas and paper.

sign, and Picasso's *Guernica* with the silhouettes of four men in suits and fedoras beating each other up.

Good fun as all this is, there is little doubt that Bourgeau has made his greatest contributions on the conceptual and ideational levels. Shrewdly having figured out what makes art people, art institutions and art markets tick, he exposes with the right indirection, chicanery and befuddlement, double talk and arrogance, manipulation and profiteering in the guise and with the voice of characters of his own invention. He challenged reviewers to write instant articles with the museum's help by leaving easy-to-complete forms at the reception desk. He invited people he admired to assume directorships of museums-without-walls and published their names and the cities in which they live in *Art in America's* gallery guide. When an exhibition fell through and 10,000 square feet of space stood empty, Bourgeau organized *Shoot!* with an invitation to ten photographers to train their cameras on the visiting public. He accompanied this with a promise that the results would be exhibited, giving the subjects of *Shoot!* an opportunity to purchase their portraits and the photographers publicity and potential sales. In what could be seen as a parody of 'networking,' the artist has insinuated himself into the Internet under different or pseudo-identities and with fictive art news that tended to take on a life of its own.

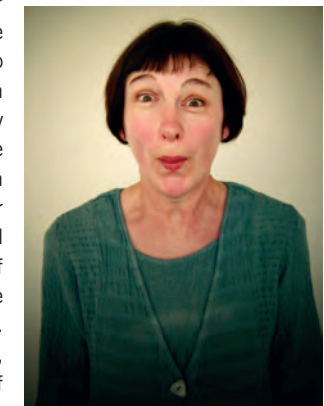
These times seem to be rife with rumor and speculation and artists tend to pick up on that. On January 16, 2007, the *New York Times* ran an article about an unrecognized, influential and extremely elusive Minimalist showing his work at *White Columns* in Chelsea. There was only one problem: this brilliant African-American artist, forgotten since the 1960's, did not actually exist and had been invented by *Triple Candle*, an alternative space in Harlem.



Stig Eklund: *Standing on the Point* 2004, photograph.

*The Wall Street Journal*, on January 1, 2006, tackled the issue of the invisible artist. Not, however, in this case, the artist who labors in obscurity, but, the one who adopts a pseudonym, joins a collective or takes another's identity. One artist mentioned in this context, was the Norwegian photographer Stig Eklund who is none other than Jef Bourgeau, director of the Museum of New Art (MONA) in Pontiac. Later in January, that museum would unveil

*Picasso's Camera* featuring not only the box camera, an alleged present from his friend Severini, but prints from a roll found in that camera and restored with the help of sophisticated computers. It was discovered that the lens already had been cracked when the photographs were taken sometime after 1906, the date of a vintage picture showing Picasso and an unidentified man sitting behind a table with the camera in plain view. The story of its retrieval is worth telling. After Picasso's death, André Malraux was asked by his widow Jacqueline to take a look at some of the late artist's 'junk'. In his memoirs, the writer mentioned having seen a box with an old camera and some glass plates, 'diversions', as he called them, and not worth keeping. Subsequently discarded, they were saved by a ragpicker who sold them at the Mougins flea market to photographer Lucien Clergue. Eventually they ended up with the well-known Swedish photography collector Per Hallstrom who paid for the reconstitution of this invaluable trove now on exhibit at MONA. From all the evidence, this was a scoop of momentous proportions.



Pablo Picasso: *Portrait of Antonina Valentin* c. 1906, reconstructed, 2006.

The point of this exhibition was to prove the importance of the camera, not only in Picasso's own work but to the birth of cubism. The examples are compelling. They included a photograph of Manuel Pallares, presumably taken in May 1909 when the artist passed through Barcelona on his way to Horta de Ebro. The portrait Picasso painted of his friend is now in the collection of the Detroit Institute of Arts. MONA made reams of supporting material available to reporters. *The Detroit News'* Joy Hakanson Colby was onto Jef Bourgeau's game: "It took real chutzpah to come up with *Picasso's Camera*. This risky project is packed with edgy humor, and it swiped at scared cows and offers commentary on art world quirks... Bourgeau demonstrates once more why his one man museum is celebrating its tenth anniversary..." It is worth mentioning, as a footnote, that this exhibition predates by more than a year, the one Arnold Glimcher and Bernice Rose just recently presented at Pace/Wildenstein in New York titled *Picasso, Braque and Early Film in Cubism*. Coincidentally, the portrait of Manuel Pallares was one of many early Picassos the gallery had borrowed.

Resisting the temptation to mention and describe the many exhibitions that made Bourgeau's admirers trek to Pontiac, to the Book Building in Detroit and then again to Pontiac, I must limit myself instead to stating, without reservation, that the Museum of New Art, now in it's tenth year, is Jef Bourgeau's finest work. [Disclosure: for a brief period this writer served as a MONA trustee.] It may not look like a work of art, but it was conceived as one; suffered pain at birth, traversed it's awkward stages, needed all the help it could get, has had a steady father, friends and plenty of attention from the press. Meant to fill a void, MONA began as an artist's concept and evolved into an everyday reality that has kept the artist tethered. How could he run a



Woman Sitting in a Chair 1934-1996, reconstructed print after Picasso. Private Collection.

the artist's principal working strategy has been to invent personae, figments of his imagination, yet believable because they were given faces and biographies to match. Such alchemic talent was too good, or so it seemed to Bourgeau, to waste on playing games. Faced with the need to continue working as an artist, showing what he made and bringing it to market, and realizing to what degree MONA had him trapped, Bourgeau secretly tested the waters with photographs, taken by him and altered in the computer, or borrowed from the Internet and modified by him. These photographs favored landscapes and isolated figures; because of their moody character, somewhat reminiscent of Northern light, he invented a likely 'auteur' by the name of Stig Eklund. In the three years since the Norwegian photographer has been launched, his photographs have appeared on the Internet, in group exhibitions and in more than one local gallery. Those who call them fabrications should be reminded that all art is a fabrication. The press acknowledges the existence of Stig Eklund as Jef Bourgeau's *doppelgänger*. Stig Eklund collectors are let in on the secret, which has not dampened their eagerness to own a print. The story does not end there. This catalogue includes examples of the work of no fewer than seven *doppelgängers*, all with their distinct identities and life stories. They are clearly distinguishable, one from the other. They range from the figurative to the abstract. Who says an artist cannot create in one or the other style simultaneously? If the photographer does not exist, what then bars that photographer from shooting the likenesses of famous artists, some dead some alive, who never sat or stood for those portraits? In his latest incarnation as juggler of identities, Bourgeau, like the juggler of balls and pins, stands poised for boos when he drops them or cheers when they remain aloft. We root for the latter and wish he 'break a leg.'



Stig Eklund: *The Factory* 2005, photograph.

museum without an income stream? How could he operate rent-free and not give his landlord something? A percentage of the sales seemed a good idea, but whose sales? Showing and selling his own work in a not-for-profit, tax-exempt institution had the makings of a conflict of interest. Thus entered the *doppelgänger*. In some form or other, Jef Bourgeau always has been hiding behind fictitious characters: the pamphleteer Cesar Marzetti as early as 1991, Jane Speaks in 1996, the president of his board in 1999, and Billy Conklin in 2006, to name a few. Or, putting it more correctly, for the better part of two decades



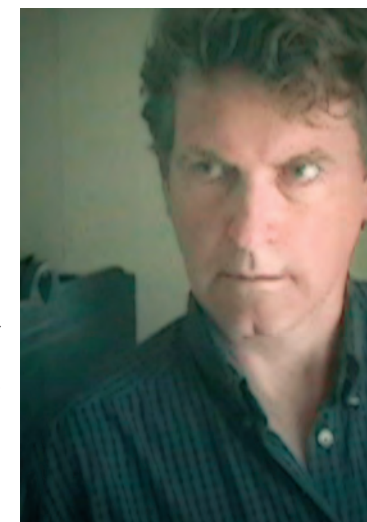
Hanne Bloot: *Motel Room* 2006, photograph.

Maybe it's just the passing of time, but I'm evaluating people who have touched my life over the years. I must say that Jef Bourgeau has made a dent in my thinking. I always somehow mistrust the word "genius" but I think if I were going to use it for an artist in this place and time, it would be for Bourgeau. I think his ideas and his philosophy need time to reach people, to seep through the armor that walls off our brains. I've been in turn annoyed, angry, dazzled, amused, nonplussed, outraged, intimidated, bewildered and a host of other emotions that his work calls up.

Joy Hakanson Colby

# JEF BOURGEAU

was born in Detroit in 1950. At the age of thirteen, he began to illustrate and write short fiction. At nineteen, he was invited to create a ten-page layout of block prints for a Canadian art journal. Bourgeau sold his first novel the next year, but, unhappy with this freshman effort, pulled out of the contract and destroyed the manuscript. He spent the next ten years experimenting with writing and painting, and soon was exploring film and video as well.



In 1980, he first encountered the early potential of computers and multi-media art. By 1986, as part of a show dedicated to Diego Rivera in celebration of the 50th anniversary of his *Detroit Industry* frescoes, Bourgeau presented three films and ten digital-based paintings at Meadow Brook Art Gallery's *Muscle and Machine Dream*.

In 1990, Kiichi Usui, that gallery's director, offered Bourgeau a solo show (*Boxes*) of new work generated entirely from computers and video.

Having finally developed these varied mediums into a satisfactory form of installation work, Bourgeau began his gallery career in 1991: first at Feigenson/Preston, next at O.K. Harris Works of Art. Within a few years his work was exhibited in museums and galleries throughout the United States, and from Europe to Asia.



# JEF BOURGEOU TIMELINE

## 1991



*The Tailor's Wife* 1990, sleeve board, india ink, red thread and pins.

**Magsig/Bourgeau**, Feigenson/Preston, Birmingham, MI

**Art Until Now** (one person), O.K. Harris Works of Art, Birmingham, MI

*Art Until Now* is Jef Bourgeau's keen, sometimes scathing look at 20th century art history from a gloriously biased perspective. The bulk of the show is made up of assemblages of found objects with audio and video elements. Although the individual pieces stand alone, they gain strength from each other as elements in an installation that occupies the entire front gallery at O.K. Harris.

This is one show that needs plenty of time to absorb. At its best the exhibit projects a cleanly honed visual intelligence. Each piece requires a careful "reading" because it's easy to miss a historical peg or one of the artist's personal interpretations.

*Detroit News*: 'Coloring 20th-century art in an entertaining hue' by Joy Colby, August 23, p. 5D.



*Picasso's Baggage* 1991, pet carrier, luggage and video monitor. Private Collection

## 1992



*Renovations* (exhibition view) 1992, mixed media, at O.K. Harris Works of Art. Photo by Tim Thayer.

**Renovations** (one person), O.K. Harris Works of Art, Birmingham, MI

**The New Real** (one person), O.K. Harris Works of Art, Birmingham, MI

Jef Bourgeau learned to question authority early in life – a theme that has lasted throughout his career in filmmaking, video, painting, writing, music and computer art. Bourgeau manages to pull all of these elements together like an artistic one-man band with a countercultural beat. But maybe the most surprising thing about this highly talented artist is that he is not better known.

The artist's current display, *Renovations*, takes his germinal ideas from his last show *Art Until Now* and inflates them into an extravaganza that begins with the actual construction of a contemporary museum, both fresh and out of touch already, and, over the course of three changing exhibits within three months, ends with a "museum" exhibit that is both cold and iconographic to the extreme, but also a place of reverence, awe and so, ultimately, disconnection. In other words, in these three back-to-back exhibits Bourgeau condenses the entire life of a contemporary museum.

*Detroit Magazine*: 'Bourgeau on the Bourgeoisie' by Veronica Pasfield, November, p. 20.



*Silent Woman* 1994, sweater form and blue tin megaphone. Collection of Dr. Stephan and Marian Loginsky.

Jef Bourgeau is attempting the difficult with his wonderful installation at the O.K. Harris Gallery. He's out to renovate old attitudes about gender, particularly female stereotyping, by setting up a contrast between past and present. Bourgeau has a deft touch. He doesn't bog down his aesthetics with his message. The two play intriguingly off one another.

*Detroit Free Press*: 'Women, then and now' by Marsho Miro, November 25, p. 12D.

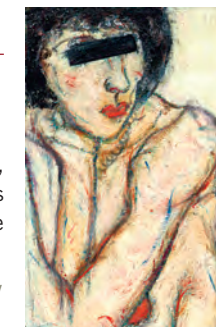
## 1993

**Jef Bourgeau: Beyond Art** (one person), O.K. Harris Works of Art, Birmingham, MI

**Dirty Pictures with Jock Sturges**, David Klein Gallery, Birmingham, MI

Bourgeau has found a venue at O.K. Harris for his painted ladies with black bars over their eyes, and has used them to lampoon some of the thinking surrounding pornography in art. The artist calls his installation *Dirty Pictures* because we manage to "estheticize everything from pain to pleasure to pornography."

*Detroit News*: 'Two artists survive a brush with controversy: Jock Sturges and Jef Bourgeau' by Joy Hakanson Colby, June 11, p. 9C.



*Dirty Picture No. 14* (after Schiele), 1994, oil and wax on paper.

## 1994



*And God Created Woman* 1994, antique birdcage, glove mold and video monitor. Collection of Rebecca and Alan Ross.

**Jef Bourgeau: New Work** (one person), Zolla/Lieberman, Chicago, IL

**60 Rooms with a View**, Art Hotel, Amsterdam, Netherlands

**Vis-à-Vis**, Focus Gallery, Detroit, MI

**Art as Logo**, The Drawing Room, Amsterdam, Netherlands

**Homage to Hans Bellmer**, Book Beat Gallery, Oak Park, MI

**Late in the 20th Century** (one-person), LedisFlam, New York

**Jef Bourgeau** (one person) Gahlberg Arts Center, Glen Ellyn, IL

**Art as Logo** (one person), David Klein Gallery, Birmingham, MI

**Elvis+Marilyn: 2xImmortal**, Institute of Contemporary Arts, Boston, MA

**touring through 1997:**

Jacksonville Museum of Contemporary Art, Jacksonville, FL

Cleveland Museum of Art, Cleveland, OH

The Mint Museum, Charlotte, NC

Contemporary Arts Museum, Houston, TX

Columbus Museum of Art, Columbus, OH

San Jose Museum of Art, San Jose, CA

Philbrook Museum of Art, Tulsa, AZ

Tennessee State Museum, Nashville, TN

Portland Museum of Art, Portland, OR

Honolulu Academy of Arts, Honolulu, HI

Takamatsu City Museum of Art, Japan

Sogo Museum of Art, Yokohama, Japan

Kumamoto Museum, Kumamoto, Japan

Hokkaido Museum of Art, Hokkaido, Japan

Mitsukoshi Museum of Art, Fukuoka, Japan

For Jef Bourgeau's first show at Zolla-Lieberman Gallery, the artist has contributed works that fall into two camps: three-dimensional mixed-media pieces that utilize found objects and appeal initially to a nostalgic impulse; and two-dimensional works on paper and canvas whose reductive, minimal aesthetic makes reference to art-historical forebears.

Bourgeau is a young artist from the Detroit area. His attitude toward the art of the recent and distant past is oblique and a little puzzling, neither mocking nor reverential.

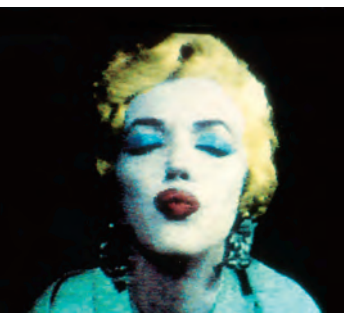
*Chicago Tribune*: 'Bourgeau plays with presence and absence' by David McCracken, February 4.

This first edition of *Art Hotel* provides us with a blueprint for future Art Hotels all over the world. It is the first mobile art fair. Because of this it can connect with major cultural events. It uses the infrastructure of a hotel to create communication between artists, gallerists, collectors, critics and everybody involved in art and its market.

*Art Hotel: '60 rooms with a view'* by Peter Bouhof, Erik Hermida, Johan Jonker, Gabriele Rivet, exhibition February 9-13, catalogue p. 42.

*Vis-à-Vis*, the Detroit Focus Gallery's current show includes 100 portraits by area artists of each other. There are maybe six conventional portraits among the lot. The rest are definitely unconventional. Jef Bourgeau saw Spencer Dormitzer as a 1950's foreign movie.

*Detroit Free Press: 'Artists as seen through other artists' eyes'* by Marsha Miro, March 3, p. 7D.



*You Are the One* 1994, video installation. Collection of Maurice Cohen.

What we have gathered here are the coins of a realm in which Elvis and Marilyn, multivalent icons, have been peculiarly anointed king and queen, god and goddess, in ways that exceed the sum of our admiration or apprehension, by a broadly diverse group of writers, scholars and artists. Including Robert Arneson, Ashley Bickerton, Jef Bourgeau, Nancy Burson, Christo, Joseph Cornell, William Eggleston, Howard Finster, Peter Halley, Richard Hamilton, Keith Haring, Robert Indiana, Ray Johnson, Willem de Kooning, Claes Oldenburg, Joel Otterson, Nam June Paik, Ed Paschke, Richard Pettibone, Robert Rauschenberg, James Rosenquist, Mimmo Rotella, Edward Ruscha, Alexis Smith, Haim Steinbach, Jeffrey Vallance, Andy Warhol, William Wegman, Tom Wesselmann.

*ELVIS+MARILYN: 2x IMMORTAL*: edited by Geri DePaoli, foreword by David Halberstam, commentary by Thomas McEvilley, a traveling exhibition, catalogue p. 68.

Hans Bellmer created an important body of work outside the mainstream, which has become aestheticized kitsch, gaining continual acceptance and momentum despite his limited output and the lack of a deep critical database about it. Bellmer, who died in 1975, blended a childlike anarchy with a gruesome foreboding knowledge; he sensed the themes of sexual anxiety rooted within modernism and was among the first Western artists to recognize and exploit it. For Bellmer, the doll became a site for this "hidden terror" and he set about to condense ideas within contemporary theater, movement and cinema into an object of surreal, fantastic and extreme fetishistic possibilities.

*Homage to Hans Bellmer*: with catalogue essay by Cary Loren, 'On the Continuing Erotic Dissonance of Hans Bellmer', edition of 100, p. 17.

In his first New York show Bourgeau combines homey antique objects with tiny video monitors that make absurdist commentaries on the vicissitudes of life.

*The New Yorker: 'Jef Bourgeau'*, July-August.

The discrepancy between audio and video in *A Day in the Life* works perfectly. It alone could have been the whole show. *Close the Door, Please*, a mini-shed with a video mini-man in an endless tunnel, is effective too.

*The Village Voice: 'Voice Choice: Jef Bourgeau'* by Kim Levin, in the first such feature, August 24.



*Paradise Lost* 1994, blouse form, glove mold and video. Collection of Rebecca and Alan Ross.



*Sm, Med, and Lg Masterpieces* 1996, acrylic, oil and tape on paper.



*The Hanged Woman* 1992, cloth, stuffing, graphite.



*A Day in the Life* 1993, Lego house with monitor. Private Collection.

The Gahlberg Arts Gallery will host a comprehensive exhibition of painting and sculpture by Jef Bourgeau from September 16 through October 15, 1994. As Kathryn Hixson writes, "In his sculptural accumulations, Bourgeau juxtaposes compelling objects in simple but jarring ways. *Hatrack* is the lower half of a child's mannequin, its underwear gathered around its knees. This potent, yet totally ambiguous composition operates like a filmic montage: disparate images are collaged in sequence to create a resonating unfixable meaning."

*Gallery Guide: 'On the Cover'*, September issue, cover and p. 8.



*Five Paint Samples* 1994, acrylic, oil and tape on paper. Collection of Amir Daiza.

Like early science fiction novels, Bourgeau accentuates to the hilt aspects of our normal existence to create an atmosphere of the coming fin de siècle, where grueling high-tech futurism messes with a nostalgic yearning for "simple" times. By resoundingly exaggerating the mundanities and endless repetitions of our lives. He tampers with the given, tedious, necessary toil of the world, colluding with the tarrying viewer to create a plethora of meanings. In effect, by sticking to the rules so adroitly, Bourgeau blasphemously mocks those rules, out-mundaning the mundane, turning everything upside down – pulling it out of focus – to reveal the liberating complexity of the real.

*Jef Bourgeau*: catalogue essay by Kathryn Hixson, for Gahlberg Gallery (Eileen Broido, director), College of DuPage, Glen Ellyn, Illinois, exhibition September 16 – October 15.



*Jacob's Ladder* 1994, commode, ladder, birdcage and video.

Wendy McDaris, a curator who lives in Elvis's hometown, Memphis, has had the clever idea of examining the impact of these two [icons] on the arts in *Elvis+Marilyn: 2x Immortal* at the Institute of Contemporary Art in Boston (then traveling to nine cities, including the New York Historical Society next October with a well-illustrated and sometimes thoughtful catalogue from Rizzoli). This very large show includes the work of 107 artists, among them Robert Arneson, Joseph Cornell, Keith Haring and Claes Oldenburg.

Rather arbitrarily divided into images of cultural, heroic, mythic and religious significance, it suffers from the usual problem of theme shows: some work is here simply because it is about the title. But many pieces are smart and amusing, and some are important. In Jef Bourgeau's *You Are the One*, Marilyn, in low resolution, tantalizingly, maddeningly blows a kiss over and over on tiny monitors while a scratchy male voice sings.

*The New York Times: 'A Pair of Saints Who Refuse to Stay Dead'* by Vicki Goldberg, Sunday, December 18.



*Bird in a House* 1994, antique birdhouse and monitor.

## 1995

**Paradise Lost** (video installation), SoMa Gallery, La Jolla, CA

**INJustice**, Detroit Artists Market, Detroit, MI

**Interventions** (video installation), Detroit Institute of Arts, Detroit, MI

**Words**, Space Gallery, Chicago, IL

**Reading Art** (one-person), David Klein Gallery, Birmingham, MI

**American Icon**, Detroit Focus Gallery, Detroit, MI

With their nuanced simplicity and air of eerie melodrama, Bourgeau's art suggest a sort of video-age Duchampian surrealism.

*Art & Antiques*: 'Intimate Dramas' by George Melrod, March, p. 21.

Bourgeau's video installation *Drowning by Numbers* sets up an intriguing interaction with *The Massacre of the Innocents*, a small Renaissance painting by Bernardino Butinone on the



*Drowning By Numbers* (detail) 1995, fishbowl and video monitor. Private Collection.



*Hatrack* 1992, mixed media. Photo by R.H. Hensleigh.



*Sex by Numbers* 1995, antique display hand with monitor.

opposite end of this wall at the DIA. Combining contemporary technologies and ordinary objects, Bourgeau's work draws us into a contemplation of innocence and peril. The work is first experienced as an auditory environment which moves and flows with sounds of nature and human life – whales, seagulls, children, and traffic.

The piece's visual element represents a shift in scale from the expansiveness of its sound to a fishbowl. Inside, a miniature video monitor plays tiny images of babies swimming under water. Only when we become aware of this element is the piece fully experienced.

The relationship between Bourgeau's installation and Butinone's painting is based on content. But while the Renaissance work narrates a specific event in Christian history, Bourgeau's reading of innocence and vulnerability is contemporary and elusive.

*Interventions*: curated and written by Jan van der Marck, Detroit Institute of Arts, June 4-September 3, (a CD catalogue).

Several of the participating artists use electronic media to question the way art is traditionally presented at museums. Jef Bourgeau's assemblage *Drowning by Numbers*, uses video just as inventively as others in the show, but with a different goal. The assemblage injects new life into a painting of the biblical subject by an Italian Renaissance master, Bernardino Butinone. Bourgeau's work is first experienced as an auditory environment which moves and flows with sounds of nature and human life – whales, seagulls, children, and traffic. The piece's visual element represents a shift in scale from the expansiveness of its sound to a fishbowl. Inside, a miniature video monitor plays tiny images of babies swimming under water. Only when we become aware of this element is the piece fully experienced.

Using electronic technology, Bourgeau expresses the horror of killing children much more effectively than Butinone did or could using paint. Borrowing a term from contemporary critical theory, Bourgeau has hyper-realized the chilling theme.

*Ann Arbor News*: 'Familiar works shown in a different light at DIA' by Roger Green, June 17, p. D2.

Jef Bourgeau's provocative multimedia sculptures are concerned with issues such as the body, gender, sexuality and art history. A life-size sculpture titled *Hatrack* (1992) depicts a headless, armless female child with white underpants pulled down to the knees, and topped by a man's brown fedora hat. At first, one might find the work repulsive, but it elicits a strange fascination and a desire to know more. That the work

is psychologically penetrating is apparent, but it also represents the dynamics between the sexes that are formed in childhood and often problematized by abuse and early sexual experience. That Bourgeau presents the child as helpless, blinded and trapped is the artist's pleas to protect all children. His technically refined presentation is crucial to getting his message across.

