

BARD

OBSERVER

BARD COLLEGE / SINCE 1934 / Monday OCTOBER the 30, 2006

BARD STARTS \$350 MILLION CAPITAL CAMPAIGN

Largest Amount in College's History to Be Raised By 2011 to Commemorate 155th Anniversary

by Michael Brown


The college is now in the "silent phase" of its newest capital campaign aimed at raising \$350 million dollars to expand the endowment and fund expansion to key buildings on campus. The announcement is not yet official, as the silent phase of the campaign entails a period of some months for gauging interest among interested donors before it can be approved by the board of governors. Ideas for future projects are under discussion, with plans to bolster financial aid, expand the library, the athletic facilities, the campus center, as well as a recreational student space.

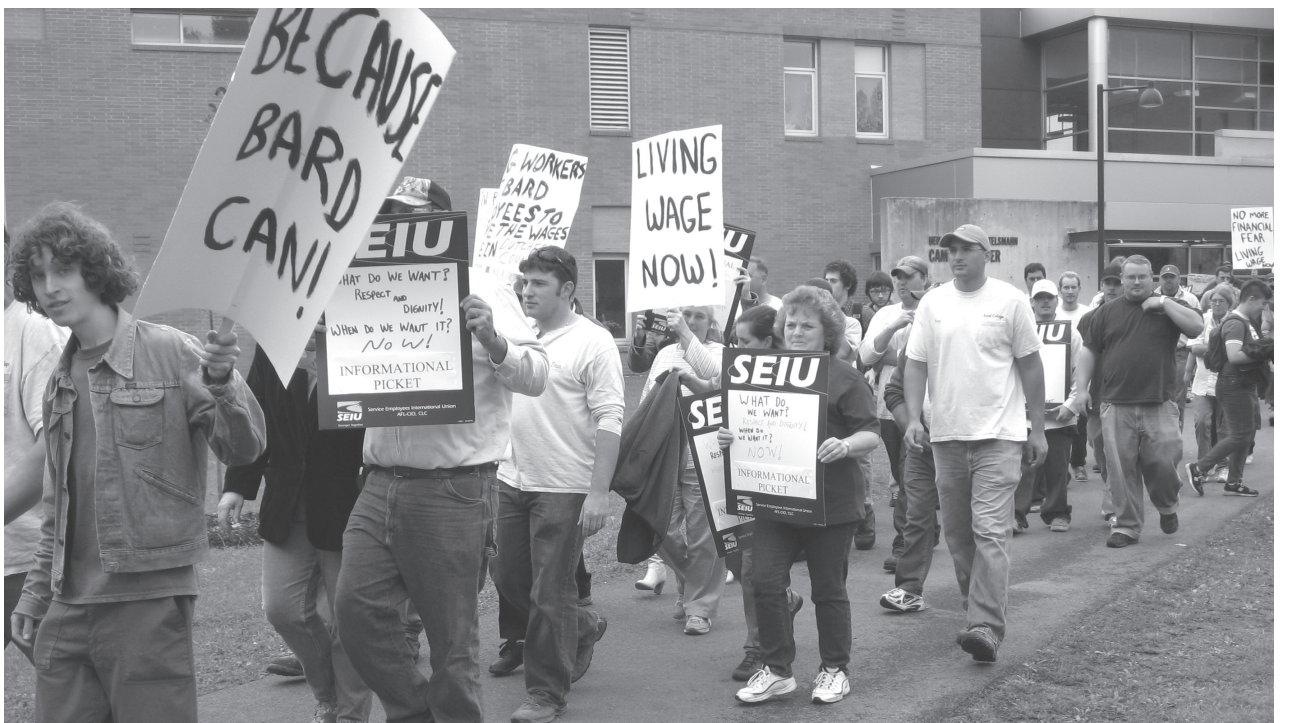
President Leon Botstein, when asked about the feasibility of such a venture considering the endowment of the school is now at \$170 million, commented, "The college in the last 10 years raised somewhat in that order of magnitude, and we are going toward the 105th anniversary of the college." He added that to fill the desired needs for expansion, upwards of \$400-500 million would be needed, but that is likely not within the means of the college. Other larger universities such as Stanford have recently announced their own capital campaigns, aiming for goals around \$4 billion. Botstein detailed the costs of merely maintaining normal operation commenting, "The way the college operates now we have to raise \$11-14 million annually to break the budget even."

