

5 SHOWS TO SEE NOW

NEW
Alumni/David Weinberg Gallery
Duncan Anderson/Kasia Kay Art
Projects
Notes to Nonsel/Hyde Park Art
Center
Susanna Slavick/Chicago Cultural
Center
A Touch of the Poet/Irish American
Heritage Center

RECOMMENDED
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appear below. To submit listings e-mail
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antee that all submitted listings will
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NEW AND NOTEWORTHY SHOWS

MUSEUMS

Chicago Cultural Center

78 E. Washington. → **SUSANNE SLAVICK, photography.** Appropriating photographs of scenes of devastation from the wars in Afghanistan, Iraq, Lebanon and further afield that she finds on the Internet; tweaking the images in the computer; and then painting elegant bits of "restorations" into them, Susanne Slavick presents yet another variant of the ubiquitous project of redeeming the ruins. Slavick's most effective photo-works feature the gutted and twisted hulks of bomb-blasted cars that she has decorated with designs and figures from ancient civilizations. In "Hemorrhage," Slavick serves up a hopeless wreck from a car bombing in Sri Lanka that she has surrounded and filled with sinuous patterns derived from an illustration in Firdawsi's fourteenth-century *Book of Kings*. Although Slavick's intent is to begin a "healing" process and to slam imperialism on the way, the effect of her images is to fix the viewer in contemplation of aestheticized brutality which arrests and satisfies the eye with its striking juxtapositions and self-sufficient beauty. (Michael Weinstein) Through Apr. 4.

Museum of Contemporary Art

220 E. Chicago. → **VARIOUS ARTISTS,** "Production Site: The Artist's Studio Inside Out," installation. Fresh on the heels of Liam Gillick's recently closed exhibition, which showed how unfulfilling a post-studio practice can be, the Museum of Contemporary Art opened "Production Site," their contribution to the yearlong, citywide Studio Chicago project, which seeks to re-energize the city's artists to get back in the studio to make stuff. While so many artists today use digital technolo-

1
NOTES TO NONSELF
(Hyde Park Art Center)
A Buddhist garden of delights

2
MATT SAUNDERS
(The Renaissance Society)
The death of cinema

3
SUSANNE SLAVICK
(Chicago Cultural Center)
Rebuilding the ruins

4
DUNCAN ANDERSON
(Kasia Kay Art Projects)
Plastic passion

5
A TOUCH OF THE POET
(Irish American Heritage Center)
Visual poetry

gies, contract outside fabricators and expand the role of art beyond the studio-to-gallery system, "Production Site" proves that museums still need studio artists. Curator Dominic Molon charts the transformation that objects undergo between their private creation and their public reception. Some of the mythical, magical heat that bubbles over in the artist's studio then dissipates in transport to the gallery or museum, but more often than not, the thirteen artists in this presentation tend to reveal that they can conjure stunning effects regardless of place. So, we end up with an engaging, visually vibrant show that nominally tries to link artists around this theme, but the artists take such markedly different turns on this journey that we ultimately get the impression that "the studio" means markedly different things to different artists. Chicago-based artist Justin Cooper presents a suite of accomplished drawings alongside a video that documents a visit to his studio in a rabid, feverishly animalistic way. The studio in question was a temporary space the artist used during a summer residency at Skowhegan, not his home base. Likewise, Amanda Ross-Ho presents nine massive sections of wall from a previous studio space, allowing us to revel in the quirky, collage-like remains of past projects, research photos, personal effects and drywall. This striking piece is more about the loss of personal space than a celebration of space as the impetus for creativity. Tacita Dean's wonderfully slow and saturated film homage to Marcel Broodthaers, by investigation of his former studio in Düsseldorf, provides a perfect counterbalance to Andrea Zittel's eco-obsessed studio, A-Z West, in Joshua Tree, California. Of all the artists, Zittel has most



Manifesto Destiny

By Jason Foubberg

WINTER KEEPS US INDOORS, AND SO IT'S A GOOD TIME FOR CONTEMPLATION. This past season, there's been a blooming of art manifestos. When so much feels out of control or beyond the purview of art—job loss, politics as usual, shrinking budgets and attention spans for art—artists take their message back into their own hands, just as they have done for centuries, and address manifestos to the masses. As published online, the Internet is the perfect marriage of medium and message.