*Sculpture Magazine*: 'Provocative Issues' by Thomas Wojtas, July-August, p. 44.

According to the 18 area artists selected for the current Detroit Focus Gallery exhibit, just what is *An American Icon* these days? These terrific artists seem to be saying that American icons now reflect our disparate selves and our divergent concerns. The art pulls these differences together. Marilyn Monroe remains an icon in Jef Bourgeau's sculpture, but only on the tiny video running inside an obsolete camera.

*Detroit Free Press*: 'New icons reflect society's divergence' by Marsha Miro, November.

## 1996

**Matisse Slept Here**, Room 7, Pontiac, MI

**The Ecstasy** (video installation), Art Seattle, Seattle, WA

**The Auto Show**, Cranbrook Art Museum, Bloomfield Hills, MI

**Fresh Art**, Jane Speaks Modern Art, Pontiac, MI

"Jef has a very sensitive approach and an innovative, versatile way with such materials as videos and computers," says Kiichi Usui, curator at Meadow Brook Art Gallery, where Bourgeau exhibited during the 1980s. "His ideas are original and he conveys them marvelously well. I especially appreciate his way of absorbing the masters into his art."

Agrees David Klein (of O.K. Harris Gallery): "He takes an idea and develops it to its fullest extent. He's a great one."

*Detroit News*: 'Artist goes high tech to evoke nostalgia' by Joy Hakanson Colby, January 11, p. 6F.



*Falling Woman* 1996, vase, water, rear projection.

With a record of solo exhibitions in New York, Chicago and Amsterdam, Jef Bourgeau is an artist to watch as an alternative to Hill and Viola, someone with a command over sculpture's material heritage who is still willing to let video technology participate without dominating or overwhelming that heritage.

*Sculpture Magazine*: 'Jef Bourgeau' by Matthew Kangas, June-July, pp. 70-71.

There is also a re-cycling of the visual and auditory raw materials of the car: in Jef Bourgeau's video installation *The Short History of the Combustion Engine* and in his painting *Chappaquiddick*.

*Cranbrook's Auto Show*: exhibition essay by Jerry Herron, Cranbrook Art Museum, exhibition June 1-September 1.

The *Cranbrook Auto Show* at Cranbrook Art Museum in Bloomfield Hills presents cars in a different light. The show travels inside and outside the museum, around the upper galleries and to the lower galleries. Jef Bourgeau offers a "warning sign" painting and the briefest video in the theater, *A Short History of the American Combustion Engine*.

*The Birmingham Eccentric* (Michigan): 'Contemplation fuels show' by Mary Klemic, June 20, p. 1B.



*Slippery When Wet (Chappaquiddick)* 1994, oil, acrylic and tape on paper and mounted on composition board. Private Collection.



Art Until Now (exhibition detail) 1997, mixed media with video.

- Art Until Now**, Museum of Contemporary Art, Pontiac, MI
- Bathroom Venus** (video installation), San Francisco Art Hotel, San Francisco, CA
- DOCUMENTA USA**, Museum of Contemporary Art, Pontiac, MI
- Aperto**, Museum of Contemporary Art, Pontiac, MI
- Naked in the Nineties**, Museum of Contemporary Art, Pontiac, MI

Today there are no more risks to be taken. Before the paint is even dry on the avant-garde it's already mainstream. So suddenly everything has to be redefined, reinvented. A contemporary museum must refuse to simply be a repository or showcase for these instant artifacts.

Ground-Up (Detroit): 'Jane Speaks: Two Interviews and an Obituary' by Richard Mann and Kay Burdell, Issue #13, February, pp. 23-29.

Jef Bourgeau sees his museum not only as a legitimate way to expose people to what's going on in art right now, but also to draw them into a dialogue about the art, increasing both the visitor's and the curator's understanding of its meaning.

Exhibits feature matted and framed magazine photos of contemporary art, displayed in a pictorial narrative of what's happening in art's avant-garde. Without the burden of a true collection, the tiny museum is free to cast its eye in any direction, and to keep thoroughly up-to-date. A truly inspired idea, every museum could benefit from a space like this, and from a host like Bourgeau, who is as interested in visitor's opinions as he is in his own.

Oakland Press (Michigan): 'A museum that doesn't collect' by John Sousanis, June 10, p. D-23.



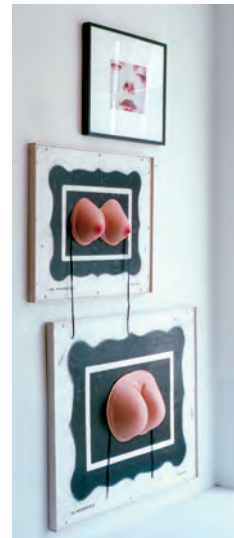
Georg Baselitz 1997, wax on paper.

I might have preferred some kind of disclosure about the nature of the contents of the exhibit [Naked in the Nineties] at the threshold of its doors so I might have made a choice whether I wished to view such material. However, no artist intending to convey the impact of his or her message partly by shock would allow such a filter.

While the photographs in the exhibit may shock, repulse and titillate its viewers, they also unquestionably serve to trigger a public awareness and discussion of the issue of sexual abuse and pornography. The fact I am writing this article is a testament to the truth of that idea.

Detroit News: 'Controversial art exhibit serves noble social purpose' by Stephen R. Jaffe, June 15.

Depictions of sex, fetishism, mutilation, various perversions and such – all neatly framed and matted – make up *Naked in the Nineties* at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Pontiac. Given its contents, the exhibition ought to be a shocker. Instead the collection on the walls raises questions about prevailing tendencies in the visual arts and how long they can be expected to continue.



The Visible Woman 1997, mixed media with prostheses.

The exhibit was created by Jef Bourgeau, Metro Detroit's most innovative video and installation artist, who has a flair for satire. He's also the director, chief curator and artist-in-residence at the museum.

Detroit News: 'Naked asks us to go beyond labels in the 90's' by Joy Hakanson Colby, July 18.



Naked in the Nineties (exhibition view) 1997, mixed media and video.

Bourgeau's museum is slightly larger than the coat room at the Detroit Institute of Arts. The ideas that bounce around here, however, are hardly restrained by the narrow walls. While the various works appear mundane and an insider's joke, when effective, they challenge the notion of what is art. And more importantly, confront the viewers with the limitations of their own perceptions and prejudices.

"Why should it be okay for a museum to claim that anything it exhibits is art?" said Bourgeau. "An artist could exhibit feces on a stick and the museum validates it as art. If anything can be art, then there's no power left to any of it."

Ironically, that sounds more like the position of cultural conservatives than an avant-garde artist. But in Bourgeau's hall of mirrors, only art can make people aware of its inherent ineptitudes and deceptions. The intent, he said, is to provoke visitors to think about where they draw the line between art and exploitation.

"The power of art allows for dialogue," said Bourgeau. "Whether it's an inner dialogue or a broader societal discussion. Art is about interaction. That's why art is never finished."

And why art, like life, is a work in progress. Seldom clear, and inherently ambiguous.

The Birmingham Eccentric (Michigan): 'The ambiguous world of Jef Bourgeau' by Frank Provenzano, October 26, p. 1D.

There's no doubt in my mind that Jef Bourgeau is one of the most successful, despite the lack of visible recognition, artists working today. And I've never doubted the seriousness of Jef or his work. I have known him for many years. I have followed what he's doing. I like his ideas as much as I like his objects, and I have collected his objects, and I have embraced his ideas, and I live in a perpetual dialogue with him you might say.

I know that Jef has worried the established art world. His work has worried institutions. In fact, institutions have protested the fact that Jef has called his setup a museum, because it somewhat casts a doubt on the legitimacy of the real thing. And that's where he hits home, and that is, I think, where the message sinks in, that's where the art is effective.



MCA Storefront (for the exhibition *The Wrong Show*) 1997, sculpture and painting.



Self-Portrait with Megaphone, polaroid.

I do not see his museum of contemporary art so much as a satire of the real thing, I see it more of a nudging, a questioning, of the real thing. In that cool Duchampian fashion that has no pathos, that has no big voice, that is a subtle, unsettling challenge to the institution usually known as the museum of contemporary art and the people responsible for the founding, the running, the financing, and the publicizing of museums of contemporary art. And so every museum of contemporary art and every institution by that name would find that this little upstart...whatever it is, in Pontiac, is somehow a challenge, and perhaps, a negative shadow falling over the real thing.

This museum asks all the questions that others do not ask. It is in very close touch with art at its most tender, at its beginning: art not yet seen, not yet recognized, not yet understood. So this very fundamental pioneering work that a beginning, unrecognized museum does is something that I very much sympathize with, because it makes people furious, it makes people think.

It does real exhibitions. They are real avant-garde. They attract a real audience. They have a real following. They are participating in a mail and Internet dialogue with the rest of the art world.

The fact that Jef Bourgeau organizes his own version of Documenta as it is done in the city of Basel every four years, a version of Aperto as it is done in the city of Venice at the Biennale every two years: shows that he understands the way that the international art world works, exchanges ideas, hands out recognition, recognizes new talent. His project operates in ways that are really so similar to those the real or the established avant-garde art world operates. It is on a smaller scale. It is certainly a whole lot more modest. But, all the quality of ideas is there.

Today, the art world does what the world-at-large does: it steals and borrows ideas; it impersonates other people; it tries to deliver a message in a language that we are almost overly familiar with; and yet, it also tries to open up a little space between the original thing and the rendering of it, the simile.



Pipe (Magritte) 1996, acrylic, oil and tape on canvas. Collection of Kathleen and Alex Bourgeau.

Jef Bourgeau, in many of the works that we have seen in his museum over the last seasons, often puts on the role that we identify with other artists. Again, not as a real act of plagiarism, or of stealing and borrowing, but as a way of bringing new ideas and art trends to a community that is not that familiar to what is going on elsewhere – in a message that he almost quotes verbatim. Of course, quoting and citing sources and impersonating someone else is a strategy that artists in the last decade apply everywhere – in New York, in Europe, and everywhere else. Jef also applies that strategy very effectively and with that he is very much in the mainstream of contemporary ideas.

It's permitted and it doesn't beg anyone's permission for an artist to deal with the whole mass of ideas in front of us, wherever they come from – the real world or electronically, or as a make-believe of something or as a virtual reality. So, Jef helps himself to all of those ideas, and from all the available sources and will do something with it that serves his purposes in a manner, for those who are not familiar with these strategies, looks as though he is simply presenting somebody else's works, somebody else's images. But, when you look closely, you see that they are very similar but not the same, that they are used

in a different manner. They are rendered in a different scale. They are presented in a different context. All of those things. And that remove that he creates, from the sources from which he quotes, from the realities which he finds – that remove is really what is his. That zone within which he operates is the zone that sets it all apart from the original model.

Like much of early conceptual art, Jef does make us live in our minds. He forces us to constantly check and double-check what is behind his work, what is he really saying, and why is he saying it. And, in this very sense, I would call what he does concept art. Some people might say, yes, but he makes objects, he puts videos in objects, he combines objects and images in an assemblage manner that goes back to that other tradition. True.

Still, his finest work to me is the concept of a museum of contemporary art. The challenge in that concept, the political statement in that concept. And the fact that no one, no one else has done this type of thing: the manner in which he has done it. There is just no precedent for it, nor is there a parallel.

Backstage Pass: 'Museum of Contemporary Art in Pontiac' produced by Katherine Weider for PBS Detroit, broadcast in October.

Bourgeau needn't look any farther than his own visitors for inspiration. Last summer a group of major art patrons exited abruptly. "They left the museum and I went outside and watched them run up the street in different directions. It was like a Keystone comedy. But then the meter-reader lady came and stayed an hour and a half to view the same exhibit."

Hour Magazine (Detroit): 'Consider the bird flipped' by Veronica Pasfield, November, p. 99.



The Wrong Show (exhibition detail) 1997, polaroid.

## 1998

The Big Huge, Museum of Contemporary Art, Pontiac, MI

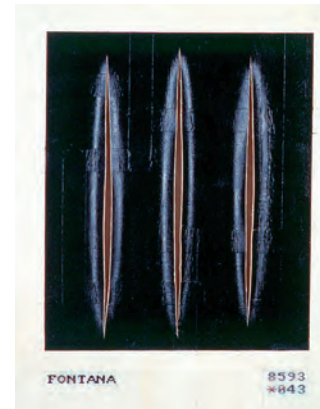
A Short History of the Combustion Engine (video projection), Cleveland Center for Contemporary Art, Cleveland, OH

The Wrong Show, Museum of Contemporary Art, Pontiac, MI

Art and the American Experience, Kalamazoo Institute of the Arts, Kalamazoo, MI

Newtopia, Clutch Cargo's, Pontiac, MI

MCA Paint Store, Museum of Contemporary Art, Pontiac, MI



Fontana 1994, acrylic, oil and tape on slashed canvas. Private Collection.

The Guggenheim Museum sent a letter to Detroit's MCA telling them they would no longer accept by post any further press-packets or museum news. "Take us off your list immediately," ordered Diane Dewey, of the Guggenheim, to Detroit's new Museum of Contemporary Art. "Should you not comply, any further mailings will be returned unopened and will be considered a breach of our rights." The Guggenheim's reason for rejecting the mail is that it is not "germane to us geographically, nor in relation to our mission or interests." Why the hostility towards one museum from another and why such offense over common publicity mailing?

Flash Art (Milan): 'Mail Harassment?', March-April, p. 45.

Christina Speaks, adjunct curator at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Detroit, has been named its new director. She succeeds Richard Mann, who will officially resign in January to concentrate on his recent appointment to the directorship of the Guggenheim Johannesburg, scheduled to begin construction late next year. Under Mann's leadership, the MCA more than tripled its membership and tripled the size of its endowment. At 24, Speaks is the youngest director to take the position in museum history.

Flash Art (Milan): 'People, Places', by Owen Drolet, March-April, p. 66.

CORRECTION: It was reported in the March-April issue of Flash Art that Richard Mann was appointed the director of the Guggenheim Johannesburg. There is no such institution. Apparently we fell victim to a hoax. Boy does Owen Drolet feel stupid.

Flash Art (Milan): 'Goings On' by Owen Drolet, May-June, p. 50.

For having declared art dead a few months back, this season at the Museum of Contemporary Art smells remarkably fresh. The museum attempts to debunk the art myth with every show and turns up some scintillating finds in the process.

The future of art will be more in-your-face than anything this century, at least as seen through the museum's crystal ball. The Wrong Show highlights work which could be taken as rude or crude or downright politically incorrect, but may betoken what's ahead. Lisa Yuskavage's paintings of elfin, pubescent girls would be almost Precious Moments-like were it not for their burgeoning sexuality. Painter Kim Dingle's Portrait of Ed Sullivan as a Young Girl is exactly what it sounds like – the hunched-over TV icon's straight mug on a little girl's body, wearing Mary Janes. Other artists include Renee Cox, Andres Serrano and Sue Williams.

Hour Magazine (Detroit): 'Future of Art' by Brenna Sanchez, September, p. 68.

American Beauty (Sleeping) places the bust of a child mannequin, her head on a rose-petal strewn pillow, inside a night-blue-bottom playpen. A common carpenter's hammer acts as a menacing reminder of unconsummated violence. As a rhetorical comment, the work is chaste and reticent. Without crying "wolf" or embracing a campaign against child abuse,



The Solution (Portable) 1997, dental kiln with wind-up chattering teeth.

Bourgeau draws attention and awakens concern about a festering ill in contemporary society. A superficial resemblance with Surrealist Grand Guignol notwithstanding, *American Beauty (Sleeping)* shows the coolness and distance that marks the art of our decade. The artist does not judge but mediates between a subject heavy with ambiguity and its viewer confronted with her own worst nightmare. Tests of public tolerance have become an art world strategy and violence as spectacle has become a staple of the movies. Accordingly, Bourgeau dwells on borderline subject matter and behavior to elicit that *frisson* we experience in coming upon a striking work of art, followed by the inevitable recognition of its sickening implications.

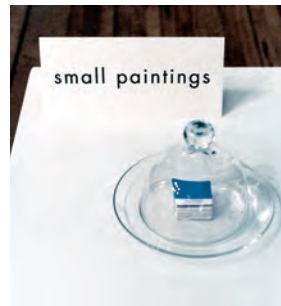


*American Beauty (Sleeping)* 1997, exhibition view at Kalamazoo Institute of Arts.

*Art and the American Experience*, curated and written by Jan van der Marck, Kalamazoo Institute of Arts, September 13 – December 6, p. 38 (image), p. 43 (text).



MCA Paint Store 1998, window display.



*Small Paintings* 1998, clipped paint chips and glass butter dish.

Despite heady competition with other events, a decent-sized crowd opted for *Newtopia*, co-sponsored by MONA with the Metro Times, at the former church now-club Clutch Cargo's, bringing with it a varied range of Metro Detroit art and a rare kind of Knitting Factory vibe.

*Metro Times Detroit*: 'NEWTOPIA' by Casey Coston, October 14.

Jef Bourgeau has turned his museum into a paint store for its last exhibition at Lawrence Street. *Paint Sale* reads one of the signs on the storefront window and the sign at the entrance adds below that, "If it doesn't match your sofa, it isn't art!"

The color of the month is blue, a deep cobalt blue in fact. And Bourgeau has created large-scale paint samples that hang on the walls, as well as tiny "paintings" of actual snipped paint chips stacked on a plate. He also created MCA paint cans with labels that read rather provocatively.



*MCA Paint Cans* 1998, paper, ink and metal cans.

After only two days of operation the museum received fines from both the city and the county for running an unlicensed paint store. Bourgeau moves the museum onto main street Pontiac next, renting a walk-in closet from Galerie Blu's director David Popa for one dollar a year.

*Art Times* (Ohio): 'Coloring a Museum in a New Hue' by Cheryl Doig, October 28, p. 17.

## 1999

*Documenta USA II*, Urban Institute of Contemporary Art, Grand Rapids, MI

*Blimey!* Museum of Contemporary Art, Pontiac, MI

*Closet Art*, Museum of Contemporary Art, Pontiac, MI

*Art Until Now*, Detroit Institute of the Arts, Detroit, MI

If Jef Bourgeau were to lie on the floor and stretch – really stretch – he could almost touch all four walls of his "museum," a portable, 8-by-10 fringe institute of shock, sleight-of-hand and slippery enigmas. Bourgeau lives in an ambiguous world where art is in dire need of an infusion of authenticity and the greatest affliction is blind acceptance of the status quo.

In Bourgeau logic, every man is not only an island, but also curator of his own museum "Most people live on the periphery," says Bourgeau. "Art can bring them out of that and get them more engaged with life."

So, it seems bizarrely poetic that this fall, Bourgeau will become part of the establishment. The Detroit Institute of Arts invited him to develop his own exhibit looking back at the passing decade and ahead to the millennium. "They asked me to put my museum inside of their museum," he says. "How could I refuse?"

*Fineline* (Detroit): 'Size hardly matters' by Frank Provenzano, Spring issue.

The Detroit Institute of Arts will start the next millennium with a bombshell in the form of an exhibition entitled *kaBOOM!* Based on the destruction of art in this century, on vandalism as a sincere form of artistic expression, viewers will be invited to destroy actual works of art. Man Ray's *Object to be Destroyed* can be crushed with an over-sized hammer, you can spray paint a green dollar sign on a Malevich painting, piss in Duchamp's *Fountain*, erase a Willem de Kooning drawing, stitch up a Fontana, or slash up a Barnett Newman.

*Flash Art* (Milan): 'kaBOOM!,' November/December.

At a hastily called press conference Monday, Detroit Institute of Arts director Graham Beal defended his decision to lock the public out of a controversial exhibit. Speaking for the first time on the issue, Beal targeted two works in the exhibit, one as "racial," the other as "sacrilegious." Several DIA board members, as well as Detroit Mayor Dennis Archer, said they supported Beal.

Former DIA director Sam Sachs II, director at the Frick Collection in New York, said Beal's decision is troubling. "It should worry people that freedom of expression is under attack," he said.

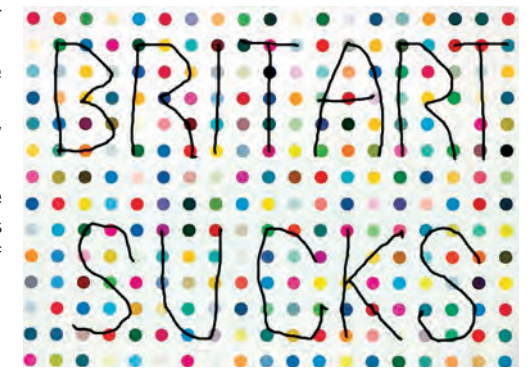
*Detroit News*: DIA director defends closing exhibit: It's offensive to the community, he says' by Joy Hakanson Colby and Tim Kiska, November 23.



Chris Ofili: *Bath tub Jesus* 1995, antique doll, nickel tub and finger-protector. Collection of Cynthia and John Kherkher.



MCA in a Closet 1999, detail of *Blimey!* exhibition.



*Connecting the Dots* (after Hirst) 1999, print and felt marker.



Van Gogh's Ear (exhibition view) 1999, Detroit Institute of Arts.

Bourgeois's show had been planned long before Beal's arrival. "We've been talking about it for two years," says 20th century art curator MaryAnn Wilkinson. "I approached Jef as an installation artist, as someone who thinks about art issues at the end of the century."

Jan van der Marck, former chief curator at the DIA, says Bourgeois's show "would have enlightened the public and made difficult issues something people could more easily understand."

*Detroit News*: 'Museum's new director cancels exhibit' by Joy Hakanson Colby, November 20.

"You can't ignore the art of this decade. And I was asked by the museum to put my version of that on display," artist Jef Bourgeois told the newspaper. "Much of the '90s was about the Young British artists, about provocation and shock. What is disappointing is that there were never any complaints and the museum still closed it down. It was neither canceled nor postponed, but shut down in its third day by the museum director."

*Chicago Sun-Times*: 'A matter of art' by staff, November 23.

Robert Sedler, professor of Constitutional Law at Wayne State University, thinks the public's First Amendment rights may have been violated. "If Beal thought the artist Jef Bourgeois's work was junk, then he'd be within his rights." (Sedler calls that editorial discretion.) "But by arguing that the art might be offensive, Beal is veering into First Amendment territory. He's doing the same thing Rudolph Giuliani did in attempting to close a controversial exhibit at the Brooklyn Museum. They're both public officials, and what this does is violate the First Amendment rights of the public to view the work. If Beal had turned this work down before it ever hit the gallery, the First Amendment issue wouldn't apply. But once it's in the museum, it's pretty hard to argue he's closing the show for any other reason than censorship."

Former DIA director Sam Sachs II disagrees with Beal's assessment. He defended the sophistication of Detroit audiences. "Detroiters are a very sophisticated audience capable of handling just about anything," said Sachs. "The arts have become a bully's target. You may not be so interested in freedom of speech, but it affects everyone."

*Detroit News*: 'Detroit thrust into spotlight by DIA exhibit' by Tim Kiska and Susan Whitall, November 23.



DIA Guard Blocking Re-entry of the Artist 1999, Detroit Institute of Arts.

Hot on the heels of the fuss over her unmade bed at the Tate, bad girl Tracey Emin is at the centre of a new art row, writes Andrew Gumbel in Los Angeles. A Detroit museum has abruptly shut down a show that included a video of the artist in a menstruation ritual, to the consternation of patrons and organisers. Museum-goers who turned up over the weekend found the exhibition rooms padlocked.

*The Independent* (London): 'Artist stages protest' by John Davison, November 23.

And so in a post-modern spectacle of its own, art pretending to be that of controversial artists has become controversial in turn.

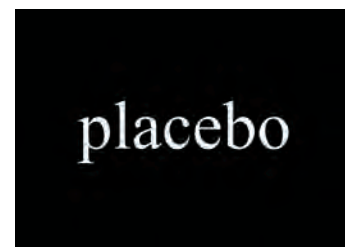
*New York Times*: 'Another Art Battle, as Detroit Museum Closes an Exhibit Early' by Robyn Meredith, November 23.



Tracey Emin: Venus on the Rag 1999, glass jars, hard-boiled eggs and rear projected video.

Officials at the Detroit Institute of Arts defended their decision to shut down an exhibition after museum officials failed to reach an agreement with the artist about changing potentially offensive pieces. The Institute closed the first portion of a 12-week installation series, *Art Until Now*, by artist Jef Bourgeois. The series, about 20th century art, included one piece called *Bathtub Jesus*, which was an anatomically correct doll wearing a condom.

*USA TODAY*: 'Culture Clash', November 23, p. 1.



Placebo 1997, acrylic on canvas. Private Collection.