Botstein maintained that the capital campaign was unrelated to the B&G contract renegotiations, offering his view on the circumstances. "The college has had a good collective bargaining agreement with the Union for many many years. We've always come to a good agreement. No matter how the campaign works out the college's basic financial capacity is small change. We've always settled amicably with the Union. A lot of this jockeying for this or that position is part of the ritual of collective bargaining."

Most of the donors are expected to be from outside the college, with still relatively little money coming from alumni donations. Botstein attributed this trend to the type of graduates that Bard produces, "Our graduates do not go into lines of work that are necessarily lucrative" He added, "It's never been an institution where the primary undergraduate motivation was becoming rich in business."

Vice President of the college and head of Alumni Affairs Debra Pemstein said that alumni will continue to play a growing role. She agreed, however, that the percentage of donations from Bard alumni has been quite low relative to other schools. She said that Bard "does not have a culture of giving among its alumni." She argued that it was difficult to cultivate a sense of class pride at a place where individualism is valued so highly.

Botstein commented on the changing attitude about giving among alumni "Yes I think there's a move. In the last 10-15 years the alumni participation is much greater. The numbers are small, but the attitude is terrific. There's a much greater sense of responsibility." 



B&G and Ludlow at a Standstill Over Salary Disagreements

by Grace Dwyer

Frustrated by the administration's refusal to grant proposed wage increases, B&G workers turned to students, faculty, and parents for help this month as three rallies demonstrated external support for the demands of the union. Despite continued negotiations dating from last July's expiration of the previous contract, B&G demands for a "living wage" remain unmet and a settlement has yet to be reached.

As last October rallies proved successful in inducing the college to supplement B&G's contractual health care policies, the Student Labor Dialogue and SEIU 200, B&G's union, hoped to capitalize on that success in this arena. A series of lunchtime rallies attended by both B&G workers and students culminated in the events of Family Weekend, where students and their visiting families were greeted with petitions, brochures, and informational tables staffed jointly by members of the Student Labor Dialogue and B&G workers. The brochures, in addition to detailing the on-campus responsibilities of the Buildings and Grounds team, cited living wages for Dutchess County generated by the Fiscal Policy Institute in comparison to B&G employee base pay. Though all Bard wages are sufficient for a couple with no children, the salary of the lowest paid tier of worker is inadequate for the needs of every other demographic, and no salary is enough to support a single parent with children.

"Given the amount of money parents give to the college, they have a right to know how the college is treating

their labor," explained B&G worker and union representative Brian Watts. "The majority of our members have to work second jobs to make ends meet." Though Watts and other workers expressed their desire "not to detract from the experience of students and parents together," informational tables increased awareness and questions distributed outside the Parent Q&A Session sparked a discussion with President Botstein on the subject.

In response to a parent question concerning the equitability of the college's treatment of lower paid workers in comparison to those with higher salaries, Botstein clarified, "The current difficulties are not about salary." He went on to explain the under-compensation of faculty across the board in comparison to their contemporaries at similar institutions, pointing to Bard's severe lack of endowment. He reasoned that B&G workers are paid more equitably in comparison to Marist and Vassar staff than faculty. "[Even] I am sorely underpaid," he joked. "I am proud of the relationship we have with the union and our lowest paid workers. I'm not concerned [about this situation.]" In answer to a second question concerning labor issues, Botstein denounced the protestors' portrayal of the administration as an evil corporate entity. He encouraged

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3rd Parties Kept Off Ballots

by Jason Mastbaum

Eric Sundwall had 5,200 signatures for his petition to run for the United States Congress as a Libertarian from the 20th district of New York—the minimum for running for Congress in New York as a third-party candidate is 3,500 signatures. Bill Van Auken, the Socialist Equality Party’s candidate for the United States Senate from New York, had 25,000 signatures when he needed only 15,000. Sundwall was ultimately kept off the ballot due to challenges to the signatures he collected for his petition to run, while Van Auken managed to overcome objections to his own petition’s signatures.

