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## THEATER/FINE ARTS

Friday, April 28, 2006

### Sneaky public art coming your way at CrawlSpace

By REGINA HACKETT  
P-I ART CRITIC

Because public art passes through committees, each exacting drafts and redrafts, the end product can be as subservient as a butler.

That subservience is a long way from the antic creativity of artists who made history by turning public spaces into open-air, performance art studios. Problem was, nobody got paid.

More than 30 years after this public art boom, artists are emerging around the country who are willing, at least initially, to forgo payment in order to create a product that's fully their own. Without anyone's permission, they're taking their art to the streets.

Crawl Space surveys a range of this off-the-public-art-books art in an exhibit titled "Personally Public."

Not all these artists survive on their good looks. The art team known as **SuttonBeresCuller** gratefully accepts grants but continues to work, funded or not.

At Crawl Space, there's a dainty table filled with family photos. Each features the trio impersonating their great-grandparents, an ongoing performance titled "The Golden Years." The subject is physical bonds and mental barriers. The audience doesn't need seats, because it's on stage with the actors, influencing the outcome of the play.

**Ron Lambert** and **Vaughn Bell** provide art experiences to anyone open-minded enough to accept them. Lambert fashioned an umbrella built for two. That means space for him and you. He documents the reactions he inspires, from averse to adventurous. Bell created a replica of Mount Rainier and takes it for a walk on a leash, offering those whose view is blocked by buildings a pathetic personal encounter with what's left of nature.

**Diana Falchuk** curated "Personally Public" and contributed photos and video documenting her ongoing appreciation of letter boxes titled "Mailboxes Are People Too." Sentimentality pushed to loony extreme becomes pointed satire. The animal-rights movement will not be amused.

**Peter Gaucys** ties thick red ropes into knots. His sculpture ("Cherry Red") is the kind of thing that you might see as rubbish on fishing docks, except, it's rubbish with animal magnetism. I long to sink my fingers into those clots.

## ART REVIEW

### GALLERY ROUNDUP

"Personally Public" at Crawl Space  
Enrique Martinez Celaya at Greg Kucera Gallery  
Laura Letinsky at James Harris Gallery

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In the next couple of weeks, it's a good idea to scan the facade of public buildings for **Peter Bonnell's** tiny human heads. He mounted them all around town: monuments to nothing and everything, hard to spot as they blend into their backgrounds but once seen, entertaining in their anonymous yet stuffy pomposity.

**Ashley Thorner** appears to be making fun of abstract plop art. Her imitation looks plausibly authentic until it sinks into a bright puddle. Actually, she's offering a plop art alternative. Her plastic and vinyl "Rapid Air Pods" can be assembled by passers-by, like Tinker Toys, into pseudo-serious art forms. Who's the artist here? Everybody.

**Kristen Ramirez's** map of Seattle is made of private longing expressed through postcards. **Robert Zervina** buys cereal, turns the package inside out and returns it to the store. His blank boxes are a critique of our brand-name life.

"Personally Public" invites us to look around. Thanks to these artists, even the most ordinary Seattle street might sport radical adornment or offer a unique encounter.

*Through May 14. 504 E. Denny Way. Hours: Saturday-Sunday, noon-5 p.m.*

- **Enrique Martinez Celaya** at **Greg Kucera Gallery** paints figures and grounds in weird, alchemical fusions. His work has **Odilon Redon's** hallucinated sense of the land coupled with **Elizabeth Peyton's** languid approach to human form. Some of it looks like a dandified dead end (no bones to support these enervated gestures), but when he connects, such as "Boy in Icy Landscape" in blood, watercolor and charcoal on paper, the result is haunting.

*Through May 13. 212 Third Ave. S. Hours: Tuesdays-Saturdays 10:30 a.m.-5:30 p.m.*

- **Laura Letinsky's** digital c-print photos at **James Harris Gallery** are worlds impersonating still lifes. Harris ordinarily edits his exhibits into cohesive and exacting experiences. With Letinsky, he's featuring two different series at once. The effect is disconcerting, especially for those who are used to this gallery's reductive subtlety.

Letinsky opened with a shot of a table that fills her frame. Proust readers will recognize this image as a sensation-soaked remembrance of time passed. Cake crumbs, pale wine stains and the delicacy of the cloth beneath them are a backward look full of the ecstasy of regret. The other pieces in this series aren't nearly as good, but what is? This photo is a masterpiece.

The second series has sharper edges and sour tonalities: empty rooms that are three-dimensional versions of Cubist paintings. The print of the multiple doors open at different angles still intrudes on my consciousness.

*Through May 6. 309 Third Ave. S. Hours: Wednesdays-Saturdays 11 a.m.-5 p.m.*

**Webtowns** 

More headlines and info from [Pioneer Square](#).

P-I art critic **Regina Hackett** can be reached at 206-448-8332 or [reginahackett@seattlepi.com](mailto:reginahackett@seattlepi.com).

On Architecture: The problem with most high-rises is how well they reach the street

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