The strife that has consumed museums from New York to Cincinnati has come to roost on Woodward Avenue. Jef Bourgeois's show, *Art Until Now*, was scheduled to run through Feb. 13, offering an overview – sometimes serious, sometimes tongue-in-cheek – of the breadth of art in the 20th Century. The first installment, which began last week, is on hold.

It's not uncommon for curators and artists to make changes in exhibitions before their openings, for reasons ranging from space limitations to possible negative audience reaction. But normally such changes are made quietly, without the public privy to the decision. In July, the DIA removed a print by artist Kara Walker. Several board members and representatives of the museum's Friends of African and African-American Art complained that the piece had offensive racial overtones.

*Detroit Free Press*: 'Dispute goes on display at DIA' by David Lyman, November 23.

How long has it been since the DIA mounted any show that provoked more comment than the Gucci gowns at the latest DIA society ball? Unfortunately for those who like to debate what is and is not art, the show that's stirred up so much discussion is closed, or, as Beal belatedly announced at a news conference on Monday, "postponed."

It's ironic that an exhibition dedicated to the extremes of 20th century art must be "postponed" until the century is over. It's disappointing that we aren't in the midst of a debate about art that we can view with our own eyes.

In a newspaper interview, Beal recently said he became enamored with art after being baffled by an abstract sculpture in a museum: "That notion of what gives art value – and who it gives value – that has been the question I've pondered ever since."

That experience – of confronting art that disturbs, unsettles, annoys – opened a door and led Beal to his vocation. Now, he's padlocked the door behind him.

*Detroit News*: 'It's unfortunate DIA exhibit debate focuses on art we aren't able to see' by Laura Berman, November 23.



Locked door to Van Gogh's Ear 1999, Detroit Institute of Arts



Andres Serrano: Christ's Piss 1999, glass bell, antique jar and vinegar.

A tempest in a teapot, or more precisely a brouhaha about *Bathtub Jesus*, is playing out at the Detroit Institute of Arts.

The points of controversy were *Bathtub Jesus*, which was a doll with a bank teller's rubber finger-protector for a penis, and a racial slur in another title card. Other potentially offensive elements were a vial of urine and a menstruation video.

The display apparently evoked artwork that has become part of the de rigueur shock list cited by critics of public arts funding. That the exhibit was designed in part as comment on earlier controversies makes it an intriguing proposition.

*Detroit Free Press*: 'Art, or Not? Playing it safe isn't always the artistic thing to do', November 24.

The DIA approached Jef Bourgeois, a well-regarded artist, two years ago to develop an exhibition tracing the major themes in 20th-century art. Mr Bourgeois, who financed the project through his own personal funds, was scheduled to open the first of his 12 installments last Wednesday in a small area of the museum. But Mr. Beal closed the event on Friday. The DIA's

decision is inevitably generating comparisons with the recent action of New York Mayor Rudy Giuliani, who threatened to cut off city funding to the Brooklyn Museum of Art for running the British exhibition, *Sensations*.

Yet the two cases are quite different: Mr. Beal acted of his own accord.

*Detroit News*: 'Tempest at the DIA' by the editor, November 24.

DIA volunteer Evelyn Wishnetsky, one of the few people to actually see Bourgeois's show, says she was impressed by it. "I'm appalled that the museum canceled it. The work makes people think. I'm in my late 70s and I loved it."

Art isn't a play-it-safe genre, and the DIA has some excellent examples of controversy, from the Rivera murals to Whistler's *Falling Rocket*. All that is a concept worth defending.

*Detroit News*: 'Art controversy focuses national spotlight on Detroit' by Joy Colby, Susan Whitall and Tim Kiska, November 24.



Janine Antoni: *Gnaw (the prosthesis)* 1999, glass bell, rubber mouth protector and half-eaten Hershey bar.

Il Museo d'arte di Detroit ha chiuso in 48 ore una mostra di arte contemporanea in cui uno dei pezzi forti era un Gesu giocattolo con indosso un profilattico.

"Ci siamo preoccupati di non offendere la comunita", ha dichiarato il neo-direttore dell'istituzione Graham Beal, mentre Jef Bourgeois, l'artista che aveva montato l'esposizione, ha accusato il museo di censura...

*Il Mattino* (Naples): 'Scandalo a Detroit' by staff, November 24.

L'exposition de Detroit, "L'Art jusqu'à maintenant", programmée sur deux mois, aurait du ouvrir ses portes mercredi dernier, avec la première d'une série d'expositions durant chacune des 12 semaines, et dont l'ensemble devait représenter toutes les facettes de l'art du XXe siècle.

*Le Monde* (Paris): 'Un directeur de musee americain reporte une exposition par crainte de la polemique' November 24.

Julius Combs, a member of the Detroit arts commission and the search committee that hired Beal, declined to discuss the specifics of the show, saying it would be wrong without first seeing the art itself. He said he wasn't happy with the idea of closing a show, but that since Beal is so new that the conservative approach was probably the best one

*Detroit Free Press*: 'Artist is upset, but DIA's director stands firm' by David Lyman, November 25.

"Bourgeois has provoked debate and controversy and that's all healthy," say painter Carl Demeulenaere. "The closing of the show has become a conceptual art work in itself."

Installation artist Deanna Sperka agrees. "The locked museum door is Jef's show now," she says.

*Detroit News*: 'Controversy may bring museum, art community closer' by Joy Hakanson Colby, November 26.

Until this month, Jef Bourgeois was known to art world insiders as an innovator. But since an exhibit of his was deemed offensive and closed by the Detoit Institute of Arts on Nov. 19, suddenly his name is known across the country as one of the central figures in a censorship battle pitting the right to freedom of speech against the desire to protect the public from "offensive" art.

*Detroit News*: 'Bourgeois says spotlight of controversy may hurt his career' by Joy Hakanson Colby, November 30.

If the DIA ultimately decides not to mount Bourgeois's show, its artistic merit becomes instantly secondary to its controversy quotient.

*Detroit Free Press*: 'Controversy is good business' by Terry Lawson, November 30.



The artist waiting to speak with museum staff, 1999, Detroit Institute of Arts.

Maya Angelou, J.D. Salinger, Elvis Presley and the Beatles – what do these people have in common? Besides being legendary artists in their respective fields, they are bound by a more dubious connection. All of these artists have been the object of censorship at some point in their careers. Censorship is a persistent threat to the artistic community, and it recently hit home when the Detroit Institute of Arts decided to close down the showing of Jef Bourgeois's *Art Until Now*. In postponing Bourgeois's show, the DIA does not mean to promote censorship, but that is the result.

*Michigan Daily* (Ann Arbor): 'DIA should not censor art exhibit', November 30.

Grandstanding commentators complaining about Beal's condescension to museum-goers miss the point entirely. The real condescension is in the act of provocation itself that basically assumes that only the most blatant shocks will be understood by the "general public," that only shit flung in well-placed exhibitions will be effective.

*Metro Times Detroit*: 'Sensation lite: DIA flap is not the event of our dreams' by George Tysh, December 1.

Bourgeois emphasized that a dangerous precedent is being set because, unlike other recent controversies, such as the one over the *Sensation* show in New York, his installation was shut down internally without public outcry.

*Arts Wire* (Online): 'Art Until Now Cancelled at Detroit Institute of Arts; Director Cites Hot-Button Issues', December 1.

Reaction to the Brazil nut image focused exclusively on its label, which contained a racial slur. David Driskell, professor emeritus at the University of Maryland and a longtime curator to entertainer Bill Cosby, said that even though he objected to the Brazil nut label, he was "ambivalent about the museum closing the show. Once you have entered a contract with the artist, there is a commitment to honor it."

Christopher Knight, art critic for the *Los Angeles Times*, said, "It's presumptuous to assume that a work of art is going to offend particular individuals. There are other ways (than closing the show) in which to prepare an audience to see works of art that might prove difficult. Preventing the audience from having the opportunity to see it is not one of those actions."

James Bridenstine, director of the Kalamazoo Institute of Arts, which included Bourgeois in a show in 1998, said of the closed exhibit's labels: "Sure, those titles could be offensive to some people, even if the images are bland. I have great respect for the DIA curators and great respect for Bourgeois as an artist. What's unfortunate about this show is the timing, closing it after it opened to the public."

*Detroit News*: 'Insulting? You decide' by Joy Colby, Tim Kiska and Susan Whitall, December 1.



Untitled (*Basquiat's Toe*) 1998, alligator vice with magnifying glass and Brazil nut.

Recently, the Detroit Institute of Arts was preparing to show an exhibit that included a work titled *Bathtub Jesus*, featuring a doll wearing a condom. When the public ire reached the ears of Graham Beal, the museum's director, he immediately stepped in and shut down the exhibit. A spokesperson for the institute told the *Detroit News* that the museum "has a responsibility to the artist and an even greater responsibility to the public." Sometimes it seems as if government responsibility is a thing of the past. It is refreshing to see someone in the arts community who understands the basic truth of accountability. Radical artists and their patrons fail to understand that hard-working Americans have a right to assume their government will not insult and persecute them with the very tax dollars they are required to hand over to that same government. I hope other arts leaders finally get the message.

*Listen America* (National Broadcast): 'A responsibility to the public' by Jerry Falwell, December 2.



The irony is that while blockbuster exhibits at the DIA may bring record crowds, the highly promoted shows may have minimal effect in broadening the appreciation of contemporary art. In some ways, major exhibits of works by Monet, van Gogh, and other historically significant artists may further entrench mainstream attitudes about what is “good art.” Last fall’s strident public reaction to the “Sensation” exhibit at the Brooklyn Museum that included a dung-laden portrait of the Madonna, and the controversy at the DIA over the closing of artist Jef Bourgeois’s “shock art” exhibit demonstrates the public’s ambivalence over contemporary art.

In the last three years, Bourgeois has had a singular mission: To prod, provoke, and persuade public opinion that a contemporary arts museum could stir a debate about how art can reflect the changing nature of society. His project, entitled the Museum of Contemporary Art, is a closet-sized exhibit space inside a commercial gallery, Galerie Blu, and located in gritty downtown Pontiac.

*FineLine* (Detroit): ‘A portrait of influence’ by Frank Provenzano, December issue.



MCA in a Closet 1999, from *Blimey!* exhibition.

## 2000



*Famous Artists* 2000, exhibition view at Galerie Blu.

- Famous Artists** (one person), Galerie Blu, Pontiac, MI
- Documenta USA II**, Museum of Contemporary Art, Pontiac, MI
- Fear No Art**, Museum of Contemporary Art, Pontiac, MI
- Critical Eyes**, Museum of New Art, Pontiac, MI
- e-MONA**, Museum of New Art, Pontiac, MI
- Ten New German Photographers**, Museum of New Art, Pontiac, MI

While the cancellation of Michigan artist Jef Bourgeois’s 12 installations, to have run through this month, took place shortly after the Brooklyn *Sensation* debate, DIA director Graham Beal discounts any connection between the events. “The art of the last ten years has been particularly confrontational,” Beal says. “Artists have been examining potent issues, and it is up to the museum to find a way to frame these issues in a way that is positive.”

*ARTnews*: ‘The Three-Day Show’, January, p. 16.

An art exhibit that was shut down by the Detroit Institute of Arts will open Friday in Pontiac. But it won’t have the works that caused all the commotion. Instead, the Galerie Blu will show Bourgeois’s photographs of famous artists.

*Detroit News*: ‘Part of controversial art exhibit to be shown in Pontiac’ by Joy Hakanson Colby, January 4.

Jef Bourgeois has set up shop in Galerie Blu. There are no pieces from his show deemed controversial and closed in mid-November by the Detroit Institute of Arts, but he’s giving exposure to work that would have been shown in the remaining one-week installments there.

Nothing’s controversial here. The work, however, is typical of Bourgeois’s ability to puzzle, humor, stimulate discussion, focus on everyday objects as art and comment on art and artists who stand out in history.



*Documenta USA* 2000, exhibition view.

A tiny space in the gallery serves as Bourgeois’s Museum of Contemporary Art. On exhibit are 100 boxes in his *Documenta USA* project containing work by such famous artists as Christo and Jenny Holzer, and a small house made of plastic blocks with a picture window that features a video playing Bourgeois’s very short version of the history of art.

*Detroit Free Press*: ‘Art dwells at 7 N. Saginaw in Pontiac’ by Keri Guten Cohen, January 16.

Jef Bourgeois has become something of an enigma, whereby his fame has overshadowed his work. Most of his work, quite frankly, is filled with biting humor and satire often missing in the all-too-serious art world. Thankfully, he is not only earnest, but, at times, capable of laughing at himself. Ultimately, he’s a provocateur and satirist who believes the absolute worse response to art is indifference.

David Popa, whose gallery features work with a pop-art sensibility, is one of Bourgeois’s biggest supporters. He, along with several other gallery owners, circulated a letter to the media in opposition to the DIA’s closing of Bourgeois’s exhibit. “Jef is good at eliciting a response, negative or positive,” said Popa. “He gets people impassioned about art.”

*Detroit Free Press*: ‘Will controversy follow Bourgeois’s new exhibit’ by Frank Provenzano, January 21.

Coming on the heels of the flap over the Brooklyn Museum’s *Sensation: Young British Artists*, was the controversy surrounding the first of a series of multimedia installations at the Detroit Institute of Arts (DIA) by Michigan artist Jef Bourgeois. This incident has been hyped in the local, national, and even international media as another skirmish in the culture wars, which pit free-speech fundamentalists against the arbiters of “good taste.”



*Art is Money* 2002, intervention to museum donors’ plaque during *kaBOOM!* exhibition, Museum of New Art (Detroit).

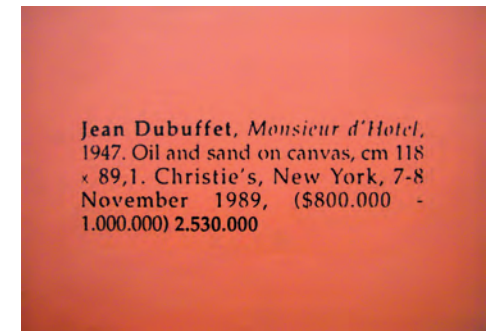
The Bourgeois affair is generally seen as evidence of the “chilling effect” rippling through our culture in the wake of New York Mayor Rudolph Giuliani’s use of the issue of public funding for the arts as a means of increasing political capital in his bid for the Senate.

When viewed through the all-pervasive lens of “show-me-the-money,” the Bourgeois incident and *Sensation* do have a common thread. In both, the fault line that divides economic interests augured the range of possible outcomes. At the DIA, Beal had no reason to jeopardize the revenue stream of the cash-strapped museum. On the other hand, Brooklyn Museum director Arnold Lehman knew that the financial might of the art world was arrayed behind him and the mayor’s threat worthless. The lesson: As with any other commodity in this great country of ours, you get as much free speech as you can buy.

*New Art Examiner* (Chicago): ‘Michigan Artist Censored’ by Vince Carducci, March, p. 64.

In the 10 years since he was indicted on obscenity charges over the Robert Mapplethorpe art exhibit, former museum director Dennis Barrie says censorship has become an even bigger problem. “It should scare people,” says Barrie, who will be the keynote speaker Saturday at a forum on controversial art and censorship, *Fear No Art: The Politics of Correctness* at Jef Bourgeois’s Museum of Contemporary Art in Pontiac.

As for the Bourgeois controversy, Dennis Barrie says he is concerned that museums are more cautious about what they will exhibit for fear of the consequences. “You see more on cable, but because museums are public, or quasi-public places,



*Monsieur d'Hotel* (after Dubuffet) 1990, screenprint and acrylic on canvas.

people think they have some right, because they are citizens or because it's their tax dollars, to say what should be shown there," Barrie says. "There is a censorship issue here and that part is very disturbing."

*Oakland Press* (Michigan): 'Arts Under Fire' by Tracy Ward, March 2.

The giant glass windows of the street front gallery were more like a shield than a portal. Covered from the ground to ceiling with brown butcher paper, the windows were wrapped by order of the Pontiac Police Department. Jef Bourgeau was cited for showing obscene images, the day his exhibit *Fear No Art* opened. Ironically, about 100 people gathered upstairs in the auditorium to debate controversial art and censorship.

*Oakland Press* (Michigan): 'Artist gets ticketed as panel discusses censorship' by Erica Blake, March 5.

Police have charged an artist with obscenity for exhibits in a display on censorship and art. Police cited Jef Bourgeau on Saturday, accusing him of allowing a public display of obscenity. The city ordinance carries a maximum penalty of 90 days in jail and a \$500 fine. Deputy Chief Conway Thompson said authorities objected to the fact that the images were visible to passersby. He said the city had nothing against art displays "as long as it's professional art."

*Detroit Free Press*: 'Artist charged with obscenity for exhibit', March 6.



Pontiac Police collecting evidence on obscenity charges, 2000.



Deputy Chief Conway Thompson, reviewing incriminating polaroids, 2000.

The owner of a downtown Pontiac museum – cited by police Saturday for an art exhibit they call obscene – is scheduled to appear in court today. Bourgeau's show is a compilation of art that has been considered controversial beginning in the 1860s and dating to the present. Bourgeau said, "I was asked to curate it. And it's not an easy show. But these are famous artists. It goes from Rembrandt through Picasso and Modigliani to modern artists such as Sally Mann and Francesca Woodman. The police seemed especially distressed by a reproduction of Gustave Courbet's *Origin of the World*."

*Oakland Press* (Michigan): 'Artist shifts from Detroit to Pontiac and the result is the same trouble' by Doug Henze, March 6.

Jef Bourgeau will have to wait to find out if his art exhibit is obscene. The artist, who was ticketed Saturday for displaying obscene images, went to 50th District Court Monday, only to find that the court wasn't ready for him. A court clerk said they didn't have all the paperwork.

*Oakland Press* (Michigan): 'Ruling on whether this art is obscene must wait' by John Wisely, March 7.

For the past four years, Bourgeau has been examining censorship and gender issues in art under the umbrella of his Museum of Contemporary Art. For this exhibit, titled *Fear No Art*, he cuts pictures out of art magazines or constructs images from found objects, making references to other artists' approaches to race, sex, religion, or any topic that has touched off an incident or a culture war during the 20th century.

*Detroit News*: 'Bourgeau Fears No Art' by Joy Hakanson Colby, March 10.

Amid the more than 100 artists represented are nudes by such respected artists as Goya, Velasquez, Magritte, Edward Weston, Cartier-Bresson and Rodin. And yet, *Fear No Art* is difficult to view. It soon becomes difficult to sort out art from offensive images. Lumped together, the nudes lose their individual beauty and take on a collective surreal ugliness. But maybe that's the point.

*Detroit Free Press*, 'Tradition, repression and censorship targeted' by Keri Guten Cohen, March 12, p. 2F.

The Museum of Contemporary Art and its director Jef Bourgeau were cited for displaying "obscene images." Bourgeau has yet to receive a pretrial date. This incident represents only the second time in U.S. history that an art institution has been prosecuted on obscenity laws.

*Art Newsroom* (England): 'Police Raid Museum', March 17.



Police photographing Gustave Courbet's *Origin of the World* (1868), 2000.

Starting at the wall Bourgeau dubbed "The Male Gaze" – a collage of various female body parts – he mentioned that all the images were culled and cut from art magazines and books found in regular bookstores and at the DIA. Bourgeau pointed out the purposeful juxtaposition of a 1924 piece by Man Ray called *Le Violon d'Ingres* next to Kathy Grove's 1990 version called *(The Other Series) After Man Ray*. Both showed nude women from behind with violin markings etched on their back – implying women are objects to be played. While 66 years separated the two pieces, it was chilling to see how one was considered art, while the modern-day version remains hidden behind covered windows in Pontiac.

*Oakland Press* (Michigan): 'Art sometimes challenges culture' by Jillian Bogater, March 23.

In the last 10 years, art has been under attack more often than the corner porn store.

*The Freedom Forum Calendar*: 'Quote for the Day' by Jef Bourgeau, September 10.

Pontiac artist Jef Bourgeau's Museum of New Art opens its first show Friday. *Critical Eyes* is an exhibition of works selected from the private collections of three Detroit-area art curators and writers: Dennis Nawrocki, Hope Palmer and Tom Wojtas. The pieces range from edgy industrial-based work to classical, figurative and abstract pieces.

Bourgeau is best-known to local audiences as the artist whose controversial installation, *Art Until Now*, was shuttered by the Detroit Institute of Arts last November. He says he sees the non-profit MONA as a constantly evolving space dedicated to the practice of contemporary art through film, video, lecture, symposium and exhibitions, with a mandate of increasing the understanding and development of new art.

*Detroit Free Press*: 'New Space Opening' by Keri Guten Cohen, October 1.



*Critical Eyes* (exhibition view) 2000, Museum of New Art, Pontiac.

The upstart museum erupts in color and style without any obviously offensive creations.

Director Jef Bourgeau, who has been running the museum in various temporary locations for the last few years, fully knows new art, and the controversy it can spark. He is a long-time artist himself, exhibiting in commercial galleries in Detroit, New York, Chicago and Santa Monica, and has shown around the world. He earned notoriety last November – when he cemented his desire to open a museum of contemporary art – after the DIA asked him to create an exhibition of modern art.

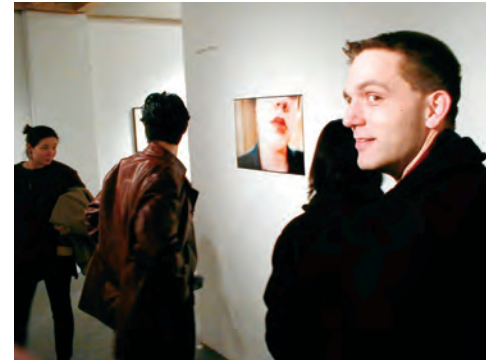
"It takes a little daring in the face of relative apathy in this town, and in the face of the very entrenched and powerful position of the Detroit Institute of Arts," says Jan van der Marck, a MONA board member who has curated at major galleries across

the United States including the DIA. “The DIA has a respectable (contemporary) collection, but once you get institutionalized, you become less nimble than we can be.”

*Windsor Star* (Canada): ‘Rules be Damned’ by Craig Pearson, October 12.

With its opening exhibit of images e-mailed from 25 countries and enlarged by digital printers, MONA has achieved an exciting merger of art and technology. *e-MONA* is a good beginning and a hopeful sign for the future.

*Detroit News* ‘New Museum fills Detroit’s need to showcase adventurous art’ by Joy Hakanson Colby, October 13.



*e-MONA* 2000, detail of exhibition – e-mailed files enlarged and printed on photographic paper.

Venture into the smaller gallery for a look at *e-MONA*. Here’s edgy; here’s current. Tacked frameless on the four walls are examples of fresh art sent by email from all over the world.

Bourgeau came up with a simple idea based on the instant technology of the Internet: He put out a call for artwork to be e-mailed to the museum and got more than 1,000 responses. The show features 50 young artists from 24 countries. Their work was blown up and printed on state-of-the-art digital printers.

*Detroit Free Press*: ‘Museum opens with collectors’ pieces, e-mailed art’ by Keri Guten Cohen, October 15.



*Guernica* (American) 1996, mixed media on paper mounted onto composition board. Private Collection.

In Bourgeau’s logic, notions of art and museums are part of a slippery game of semantics. Whereas in 1917 Marcel Duchamp pushed the idea that in a given context even a urinal could be considered as art, Bourgeau has set out to redefine an art museum. He espouses the idea that art should be considered “of the moment,” not just a historical artifact.

*Detroit Free Press*: ‘Museum of New Art uses the term loosely’ by Frank Provenzano, October 15.

Dick Goody, director of Meadow Brook Art Gallery at Oakland University, also believes the MONA is a place to be visited. “This puts us on the map in terms of contemporary art. It’s just the place for experimental art in Detroit. Jef Bourgeau is committed to art on the cutting edge,” said Goody. He believes people can expect great things out of MONA and Bourgeau.

*Oakland Post* (Michigan): ‘Banned’ by Mike Murphy, October 18.

## 2001

*Documenta USA III*, Museum of New Art, Detroit, MI

*Lucio Pozzi*, Museum of New Art, Detroit, MI

Artist Jef Bourgeau was getting ready to open the Museum of New Art in Pontiac last spring, when he received a phone call telling him the back wall of his building had fallen down. Bourgeau remembers turning around in mid-errand and rushing back to Pontiac. He found a condemned sign on the front door and the back of the soon-to-be museum wide open.



Sign taped to The Museum of New Art’s building in Pontiac.

“It was unbelievable,” he says. “The place was a nightmare with no water, no heat, no electricity, a leaking roof and then no back wall.”

One year later, the museum popularly nicknamed MONA not only survived the trials of Pontiac, but it’s getting ready for a new life in Detroit. The museum is in the process of moving to a handsome 10,000-square-foot space in the venerable Book Building.