Both candidates technically had enough signatures, but in New York it is generally considered that a candidate needs at least double the legal minimum as a protection against ballot challenges. Further stacking the odds against third-party candidates is that, legally, the five recognized parties in New York State, a group that includes the Republican Party and the Democratic Party, need fewer signatures than third party candidates. For instance, to run for Congress, a Democrat would only need 1,250 signatures.

Trying to find information about this abrogation of democracy proved wildly difficult. In doing some preliminary fact-finding, I was forced to call the New York State Board of Elections, because their web site did not have much in the way of useful information. In my subsequent Googling for some hint of what I was dealing with, I eventually stumbled across the fact that one Warren Redlich was representing Sundwall pro bono in court over the challenges to Sundwall’s signatures. This bit of information would have been rather mundane, except for the fact that Warren Redlich is running for Congress in New York’s 21st district on the Republican ticket.

During my interview with Redlich, he described the difficulty of getting even 2,500 signatures (the amount that he, as a Republican candidate for Congress, would need to be considered “safe”). First assume that the candidate is working alone, not altogether an unreasonable assumption since he’s a third party candidate. Now, at a rate of 10 signatures per hour (which various people have told me would be a very

impressive showing), it would take 250 hours to get 2,500 signatures. Assuming that the candidate spends 8 hours a day collecting signatures at the 10 signatures per hour rate, it would take 31 days to get 2,500 signatures. Now consider that third party candidates for Congress, such as Sundwall, would need to get 7,000 signatures to be considered “safe.” It quickly starts to become clear why it is so amazingly difficult to run as a third party candidate in New York.

Even if the third party candidate gets enough signatures, as Van Auken told me, “Such an operation [aimed at challenging signatures] makes it very difficult for a new party to get on the ballot, as it entails extensive work in proving that your challenged signatures are indeed valid as well as appearances in court and before election boards, all of which consumes [sic] a great deal of time and money.” For a major party candidate, this could make signature challenges all the more enticing, because even if the third party aspirant prevails in court, he will very likely have been bled dry of most of his campaign funds in the process.

Now, how does one go about challenging petition signatures, one might ask? Redlich informed me that when he was reviewing the challenges to Sundwall’s signatures, the most common one was the “no town, wrong town” objection. According to New York law, only a residence address is acceptable for the purposes of signing a candidate’s petition—but most people don’t know this, so they put down their mailing address, such as a P.O. box. Furthermore, in New York, there are

many hamlets and villages that fall within the jurisdiction of a larger town and thus are not valid residence addresses. To name an example, Annandale-on-Hudson is a hamlet falling within the Town of Red Hook, which also includes the villages of Red Hook and Tivoli. But because most people are not actively aware of such fine distinctions, they are apt to put the “wrong” information down when signing a petition, making them vulnerable to a determined signature challenger.

To zoom in on the 20th district, our district if you are registered to vote using your Bard address, Representative John Sweeney (R-NY) has wielded signature challenges on multiple occasions. Once was against Sundwall—it was someone on Sweeney’s payroll who challenged Sundwall’s petitions. Another time, it was against Democrat Kirsten Gillibrand, who is challenging Sweeney for his seat. Both wanted to be on the Independence Party’s primary ballot to try and gain their nomination and thus their votes, but Sweeney filed petition challenges to keep Gillibrand out of that primary. (Although Sweeney is a Republican, New York Democrats are just as likely to use such tactics.)