In February, photographer and educator Dawoud Bey gave the keynote address to the College Art Association, where he had the ear of art professionals from across the US, and which he later posted on his blog, *What's Going On?* The three-thousand-plus-word speech asks a series of questions about the established norms of the art world. Bey's speeches and blog posts always emit an aura of calm, through which he enacts his activism, but a tone of anger cuts through his present speech. He asks, "Are we ready to rethink the notion of institutional prerogative, privilege, and exclusivity, or is the current institutional climate as insular as ever?"

Bey's speech strives to empower its audience to build relationships with those who are usually excluded from the arts. "How do we go about making what we do matter not just inside of the institutional space of the college, university, museum or gallery, but outside of it as well?" With equal doses idealism and realism, Bey critiques the institutional systems of exclusion, with an anti-authoritarian, yet sane, message. The fix? "One has to believe that the work of bringing others into the center of the discourse truly matters."

On Jogging, a new Internet art website, a three-part manifesto was published this January (Jan 2, an 5, Jan 13). Although the manifestos are unsigned, the writer(s) frequently use the first person. The anonymity of this manifesto is key to its message, which reasons the imminent disappearance of art objects and physical spaces to exhibit art.

The tone is anarchic: "If the opportunity to destroy art in the museum is the viewer's chance to be master, [the viewer's] denial to do so makes them consensual slaves." It's a new dawn of Internet Futurism.

As Bey frequently recalls his capacity as a teacher in his speech, the manifestos on Jogging also target the student population, which is perhaps the largest segment of the art community, and where ideas and methods are indoctrinated. "Why are today's leftist-educated art school students satisfied with and eager to join the most laissez-faire market in America?" The anonymous author concludes, "I want art that is free to experience, free to make, and free to promote. I want Free Art." Like any good manifesto, this one on Jogging is impassioned, but not always realistic. The Internet is not free, but it is cheaper than running a gallery. To their benefit, the manifestos on Jogging are visionary, and take issue with a specific strand of art. They should be read and wrestled with.

Randall Szott, a blogger who supports non-object-based art practices, and a chef for the US Army Corps of Engineers, published a manifesto on his blog *Lebenskünstler*, in mid-January. Szott defines the enemy lines—"we refuse to meet on your terms." Unnamed, the "we" and the "you" are assumed to be artists versus academics and critics. "We are not your intellectual playthings," he writes, and "we reject your representation and demand our autonomy." He targets the "theoretical class." Szott, though, has a taste for intellectualism, evidenced in several public art arenas, so his manifesto seems more a personal reflection or self-critique than public prescription.

"While you wring hands over what it all means, we are trying to change the world, build relationships and communities," writes Szott. A good manifesto is supposed to organize a community around a meaningful situation or enterprise, and that may mean it can have academic ties, for university professors are often very politically engaged.

A common thread among Bey's speech, the three anonymous Jogging posts and Szott's manifesto is an instigation to form community. The do-it-yourself sentiment strikes hard here, as it does often in Chicago. Forget the institutions, they seem to say, and form your own colony of ideas. Chicago's artists have long held this belief. "Certainly there is no honor in teaching students that their only job is to make their work and to then wait for someone to shower rewards upon them," writes Bey, critical of institutional conferment.

The DIY method is an invisible blanket that promises safety, and invisibility. These networks and communities, if motivated to grow, form new institutions. Institutions give grant money, provide exhibitions that attract international audiences and distribute information across wide channels. These institutions often include people who are not artists, but who do the work that, if artists performed daily, they would not have time to make art. Art manifestos, like their market-driven counterpart, artist statements, empower makers to keep making, with a focused goal; more should be written, and read.

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