*Detroit News*: ‘Metro Detroit artist finds home for contemporary art’ by Joy Hakanson Colby, May 16, p. 1D



Constructing the new museum in the Book Building, downtown Detroit, 2001.



MONA opens its Detroit doors with *Documenta USA III*, 2001.

This museum is neither Palladian palace nor temple to contemporary architecture. Its location in a Washington Boulevard skyscraper was fashionable 60 years ago. Is this place, in fact, a museum? Will it ever become one? Any art patron or admirer might ask these questions while touring the raw and rough 10,000 square feet of space in the Book Building where Jef Bourgeau – artist, provocateur and self-styled curator – and a cadre of supporters are launching a museum to house the art of now.

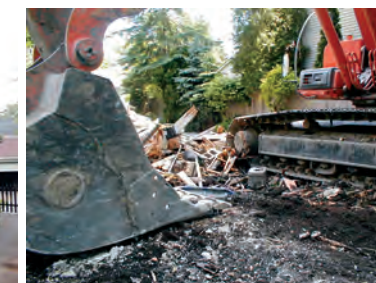
*Detroit News*: ‘Museum of New Art Downtown’ by Laura Berman, May 17.

The MONA is a contemporary art space. Given the slightly unfinished edgy feeling, and the capacious loftlike setting, one could almost picture this as an art-snoo filled SoHo gallery show.

*Metro Times Detroit*: ‘Drowning MONA’ by Casey Coston, May 22.



*The Guyton House* (Birmingham) 2001, residential home decorated by artist Tyree Guyton and friends.



*The Guyton House* (Birmingham) 2001, decorated home destroyed a few days later.

Don’t look now, but MONA is turning a postmodern innovator into a provocateur. At least that’s the effect of setting up Detroit artist Tyree Guyton to Heidelberg-ize a site in a polite Birmingham neighborhood. In that staid community where the major problems are valium abuse and nervousness over NASDAQ reports, the reaction to Guyton has been cold and swift: Tear the mother down and within days, not the months that it took in “inefficient” Detroit.

*Metro Times Detroit*: ‘There goes the hood’ by George Tysh, June 13-19, p. 21

The MONA opens its doors in a new home downtown Saturday with an exhibit called *Documenta USA*, featuring 2,000 works by artists from 45 countries. Every 100 minutes, the art on exhibit – slides, catalogs and postcards of original works – will change.

*Detroit Free Press*: ‘New museum tests barriers’ by Frank Provenzano, September 9.

*Documenta USA* uses the peripheral support materials of contemporary art as a survey of what's happening, on an international level, in contemporary art. Catalogs, revolving slide and video exhibitions – including Spencer Tunick's delightful Naked Series and Nina Glaser's caked nudes – reviews, postcard announcements in research boxes, as well as antique opticons beckon visitors to be their own researchers, to examine the world of new art and thus in a sense be the creators of it. In addition, the response to Bourgeau's ingenious idea (to create an active archive collection by sending an open invitation to all artists to submit a work that fits inside a standard archive box) has been strong, with leading artists from around the world (including Jenny Holzer, Vito Acconci, Arman and Christo) creating works that MONA has used to construct a most inviting installation piece. Asked what "contemporary art" is, Bourgeau responds, "Any art that hasn't accumulated a history, that is fresh and challenging to status-quo visions of art."



*Documenta USA III*: detail of postcard installation.

*Metro Times Detroit*: 'The latest evidence' by Glen Mannisto, September.

Bourgeau feels that of late the key players in art exhibits – audience and artist – have been surpassed by a behind the scenes, often disconnected, group of decision makers. As a result, he's chosen the concept of documentation to inaugurate the museum. 'The idea came from Germany. Every year they have a big show that examines art in the world. This show uses all of the materials from before and after an exhibit. Submitted slides, postcards, interviews. Who's to say what gets accepted to the show and what doesn't? We wanted the audience to be involved.' Thus the show, *Documenta USA*, billed as "the largest art exposition in the world," is a massive analysis of the puzzle pieces that make an exhibition. Slides and pictures are displayed with no discrimination, as the audience is invited to, in effect, make their own show. As an extension of MONA's viewer-friendly attitude, no piece is untouchable or,



*Documenta USA III*: Viewing stations.

certainly, unapproachable and every 100 minutes pieces are changed, taking the phrase "of the moment" to a whole new level. The show also includes a video component, *Fifteen*, that features artists talking about their work, as well as a mural from the Boston based Artist Head Clausnitzer and *The Burnt Show* from California based Sacha Eckes. Still, the museum hasn't traded big names for new names. Among the exhibited works are pieces of Arman, Jenny Holzer, Sol Lewitt, Christo and sorely underrated Fluxus queen Yoko Ono, along with many others.

*Real Detroit Weekly*, 'Art for the Moment' by Natalie Haddad, September.

In a press release that ranks as the most entertaining ever received by the *Flash Art* news office – part spirited manifesto and part PT Barnum-esque ballyhoo – the Museum of New Art in Detroit (MONA) announced that it would unleash *Documenta USA* September 15 – October 27, boasting the participation of over 2,000 artists in "the largest art exposition in the world." As part of the museum's mission, MONA proposes "to void all previous museums and to prove them invalid." *Documenta USA* creates an archive of all the materials used to decide an exhibition – slides, postcards, reviews, catalogues – in an attempt to eliminate the curator as the middle-man and deliver art to the public straight-with-no-chaser. The exhibition reads like a wish list promising deliverance from the museum as mausoleum, including an exhibition that completely renews itself every 100



*Documenta USA III*: Books and catalogues.



*Documenta USA*: Boxes housing the work of over 100 artists.

minutes; a gallery filled with art that visitors can touch, with work by Christo, Vito Acconci and over 100 others; and a 48-hour open invitation to artists to hang one work on the museum wall until it is displaced by the work of another artist.

*Flash Art* (Milan): 'Documenta USA', October, p. 58.

Bourgeau's *Documenta USA* attempts to incorporate the audience as an integral part of contemporary art. The viewer is invited to explore the materials used in deciding how to assemble an exhibition – to assume the role of curator and examine the slides, biographies, catalogues and critical reviews. At the same time, the museum will record and photograph visitors to *Documenta USA* and include these images in the exhibition.

*Hour Magazine* (Detroit): 'Drawing in people: new Detroit museum makes viewers part of its exhibit' by Susan Howes, October 21, p. 99.

The Museum of New Art (MONA) positions itself in the museum world with the fervent awareness that the history of new art hasn't been written yet, which gives the public the possibility of drawing its own conclusions; and, using this knowledge, to create a context where the museum no longer acts as an interpreter of simulacrum and artifice, but has become a living language itself, with that power to clarify and validate, not only our particular time and culture, but our daily reality.

Lucio Pozzi, then, is a natural choice for MONA's second solo exhibition. Pozzi is an artist, not only unafraid to reveal his process of creating, but boldly willing to utilize this process to its fullest: interacting with the intended museum community well-before the exhibition, creating work on the spot, using a team of local artists to aid in his creation, and to follow it all up with a performance piece that pokes a satirical hole in the tradition of art tours – using his own exhibition as the butt of his artful joke.

Lucio Pozzi: 'A 21st Century Museum' by Jef Bourgeau, foreword to the exhibition catalogue *Lucio Pozzi* (Corraini, Milan, 2001, text by Jan van der Marck) at the Museum of New Art, November 10- January 6.



Lucio Pozzi preparing an installation for his solo exhibition (with student assistant Sioux Trujillo), 2001.

Bourgeau has been fighting the battle since 1997, when he opened his conceptual Museum of Contemporary Art in Pontiac as "an artist's project," but failed to gain the full attention of the art community, in part because of the space's distant location and in part because of Bourgeau's defensive and naïve iconoclastic appeal. But that's a thing of the past and Bourgeau has worked hard to bring us a viable institution. When asked about the role of contemporary art museum, Greg Wittkopp, the director of Cranbrook Art Museum, says, "At its best, contemporary art is an agent for change, whether social or political, to open its audience to new ideas and to new perceptions of our world, and the role of the contemporary museum is to pursue that imaginatively."

*Metro Times Detroit*: 'Oh, MONA: the Museum of New Art shoulders the challenge' by Glen Mannisto, December 19-25, p. 22.

## 2002

**International Film Festival**, Museum of New Art, Detroit, MI  
**kaBOOM!** (various performance work), Museum of New Art, Detroit, MI  
**Centerfolds**, Museum of New Art, Detroit, MI  
**Shoot!** Museum of New Art, Detroit, MI  
**Ground Zero**, Museum of New Art, Detroit, MI  
**ArtCore**, an empty storefront to gallery project, Detroit, MI

The seven-member panel, moderated by Dick Goody, director of Oakland University's Meadow Brook Art Gallery, discussed the current state of art and art museums, as well as the specific future of MONA. The forum grew out of MONA's ongoing efforts to provide a counterforce to what many see as the trend toward crass commercialism by the official artistic establishment.

WSWS (Online): 'Panel discusses role of art museum in twenty-first century' by David Walsh, January 10.



Panel discussion on the future of the contemporary museum in the 21st century. Right to left: Dick Goody, Michelle Perron, Greg Wittkopp, David Walsh, Jeffrey Abt, Helga Pakasaar, George Tysh, and Jan van der Marck.



kaBOOM!: entryway to exhibition with hanging Howdy Doody.

The room was filled with noxious smoky dust. The crowd was gathered around a guy pounding the hell out of a cello with a big hammer – the instrument wasn't anything but shards of wood now – and it was hard to tell if the audience was enjoying the performance or if they were uncertain about it. Only two hours into the exhibition, the whole space was filled with dust and rubble.

Earlier in the day, various stations with art objects in them were poised and ready for destruction. There were familiar replicas or copies of famous Dada works of art, such as Duchamp's "readymade" works. There was his *Fountain*, a porcelain urinal, signed by "R. Mutt," or his mustached reproduction of the *Mona Lisa*. A copy of Man Ray's famous metronome, *An Object To Be Destroyed* (1923), with the picture of an eyeball attached to the pendulum, sat on a pedestal with a hammer and Ray's original directions as to how to be smashed.

Now these standard 20th century cultural icons, that were themselves iconoclastic creations meant to topple traditional notions about what art was, stood ready for their own demise. Man Ray's famous *Cadeau*, composed of a clothing iron with carpet tacks attached to its face, had sat on an ironing board earlier in the day, but now it lay humbled with tacks torn off and

strewn around and the dress that was to be ironed now torn and shredded. The porcelain urinal was broken into bits and pissed on. The metronome sat smashed per instructions, with internal machinery hanging out like guts from a road kill. Instead of a moustache, *Mona Lisa* had a penis and testicle for a nose.

*Metro Times Detroit*: 'Eve of destruction' by Glen Mannisto, March 13-19, p. 34.



Man Ray: *Object To Be Destroyed With Instructions* 2002, metronome, Monroe/Warhol eye cut-out with hammer.



*Object Destroyed*: smashed metronome and hammer.

The point is that, although anything apparently goes in contemporary art, it's only with reason that it becomes art, even if the reason is nonsense. Take that away and you no longer have art; it's the one constant of a contrary world. When Jef Bourgeau brought the Museum of New Art to Detroit last year, it offered a

bastion for the unorthodox, the irrelevant and the one-fingered salute rarely seen in a formal downtown art venue. Since then, the museum's shows have transformed the notion of the exhibition into its own art, manipulating titles into free-for-all for the imagination.

MONA's latest exhibition, *SHOOT!* begins with nothing. No work and moreover, no explanations. Rather, the space is armed with a league of photographers. And therein lies the art. Assembling a group of over a dozen local and national artists, Bourgeau's (deliberately loose) interpretation of the title merges the principles of theater with that of the art show. Art is in the present, and it's realized because of the audience. The nothing is replaced by images of those who come to view it. How the photographers interpret these guidelines is up to them, but we're the art, and we're the reason. And it's not nonsense at all.

*Real Detroit Weekly*: 'Shoot! At Museum of New Art' by Natalie Haddad, May 15, p. 15.



*Shoot! Portrait of the Artist* Sacha Eckes 2002, photograph.



*Ground Zero*: exhibition detail, 2002.

*Ground Zero* is not only the name of the crater in the Manhattan financial district. It's the point-blank title of an emotionally charged art exhibit organized by Frank Shifreen and fellow New York artists Daniel Scheffer and Julius Vitali.

*Detroit Free Press*, 'Images of Ground Zero' by Frank Provenzano, July 10.

*Ground Zero* is a big, sprawling, messy affair with some terrific works and some inept stuff. But together this mass of material – containing everything from body bags to elk antlers – comes together to pack an emotional wallop.

*Detroit News*: 'Ground Zero engulfs the senses' by Joy Hakanson Colby, July 27.

An exhibition of art works created in response to the September 11 terrorist attack in New York City and to the events that followed it is currently on display at the Museum of New Art (MONA) in Detroit. Nearly sixty artists from a number of countries are represented by 300 paintings, photographs, digitally altered images and sculptures.

WSWS (Online): 'Ground Zero: signs of a more critical mood among US artists' by David Walsh, July 29.

If you spot a 1990 Dodge Caravan painted rainbow colors and with a giant eye on its backside, you're looking at the *Crashmobile*. It's Detroit's newest gimmick for whipping up public interest in art.

This flamboyant vehicle decorated by a New York graffiti artist known as Crash will be the official car for the Museum of New Art (MONA), currently housed in the Book Building, Detroit.

MONA's director Jef Bourgeau, who owned the van before he turned it over to the museum, has been driving it since Crash finished the paint job last Thursday.

Bourgeau hopes the *Crashmobile* will be the first of a fleet of art cars decorated by artists connected to MONA. "Other cities have been showing fiberglass cows, sheep, pigs or polar bears that artists have transformed," he says. "It seems fitting that Detroit should have art cars traveling our roads."

*Detroit News*: 'Honk if you love the Crashmobile' by Joy Hakanson Colby, August 21.



Crash, the NY graffiti artist, spray painting the museum van.



Crash with the finished art work. Collection of Nicolas Bourgeau.



Abandoned CVS building: to be used as art gallery by ArtCore project.

Imagine this scene in downtown Detroit. Vacant storefronts are transformed into art galleries. Once-empty streets are alive with foot traffic. Here and there you see somebody carrying an artwork they just purchased. Does it sound too good? Not to Jef Bourgeau, who starts his new project called ArtCore today with the opening of five such gallery collectives.

*Detroit News*: 'Art exhibits paint a better image for downtown storefronts' by Joy Hakanson Colby, September 14.

## 2003

- International Film Festival**, Museum of New Art, Detroit, MI
- Counting Coup**, Musee d'Art et d'Industrie, Roubaix, France
- Flak**, Cranbrook Art Museum, Bloomfield Hills, MI
- Actual Size**, Detroit Contemporary, Detroit, MI

For anyone who either made it there or has since discussed it with a constituent of metro Detroit's art community, the beginnings of the Museum of New Art are now somewhat fabled. The museum, now about six years old, began when founder and director Jef Bourgeau rented out a walk-in closet space in downtown Pontiac. Driven, intellectually, by a steamroller of conceptual thought, the location seems appropriate – a DIY extension of established Dada logic; if a urinal can become art by placing it in an art gallery then certainly a closet can become an art museum by placing art in it. Like most conceptual art, it works in theory as a cerebral endeavor; and like most art in any genre, in practice it has its flaws. And under less vigilant direction, the flaws could easily have been fatal. Instead, MONA is in a new location – its third – and, as Bourgeau had planned from the outset, it's made it from Oakland to Wayne County and from the suburbs to the city. More unbelievably, though, at least within the cloistered art community of Detroit, is his success beyond the second-floor Book Building loft that accommodates MONA. Through Bourgeau's fledgling ArtCore project – which utilizes Detroit's empty storefronts as temporary galleries – MONA is just one of around five art spaces in the Book Building, and if enough resistance (from the city's government, landlords, etc.) can be worn down, there should be more throughout Detroit.

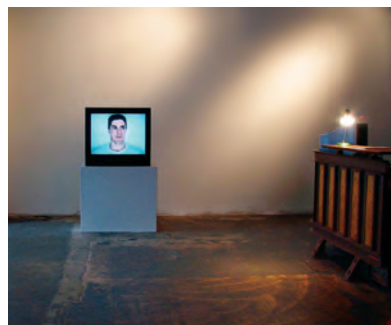
*Real Detroit Weekly*: 'An ArtCore moment' by Natalie Haddad, Jan 29.



ArtCore: one of five Detroit galleries before renovation.



ArtCore: gallery after renovation.



International Film Festival: One of ten monitors and projections.

The MONA is hosting the fifth edition of the Detroit Film Festival. An invitation section, as well as one that is open to general subscription, comprise the event, while a special segment is dedicated to the best of entries. Among the participating artists in the *Best of Show* are Maike Freess (Germany), Sabrina Muzi (Italy), Takagi (Japan), and Franz Wassermann (Austria).

*Tema Celeste* (Milan): 'Detroit Video Fest' by staff, January-February, p. 116.

This year's entries come from Canada, China, Costa Rica, Estonia, Germany, Hungary, Indonesia, Israel, Italy, South Korea, Romania, Russia, Slovenia, Taiwan, Thailand, the United Kingdom and the United States. More than 250 videos from 32 countries – 100 more entries than last year – are included in this look at what's new in video.

*Detroit Free Press*: 'Museum celebrates video as art form' by Keri Guten Cohen, January 30, p. 19.

## 2004

- Photography Now**, Urban Institute for the Contemporary Arts, Grand Rapids, MI
- Biennale 2004** (as Jan de Groot), Museum of New Art, Pontiac, MI
- Art Against War**, The Majlis Cultural Center, Mumbai, India
- From This Day Forward... Painting is Dead**, Museum of New Art, Pontiac, MI
- In Flux**, Marygrove College Gallery, Detroit, MI
- Piss Off!** (as various artists), Museum of New Art, Pontiac, MI
- Untitled**, 555 Gallery, Detroit
- The Invention of the Pixel**, Museum of New Art, Pontiac, MI

Jef Bourgeau's Museum of New Art is returning to Pontiac after nearly three years in Detroit. In February, when the Oakland Arts Building was nearly empty, Bourgeau was approached by Amir Daiza, a real estate and entertainment entrepreneur and one of the center's owners. "I told him about my ArtCore project in Detroit, an experiment in converting empty storefronts into temporary art galleries," Bourgeau says. "Amir convinced the other partners this would be good for the building."

*Detroit News*: 'Renewed interest in reviving downtown Pontiac art scene' by Joy Hakanson Colby, March 14.

The vision Bourgeau paints for the new MONA is certainly an admirable and exciting one — a place for young, edgy artists to cut their chops and for artists, collectors and the general public to see what's happening on the contemporary scene.

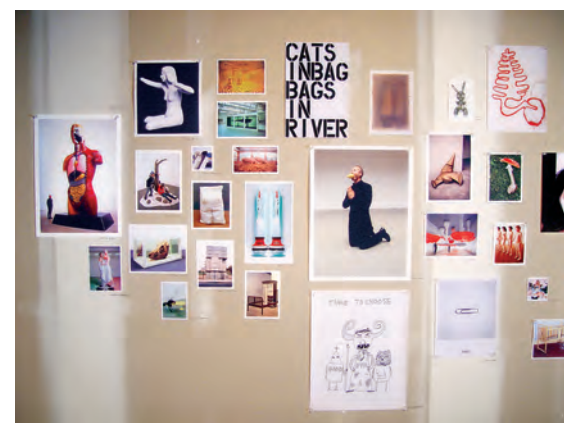
*Metro Times Detroit*: 'Pontiac Pull' by Christina Kallery, April 7.

This is a bold, engaging and playful collection of photographic works. Represented are 11 artists from eight states. Jef Bourgeau's work is conceived to arouse both curiosity and anxiety, drawing the viewer into a scenario which doesn't necessarily have a fixed response, relying instead upon the spectator's involvement to continue or complete it.

*Urban Institute for Contemporary Arts-Grand Rapids: Photography Now*, exhibition April 4-May 8.



Stig Eklund: *Figures in the Park* 2004.



Biennale 2004: exhibition detail.

The Museum of New Art (MONA) reopens its doors in a new space at 7 North Saginaw Street, Pontiac. From May 15 through June 26 the museum is hosting a biennial exhibition with works by Mathew Barney, Monica Bonvicini, Sophie Calle, Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster, Tracey Emin, Anna Gaskell, Andreas Gursky, Barbara Kruger, Paul McCarthy, Shirin Neshat, Olaf Nicolai, Elizabeth Peyton, Sigmar Polke, Chris Ofili, Thomas Ruff, Thomas Struth, Gavin Turk, Hellen van Meene, Cosima von Bonin, Kara Walker, and others.

*Tema Celeste* (Milan): 'New Home for MONA' by Simona Vendrame, May/June, Issue 103.

The expectation of a biennial exhibit, whether it's at New York's Whitney or the Venice Biennale, is to present a survey of contemporary work by vanguard artists. But to really elevate the event, it has to be a survey of what's pushing the boundaries, in the tradition of the Whitney. It must take up the challenge to elevate the public conversation about how



Jan de Groot: *Portrait of Joseph Beuys* 2004.



Jan de Groot: *Portrait of Yayoi Kusama* 2004.

art is a reflection and – sometimes – an indictment of society. As I look at a photograph of a man with a flattened-out fedora and a finger up his nose (a goofball shot that portrays Joseph Beuys), a light-haired woman next to me points to a photo and says, “That’s me when I had dark hair.” In the *Portrait of Yayoi Kusama*, Elaine Ohno poses in a straitjacket as Kusama, an artist she wasn’t familiar with. When I ask her whether de Groot was a visiting artist or lived in Detroit, she knows nothing of the Dutch photographer and tells me, “Jef Bourgeau took the picture.” I say, “You may have told me something I’m not supposed to know.”

The jig is up! It’s a hydra-headed sleight. Jan de Groot is none other than Jef Bourgeau posing as an au courant Dutch photographer taking portraits of Detroiters posing as the cream of

contemporary art darlings all housed in a quasi-real contemporary museum posing as a real contemporary museum.

In between the de Groot photographs, filling just about every spare room in the museum, are down-loaded art images created by the original artists as a *true* complement to the faux portraits. These virtual images are part of the museum’s *e-MONA* project, created as a means to bring the best and freshest of world art to the Midwest. Bourgeau’s double caper, the real and its burlesque, has managed to get top artist’s names inside an under-funded museum.

Hat’s off!

MONA is a surprisingly luxurious art museum surrounded by an impressive maze of fresh ideas, both real and virtual at once. It appears to possess a conceptual personality that, over the last six years, has been finely-honed into the realm of the real and everyday, steadfast and sure while unafraid to push the boundaries of styles and media.

*Metro Times Detroit*: ‘Le Poseur in Wolf’s Clothing’ by Anita Schmaltz with Carl Minkow, May 26, pp. 20-22.

For Bourgeau, the museum is an evolving abstraction; the building is its vehicle. That’s the paradox, though: It’s an idea that takes some experience with contemporary art theory to absorb, which is precisely what MONA has used its locations (six in the last ten years) to propagate.



Jan de Groot: *Portrait of Damien Hirst* 2004.

Bourgeau has made cases for creativity through financial necessity in the past, most notably with MONA’s *e-MONA* exhibition in 2001, in which viewers were invited to visit artists’ studios via the Internet. *Biennale 2004* observes the precedent, first by revisiting *e-MONA*, which ideally reconciles the practices and philosophies of contemporary art, and, more pragmatically, achieves an otherwise inaccessible index of high-profile artists virtually rather than proposing less germane “live” art as biennial fare. For a culture indoctrinated with museum protocol, *e-MONA* is an exercise in simultaneous engagement and disengagement. The international import of the artists demands consideration to an extent that work by lesser-known artists, which MONA could more easily bring in, would not. At the same time, the absence of the object (or, rather, the installation of the computer as stopgap between the object and viewer) furthers the dematerialization of art, which conceptual art initiated long before digital technology. Whether or not this becomes an obstacle depends, again, on perception – art theory can validate it in its idea state – but if a biennial purports to examine the state of art, it’s crucial to select art that represents it. In addition, *e-MONA* dissects the viewer-viewed dynamic, which can no longer be characterized by simple reciprocity. The viewer becomes a variable in the art itself.



Jan de Groot: *Portrait of Tracey Emin* 2004.

This thesis is enforced by a series of artists’ photographic portraits attributed to a certain Jan de Groot (but all created by Bourgeau), probably the most abstract feature of the *Biennale*. The only issue is of authenticity, and it’s obsolete in this era: The anonymity of an artist restores the authority to the art, which therefore alchemizes his celebrity into mythology. The conversion from a non-identity to a false identity, selected by the audience, further mythologizes, and dematerializes, the artist by deriving his form from preconceptions engendered by the art. Moreover, it involves the audience in the communication and implicates them in the art.