Mr. Redlich, for one, is not pleased with the current system in our state. “New York’s ballot access laws are too restrictive, and I understand the political reality of it, but I find it shameful to do that to a third party candidate,” referring to challenging their signatures on whatever grounds present themselves. He continued to say that he finds such actions highly undemocratic and that they are depriving voters of a choice.

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if you have any questions please email ap491@bard.edu

Meet The Candidates

by Sarah Martino

October 4’s Meet the Candidates event in the MPR, moderated by Leon Botstein, introduced the student body to their potential future representatives: Kirsten Gillibrand (D), running for the district’s Congressional seat, Marc Molinaro (R) and Victoria Martin (D), running for State Assembly, and Brian Keeler (D) running for State Senate. Each candidate was given a chance to speak and then answered questions from the audience who were eager to make them sweat.



Gillibrand opened by affirming her dedication to “reward[ing] people who work hard.” She spoke on the importance of a living wage, and vowed to fight to raise the minimum wage, which her opponent, John Sweeney, has voted against. She also cited Sweeney’s unwillingness to stand up to the President’s plan to privatize social security, a plan which she called “poor public policy” and promised never to support. Gillibrand moved on to the state of education and health care, saying that she’d like to see college tuition tax deductible up to \$10,000 and a switch to more preventative health care instead of treating people expensively at the emergency room. She proposed opening up Medicare to anyone who wants to buy in at a price they could afford.

Gillibrand closed with a focus on alternative energy use. Citing that Dutchess County and surrounding areas have already been successful in implementing alternative energy use like hydropower and fuel cells, she stated that she wanted America “to be the leader in this endeavor” and also that “outsourcing is

not inevitable.” She sees the possibility for a lot of jobs created by the development of alt. energy, as well as in a return to older industries: “When a nation builds its agricultural base and its manufacturing base it becomes stronger.” Gillibrand repeatedly made the point that “when we stop manufacturing we can no longer innovate.” She said she would not have supported CAFTA, and thinks cutting our area’s dairy exports has hurt local agriculture.

During the Q&A, audience members, including Leon Botstein, pressed Gillibrand to speak more in depth about several of her policy positions including her stance on withdrawing from Iraq, gay marriage, and fiscal responsibility. She spoke on the importance of an exit strategy from Iraq that involves getting out in less than a year and promising the Iraqi people that we

have no stake in their oil. She is for the Federal implementation of civil unions in all states and leaving it up to individual states to decide what kind of language they want to use when it comes to “marriage.” She also stated that she would vote to roll back the Bush tax cuts given to the wealthiest percentage of the country. Her opponent, John Sweeney, who has been in office since 1999, did not attend the event.

The Democratic candidate for the 103rd district State Assembly, Victoria Martin, discussed her background as a professor (She was teaching at the University of Albany when asked to run.) and declared her main concern to be “the state

of the middle class.” Like Gillibrand, she spoke on the high costs of education and health care, as well as encouraging and

B&G CONTRACT NEGOTIATIONS CONTINUED, *from page 1*

parents to keep in mind that it wasn't a situation of good and people, saying, "they are preying on positive sympathies, but the facts simply aren't there."

While admitting that the union and the college are still "some distance apart" where wages are concerned, "I don't anticipate any difficulty [solving] this," seconded Jim Brudvig, Vice President of Administration and one of the chief figures in the ongoing contract renegotiations. Last week the administration tabled an offer of a 3.5% increase every year over a three-year period, which would increase the wage of the lowest paid B&G worker from \$14.10 to \$15.63 per hour by the third year. The union's proposed increase of 10% every year, raising the lowest wage from \$14.10 to \$18.79, was deemed unfeasible on the grounds that, as Brudvig put it, "students come to Bard to get great teachers, not to get great administrators or great plumbers."

Though willing to discuss the establishment of a realistic "living wage" figure, Brudvig said the effect of student and parent support on his decision in the form of petitions and protests was minimal. "The resolution of this is between the administration and the union. Tactically does [student support] change my mind? No."

As contract renegotiations continue it is unclear whether or not the student rallies will affect the outcome. As one first-year student from the Student Labor Dialogue observes, "I think they project the image that the students have an input - what students care about should matter. Whether administration does anything about it is another matter entirely." Though B&G workers are still fighting for a living wage and the benefits of the rallies are yet unseen, Watts reminds students that, while not underestimating the importance of the union, "[Student involvement] is the only way. If students weren't involved, nothing would get done." ➔



Hannah Arendt TURNING IN HER GRAVE

by Frank Brancely

Some people need to be dead. How would you react to that statement? That is just one among several disturbing remarks that escaped the tobacco-stained lips of the keynote speaker Friday night at the Arendt Conference held in the Olin auditorium. "Some people need to be dead," vehemently uttered Christopher Hitchens, author, journalist, and literary critic, instantaneously sending shudders through the audience. Born in Portsmouth, England and educated at Balliol College, Oxford, Hitchens now resides in Washington DC. Hitchens has worked as a columnist for Vanity Fair, The Nation, and Slate, among other publications, most notably of recent, the Wall Street Journal. Known for his atheism, anti-fascism, anti-clericalism, iconoclasm, and clamorous betrayal of the American Left, Hitchens - once a self-ascribed Trotskyist, stirred the audience with his stinging wit and flamboyant narcissism. Hardly pertaining to the subject of the evening, which was supposed to be the late, great political and social thinker Hannah Arendt, Hitchens instead decided to focus on his own controversial views, degrading the conference to his opinion on what he calls "fascism with an Islamic face." His lecture was moderated by Classics Professor William Muller who, after configuring what must have been a complex sound system with a mute microphone, shamelessly promoted his new book attempt and high privilege of being buried in the same cemetery (since apparently he somehow acquired tenure) as Hannah Arendt. Professor Muller then clumsily (it's difficult to believe he teaches a course on rhetoric) introduced himself as a great admirer of Mr. Hitchens, flattering him for minutes on end. Unfortunately, his decision to feed the already gluttonous ego of Hitchens would subsequently serve to alienate an already antagonized audience during the Q&A session.

To give Mr. Hitchens credit, the opinions he shared with the audience certainly possessed some valuable, scholarly insight and weight. Mr. Hitchens discussed (among other

things): Arendt's fear of a deformed revolution as opposed to a successful one, the notion that the Soviet Union was not fooling itself as much as we thought it was, that Kafka was a realist after all, that 'insurgent' is a distorted label that shouldn't be applicable, that we need to take the temperature of anti-semitism again. He also enlightened the audience as to his thoughts on the proximity of the concepts of racial bigotry and anti-semitism, in addition to his analogy of Paul Wolfowitz (who is actually a close friend of Mr. Hitchens) to President Bush as Fagan to Oliver Twist. Mr. Hitchens disagreed with Hannah Arendt's views on totalitarianism but failed to extend much further and when asked to define anti-semitism said "I can't tell you how I know - but I know it when I hear it, see it, smell it." The lecture unfortunately degenerated into an even more unsettling discourse on Mr. Hitchens take on the invasion of Iraq, insisting that WMDs did in fact exist. "I don't know [what happened to them]. But the lists existed!"

At one point an elderly gentleman walked to the microphone at the front of the room and stated, "first of all, I am a refugee from Nazi Germany, you are a refugee from Thatcher England. When you say 'some people need to be dead', we are going to have different views on that." Mr. Hitchens interrupted the man as he tried to continue speaking, insisting "what's the difference? What's the difference?!" His expression and body language immediately tense, Mr. Hitchens told the man: "You should be ashamed of yourself. That is demagoguery what you just said and you should be ashamed of yourself. And anyone who clapped" (people rightly clapped) "you should be ashamed of yourselves too." Mr. Hitchens earlier told one woman, who was obviously upset by many of the speaker's comments and had decided to respond with some opinions of her own: "I don't like being sneered at, so if you would, remove that sneer from your face." He told another woman, "you might as well have asked me a question about global warming." This was by no means a civil dialogue on Hannah Arendt but a feeding ground for uncontrolled vanity, and Professor Muller, undoubtedly too obsessed with Mr. Hitchens to notice, failed to curtail the lecture to anything meaningful or of substance. At one point

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relying on local agriculture. Martin dedicated most of her time distinguishing herself from her opponent in several respects, mainly that she "is not a Republican" and "not a career politician." She characterized her campaign as "grassroots" and stated that she has not asked for money from the government.