Jan de Groot: *Portrait of Vanessa Beecroft* 2004.

Bourgeau isn’t proceeding timidly – his *museum* refutes (inadvertent) provincialism and fosters the intellectual voice of visual art. Better, though, it does so without relinquishing the romantic gesture at its core. As art has proven again and again, beauty without progression is one step away from banality.

*Real Detroit Weekly*: ‘Building Excitement: Biennale 2004’ by Natalie Haddad, May 12-18, cover story, p. 25.

Run (don’t walk) to Pontiac’s recently relocated Museum of New Art (MONA) to catch the work of internationally renowned photographer, Jan de Groot. And behind every great man, there is... another great man, in this case museum founder, Jef Bourgeau. Bourgeau is the indefatigable force behind this venue dedicated to exhibiting cutting-edge art from around the world. He is also an intelligent conceptual artist who has devised the conceit that underlies this show: nothing is what it seems; beware the cult of art stars; original art is a thing of the past; embrace modern technology; the viewer is as important as the art object; question authority; embrace expedience.

*The Detrioter*: ‘When the audience becomes the art: Biennale 2004’ by Christina Hill, May 28.

The photographs for MONA’s most recent show *From this Day Forward...Painting is Dead* extend throughout the museum’s labyrinthine space, and director Jef Bourgeau reduced the show to avoid a salon-style exhibition. (Works not on the walls are represented in a photomontage on various video screens.)

Probably for as long as it’s been around, but particularly since its return to Pontiac in April, MONA has encountered its share of criticism, due primarily to its simulative practices. Still, a non-profit organization, MONA remains the area’s foremost barometer of current art. And as art merges increasingly with theory, principles are easily made obsolete.

*Real Detroit Weekly*: ‘Before the right one’ by Natalie Haddad, July 21-27, p. 11.

An object like a painting.



Stig Eklund: *Portrait of Jan de Groot* 2004.

It is hardly unusual for the editor at CIRCA to receive art-news alerts and press releases via e-mail, therefore when we received one from the director of the Detroit Museum of New Art telling us of the tragic death of the young artist Jan de Groot (touted to be exhibiting in the upcoming *Piss-Off* exhibition with the likes of Sarah Lucas and Sam Taylor-Wood), we believed them, and in a slightly shallow way, mourned his loss. Well, it would have been vulgar not to. The details were mildly gruesome:

**AMSTERDAM** – The friends of “Grooti” are bewildered. Without warning, Dutch artist Jan de Groot, 37, has jumped from his parents’ apartment and is crushed on the sidewalk below. Later, his parents are discovered chopped to pieces in their beds. Their heads seem to have disappeared completely. The trash is gone through, but nothing of interest is found.

The artist had recently been asked to participate in a museum show entitled PISS OFF! Some friends speculate that he took this commission too much to heart.

*An Object Like a Painting* 1994, wax on paper.

"He began to complain about everything," fellow photographer Frank Yost explains. "Even about the abuse of salmon and other spawning animals. What he began calling the disruption of rhythmic verticality. He became unbearable to us all. And it seemed, more pissed off every day."



Stig Eklund: *Portrait of Jan de Groot at the time of his arrest*

When asked for comment, Jane Speaks, organizing curator for the Detroit Museum of New Art and the exhibition itself, let her public relations department issue a brief epithet: "It may be said that Jan de Groot lived his art to the end."

Bizarre, bizarre, bizarre. So I googled this unfortunate man, subject to the whim of his artistic temperament to the very end. However, with the exception of the artist's c.v., and some images of his work, both linked to the Museum's website, there were absolutely no other sites offering his profile. The c.v. may well be false; there seems to be no record of the man in the museums in which he supposedly exhibited. And the MONA website itself is littered with anarchic manifestos boasting hoax exhibitions, as well as a 1996 obituary for the one and only (presumably) Jane Speaks. This must be a truly modern establishment. Art mysteries are common as muck these days and to be honest they aren't my cup of tea. So I will open this issue to the floor. Readers: have I wasted three hours of my precious life that I will never regain, or is he dead and if so should I apologise? Did Jan de Groot ever exist, and if not then who bothered fabricating his art? Is the Detroit Museum of New Art a fake institution? Has anybody ever been there, or does it merely exist in the heads of several American art anarchists? And if so, that's a lovely idea folks, really it's so avant-garde, but just so irritating. I am going to home to relax with a cup of Earl Grey in front of a reproduction of Vettriano.

*Circa Art Magazine* (Ireland): 'Murder Mystery: Bad News or Art Sham?' by Isobel Harbison, September 7.

The hour-long documentary the *nea tapes* introduces the major events and players of the culture wars, including Robert Mapplethorpe, Karen Finley, Jef Bourgeois, Arthur C. Danto, Andres Serrano, and Fred Wilson.

*NEA TAPES*: a one hour documentary produced and directed by Paul Lamarre and Melissa Wolf, press release, 2001.

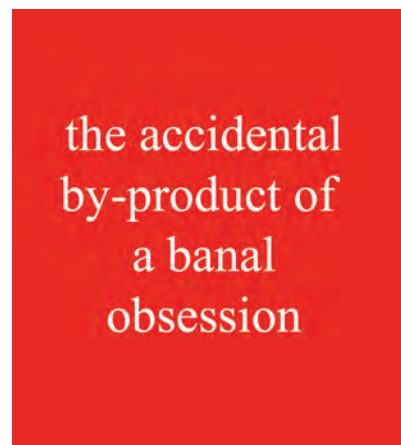
This hour-long offering from filmmakers Paul Lamarre and Melissa Wolf gives a pretty thorough overview of the controversies surrounding the funding of the National Endowment of the Arts (NEA). Established in 1965, the NEA, once seen as an altruistic venture, is now seen by many as the devil's spawn — as a direct result of the rise in power of conservative groups who saw the agency as a symptom of society's ills.

Several flashpoint artists are represented in the film — Andres Serrano (whose "Piss Christ" gave the anti-funding forces a two-word rebuttal to every argument), Robert Mapplethorpe, Karen Finley — and Detroit's own Jef Bourgeois (omitted here).

*Metro Times Detroit*: 'A few of the week's 100-plus on-screen excursions: *The NEA Tapes*' by Richard C. Walls, November 3.

Each work in the exhibition will be extremely immaterial and will not be installed over the full space of the MONA and in non-existent spots: visibly absent in such a way that this exhibition device, its strategy, will play a substantially covert part of the event, clearing the exhibition rooms to an empty look.

*Artdaily* (Mexico City): 'None of the Above' by Ignacio Villarreal, November 30.



*The Accidental By-product of a Banal Obsession* 1994, wax on paper. Private Collection.

## 2005

**Madness** (as Stig Eklund), Museum of New Art, Pontiac, MI

**Double Vision**, The District Gallery, Birmingham, MI

**Going Dutch** (as Hanne Bloot), Museum of New Art, Pontiac, MI

**None of the Above: A show without art**, Museum of New Art, Pontiac, MI

**New Work** (as Kenzu Nagawa), The White Room, Los Angeles, CA

**Is London Burning** (as Billy Conklin), Museum of New Art, Pontiac, MI

**FiftyFifty** (as Missy Wiggins), C-Pop Gallery, Detroit, MI

"Contemporary art is a reaction to what's happening in the world," Bourgeois says. "It exists briefly in our cultural moment, in reaction to it. The audience, the viewer, completes it. Only after this realization can it move from the contemporary space to the more traditional museum. The art being created in Detroit doesn't have such opportunities, to be understood or even viewed — not until we create such a museum to act as this conduit, this meeting place between viewer and art."

*Detroit Free Press*: 'Artistic License' by Frank Provenzano, March 11.

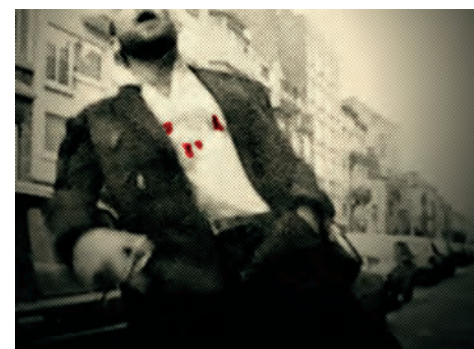
Stig Eklund's photographs are a repertoire of fractured architecture, of casual violence, and the solitary figures that inhabit his nordic world. His work deals with the quiet despair of these figures, following their drama of isolation in the midst of an urban world. The characters are in a physical interaction by the mere presence of their bodies, but still they remain spiritually isolated. The glances, the placement, the attitudes of these shadowy figures and sites create an urban view built around a city's innermost and darkest recesses, turning Eklund's images into living frescoes of our time.



Stig Eklund: *Man on the Stairs* 2004.

*Artdaily* (Mexico City): 'Norwegian's first American solo show' by Ignacio Villarreal, March 12.

The Museum of New Art (MONA) is known for creative exhibits and a director who likes to tweak the public's sensibilities. The place lives up to



Stig Eklund: *Incident* 2004.

its reputation on both counts with the current offerings titled *Madness*. Stig Eklund, a Norwegian photographer, who takes command of digital technology, creating haunting portraits, shadowy figures and urban and country landscapes. Some of the landscapes glow in the dark thanks to luminescent paper. Eklund also excels as a painter, a video artist and a maker of constructions. He is one terrific all-around artist.

*Detroit News*: 'Exhibit captures demise of Detroit, terrorism and war' by Joy Hakanson Colby, March 25.

What we can say with some degree of certainty is that museum director Jef Bourgeois has created an unsettling, unique installation with the help of dozens of Dutch artists.

*The Detroitier*: 'Going Dutch: New Photography from the Netherlands' by Nick Sousanis, May.



Hanne Bloot: *Morning* 2006.





Billy Conklin: *Is London Burning* 2005.

Art critics and connoisseurs are not known for donnybrooks, but at least one London correspondent has confided that an interlude of polite fisticuffs followed a discussion of Billy Conklin's works at a certain show in the UK. Conklin is a maverick with a provocative — some say subversive — take on what art is meant to be in a pluralistic society. His pieces have been occasionally likened to “the psychoanalytic concept of transference.” Conklin's current offering at the Museum of New Art, is non-transferable, but the ideas and questions that arise in your head may be freely taken home at the end of the night. Sweet dreams.

*Real Detroit Weekly*: 'No Staples' by Robert del Valle, September 21.

In 2003, graffiti artist Turtl came to town. Here's the account of what happened next, according to former DAM director Timlin: Turtl tagged the James Stoa sculpture outside DAM and there was an ensuing media debate. I offered a \$1000 reward for information leading to his arrest

and conviction. The Wayne County prosecutor used our reward to begin the investigation and make a public announcement. In protest of my actions, Museum of New Art director Jef Bourgeau along with NY graffiti artist Crash offered a counter-reward of \$1000 to throw a vegan cream pie in my face.

*Metro Times Detroit*: 'Swinging naked, slinging pie and multiphonic monks: On 25 years of art in Detroit' by Rebecca Mazzei, October 19.



Billy Conklin: *Terror Response Exercise #24*, 2005.

It was assumed that within a controlled situation, actions could be controlled. Included in the show's 100 works to be destroyed was a reproduction of Man Ray's *Object to Be Destroyed* and Duchamp's *Fountain*. The opening began well enough, with Ray's piece being violently undone per instructions provided by the artist himself, hammer included. By the end of the night, though, someone had not only urinated in Duchamp's fountain but also into his *Why not Sneeze, Rose Sélavy?* — a birdcage with sugar cubes — irreparably discoloring and melting the cubes. Then someone else came along and stomped the cage to pieces. Another visitor grabbed up the museum handouts on the history of art vandalism and a reproduction of Duchamp's *LHOOQ* (Mona Lisa with a moustache), and set fire to it all in the recently drained fountain. The fire in turn was put out using the nearby bottle of fluid excreta from Andres Serrano's *Piss Christ* (reconstituted).

And what was to have been an orderly performance combining Yoko Ono's *Cut* with Duchamp's *The Bride Stripped Bare By Her Bachelors, Even* quickly descended into a chaotic attack on the performance artist in her bridal gown, leaving her in tears and running naked for the safety of a locked room.

A scaled reconstruction of Tyree Guyton's *Heidelberg Project*, a polka-dotted house with a wrecking ball, was destroyed as hoped. Fine. But then the wrecking ball was turned on the museum's own walls, creating huge holes in the drywall before that could be stopped.

By the end of the night, in all the pandemonium of freedom, someone had the nerve to scrawl on a wall: “Fuck Art Rules!” Someone actually complained, because the museum staff was actively trying to control the audience from burning the place down. That's a pile of irony, considering how the show had operated without given rules at all — except, perhaps, don't burn us down.



kaBOOM!: *The Bride Stripped Bare By Her Bachelors, Even...* 2002.

The best moment of the night, though, was when a young boy, about 6 or 7, turned to me as he was leaving the museum with his dad and said: “I've never had more fun anywhere in my life.”

*Metro Times Detroit*: 'Art damage: A night of creative destruction' by Jef Bourgeau, October 19.



kaBOOM!: *Fuck Art Rules* sabotaged installation with paint and graphite, 2002.

## 2006

*Picasso's Camera* (as Picasso), Museum of New Art, Pontiac, MI

*KISS KISS BANG BANG!* (as Missy Wiggins & Billy Conklin), Museum of New Art, Pontiac, MI

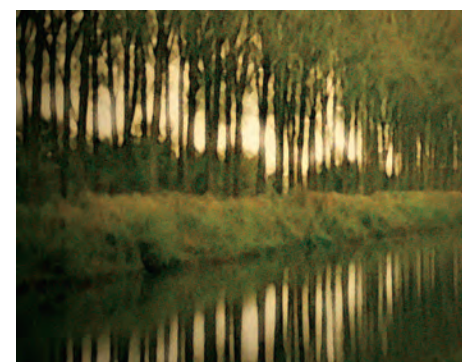
*The Minute Man* (as Douglas Gordon), Museum of New Art, Pontiac, MI

*Quantum Circus* (as Stig Eklund), Soo Visual Arts Center, Minneapolis, MN

*The Face of Art* (as Clara Beckmann), Museum of New Art, Pontiac, MI

*RE: The D* (as Missy Wiggins), Wayne State University, Detroit, MI

*Swindle!* (as Cesar Marzetti), Museum of New Art, Pontiac, MI



Stig Eklund: *Sunrise* 2006.

Some artists have come under fire for using pseudonyms. When Norwegian photographer Stig Eklund was revealed to be Jef Bourgeau, director of the Museum of New Art (MONA) in Detroit this year, dealers complained in the local paper about his misleading multiple identities. Mr. Bourgeau, also works as a Japanese abstractionist, Taki Murakishi, as well as under many other pseudonyms.

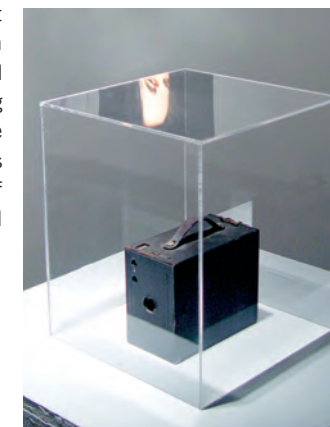
*The Wall Street Journal*: 'The Invisible Artist' by Jacob Hale Russell, Sunday, January 1, p. 3.

Two momentous events occurred in 1906 – San Francisco was ripped apart by an earthquake and Pablo Picasso “discovered” photography.

The former event, of course, has entered the history books; the latter, however, has been treated hitherto as a mere footnote to a great painter's development as an

iconic artist. No more. A box camera that once belonged to Picasso has been unearthed with a roll of undeveloped film still inside. The resulting photographs – intriguing images made jagged and more forceful by the accidental marring of the lens by the camera's previous owner – now lend a sharper clarity to that period when Picasso was still coming to terms with the then revolutionary discipline of cubism. The Museum of New Art is greeting the New Year with an entire show devoted to *Picasso's Camera* and I'll be hard put to think of any forthcoming exhibit that will be able to top it.

*Real Detroit Weekly*: 'Earthshaking' by Robert del Valle, January 18-24.



Picasso's camera, c. 1905.



Pablo Picasso: *Carlos Valentin* 1906 (restored 2006), photograph.

When the first press release showed up in my inbox from MONA about this exhibition I laughed out loud. Here are two excerpts from that statement that characterize the show:

*A box camera belonging to Pablo Picasso at the start of the twentieth century has been unearthed with a roll of exposed film still inside. What was discovered, once that film was developed, is rewriting the history of modern art.*

*The camera's cracked lens caused the facial plane in Picasso's photo-portraits to be broken themselves, raised slightly on one side. Attributes he would soon utilize and transpose to his early sketches and preparatory drawings for the seminal LES DEMOISELLES D'AVIGNON.*

Picasso's camera? Its cracked lens and warped pictures served as the genesis for Cubism? I'm laughing just typing these words now.

For those not in the know, the Museum of New Art (MONA) is the 10-year old brain child of director Jef Bourgeau, and fluctuates between showing hip contemporary works by emerging and established artists both local and international, as well as

serving as an ongoing performance venue for Bourgeau himself, taking on the identity of fictional artists and staging exhibitions of work he's created. This time Bourgeau truly goes all out: this is not just some fictional artist – it's freaking Picasso! And to read the extremely detailed and factual seeming press about the show (especially the ones written in German!), complete with quotes from important sounding people historically as well as scientists "reconstructing" the work, it's all quite credible. For those who might be (at times perhaps justifiably) irritated at Bourgeau's play of identity – this is so far over the top as to make it clear that he's at a different game than one of his own ego – but to play at what art is, what it means, and where the art world might be headed. And what better way to do so than through the lens (cracked as it might be) of the titan of creativity himself? This is a thorough tour de force from Bourgeau from the writing to the varied and solid artwork itself.

*The Detrouter: 'Unearthed camera reveals origins of 20th-century art'* by Nick Sousanis, January.

It took real chutzpah to come up with the current exhibit called *Picasso's Camera*. This risky project is packed with edgy humor, and it swipes at sacred cows and offers commentary on art world quirks. With tongue in cheek, Bourgeau credits a broken lens on Picasso's camera with inspiring Cubism, a great breakthrough in modern art. To illustrate this, MONA's head man produced a series of fractured photo portraits that are wonderfully outrageous.

Picasso is also interpreted through several "combines," which are sculptures made with found objects joined to make a point. For instance, there's the antique blacksmith bellows that resemble a Picasso mask. It's attached by means of a fire hose to a sexy red shoe that recalls the famous one's reputation as a womanizer. A video titled *The Mystery of Picasso* keeps flipping nothing but credits. Another video captures the master's face inside a pet carrier and calls attention to itself by heavy breathing and scratching.

With *Picasso's Camera*, Bourgeau demonstrates once more why his one-man museum is celebrating its 10th anniversary this year and is likely to go for 20. It's a Detroit treasure.

*Detroit News: 'Mastermind behind MONA shrewdly takes on Picasso: Taking a playful jab at the 20th-century artist'* by Joy Hakanson Colby, February 10.



Pablo Picasso: *Fractured Woman* 1907 (restored 2006), photograph.



Pablo Picasso: *Woman in Blue Shirt* 1908 (restored 1998), pencil and gouache.



Missy Wiggins: *Passing in Detroit no.4*, 2006, photograph.

It has been a year to the day since the London tube bombings. British artists Billy Conklin and Missy Wiggins don't want anyone to forget the fact. Although they have split as lovers, the two have gotten together one last time for the exhibition *KISS KISS BANG BANG!* to open July 7th at Detroit's Museum of New Art (MONA).

This joint exhibition examines the after-shock of the London bombings in our day-to-day lives, most personally the toll it took on their own romance. The two artists called it quits shortly after the attacks, as lovers and collaborators. Since then Conklin's career has rocketed skyward, while Wiggins has wallowed despite allegations that Conklin plagiarized her work to build his separate career – including a sex tape (to be screened at this exhibit).

The Croydon-born artist Missy Wiggins – best known for her disturbing installations of art to be destroyed – said she had had an affair with Conklin before he became famous and that she was the source for many of his ideas.

Still, Missy is willing to put all that aside to mark this somber anniversary. "I want this chance," she says with a quavering voice. "The chance to place my art side by side with Billy's. And for the public to see how I've been totally bugged."

*UndoDotNet (Italy): 'Kiss Kiss Bang Bang! Pairing former lovers Missy Wiggins & Billy Conklin for the first time in a public exhibition'*, July 6.

A friend spoke up recently, confident he had the Museum of New Art figured out. "It's all him, isn't it?" he said, in revelation and doubt. But that's what's interesting.

Museum of New Art director Jef Bourgeau has a reputation that sometimes overshadows the impact of his exhibitions. Bourgeau's art excursions both charm and annoy the public. But no matter where you fall, it's easy to see that Bourgeau is trying to use the museum as a venue for institutional critique. His shows question the curator's role, the validity of artistic "integrity" and the relevance of museums in the information age.

*Metro Times Detroit: 'Questioning Identity' by Nolan Simon, October 12.*

Torn from the world's monthly art bible, Cesar Marzetti has stolen every image from the most recent issue of *Art in America*. From cover to cover, the Italian artist has copied and reprinted them all, then scribbled on, captioned, signed and made them his own – but with a twist.

When Marzetti plays with images taken from magazines, reproductions from other artists now mass-produced, he negates their original production. Marzetti's provocation not only unmasks the art market, it radically questions the very principle of art according to which the individual is considered the creator of the work of art. Marzetti's actions are not works of art but manifestations, a relentless destruction of the original object.

"The emptying of art began with DADA," Marzetti spoke by telephone. "And was reinvigorated with POP in the 60's, whose spirit continues today – that of formless meaning and meaningless forms, of visual indifference in favor of an idea. Most of these ideas are ordinary, thus transforming any art into the ordinary."

Much like a magician revealing all his magic, Marzetti's acts are an artist's betrayal, a revelation of art's negation to its past triumphs, of novelty in favor of the ordinary.

"Art may not be dead," Marzetti finished, "but the authentic author is."

*Artdaily (Mexico City): 'Swindle: Art in America' by Ignacio Villareal, December 13.*



Cesar Marzetti: *My Shadow is a Girl* 2006, print and graphite.



Cesar Marzetti: *Lost at Sea* 2006, photograph.

Now THIS is something different. If you were as enthralled as we were by the Orson Welles film *F is for Fake*, you'll undoubtedly be intrigued by the current offering at the Museum of New Art in Pontiac. *Swindle: Art in America* is a fascinating retrospective on the career of Cesar Marzetti, a gentleman who has (and we are quoting the press release verbatim) "stolen every image from the most recent issue of *Art in America*, copied and reprinted them all, then signed and made them his own — but with a twist." The twist evidently is that Marzetti wishes to draw attention to one of the key questions of contemporary aesthetics — when art is mass produced can it still be linked directly to a single creator? Further, Marzetti himself does not regard his works as art per se, but as manifestations that relentlessly destroy the original objects. Is this Dada (with a twist?) or a welcome dash of humorous nihilism?

*Real Detroit Weekly*: 'B is for ... Borrowed?' by Robert del Valle, December 20.

Douglas Gordon says *24 Hour Psycho* showed you can't always appropriate: "It's not going to be great art simply by association, but sometimes an appropriation is more appropriate." This is a point he proves with his new piece.

*One-Minute Psycho* is Cliffs Notes for a terribly long and shitty Gus Van Sant indulgence, a shot-by-shot remake that won the "worst movie" Razzie in 1998. Even though the original thriller was shot in black and white after color film had been invented, Van Sant thought it best to brighten up the story. As a result, the pivotal close-up of bloody water spinning down the drain looked more like a turbulent yet tasty bowl of fruit punch. Gordon's condensed revision, like so many of history's revisions, is welcome. Who on earth would want to watch more than a minute of Vince Vaughn and Heche on the big screen anyway? And Gordon's new movie proves Freud was on to something — almost all images of death, artistic or awful, inspire anxiety about our own mortality, even if they flash onscreen for a second. Powerful pictures stand the test of time.



Douglas Gordon: *One-Minute Psycho* 2006, film still.

*Metro Times Detroit*: 'Reel Time: The return of the minute man' by Rebecca Mazzei, December 13-20.



In November 1999 the new director of the Detroit Institute of Arts postponed indefinitely an exhibit that had been two years in the planning because it included potentially offensive pieces, such as a vial of urine from Serrano's highly publicized *Piss Christ* and a work called *Bathtub Jesus* featuring a doll wearing a condom. Also cause for concern: a pile of human excrement and a Brazil nut labeled with a racial epithet. The very first installation, called *Van Gogh's Ear*, actually contained specific reference to previous art world controversies. The principal artist affected, Jef Bourgeois, exclaimed to the Detroit News that "the 90's art, most notably the Brits', was about shock." So intimidation and caution were very much in the air at the turn of the millennium.