Martin's opponent, Republican candidate Marc Molinaro, is familiar to many Bard students as Mayor of Tivoli for the last twelve years. Molinaro opened by saying, "I hope I get a couple of points for being the only Republican brave enough or dumb enough to be here tonight," and went on to stress that he is proud to count Bard students as part of the local community and that he could "care less about party affiliation" and he "wants everyone to have a voice." Molinaro stressed his commitment to alternative energy sources, reminding the audience that received an endorsement from the League of Conservation Voters. However, Molinaro appeared visibly shaken when forced by Botstein and other audience members to give clear answers about his position on abortion and gay marriage. Stating first that abortion is legal in New York and that he is dedicated fighting for everyone to have access to the health care they deserve, he said he believes "innocent life should be protected" that "minors need parental notification except for in cases of abuse and incest." He does not support gay marriage.

Last to speak was the Democratic candidate for New York State Senate, Brian Keeler. Keeler, who was trained as an actor and has a voice to prove it, opened by reminding the audience that "1910 was the last time this district voted for Democrat for state senate." He then proclaimed, "I'm going to be the next." Keeler has been very active in online media ethics as a founding member of ePluribusmedia.com. Keeler stated that his main concerns are property tax reform, health care reform, and campaign finance reform. He supports term limits so that it's easier for new voices to get involved in state government. Incumbent opponent Steve Soland has been in office for sixteen years and did not attend the event. ➔



The Prison Activist Coalition presents--

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A workshop by
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This workshop breaks down what's happening inside New York City schools, especially with an increase in NYPD presence that has shortened "The School to Prison Pipeline." Come learn about the dollar for dollar trade off between education and incarceration/policing. As more money funnels from schools and social services to prisons and policing, it's time to unite to fight back!

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Middle States Commission Comes to Bard

by **Oliver Traldi**

Every five years Bard undergoes a process of re-accreditation by the Middle States Association Commission on Higher Education; every ten years this process includes a comprehensive administrative self-study. The report provided by the College in 1997 prompted some concerns about institutional transparency and student participation. For this reason, the Deans and other administrators intend to make the 2007 Middle States Self-Study a collective effort with wide readership, a document of which the community is aware and approving.

But you haven't heard of the Middle States audit. One reason for this is that the report is just now, as of Wednesday the 25th, being disseminated to the student body. Another is that the administration has (t)asked the Central Committee, especially myself and Laura Bomyea, a second-year representative on the school's Middle States Steering Committee, to aid in the process of opening up the dialogue to students.

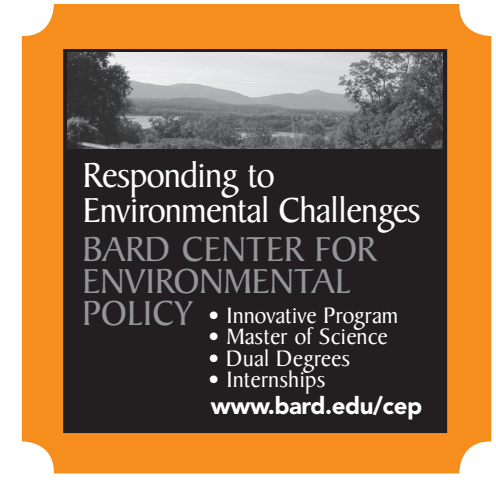
To my mind, the most important reason for students to involve themselves in the self-study process - besides, of course, our insatiable curiosity about how high we are being asked to jump - is that the report which the college submits,

and especially the Commission's response to that report, will actually serve as a template for action and decision-making. So, for example, if somehow the lack of a student social space was featured prominently in the assessment, this would carry far more weight than a simple student recommendation.