*Michael Kammen*: 'Visual Shock: A History of Art Controversies in American Culture' published by Knopf, 2006, p. 299.

*Untitled (Basquiat's Toe)* 1998, alligator vice with magnifying glass and Brazil nut.

## 2007

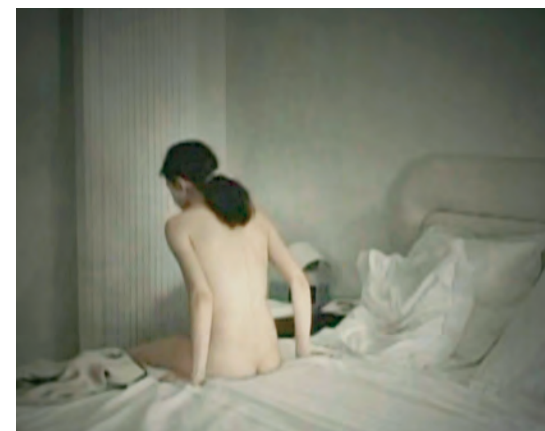
- Found Footage** (as Andy Warhol), Museum of New Art, Pontiac, MI
- Bringing Back Sexy** (as John Currin), Museum of New Art, Pontiac, MI
- Changing Cities: Second City**, First, Museum of New Art, Pontiac, MI
- Lost & Found** (curated from Charles Saatchi's *Your Gallery*), Brick Lane Gallery, London, England
- Intelligent Design** (as Stig Eklund), Silvermine Guild Art Center, New Canaan, CT
- Photography in Film**, Jane Austen Book Club, Los Angeles, CA
- F\*ck You/Commentary Criticism** (video), Yacht Club Gallery, Hamtramck, MI
- Silence** (as Clara Beckmann, Hanne Bloot, Stig Eklund), Paint Creek Art Center, Rochester, MI

John Currin is best known for his satirical, figurative paintings created using "old master" painting techniques... but with often startling results.

Hot on the trail of his major gallery show in New York that featured Currin's latest paintings, the Detroit Museum of New Art brings us the first public showing of photographs that have inspired much of Currin's work.

But lest you think you're going to wander into a gallery filled with pictures of bunnies or buildings, think again. These are erotic images that fall just short of the label of pornography. Or maybe they don't. Of the artist, essayist Hans Bieterling writes, "John Currin is the art world's new sex professional."

*Six New Things* (Online): 'Inspiring images ... just stand away from the guy in the gallery wearing the trench coat', January.



John Currin: *Seated Nude* 2007, photograph.

The idea that art should shock is by no means new. But the stakes have been raised so high that it's now almost impossible to do anything shocking. It's no longer enough just to plop

a pile of feces on the museum floor. To shock the bourgeoisie these days, you have to combine the crap with racial slurs, as Jef Bourgeois did with Detroit Institute of Arts exhibit *Van Gogh's Ear*. It included both a heap of feces and a Brazil nut titled *Nigger Toe*. And that was in 1999. God knows what would be necessary now.

*Reason Magazine* (Los Angeles): 'Shocking the bourgeoisie – it's nice work if you can get it' by Cheryl Miller, January, pp. 74-75.



*Shredded Hirst*, art magazine half-shredded, 2002.

Sister cities in America's Midwest, both historically and culturally, Chicago and Detroit are suddenly swapping artists. Why not!

In the last several decades, Detroit has suffered a growing loss of cultural history, and, so, any real sense of place. The city's art institutions have been debilitated by short-term memory and lack of local interest. Artists have quickly been lost to time, either through death or diaspora.

Currently, there is no established system, gallery nor collecting, for nurturing or encouraging an artist to stay and thrive; none for the necessary growth to create a career or even to form some collective identity of the city.

In this first in a set of new initiatives, the Museum of New Art (MONA) is launching a bold response to overcome this forced entropy. *Changing Cities* will hopefully be the initial step in establishing a global art exchange, swapping Detroit artists and work with artists in other cities.

*Artdaily* (Mexico City): 'Changing Cities: Chicago at MONA' by Ignacio Villarreal Jr., April 5.

From its beginning in a gallery's walk-in closet that founder Jef Bourgeau rented for \$1 a year, the Museum of New Art in Pontiac has been less a place than a concept. It's fitting, then, that MONA would host a series of artist exchanges between Detroit and its neighboring metropolis. *Changing Cities: Chicago*, curated by Chicago gallerist Paul Klein, is the first installment of the exchange, to be followed in the coming months with a contingent of Detroit artists traveling to Chicago's ThreeWalls gallery.

*Metro Times Detroit*: 'Lake Effect – Changing Cities with Chicago' by Natalie Haddad, May 23, p. 48.

In un sobborgo di Detroit Jef Bourgeau ha creato un museo-opera d'arte: vi allestisce mostre di artisti inesistenti (o mostre fittizie di artisti reali), con lavori, manifesti e persino stroncature finti. Senzi peli sull lingua Jef esprime la sua rabbia perché la gente lo tratta come un paria, ma intanto prepara impertentito una retrospettiva della sua arte. Mi chiedo come vi presenterà il MONA. E poi in un mondo dell'arte freneticamente alla caccia dell novità prevista, cos'è vero e cos'è falso?

*Il Giornale dell'Arte* (Italy): 'MONA d'invenzione' by Lucio Pozzi, May, p. 57.

This first show at Hamtramck's Yacht Club Gallery, *F\*ck You/Commentary Criticism*, features artists from Detroit, Toronto, Los Angeles, New York and Chicago, and its theme is a twist — a critique of the idea of criticism. There's a video of Detroit artist and curator Dick Goody reading pedantically (and ably assisted by his English accent) from *Art in America* to Jef Bourgeau, who responds by tying Goody up with a length of rope then strangling him with one good yank — face down into the art magazine.

*Metro Times Detroit*: 'Summer Fling' by Vince Carducci, June 13, p. 69.

The final piece, a video, is a strong curatorial element. Staged and filmed "anonymously," it features artists and directors of their respective non-profits Dick Goody and Jef Bourgeau sitting at a small table. Goody is reading (from "Art in America" we're told), in the manner of a learned academic, while the impish Bourgeau is tying him up in a length of rope. There are plenty of meanings to be read into this — as in link between artist and critic, artist and audience, and from knowing the identity of these men and their role in the community, but it stands on its own (even without the volume on) as this odd couple of playful prankster and exacerbated orator. The dynamic between the two propels imagined narrative along and one could envision this as but the first of several collaborations.

*The Detroit*: 'F\*CK YOU/ Commentary-Criticism' by Nick Sousanis, June 21.



Jef Bourgeau coils rope around Dick Goody, then with one good yank strangles Goody face down into the art magazine, performance on video, 2007.

Stig Ecklund

Taki Murakishi

Hanne Bloot

Billy Conklin

Thomas Baedeker

Clara Beckmann

Karl Strumpf

# DOPPELGÄNGERS

A *doppelgänger* has come to refer to any double or look-alike of a living person. The essential meaning of the German word is "doublewalker", someone who is walking the same way you do. The word is also used to describe the sensation of having glimpsed oneself in peripheral vision, in a position where there is no chance that it could have been a reflection.

Jef Bourgeau has invented over one dozen *doppelgängers*. He has done so for many reasons, mostly artistic, two of which are basic and pragmatic: first, with this cast of shadow figures his "novelization" of the modern art museum has come full circle; and second, being *banned in Boston*, the artist has been able to exhibit and make a living compliments of these *doppelgängers*.



The Incident 2004, archival photograph.

## Stig Eklund

was born in Bergen, Norway in 1976. He lives and works in Oslo.

An undiagnosed dyslexic, Stig Eklund left secondary education at the age of sixteen. He spent his remaining teen years working at a cardboard factory in his home town. During that time, utilizing the materials at hand, he began to make and experiment with several pinhole cameras. The work from these rudimentary cameras developed into dark, moody photographs. He has since remarked that he can only see "right" through a camera lens.

For extra money, the young photographer soon began to hawk them to tourists from cruise ships that docked in Bergen. One of these tourists turned out to be the owner of a major gallery in Oslo. She signed the young Eklund to her artists' stable and the rest is history.

Eklund's mature camera style is so strong that it can even shroud a street lamp, so that, instead of light, it seemingly emits darkness and shadows. His vision drapes geometrically clashing urban beauty with the sooty persona of its denizens, succinctly captured by a Norwegian artist who spends much of the year in a glowering twilight.



## Taki Murakishi

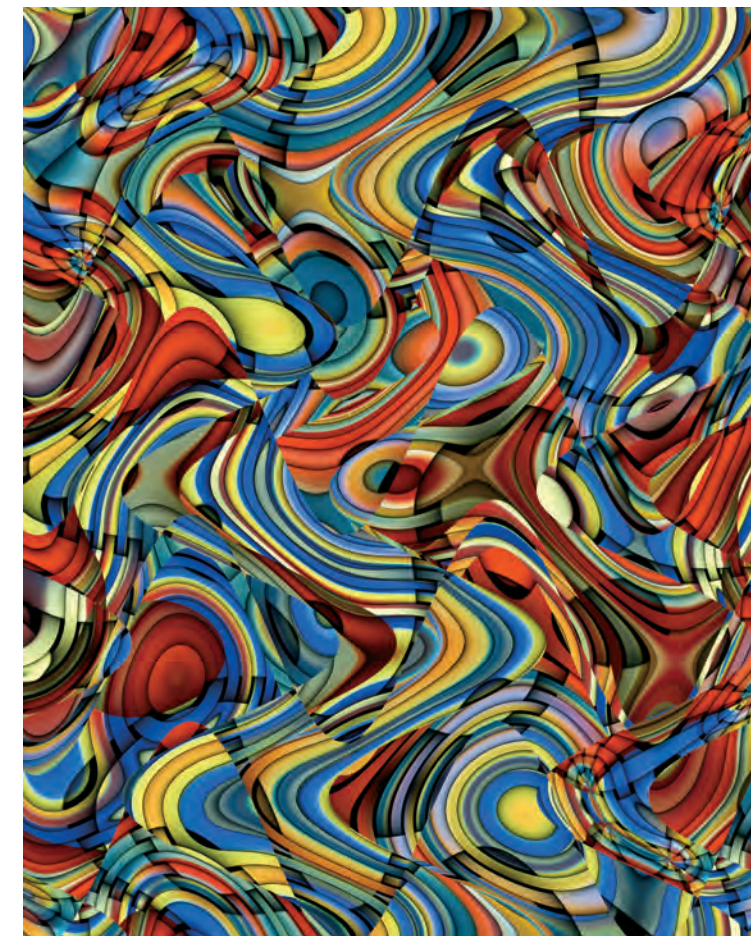
was born in Kyoto, Japan in 1975. He lives and works between Tokyo and New York.

Taki Murakishi creates portraits of his friends, the music scene and Tokyo, only to twist, layer and rework them into abstractions of his life.

"So-called abstract painting has never been wholly original, has never been its own end. Such creation exists only where art presents images that take nothing from what has been imagined, neither repeating or modifying a particular artist's vision, but inventing its own, liberated from both and all.

One must move toward an art where everything must be sacrificed to the truths and necessities of a new millennium, toward those elements of a pure and eternal art, full and infinitely beyond our known experience. One must move toward the pixel and beyond."

–Taki Murakishi, from *INVENTING THE PIXEL: ABSTRACTION IN THE 21st CENTURY*



Invention no.16, 2004, archival photograph.



*Bidet* 2007, archival photograph

## Hanne Bloot

was born 1980 in Maastricht, Netherlands. She works in Amsterdam.

Bloot discovered photography in her early teens, beginning her studies at Ritvald Academy in Amsterdam at just seventeen. By the age of nineteen she was a P.S.1 grant recipient, where her series *My Life As A Film* (2000) was created and first exhibited.

Alongside her photographic works such as the series *Alone And Not Alone* (2004-present) and *Hidden* (2007), over the subsequent years she also made many short films.

Hanne Bloot's application of light and color in her photography is painterly and yet contemporary at the same time, hinting at dark emotions. There is a sense of forced isolation, of two people sharing space yet disconnected, of a room within rooms.

Her work is a quiet poetry of understatement and misdirection. As our eyes drift across Bloot's photographs in search of a resting point, we invest the dark spaces between with a symbolic value: the alienation of life in an increasingly urban world.

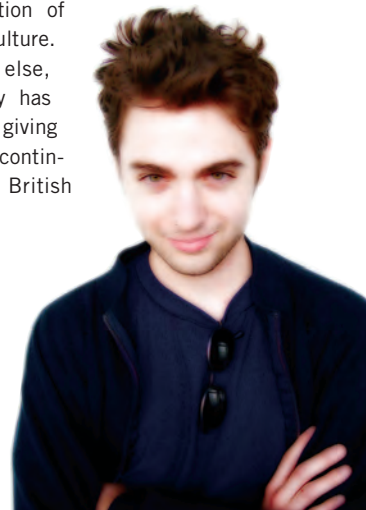


## Billy Conklin

was born in Leeds in 1976, and currently lives and works between London and Detroit. His work has been exhibited abroad extensively. Conklin received an Arts Council Research and Development Grant in 2004 and is a finalist for the 2008 Prinzhorn Award.

Billy Conklin is one of the so-called second generation Young British Artists (YBAs). Although several early exhibitions caused Conklin to be well known in art circles, he was largely unknown until he appeared before the public on a BBC television program. It was a South Bank production that visited young artist's studios. Conklin was completely drunk at the time, repeatedly saying he wanted his "telly" back and brandishing what turned out to be a starter's gun. It seems he drunkenly thought the television crew was from his cable company. It all ended with Conklin pushing a grip through a plate glass window. Although no one was injured, the incident secured Conklin's career.

Critical responses to Conklin's influence remain in dispute. His output in a short period of five years contains some of the most virulent anti-icons of contemporary art; the centerfold icon especially has been much imitated and parodied in books and advertising, and his *Is London Burning* series has been equally contentious. However, Conklin himself admits that he has had serious drug and alcohol problems for much of these years and much of the work done since 2004 is arguably repetitive and reductive. The majority of Conklin's works are made with assistants and other technical supports which some argue makes his authorship questionable. It is argued though his focus on celebrity has contributed to the trivialization of contemporary culture. If nothing else, Conklin certainly has had a key role in giving the visual arts a continued profile in British public life.



*Gypsy Girl* (from *Is London Burning*) 2005, archival photograph. Collection of Dr. Stephan and Marian Loginsky.



Colorform 2006, archival photograph.



## Thomas Baedeker

was born in Koblenz in 1973. He currently lives and works in Berlin.

Since 1996 the “career hopper,” who started his professional life by training as an insurance salesman, has successfully landed as a painter after a near fatal car crash. Although fanatically devoted to his initial career, he had forgotten to insure himself. Penniless and without formal training, at thirty he began life anew as an artist.

Through his previous business contacts, which he has built up and maintained over the years, Baedeker moves around the art-world stage confidently. In many cases friendships have developed with old clients, enabling an intimacy and camaraderie that has preceded Baedeker into the world of art.

In much of his work, pictorial structures and compositional lines relate to the abstract perfectly and coherently. Particularly those images with two or more colors in dialogue and which appear atmospherically loaded, almost three dimensional. Most particular, in the artist's series titled *Colorforms*.



## Clara Beckmann

is the grandniece of German painter Max Beckmann. She was born outside London in 1978, and has recently served a residency at Detroit's Museum of New Art. She lives and works in London.

Throughout her young life Clara Beckmann has traveled the globe immortalizing art figures of the early 20th century with her camera. In the *Face of Art: Famous Dead Artists*, Beckmann's lens is focused exclusively on these early innovators of modern art.

Beckmann's portraits are known for their dark clarity and simple texture. Her lack of personable knowledge and insensitivity toward her subjects combined with her self-taught technical skills allow us to intimately view some of the outstanding personalities of our era. The power of Beckman's portraits lies in the fact that they are memories of our existence. They reveal something of the nature of our age.



Hans Bellmer – 1938 (from *The Face of Art: Famous Dead Artists*) 2006, archival photograph.



*String Theory no. 26, 2007, archival print.*



## Karl Strumpf

was born in Graz, Austria in 1950 but moved with his parents to England as a young boy. He now lives in London.

Upon surveying recent renovation in the basement of his new Chelsea gallery at Sloane Square, influential art collector Charles Saatchi was startled by 56-year-old Karl Strumpf's boiler room walls which were spattered with mud patching and of half-finished drips and rolled paint. "My God, this is what great art should be." said Saatchi. "Something that gives real visual pleasure and makes you sit up and think, not the pseudo-controversial rehashed claptrap that so many actually believe is cutting-edge art."

Strumpf's only formal studies have been at the British Gypsum Drywall Academy training centre at East Leake, in Leicestershire. Several sections of his still fresh walls have already been cut away and mounted on supports, so that they may be exhibited as their own piece under the collective title *String Theories* when Saatchi's gallery opens.

Plenty of people have had the dream of finding a lost or hidden masterpiece in their attic, but how does one respond to what they find a common worker doing in their basement? Mr. Saatchi isn't alone in his convictions of this underground art and its potential on the art market. Such "isolation and visual focus denotes importance: the greater the masterpiece, the greater its separation from other objects that might compete for attention." Victoria Newhouse writes in her book, *Art and the Power of Placement*.

# DOCUMENTS

How to Build a Museum





By pulling from imagination, recollections, and real interventions, Jef Bourgeau's *museum* claims new boundaries for an artwork by forcing all boundaries to fall away. Political, novelistic, psychological, personal, the *museum* ruptures conventional notions of art – to build its own space. The great messer-upper of media categories, the project has formed its own medium; and by its radical simplicity and deliberately open invention, it has been able to touch on the most sensitive nerves of contemporary and cultural history.

Bourgeau's *museum* challenges the stereotype of, not only what art can be, but, the power structure of art. By shouts, with whispers, luring into cul-de-sacs, guiding out through halls of mirrors: the *museum* visitor is not merely drawn into a visual relationship with a static object, but forced to become an active participant. And is shown – how art can be honest, or, tell lies. And that even within lies, there is truth.

# MANIFESTO

## FOR AN ANACHRONISTIC-FUTURISM:

Trapped in the  
ever-present  
PAST  
there is no  
future.

by CESAR MARZETTI

- 1 *Anachronistic-Futurism* is the final art which will be the art of fact in the language of fact but it will be the art of fact not realized before.
- 2 *Anachronistic-Futurism* will be art and at the same time the secret of beauty; art and at the same time an explanation of art.
- 3 *Anachronistic-Futurism* will disavow interpretation. Rather, it would have us inquire into the notion of time, of time filled, not fulfilled, of not really going anywhere within a certain period of time, of the sense of time passing (slowly, rapidly) until the time is used up, quo pro quid, an inquiry into the very notion of human existence.
- 4 To capture the definitive by chance.
- 5 To snatch in a moment of courage, from the remorseless rush of time, a passing fragment of life – is only the beginning of the task. The task approached in tenderness and faith will be to hold up, unquestionably, without discrimination and without fear, the rescued fragment before all eyes.

**CESAR MARZETTI: THE MAN IN MANIFESTO****PETER KRUG** September 12, 1991

**Peter Krug:** I'm just going to start out with some really interviewy questions: How did you come to write the manifesto for ART UNTIL NOW?

**Cesar Marzetti:** Very simple. Jef (Bourgeau) came to me and asked me to compose one for the show, as a favor. I happened to have several already written. We agreed on one. That it was best. That, having described what he was trying to do, it suited the show the best.

**PK:** But you hadn't seen the show?

**CM:** I still haven't.

**PK:** Then how can you be sure what you wrote is right?

**CM:** I don't have to see any of it because it doesn't matter. Because I knew it would be right. Because art is universal and specific at the same time. Any of my other manifestos would have been equally right. At the time I think we had six or seven to choose from. Jef could've picked any just as well.

**PK:** Will you see the show?

**CM:** I don't need to see it. In fact, I refuse to see it.

**PK:** If you refuse to see ART UNTIL NOW, how will you ever know if it met any of your criteria?

**CM:** I will know when I hear that a person, any person, shall have stood before it and had his voice quiver, his neck swell and his mouth drool.

**PK:** You mean cry?

**CM:** Exactly. But not me. I've wept enough. My art has been my tears.

**PK:** The public?

**CM:** The public must cry. No crocodile tears. Their eyes must get wet.

**PK:** I've seen the show and I didn't cry.

**CM:** Sometimes it takes a few days. It's a delayed reaction. Especially to those of us living in this era. We see too much, so we are less aware of what we see. Then one day...Boom! So, you'll cry. I guarantee it.

**PK:** Is it true that you don't paint anymore?

**CM:** That has changed nothing. There is still only one true artist in the world, and it's me.

**PK:** Isn't it true that you spend all your time now writing manifestos?

**CM:** Today the art world is in chaos. Everything is too ill-defined, so I give it definition.

**PK:** Why did you choose the term Anachronistic-Futurism?

**CM:** Because Anachronistic-Futurism is a contradiction in terms. Because all art has become a contradiction. And, if you give me the time here, I would like to contradict everything I've said to you.

**PK:** Why only five points to this manifesto?

**CM:** There was a sixth, but my computer crashed at that moment. Which left five again.

**PK:** Do you remember what it was? This sixth?

**CM:** Exactly: Anachronistic-Futurism will ask twenty-five questions to which there are no answers.

**PK:** Would any of these questions or their answers help explain what you mean when you talk about a "new language" in art?

**CM:** That is one of the twenty-five questions without an answer.

**PK:** You won't answer?

**CM:** I can't. I can only tell you that every artist, as a child of this age, must express what is characteristic of his time.

**PK:** You speak in terms of children. Does that mean next thing artists will be smearing their feces on the wall?

**CM:** I'm certain someday we'll return to the caves. And when we do, we'll draw with whatever is at hand.

□

(from the Italian by Lia Caro)

Peter Krug is the European editor of *Smart Art*.**NOSE FOR ART... O.K. HARRIS****Gunfight at the O.K. "corral":... no survivors!****Kay Burdell** September 7, 1991

A fraud has been thrust in the public's face. ART UNTIL NOW at O.K. Harris in Birmingham is a hoax.

Posing as a serious summary of modern art, ART UNTIL NOW is anything but! LOOK FIRST, LAUGH LATER would be a title more fitting to its mean spirit. I guarantee nobody will dare but laugh. Yet, this is not really all that amusing. In the end, it is simply dismaying and disheartening.

Only the totally ignorant would be taken in by the racism of these bogus African masks, i.e., Dogon rococo; the contempt for women in a piece like "Eve" (sweater form and douche-bag); or, in the celebration of war in "War Games" – press the knob and experience the thrill of it!

What does any of this have to do with the Twentieth Century anyway?

This exhibit only glorifies the destructive gesture, those hostile ideas that kill art. Standing on the promontory of this century, what good is there in looking back if we have to bash in the doors of our glories? The function of art should not be to remind us of its deterioration, but to counter it.

Point-counterpoint: O.K. Harris and a cemetery have become identical in their sinister contact of bodies that do not know themselves. Gallows' humor and the pall of death are everywhere here.

The exhibit's so-called "Manifesto" is less a letter-of-purpose, even less a post-script to Post-Modernism – than a post-mortem declaring itself DOA.

"We must have the freedom and the will to understand a new language," Cesar Marzetti, its author, declares with a straight face. But is there anything "new" here? Someone please let me know and I'll be the first in line to buy my Berlitz tapes.

ART UNTIL NOW would have us believe in the bankruptcy of today's art, its inability to shake off its past and to push forward.

Can there be any future for art without a past?

Exactly what has made our culture grand has been its increasing inability to create the new. The evolution of humanity has gone hand in hand with the object's moving away from embellishment. After all, a non-tattooed face is more beautiful than a tattooed one, even if the tattoo were done by Monet.

□

*SLAM! art for the next century*. Page 41.

Kay Burdell, Staff Writer



**JANE SPEAKS**, *Jane Speaks Modern Art*

Richard Mann

**Richard Mann:** Is Speaks your real name?

**Jane Speaks:** Yes.

**RM:** Is it short for something?

**JS:** Jane Will Speak. When I was growing up I went by Jane Will Speak.

**RM:** Will Jane Speaks Modern Art retain a large stable of artists?

**JS:** There is great safety in numbers, don't you think? I'm going to start small instead. I'll show one, maybe two artists. We'll see.

**RM:** What will you say to all those good artists you turn away and who remain unrepresented?

**JS:** When there are too many artists, all possible, all good, then nothing is good.

**RM:** Using that logic, you dare to be bad?

**JS:** Good heavens, yes. Running a gallery for me means failing like nobody else dares to fail. It's all about chances.

**RM:** And would Jane Speaks have us believe that failure is a metaphor for our universe, not hers.

**JS:** It's the universe we all inhabit, but have lost the art of recognizing.

**RM:** So Jane Speaks presumes to offer us this lost vision?

**JS:** I only presume to offer my visitors the chance to see again with all five senses, so that the exhibitions here both shout and whisper, laugh and cry, bleed and heal.

**RM:** Big talk nonetheless.

**JS:** Small talk, really. The real voice will be in the art I choose.

**RM:** Choosing this art will you attempt to compete with or emulate some of the more au courant galleries in New York or abroad?

**JS:** If you want to talk trends or fashions, compare Jane Speaks to the cannibal lying naked in the sun – a far cry from the vegetarianism of New York – with my gallery eating the flesh to reveal the soul.

**RM:** Actually, this is all a bit deep for me. Cut to the bone and what really remains?

**JS:** What remains are the things we really don't care to see anymore: those things which are essential to any vision.

DECEMBER 10 1996

## DEATH NOTICES

THE OAKLAND PRESS

### SPEAKS LOST AT SEA

Jane Speaks was recently involved in a boating mishap off the Cape Verde Islands. Although her body was never recovered, she is presumed dead. In her short but rigorous tenure as director of JANE SPEAKS MODERN ART, Jane

garnered respect and admiration in art circles as diverse as New York, London and Paris. Her quick success and audacious facility at keeping just one step ahead helped coin the phrase: When Jane Speaks, the art world listens. Now, sadly

chiseled into her cemetery marker is the lone epitaph: Jane Has Spoken. A fitting tribute to a true visionary. Perhaps, but the silence left by her loss will quickly be filled thanks to her estate's generous endowment to establish Detroit's first contemporary art museum in Pontiac. The Institute of Contemporary Art will be housed at 23 West Lawrence until a more permanent site can be found. This vibrant space will doubtlessly provide Jane with a continuing voice in art for some time.

The family suggests memorials to Hospice of Southeastern Michigan.

**KELLY, LOIS M.;** age 79; December 6, 1996; of Lake Orion; survived by her sisters Norma, Martha, Beverly, and Jerry and one brother Max; dear mother of Colleen Newmyer and Melanie Rouse; grandmother of Steven Cimini, Shannon David Cimini, Kelly and Tara Rouse; great grandmother of Valerie (Cimini) Koski and Hunter James Cimini; preceded in death by her parents, Addison and Blanche Simmermon, and sister Doris, and brothers Dale and Gail. Memorial service to be held at the Seventh Day Adventists Church, 1980 N. Lapeer Rd., Lake Orion, on Thursday, December 12, at 6 p.m. Family will receive visitors between 5 p.m. and 6 p.m. at the church. In lieu of flowers the family requests donations to the Cranbrook Hospice Care, 281 En-Hills, MI 48302. Envelopes available at the church.

**KNAPP, REBECCA ANN;** of Waterford; December 8, 1996; age 47; wife of Leslie J.; mother of Angela M. Miley (Michael), Karl E. Knapp (Rebecca) and Aaron M. Knapp; daughter of Eleanor Kirkpatrick (Kirk); sister of Nancy C. Mitchell (Paul) and Julie Stewart; beloved aunt of many nieces and nephews; niece of Robert and Vera Janes; cousin of Robert Janes Jr. Mrs. Knapp was a registered nurse with member of Shepherd Fellowship Church. Funeral service Wednesday, December 11, 1996, 1:30 pm at Home. Rev. Terry Walker officiating. Interment Christian Memorial

**STEIN, LELAND JR.;** D. 1996; age 64; loving husband of Anita Stein; father of Steven Genetrice (Roy) Harvey (Horice) Allan, Leland Steven Annette (Charlie) Motley. worked for 30 years at the Corporation until the plant. He retired from the Detroit Corporation. Funeral service day, December 13th, at Davison Missionary Baptist Church, 39 E. Dakota, Detroit, MI. may call at the church on December 12, from 7-8 p.m. arrangements by Pope Home.

**SUTHERLAND, KENNETH;** 83; of Rochester Hills; D. 1996; loving husband of Florence Jean Hull; grandfather of Todd (Kellie), Lori (Diane) zano, Scott (Elizabeth), Jenny; great-grandfather of Cathleen, and 1 Sutherland was retired summers Power after 30 years vice. He was a past President of Rochester Lions and a member of St. Paul's United Methodist and a Charter member of the Elks Lodge. Funeral service Wednesday, 11 a.m. at the Modetz Funeral Home, 10000 Blvd., Rochester. The family will receive friends Monday 6-8 Tuesday 3-5 and 7-9 p.m. suggests memorials to the Dog for the Blind of E Projects.

**TWO MEN AND A MUSEUM:**  
**Kay Burdell talks with Richard Mann and Cesar Marzetti**

**Kay Burdell** *Art View*, Spring 1997

**QUESTION:** First I would like to ask why and how you decided to open Detroit's first contemporary museum in Pontiac?

**RICHARD:** We wanted to start fresh. We chose a city nearby Detroit that would have a fresh atmosphere. A small enough community where we could create an art scene that would be new and innovative. Pontiac fits that bill perfectly.

**Q:** Richard, as director of the Jane Speaks Foundation and now the museum, perhaps you can best answer why you've chosen to opt for this idea of a "small" museum as well?

**RICHARD:** I've never thought in small terms.

**CESAR:** I don't accept this notion of small either. Small town, small museum! It is a museum on the human scale. And I would say that is the ideal scale.

**Q:** At any scale, how would you describe the position of a contemporary museum in the larger community?

**RICHARD:** As a place for showing art that is currently under discussion, but that takes risks at the same time. This is and will always be our position.

**CESAR:** Today, there are no more risks to be taken. Before the paint is even dry on the avant-garde – it's already gone mainstream. So suddenly everything has to be redefined, reinvented. A contemporary museum must refuse to simply be a repository or showcase for these instant artifacts. We must create an alternative space for the future.

**Q:** How will you make your institution different and innovative?

**RICHARD:** I would hope to develop a system of special curators or of committees to advise us on our decisions. I would include in these other curators or gallerists living in New York or LA, but on our payroll as well. They could make such decisions from a position of respect.

**CESAR:** All this is very ambitious, but still just another way of perpetuating the old way of choosing and validation.

**Q:** How do you see the role of curatorial decision-making?

**CESAR:** I think the times dictate the role of a single curator. He will be the one, true artist going into our new millennium. We can already see it happening at the level of commercial galleries. Deitch, Hirst. Theme shows. Bad Girls and Vertigo.

**Q:** So how exactly do you see your role as head curator in a contemporary institution?

**CESAR:** The public doesn't come back each month to see a specific work of art. That piece will have moved on with something to replace it. Month to month, only the museum itself remains constant. The role of the contemporary curator then is to act in such a way that the art becomes invisible. His role is to make the museum all the more visible.

**Q:** For your first show you're bringing in names like Matisse and Picasso, to Warhol and Koons. Do you really think you can make such giants of modern art invisible?

**RICHARD:** The art business is about believing. There is no value without belief. Cesar and I want to make non-believers of the world. After our first show, you'll see, this should be an easy task.

**CESAR:** The rest will be downhill.

**Q:** But opening a contemporary museum you can't hesitate. You have to start on the top of everything. And you seem to be doing this with your first show. But how and where do you go from here? I guess I'm really asking what is the best source for direction in the current art world? Where do you go in making such decisions in the future?

**RICHARD:** Art magazines. It's not a complex system. But Cesar has convinced me of its effectiveness.

**CESAR:** It's all about whose face is on this month's cover. It's a hit parade. Success comes about that quickly.

**Q:** Isn't that a rather facile way of deciding things?

**CESAR:** Pragmatic for me.

**RICHARD:** At the end of the eighties, Cesar was diagnosed with a spastic colon. Needless to say, he spends a lot of time on the crapper – reading. That's where he experienced this particular epiphany.

**CESAR:** It was like Saul on the road to Damascus. One day I was suddenly enlightened.

**Q:** Do you still see yourself as an artist?

**CESAR:** I'm an artist to the death. In fact, here and now, I want to declare myself the greatest living artist! Why? Because now I not only have the power of making art, but also that power of being able to make art history itself.

**Q:** And what exactly is your vision of art history?

**CESAR:** I don't know if mine is a hopelessly romantic idea but I have a vision of the world where there are no more images – nothing but desert.

**Q:** What does that leave?

**CESAR:** The sky above! This is the moment we no longer have to gaze backwards at the dust at our feet. But to move into a new age, you must preclude the existence of a past.

**Q:** Richard, if you let Cesar destroy any referencing to a past, how can you judge future art?

**RICHARD:** I have to agree with Cesar. Because too many references have led to no real references at all. To a visual bankruptcy. Where references no longer have weight because of their sheer bulk. This has happened to art. It has been transformed into something which doesn't have any value beyond mercenary.

**Q:** How will you establish the value of this new world art then, if you throw out the value of the old?

**RICHARD:** The value of any art relates exclusively to how many people have bought into it. By every definition, it's about status and consumption.

**CESAR:** It's also about a star system. And I will be the new millennium's first impresario. I will provide and organize its first entertainments. I will be the one to fill its sky with new constellations.

**Q:** What does all this mean for the museum in the long term?

**RICHARD:** That there will be no long term. We'll go bankrupt. The banks will walk in and take over almost immediately. New ideas are always a bad risk. And once the banks take over, everything is sold for very, very low prices.

**Q:** How does this fit with the museum's agenda as the ultimate paradigm for art's future?

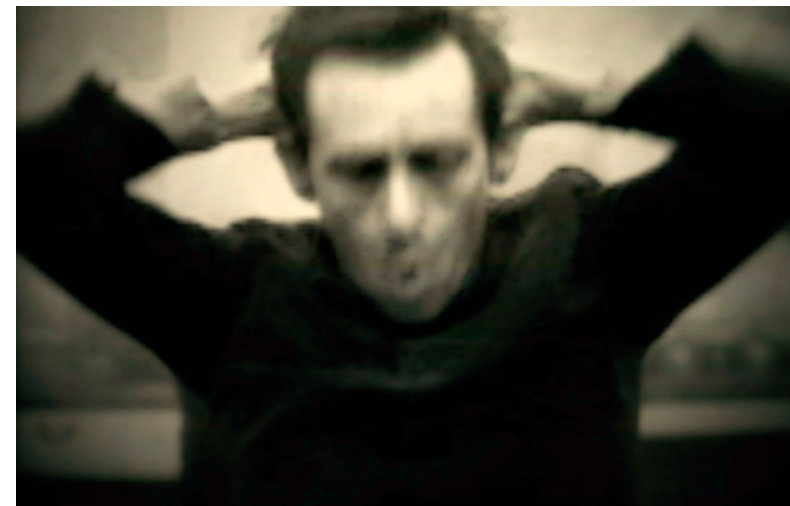
**RICHARD:** Ultimately, it will help in the total mistrust of contemporary art.

ART VIEW. Page 58.  
Kay Burdell.

# The Detroit MUSEUM OF NEW ART (MONA) must be saved. It is a unique institution heroically promoting an attitude towards art and its display which is original and challenging beyond imagination. We, artists and cultural operatives from Detroit and everywhere else, support MONA in its fight for survival:

Lucio Pozzi Wim Delvoye Louise Bourgeois Simona Vendrame Gracie Mansion David Salle Jan van der Marck Pipilotti Rist John Torreano Rene Gimpel Sarah Charlesworth John Yau Lawrence Weiner Arman Pat Steir Mary Fortuna Alison Knowles Orlan Simen Johan Kenneth Snelson Carolee Schneeman Liz Nval Lisi Hämmerle Vukasin Nedeljkovic Marcello Marvelli Cecilia Qvarnström Bettina Werner Helenede Franchis Bernar Venet Mel Kendrick Mona Vatamanu Kate Holtet Floe Tudor Christian Mélot Stefano Cagol Helle Behrndt Joyce Pomeroy Schwartz Doron Furman Ralph Valdez Filomena Cusenza Maria Cilena Sangüini Primoz Novak Marit Lindberg Gijs van Tuijl Laura Bruce Alisdair MacRae Luca Curci Marilyn Zimmermann Colette John Albert Murphy Maria Yakovenko Audra Wolowicz Jim Simmons Kim Austin Jimmy Draper Mandy Williams Jane Grossenbacher Dr Christoph Brockhaus Mary Harrison Tom Thewes Mark Dancy Carole Biagiotti Davin Brainard Melissa Richard Amie Potsic Jeremy Breithaupt Robert Gutierrez Sarah Burger Anninadi Oronzo Frederic McCoy Ula Einstein Gary Sherman Polly Wood Monroe Denton Sante Scardillo Patricia Pinsker Lucie Claire Bourgeois Maz Jackson Brian Anderson Meira Yedidsion Mindy Belloff Jeffrey Kilmer Irene Westholm Charles Hinman Francis Boeske Carolin de Lannoy James Diron Flavio Del Monte Nicole Olenio Michael Peacock Sarah Slobodzian LENIN Jessica DuVerneay Laura Cloud Frank Duerr Jill Field Duerr Antonio Sasu Bruce Hamilton Susanna Carlisle Victor Vedten Gruppo Sinestetico Wade Saunders Janos Kalmar João Fonte Santa Anne Rochette Christopher Chambers Livio De Carlo Don Boyd Marilyn Schechter Eric Geiner Laura Stoland Kim Austin Artemae Anderson Suzy Hug Levy David Peterson Richard Brerley Karl Ingar Roys Jessica Hill Catherine Reed April Liu Head Clausnitzer Olga Horvat Sioux Trujillo Jean and Christina Mairet Brian Anderson Kathleen Ruhl Bourgeois Sarah Anderson Andrew Ginzel Jennifer Everland Nicholas Hales Franz Wassermann Rebecca Camhi Cristina Pavesi Marc van der Marck Tracy Heneberger Beth Wilusz Jan Hinman Conceição Lopes Elena Acquarone Joseph Wolkosky Gabriela Bernales Kay Young CJBenninger Sara Brolund Carvalho Gwen Joy Jason Murphy Françoise Doherty Lisa Simon Nina Yankowitz Topher Crowder Ann Sperry Lara Sfire Geoffrey Hendricks Laurainda Stockwell Jung Hyang Kim Rosalie Winard Eliza Barrios Jennifer Bacon Filippo Fossati Lisa Harrison Andrew Robinson Nadine Robinson Tom Teebe Paolo Colombo Suwan Methapisit Angelo Evelyn Jim Cogswell Sumiko Seki Peter Steinlechner Franco Leidi Mark Kadota Leslie Johnson Axel Harvey Maria José Goulão Patricia Olynk Sarah Lapinski Vasco Diogo Connie McKinney Claudia Jessup Jonathan Richards Tamar Halpern Varouj Gumuchian Gianna Marini Brandon Bauer Mitzi Lee Colombo Liz Erlewine Raffaella Losapio Vincenzo Ceccato Thorsten Knaub Peter Pezzimenti Liliana Kadichevski Lee Redfern Julie Thomson Andreas Weiland Scott Paffman Mary Assenmacher JoAnne Cocadiz Daniel Scheffer Mary Beth Carolan Michael Nagara Wilma Cruise Tom Fowler Emily Linn Michael Goldberg Lynn Umlauf Colleen Quigley Sandra Lehman Amy Cheng Melissa Schubeck Erin Eisey John Cynar Marius Dybwad Brandrud Wilfried Agricola de Cologne Nina Zimmer Michael Faulkner Axel Stockburger Joerg Huber Patterson Sims Katie McGowan Ivona Bonacorsi Sandro Ricaldone Sol Robbins Silvia Castro Mary Hrbacek Rob Waters Kimberlin Blackburn Florence Marzotto Paolo Marzotto Paula Mettler Siren Nordbo Bernadette Wolbring Cynthia Greig Kari Jones Michele Sohn Janice Vidican Paul Lamarre Melissa Wolff Frank Tomozylsabe Alves Roberta Piccioni Diane Farris Kelly Parker Hap Tivey Achilles Kentonis Brent Harris Rozalinda Borcila Claire McConaughy Melanie Manos Adriana Ferlauto Nicolò Parodi Janet Cooke Francesco Bertello Adad Hannah Marco Lavagetto LuLuLoLo Gulsen Calik Colin Matthes Mary Magamen Stephan Hillerbrand Julie Meitz Bernard Yenelouis Babs Reingold Nicholas Kothari Lasse Bergfeld Edwin Varney Francesco Arena Tommy Mew Christwomey Kim Fay Dan Falzone Mark Bommarito Marco Fantini Nika Oblak Francisco Camacho Catarina Campino Warren Keith Wright Mariana Pimentel Joan Grubin Francis Grunow Michelle Diggs Scott Dillon Carol Salmanson Mery Lynn McCorkle Amedeo Porro Keith Bjorkman Sands Murray Wassink Maria Walather Sasha Schwartz Alexander Reilly Alan Moore Richard Jansen Harriet Regina Marion Joyce Bennett Amathin José Pinheiro Sarah Sanders Bridget Rafferty Leah Retherford Michael Sheppard Kristina Newhouse Joel Cardoso Rodrigues Chris Gideon France Garrido Daniela Paes Leao Ann Holdreith Joe Lovett Richard Reeves Joseph Ernst Meryl Greenblatt Cláudia Ulisses Scott Collins Joseph Ferraro Mykola Kirichenko Jennifer Boyak Hugh Broder Jeffrey Haefner Nadia Theba Beth Diamond John Broughton Philippe Splingart António Olaió Magnus O'Mara Andrea Hagopian Kara Meister Chuck Dyer Emily Wolfe Stuart Taylor Sigrid Williams Mischa Kuball Jami Taback Matthew Rose Helga Griffiths Wulf Kirchner Maurizio De Bonis Micaela Martegani Monique Voiret Daniela Watson Elisabeth Condon Giuseppe Xausa Dave Channon Karen Charman Mark McCarroll Sonchalacono Yolanda Sharpe Giovanni Bai Beverly Bergman Dorothy Faison Julie Karcis Elda Cerrato Eve Stuart Leigh Burton Farrell Brickhouse Judith Uehling Matthew Baringer Allison Glenn Joel Cardoso Rodrigues James Sweetbaum Kelly Gale Amen Chris Anderson Jean Pierre Mathy Micaela Giovannotti Dinis Guarda Sara Buckwitz Peter Kuckel Robert Lederman Carol Starr TRASH / TREASURE Joana Régio Dave Perry Cira Pascual Marquina Beverly Kedziór Jacqueline Bishop Niek Kemps Joseph Semah Felix Weinold Mark Bain Paolo Jacomella Patricia Jacomella Livio De Carlo Hans Tyrrestrup Peter Lussenheide Marta Marce Jaime Gili Eduardo Padilha Valentina Loi Maix Mayer György Galantai Julia Klaniczay Ruri Kirsten Justesen Julius Vitali Fulvio Tomasi William Bingham Karen Fitzgerald Gianluigi Bellei Barbara Prokop Ken Campbell Ammie West Katie Brewer Jean Louis Perrot Cynthia Kerkher Art Expo Group Gabriele Seethaler John Carlson Maria Maier Maria Corsetti Roger Wagner Stefan Sagmeister Maria Walter Erik Lindsay Jacqueline Simon Hans Peter Omann Carole Benzaken Richard Hertz MacKenzie Wilson Eugene Rodriguez Maik Freess Jason Walz Varot sos Costas Lisa Gavan Manuela Corti Ricardo Cruz de Vasconcelos Patrícia Alemanno Nicola Dimitri Donald Harrison Kellie Pickard David Walsh Robert Derr 4FR John Corbin Neriman Polat Erik Pevernagie Patrik Karlstrom Pnina Gorali Travis Pickard Kelly Gale Amen Graham Nichols Javier Prato Enrico Grasso Daria Dorosh John Tomlinson Dr Klaus Groh Michelle Handelman Rick Lieder Susan Rueter Susana Mendes Silva Michelle Constant Stephana and Marian Loginsky Diego Toscani Marianne Elder Juliana Miloski Vince Briffa Lorraine Benini Judy Wilson Mariella Bettineschi Julie Zack Carl Demeulenaere Kevin Smith Sissel Gryta Kaleola Belle Kyra Garrigue Jeremy Schulz Jennifer Ryan Cy Yoakam Michael Krumenacker Jorge Queiroz Nicholas Hales LaKeja Brown Linda Lee Marc Pagani Stephanie Keene Daniel Vanneste David Gazdowicz Louis Kerman Erin Nail Lisa Cohen Orith Youdovich Christina Hetherington Ana Barata Stephen Pender Beiliu Brad Alder António Olaió Michelle Burns Pedro Dantas Helena Palma Luis Miguel Soares Isabel Cernich Maria Elisa Toscani Nick Sousanis Dianna Kramer Margo Kish Kim Sobanski Gyste Bojaj Mike and Gosia Rehfus Julie Durst Paula Morales Alia Toor Angela Brentford Francescolly Rebecca Radcliff João Tabarra Tom August Emília Tavares Mark Brown Mark Feinsod Jason Kasper Martin Hetherington Peter Mertz Vicki Parker Jen Santarelli Matt Powers Lorilyn Mertz Kathy Shepardson Michael Butler Nathaniel Stern Curt Winnega Edmund Balde Gwen Smith Anton Crainic Simone Clunie Waltraut Cooper Tina Edgar Steven Whyard Neil Solomon João Simoes Frank Shifreen Mara Castilho Linda Kay Joe Lavis Nicole Lesperance Jef Bourgeois Grady Turner George Waterman Mark Rist Carrie Armstrong Claire Nelson Robert Niedson Lyn Bolen Rushton Andrew Sempere Crash

www.detroitmona.com



## DUTCH ARTIST FAKED OWN DEATH

### Jan de Groot found alive during police round-up

AMSTERDAM – The Dutch photographer, Jan de Groot, who was reported to have committed suicide last year, has instead been discovered alive and well. The artist was picked up in a routine dragnet of prostitutes operating illegally in Amsterdam's De Waal or free zone, most of these immigrants. Police told us that de Groot stood out from the other streetwalkers due to his awkward application of lipstick, his wearing out-of-season pumps, and by sporting a heavier than normal moustache.

"He was obviously out of his league," police chief Pieter Koomens remarked. "Plus we'd received quite a few complaints from his joints: that de Groot, or Bootsie as he was known on the street, was totally inadequate despite his, well, you know."

Responding to the possibility of prosecuting the artist, Chief Koomens responded that de Groot hadn't really committed any other crime than unlicensed solicitation. He was fined for that and released.

"Yes, it is a crime to commit suicide. The law is clear on that. But there's nothing in the books for having faked it," the chief said, but added with a wry smile: "However, unhappy clients may file civil complaints against Bootsie."

Our country has many laws concerning services' fraud, failure to deliver goods and so on. There may be some redress there, some justice of sorts."

Going back to life as usual, the artist was located by this reporter working happily in his old studio on his latest series of portraits. When asked why he had faked his own death, he argued that his gallery had pushed him to it.

"They told me my work had gone shit lately. We had a big blow-up and they dropped me. They said I was dead as an artist. To make them feel some regret, I staged my suicide. I thought I'd show them. But, after my death, my prices plummeted even more. Things just don't work like they used to."

As he dried his new photograph of long dead artist Asger Jorn, he talked about recent events: "Now, after my arrest and all the police hullabaloo, my value has recovered. The scandal has put my prices through the roof. All in all, I'm glad I was found out. In season or out, I couldn't have lasted another day in those heels. And my gallery has taken me back now that I've been charged in my parents' murders."

## IS LONDON BURNING

August Meerschart for *Morgenspiegel*

Billy Conklin's work has an allusive Duchampian wit, a Magrittian mystery, and a diabolic Swiftian mastery of design. Since narrative plays as a primary means of organizing people's lives and experiences, Conklin has created a long string of art narratives that some critics have described as superfictions. Other critics have suggested that his work is so far beyond what can properly be considered art, that they use the term "post-art" to describe it. Yet within all these definitions Conklin has set up a powerful negative logic, aimed to question the nature of art and art institutions. And, perhaps, even the culture that builds and decides such things.

Now that he has a home in Detroit, Billy has only learnt one American phrase so far, a rude one, although the garrulous artist promises to soon be chatting away politely with the locals who inhabit the neighborhood streets. More than merely a means of escaping the British doldrums, the second generation Young British Artist says the decision to move here is motivated by the deep affinity he feels for the darker side of the local culture. He spoke to me in his shabby-chic Detroit house he purchased on his last trip to town. He spoke as somebody who has been through the wringer of public controversy. Outside we had prostitutes standing at our corner, and people crapping round the back alley.

**QUESTION:** Why relocate to Detroit?

**Billy Conklin:** Because the Old World charm is still here. (*He lets the stained drapes fall back over the barred window.*) They've even got their own version of Bonfire Night. But, yeah, I suppose the whole thing really is about death.