Actually, student issues are all very difficult to find in the document as it stands. For example, besides short inclusions of the Educational Policies Committee and Student Judiciary Board under their associated academic and administrative sections, student government does not figure in whatsoever. Recognizing that the audit committee, made up of officials from other Middle States schools, may not be all too interested in foursquare, I still feel as though the student body is in many ways productive of the college's culture rather than merely consuming it. The only way for this to be reflected in the report, short of a truly non-hierarchical and transparent relationship between students, faculty, and administration, is through student input.

The self-study is comprised of fourteen sections written and compiled by thirteen working groups under the general direction of Michele Dominy, Dean of the College. The working groups were: (1) Missions, Goals, and Objectives; (2/3) Planning, Resource Allocation and Institutional Renewal & Institutional Resources; (4) Leadership and Governance; (5) Administration; (6) Integrity; (7) Institutional Assessment; (8) Student Admissions; (9) Student Support Services; (10) Faculty; (11) Educational Offerings; (12) General Education; (13) Related Educational Activities; and (14) Assessment of Student Learning.

The next student forum, on Wednesday November 11th, will deal in part with the Middle States Assessment. Any opinions on the report or on potential strategies or approaches for student involvement with the process will be pertinent. The Central Committee is working on developing a system for collecting student input with the hope that, in some form, it will become part of the document. ➔



Please join us for

The Inauguration of the Hessel Museum of Art at the Center for Curatorial Studies and the opening exhibition "Wrestle"

curated by Tom Eccles and Trevor Smith
November 12th, 2006
Noon - 4 p.m.
Free and open to the public

Inauguration Events:

10:00 a.m.
"WITNESS TO HER ART" PANEL AND BOOK LAUNCH

With editors Rhea Anastas and Michael Brenson.

A new anthology of artists' writing and criticism featuring artists in the Marieluise Hessel Collection: Witness to Her Art: Art and Writings by Adrian Piper, Mona Hatoum, Cady Noland, Jenny Holzer, Kara Walker, Daniela Rossell, and Eau de Cologne.

Presentations by Michael Brenson, Faculty, CCS and Milton Avery Graduate School of the Arts, Bard College; Helen Molesworth, Chief Curator of Exhibitions, Wexner Center for the Arts.

Blithewood

HESSEL MUSEUM OF ART INAUGURATION

Noon

WELCOME
Leon Botstein
Tom Eccles

12:30 p.m.
HESSEL MUSEUM OF ART RIBBON CUTTING

Followed by a Special Performance by Martin Creed with students of The Bard College Conservatory of Music.

1:30 p.m.
LUNCH*

2:30 p.m.
"WRESTLE" PANEL DISCUSSION

With Tom Eccles and Trevor Smith;
Arthur Danto, Johnsonian Professor Emeritus, Philosophy, Columbia University; Vasif Kortun, Director, Platform Garanti Contemporary Art Center, Istanbul; Ute Meta Bauer, Director and Associate Professor, Visual Arts, MIT; and Molly Nesbit, Professor of Art, Vassar College.

Theater, Milton and Sally Avery Center for the Arts

*Sandwiches and concessions will be available for purchase at the Museum.



Senior Class Gift

Socially Responsible Investing and a Political Student Union

by *Ethan Porter*

The Senior Class Gift has been a semi-regular tradition at Bard for some time. The Gifts, made with donations from students and parents, are chosen in an attempt to improve some aspect of campus life. The swing set that sits outside the Campus Center was one such Gift. The Gift is selected every year by a group of student volunteers called the Senior Class Committee.

After much internal debate and many discussions with our fellow class members, this year's Senior Class Committee has decided to use the Senior Class Gift to establish a socially responsible endowment that will fund a political student union. In other words, we will bring speakers to campus who the school could not otherwise afford, and sponsor campus debate, with money from a fund (a so-called "SRI endowment") that is invested in a socially responsible manner. If this Gift sounds especially complicated and ambitious, that's because it is. But if we can raise the money to fund the gift, the day-to-day lives of future Bard students will benefit considerably.