**Q:** Your work is often chastised by European critics for being too obvious, but, all the more, as just morbid.

**Conklin:** I think that the way that I deal with death is totally American. And Detroit is the picture-perfect city for that, imbued with all that. Not just the Murder Capital of the World thingie that comes and goes, but down to the bricks. It's in the architecture. The ruins of a once great city and culture. In England people hide or shy away from death and ideas about it, whereas Detroiters seem to walk hand in hand with it. In that way I feel a bit liberated here. I identify with the directness of this tradition of violence, which along with the rust and rot has also permeated Detroit's artistic traditions.

**Q:** London has been good to you though? It's where you made your career. It's now the capital of the art world. Why abandon that?

**Conklin:** The art world is not a lot to do with art. It's to do with money and power and position and control. And if they've decided you fit their strict profile, you'll be in. If they've made up their minds otherwise, you never will be. I wanted to find another planet altogether, a livable place beyond any art world. And so, one day I landed happily in Detroit.

**Q:** So London put you in the latter category? On the out?

**Conklin:** Yeah. But I think experience will tell these people that the more they try to slag off Billy Conklin and his work, the more the public reaction will grow stronger in the opposite direction. That's a universal law. And has nothing to do with the quality of me or my art.



**Q:** Which draws me to my next question: You've been described as an arrogant self-promoter. Do you think of yourself as an important artist?

**Conklin:** Today's artist is of no importance, since he is replaced daily. And no wonder, I'm easily sick and tired of myself. So must the viewers be.

**Q:** You've often been quoted as saying that today's art is the new readymade. What do you mean by such a disparaging statement?

**Conklin:** There's nothing disparaging about it. The art of the 21st century is the new readymade. A poorly manufactured object transformed by its mere selection and placement in a gallery or museum context. A shallow, unreflective banality motivated only by the desire to become institutionalized. So that putting these mundane objects in the limelight makes them appear extraordinary instead of ordinary. Such placement makes anything on view precious. At least for the near future.

**Q:** Yet you don't see this as something bad. Since you obviously embrace and participate in this duplicity by showing your own work in such institutions.

**Conklin:** Of course I participate. All that today's museums offer is their institutional authority. So that any visit to one is the ultimate act of deception. And, know it or not, that confronts the current culture full-face. I'm all for that, where everything is hidden by being exposed in plain sight. We live in a world of deliberate artifice compounded by such direct misrepresentations of truth and beauty, and by such

cunning indirections of those who decide and are in positions of power.

**Q:** Did you steal your power to be an artist? You've also been accused of being a fake. Or even a forger.

**Conklin:** The forger's art is simultaneously self-aggrandizing and self-effacing, selfish and generous, bold and timid. By taking other artists' work as my own dissolves these boundaries of constraints and permits us to push one's imagination to the limit. To explore every possibility. Someone makes a pretty painting and puts it on the wall because it can't stand on its own feet. I give art feet so that it can stand on its own.

**Q:** And by this action, which some critics have termed *superfictions*, what do you hope to accomplish?

**Conklin:** To simply ask those questions this century has already forgotten. What is art? What is the role of the artist? What is the role of the public? A gallery? A museum?

**Q:** And once there are answers?

**Conklin:** There won't ever be answers. Just data to gather. Then to analyze all that. To analyze the conditions of art production at the start of this new century. And to discover that point where the modern equation between art and truth has lost meaning. And, in so doing, life itself.

## Gagosian Correspondence

### E-mail

*In a message dated 12/14/2006 9:36:57 AM Eastern Standard Time:*

Dear Mr. Bourgeau,

I work at Gagosian Gallery in New York. As you may know, we represent the artist Douglas Gordon. I work very closely with Mr. Gordon through the gallery, but I am not familiar with his project, *One Minute Psycho*. Is this a spoof of Mr. Gordon's work, or is this artwork authored by him? Have you been in contact with Mr. Gordon about this work?

Regards, Kara Vander Weg

Gagosian Gallery  
980 Madison Avenue  
New York, NY 10021

*In a message dated 12/14/2006 2:36:57 PM Eastern Standard Time:*

Dear Kara,

Cesar Marzetti is the organizer and curator of the MONA exhibition *Swindle*, within which he's included Douglas Gordon's *One Minute Psycho*. I'm not sure if he'd characterize the Gordon piece as a spoof or not, but I'll forward along your e-note to him.

Hopefully, he will answer your questions better than I can.

Best,

Jef Bourgeau @ Museum of New Art

*In a message dated 12/15/06 10:50 AM Eastern Standard Time:*

Dear Mr. Gagosian,

I will try to answer all your questions concerning the *One-Minute Psycho* as best I can:

Yes. It's a total fake. It's a shriveled, shrunken mirrored image of the real thing and of the real author. And it only becomes more poetic that way — the real thing. It's something you see in the periphery of your vision now, like a mirage of the fake. With a mirage of a fake, you know: when you take two negatives, it makes up something like a positive, you could almost believe that the real thing is somewhere about in the air. And it all penetrates you that way, as an apparition of this reality.

This is the first time I have had the opportunity to do this, to revisit a work that has been revisited already — to reinstall something yet once again, playing with the idea not entirely of an instant recall but some kind of a recollection of that recall.

At the same time there is definitely something tongue-in-cheek going on — but if people didn't see the original recollection that doesn't really matter. The people who did maybe will get the humor and conceit of it. But within the humor there is an implication of some kind of trauma. It is found all through the sped-up work. Fast motion is for Keystone Kops, not a murder in the shower. I wanted it to become more terrifying as you laugh. There's a split created inside your gut, between the belly-laugh and the churning butterflies, that recognizes horrors whizzing by. You become very conscious of the difference between the two speeds and the way that is going to affect your cognitive process, your physical interaction with objects. I think this is one of the things that probably was behind *One-Minute Psycho*, the way people behave in space with an image that is moving that fast.

I did this version of *24 Hour Psycho*, which is called *One-Minute Psycho*. It is almost like a very bad colorized version of the original masterpiece — except it's over in the blink of an eye. I lived in Berlin for a while and I went to especially catch the shower scene from *24 Hour Psycho*, and I actually did. Walked in, sat down, and there it was on cue. And I thought I may never get to see this again, so I rented the *Psycho* remake and pushed it into fast motion. I wanted to believe it was something anyone could do. That *One-Minute Psycho* was necessary. Whether I did it, or someone else did it, it was necessary. So mine only lasts for sixty seconds — so it's like the "best of" something. And no one need ever miss the shower scene again.

As for me, I'm only left a small player in this. I like the idea that artists I have admired over the years may have found their way into my subconscious only to resurface much later in the shaping of a work of art. For me the piece that has been 'kidnapped' will not in time occupy so much of a different status from the work that these others have. The multiple and contradictory mythology around the work is as important to me as the work itself.

For me, it is always more interesting to get away from the idea of the gesture of art and the authentic author. I'm coming from the other side of that, where my idea is that things are fixed so let's jeopardize them. So I had the museum put the story out that of course it was Douglas Gordon that had made this film. It was much more interesting for me to have contradictory stories around the work.

Yours sincerely,  
Cesar Marzetti

# DOCUMENTS

## EXPLANATORY NOTES

### D1 MANIFESTO August 1991

*Art Until Now* was the first expression of Bourgeois's urge to transform the museum into a medium all its own. It was also the artist's first solo exhibition. Opening in August of 1991 at O.K. Harris Works of Art, the show modeled itself after those ragged displays at the Trocadero in early 20th century Paris. The exhibition also first introduced Cesar Marzetti and his recently penned manifesto to an unsuspecting audience.

### D2 CESAR MARZETTI September 1991

Both the *manifesto* and the *interview* with Cesar Marzetti were key components of Bourgeois's seminal exhibition *Art Until Now*, and, of greater importance, for all his future art strategies. Bourgeois had founded a project that combined not only the elements of his background in writing, video, photography and painting but one that also allowed him to expand beyond these with installation, performance and theater.

### D3 NOSE FOR ART. . . September 1991

Bourgeois's first use of a faked article was for *Art Until Now*, albeit one that harshly critiqued that exhibition. Without letting him in on the joke, this mock review was given to gallery owner Ivan Karp, who ordered back "written with a lot of verve, but don't dare set it out where anyone can see it."

### D4 JANE SPEAKS September-December 1996

The museum project began as a commercial gallery on Lawrence Street in downtown Pontiac. This project lasted for three months, until enough funding from sales was collected to sustain a year's rent for a non-profit contemporary museum. The name of the gallery was *Jane Speaks Modern Art* and it was owned and operated by the fictitious Jane Speaks.

This interview with Miss Jane was published in an actual art journal *GROUND-UP* published by artist Mary Fortuna and with an accompanying photograph of the dealer (each issue, however, was published with a different photograph of a totally different woman representing Jane: i.e., one of a young person; another of an older, sterner looking woman; the next with an African-American; the next of a seated nude wearing a hat; and so on).

### D5 OBITUARY, *The Oakland Press*, December 1996

Once the funding for a museum had been achieved, Jane was no longer necessary and she quickly and conveniently passed

from the scene – but in such a way that she might be brought back at a moment's notice, if necessary. And also, with her presumed death, the revelation was made of an endowment to fund a contemporary museum.

The following *obituary* was embedded in *The Oakland Press* and spread as a copy. With so much of the art world thriving on gossip, the owner of a prominent gallery was heard to say what a horrible loss Jane's passing was for the community. (If you notice, the museum is first mentioned as the Institute of Contemporary Art.) The project developed organically, reacting to and with the art and the life around it.

This early version of a contemporary museum in Detroit, despite all of its conceptual and neo-fluxus trappings, was a very real place, examining and critiquing the art and trends of its time, often in a Swiftian way. But it was also a living work of art, dependant as much on the moment, on the viewer/visitor as on the artist himself.

### D6 TWO MEN AND A MUSEUM January 1997

This next interview introduces the new players. Richard Mann had been the name used to interview Jane Speaks earlier. He has been given a history now, the widower of Jane Speaks and entrusted with the endowment for a new museum. He is the more grounded of the two, but sinister at the same time. Cesar Marzetti is an old character, who had appeared five years earlier to write the manifesto for an exhibition at O.K. Harris Works of Art. This manifesto is in fact revived to become that of the new museum. Cesar is unbridled and quite free in his thought process. Again, this "article" for *View magazine* was faxed, emailed and circulated by hand and regular mail. Richard conveniently becomes the museum's director, and Cesar its curator. The museum is given the official title, Museum of Contemporary Art. Within three years it will have morphed into a real museum, the Museum of New Art (MONA), complete with board, benefactors, a substantial downtown space, and its own non-profit museum status.

### D7 THE PETITION 2003

After the Museum of New Art had lost its home in downtown Detroit, a petition to save and support the museum, both as a space and as a concept, was published in several art journals: i.e., *Artforum* and *Tema Celeste*. The petition was first drafted in New York, but then circulated and signed by over 500 international artists and art patrons, including: Wim Delvoye, David Salle, Pipilotti Rist, John Torreano, Lawrence Weiner, Pat Steir, Arman, Carolee Schneeman, Bernar Venet, Crash, Lucio Pozzi, Jean and Christina Mairat, and Louise Bourgeois.

### D8 DUTCH ARTIST FAKED OWN DEATH May 2004

After nearly a year of being homeless, the Museum of New Art found new lodgings back in Pontiac. MONA returned to the city of its origin lighter on its feet, having shed its board of directors along the way, and, without these overseers of by-laws and rules, a new mandate for freedom and expression.

Once having established its official museum status in Detroit, MONA was now able to operate as a hybrid of art and life in Pontiac, of the real and its imitation. So, the museum reopened its doors with a grand *Biennale*. Bourgeois celebrated the opportunity by reinstating his *e-MONA* series. This time, however, on a much more commanding scale: displaying the trendiest Internet and clipped art magazine photos throughout MONA's large and cavernous new home. At the same time, portraits of many of these participating artists (photographed by a Dutch artist) were hung in neat rows in several of the smaller galleries.

It is now apparent that Bourgeois used this opportunity to renew his so-called *museum* project and, by way of completing it, began to invent a fresh but fictional stable of international artists. The first of these was a full-blown effigy named Jan de Groot, a Dutch photographer. This article is a follow-up to a previous one that had announced de Groot's presumed suicide and that had garnered some interest and response, most notably from Ireland's foremost art journal *Circa*.

### D9 IS LONDON BURNING 2005-2006

Young Brit artist Billy Conklin has been the most raucous, most visible and perhaps the most political of Bourgeois's invented personae. He first appeared in response to the July 7th terrorist bombings in the London underground system. Taking his camera to the street immediately, Conklin photographed passers-by shortly after the bombings.

Within the week, Conklin had also found out about a terror response exercise held by the government in London. There were 200 role-playing victims in a terror exercise, feigning a range of injuries, both chemical and from flying debris. A large debris pile itself, complete with crushed cars and a bus, was erected near the Bank Station where much of the action took place. Rumor has it that this simulated attack was happening at the same exact time as the actual bomb blasts.

This second part of Conklin's project includes some of these actors who'd performed as casualties in this terror exercise. He brought them into his studio and asked them to recreate their responses to flying debris and chemical agents and the like. Whatever had been their "specialty." The resulting images of both projects were at times horrific while others comical, and often both at once.

At this point, Bourgeois has come full circle with his *museum* project: first having concocted the fictions of an administrative staff and their lives; next, after honing variations within commercial galleries, creating a museum space to showcase both real and imagined art; then finally to invent a stable of fictive yet fully realized artists to exhibit within this museum space.

### D10 GAGOSIAN GALLERY CORRESPONDENCE 2006-2007

There had been earlier occasions that Bourgeois had not only appropriated artwork, but another artist's identity itself. This happened, most notably, during the 1999 DIA controversy for which the artist had created totally new artwork for all the represented artists, living and dead. Even though he had played with similar strategies as early as his first solo show in 1991, by creating a work attributed to Egon Schiele, it wasn't until Douglas Gordon's purported *One-Minute Psycho* that he was finally called out on this ongoing strategy by the Gagosian gallery (for his 2006 sixty second speed-up of a 1998 scene-for-scene remake of Alfred Hitchcock's *Psycho* which in turn was based on the original *Psycho* 1960 which in turn had been remade by slowing it all down to 24 hours by Gordon in his *24 Hour Psycho* 1993). Bourgeois responded in turn by answering as the offending artist-curator Cesar Marzetti, himself an invention, in a letter to the gallery written mostly in Marzetti's own rather shaky artspeak.

What has separated Bourgeois's appropriation method from the many others who have practiced it before (since Duchamp's *Fountain* 1917 to more recent work by Sherrie Levine, Jeff Koons, John Currin and Douglas Gordon himself) is that, rather than simply reproducing as his own work other works of art, he has often created an entirely new work instead, or, at the least an artwork that continues the appropriational line to a more absurd extreme. In doing so, Bourgeois not only raises the usual questions of originality, authenticity and authorship, but belongs, not just to the long modernist tradition of artists that question the very nature or definition of art, but to those who now question art itself.



# WORKS IN THE EXHIBITION

## I. Early Paintings

1. *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* 1968, acrylic on canvas, 10" x 8".
2. *Pink Nude* 1970, felt marker on paper, 7" x 5".
3. *The Magus* 1973, charcoal on paper, 14" x 11".
4. *Yellow Christ (Yawning)* 1980, mixed media on paper, 20" x 16".
5. *Frida in Detroit* 1983, mixed media on paper, 7" x 5". Private Collection.
6. *Diego and Frida* 1984, acrylic and oil on canvas, 8" x 10".
7. *Diego at the Beach* 1984, acrylic and oil on canvas, 8" x 10". Collection of Kathleen and Alex Bourgeau.

## II. Objects

8. *A History of Black People (After Basquiat)* 1984-85, mixed media, 26" x 40" x 12". Private Collection.
9. *The Tailor's Wife* 1990, mixed media, 21" x 5".
10. *Silent Woman* 1991, mixed media, 42" x 16". Collection of Dr. Stephan and Marian Loginsky.
11. *Origin of the World* 1992, mixed media on drywall, 48" x 48".
12. *The Shroud* 1994, mixed media, 48" x 16".
13. *American Beauty (Sleeping)* 1997, mixed media, 22½" x 40" x 39½". Private Collection.
14. *Blue House on the Moon* 1997, mixed media, 21½" x 12½" x 20½". Private Collection.
15. *Blue Judith* 1998, mixed media, 31½" x 7" x 5½". Private Collection.

## III. Video Works

16. *A Rose for Picasso* 1980, single-channel monitor.
17. *Picasso's Baggage* 1991 (reconstructed 2007), luggage and pet carrier with monitor.
18. *A Day in the Life* 1993, lego house and monitor, 6" x 11½" x 5". Private Collection.
19. *Paradise Lost* 1994, porcelain glove mold, blouse form and monitor, 23" x 14" x 11". Collection of Rebecca and Alan Ross.
20. *The Same Thing* 2006, single-channel monitor.
21. *A Boy's Life* 2007, single-channel monitor.

## IV. Pictographs

22. *Adam and Eve* (triptych) 1993, mixed media on canvas and paper, 17½" x 40".
23. *Matisse (early and late)* 1993, mixed media on paper mounted onto composition board, 48" x 48" each. Collection of Dr. Terry and Meryl Podolsky.
24. *Slippery When Wet (Chappaquiddick)* 1994, mixed media on paper mounted onto composition board, 48" x 48". Private Collection.
25. *Factory* 1994, mixed media on paper mounted onto composition board, 20" x 16".
26. *Guernica (American)* 1996, mixed media on paper mounted onto composition board, 16" x 20". Private Collection.
27. *Three Masterpieces (Sm, Med, Lg)* 1996, mixed media on paper mounted onto composition board, 77" x 38" overall.
28. *Pubescent Pink* 1997, mixed media on paper mounted onto composition board, 48" x 48".

## V. Fear No Art

29. *After Schiele* 1993, oil, acrylic and wax on paper, 4" x 4".
30. *After Léger* 1993, oil, acrylic and wax on paper, 4" x 4". Private Collection.
31. *After Renoir* 1993, oil, acrylic and wax on paper, 4" x 4". Collection of Kathleen and Alex Bourgeau.
32. *Police Investigator* 2000, digital enlargement.
33. *Police Chief with Investigator* 2000, digital enlargement.

## VI. Text Art

34. *An Object like a Painting* 1995, archival print, 7" x 5".
35. *The Accidental By-product of a Banal Obsession* 1995, wax on paper, five images each 4 5/8" x 3 1/2". Private Collection.
36. *Monsieur d'Hotel (after Dubuffet)* 1995, silk-screen and acrylic on canvas, 18" x 24".
37. *An Object like a Painting* 1998, oil, acrylic and tape on paper, 17" x 14". Private Collection.

## VII. Graphic Identities

38. *Andy Warhol*, 1997, digital print, 5" x 7".
39. *Andres Serrano*, 1997, digital print, 5" x 7".
40. *Gerhard Richter*, 1997, digital print, 5" x 7".
41. *Georg Baselitz*, 1997, digital print, 5" x 7".

## VIII. Deface/Destroy/Strip

42. *Brit Art Sucks* 1999/2002, digital enlargement.
43. *kaBOOM! on wall with hanging Howdy Doody* 2002, mixed media installation.
44. *The Bride Stripped Bare By Her Bachelors, Even...* 2002, digital enlargement.

## IX. Lost Picasso

45. *Woman Sitting in a Chair* c.1934 (reconstructed print after Picasso 1996), 6 1/2" x 4 1/2". Private Collection.
46. *Woman in a Blue Shirt* 1998, pencil and ink, 7" x 5".
47. *Carlos Valentin (1905)* 2006, archival photograph, 7" x 5".
48. *Antonina Valentin (1906)* 2006, archival photograph, 11" x 14".
49. *Picasso's Camera* c.1905, box camera with cracked lens, 8" x 6" x 10".

## X. Texts and Discs

Documents and materials displayed under glass.

## XI. Doppelgänger Photography

### Thomas Baedeker

50. *Circles and Boxes no.3*, 2006, 24" x 18".
51. *Colorform no.12*, 2006, 14" x 11".
52. *Colorform no. 22*, 2006, 14" x 11".
53. *Circles and Boxes no.14*, 2006, 14" x 11".
54. *Circles and Boxes no.23*, 2006, 14" x 11".

### Clara Beckmann

55. *Ana Mendieta* 1985-2006, 24" x 18".
56. *Hans Bellmer* 1947-2006, 14" x 11".
57. *Jean-Michel Basquiat* 1984-2006, 14" x 11".
58. *Kurt Schwitters* 1932-2006, 14" x 11".
59. *Piet Mondrian* 1913-2006, 14" x 11".

## Hanna Bloot

60. *The Green Chair* 2005, 24" x 18".
61. *Corridor* 2005, 14" x 11".
62. *Morning* 2005, 14" x 11".
63. *Dinner Setting* 2005, 14" x 11".
64. *Bidet* 2007, 14" x 11".

## Billy Conklin

65. *Pink Words* 2005, 24" x 18".
66. *Terror Exercise #4*, 2005, 14" x 11".
67. *Man in Red Shirt* 2005, 14" x 11".
68. *China Girl* 2005, 14" x 11".
69. *Terror Exercise #7*, 2005, 14" x 11".

## Stig Eklund

70. *Figures in a Park* 2004, 24" x 18".
71. *The Face* 2006, 14" x 11".
72. *The Incident* 2004, 14" x 11".
73. *The Dancer* 2004, 14" x 11".
74. *Man at the Stairs* 2004, 14" x 11".

## Taki Murakishi

75. *Invention 4*, 2004, 24" x 18".
76. *Invention 8*, 2004, 14" x 11".
77. *Invention 12*, 2004, 14" x 11".
78. *Invention 14*, 2004, 14" x 11".
79. *Invention 17*, 2004, 14" x 11".

## Karl Strumpf

80. *String Theory #3*, 2006, 24" x 18".
81. *String Theory #7*, 2007, 14" x 11".
82. *String Theory #9*, 2007, 14" x 11".
83. *String Theory #14*, 2007, 14" x 11".
84. *String Theory #17*, 2007, 14" x 11".

Unless otherwise noted, all works are lent by the artist. □

# JEF BOURGEAU

A User's Manual

Curated by Jan van der Marck  
Catalogue written by Jan van der Marck  
Edited by Candace O'Leary  
Designed by Debra Lashbrook  
MONA logo by Skidmore Inc.

## Oakland University Art Gallery

Department of Art and Art History  
College of Arts and Sciences  
Oakland University  
208 Wilson Hall  
Rochester, MI 48309-4401  
(248) 370-3005  
www.oakland.edu/ouag

Director, Dick Goody  
Assistant to the Director and Registrar, Jacqueline Leow  
ISBN 978-0-925859-41-9  
Printed by Allied Printing Company

Copyright 2007 Oakland University Art Gallery. All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced in any form without the written permission of the Oakland University Art Gallery.



Oakland University Art Gallery exhibitions are made possible through the generous contribution of individuals, companies and foundations.

### Benefactors: \$5,000+

Marianne Fey Miller and John Miller

### Patron's: \$2,500 – \$4,999

Peter and Aggie Corrado (Infinity Outsourcing)

### Directors' Circle: \$1,000 – \$2,499

Annette Balian	Rex Lamoreaux
Nora and Guy Barron	Kathryn LeBlanc
Elizabeth DuMouchelle	Stephan Loginsky
Phebe Goldstein	Diana Mitzelfeld
Dr. and Mrs. David E Haines	Pam Mitzelfeld
Patricia Glascock and Michael Hall	Elaine Ohno
Joyce LaBan	Teri Takai

The above gifts were made between June 2006 and June 2007. Oakland University Art Gallery apologizes for any inaccuracies or omissions.

This exhibition and catalog were made possible by a grant from Michigan Council for Arts and Cultural Affairs and by the College of Arts and Sciences, Oakland University.

## Acknowledgement

Jef Bourgeau thanks Amir Daiza and the owners of the Oakland Arts Center for their generosity, and all the landlords and building owners who have donated space to him in the past.



Throughout his career Jef Bourgeau has fashioned his own identity as one might manipulate an artistic medium, helping to launch a fundamental model of post-20th century theory: not so much preoccupied with the issue of identity as suspending it.

In accordance, there is not one Jef Bourgeau but many. Not only has he adopted several post-modernist and more advanced idioms in quick succession, but he has also invented several contradictory alter egos. Bourgeau has presented himself as artist and art dealer, conceptualist and craftsman, pragmatist and dreamer, bully and recluse. He is the ultimate fabulist, challenging our assumptions about art.

Yet, within all these shifting strategies Bourgeau has set up a powerful negative logic, aimed at questioning the nature of art and art institutions. And, most profoundly, the culture that builds and decides them.

So to that end this book would present his work as an on-going narrative, yet without a story. Or, at the least, without resolution. There is a tension in his work that is relentless; like all good art, never entirely allowing the viewer the comfort of seeing it completed.

Jan van der Marck