We chose this gift in particular in order to accomplish two distinct, yet interrelated, goals: to improve the quality of political debate on campus, and to improve the ethical foundation of the school's endowment. In regards to the first concern, there can be little doubt that Bard students are passionate and knowledgeable about politics. Yet at this time, there is no formal means for debating political issues in a structured format. Sometimes, this can result in the appearance of homogeneity on campus; because we only talk about politics outside of the classroom in a haphazard manner, we sometimes mistakenly think we all agree. A Political Student Union would offer students the opportunity to debate contentious issues. It would also bring interesting speakers to campus.

Political Student Unions exist across the country, and indeed, around the world. Many of these Unions operate in the following manner: several times a semester, a notable speaker (e.g., an intellectual, a public official, or an activist) comes to

campus to speak on a particular resolution. A resolution could concern issues as disparate as the Iraq War, affirmative action, welfare policy, the questions of American Empire, or the domestic economy. Following the speaker's remarks, students would debate the issues themselves. Why must we fundraise for this project? Simply put, speakers of note cost a good deal of money. As many clubs can attest to, the cost of bringing a well-known speaker to campus is often prohibitive considering our budget restraints. The Senior Class Gift will pay for speakers to come to campus who otherwise would be out of Bard's price range. By creating the Political Student Union, the Senior Class Gift will encourage organized political debate and highlight speakers of note.

The Socially Responsible Investing (SRI) component of the gift is in large part a response to increasing concern with Bard's primary endowment. The SRI Committee has labored in recent years to figure out where Bard's endowment money is located, and the picture has not always been pretty. Currently, our school invests in a variety of conservative media interests and oil companies. Profits, not ethics, are the chief motivating factor of the school's primary endowment. Of course, the school needs to raise money, especially as it prepares to kick off a \$300-\$350 million capital campaign. This new SRI endowment will act as an avenue for donations to the school from people who otherwise would feel somewhat uncomfortable giving to the primary endowment. The SRI endowment will be controlled by Domini SR Mutual Funds, which has a track record of making ethical investments. This endowment will be open to alumni donations for perpetuity.

This year's Senior Class Gift is more ambitious than the Gifts of years' past, but once given, the Gift will help Bard and its students for many years to come. With it, we'll be bringing more speakers to campus, improving the quality of on-campus debate, and offering a fundamentally different way to donate to Bard College. ➔

Ethan Porter is President of the Senior Class Committee.

For Hallie

by Tom Mattos

Tom Mattos graduated in 2005 and was a former editor of the Bard Observer. He lives and works in Cambridge, MA at a rare book firm, and can be contacted at tom.mattos@

When you are struck with the news that someone you knew has passed from one world to the next, your mind clears and all the rational nuts and bolts lay bare. The gears of thought grind together, churning memories and anecdotes from present to past. I know Hallie Waters becomes I knew Hallie Waters, and so on and so forth, on down the line, following the unforgiving logic of things. In these moments, you press your hands against imaginary stop buttons in the walls of your room and try to slow things to a speed you can understand and manipulate. At times like these you want rest, a stop to the madness, a moment's peace. World stop turning, cars stop going, children stop running, wind stop blowing: let me find myself again in a world without pity, let me find myself in a world without this person who I knew when they were alive.

Surely I am not the appropriate person to write something for Hallie, as I'm sure in her private world there is someone, perhaps many people, who knew her to depth in which I have only surfaced dived. I knew her when I worked at the Bard Observer, when we were both patient scribblers. I remember when she began coming to meetings, braving the trip down to the damp Tewksbury basement. She came here after transferring to Bard from a school I did not know and can no longer remember. I think Bard gave her more space to be who she was, and each time I talked to her she seemed like she opened up a little more. Maybe the size of the place—not the people, the woods, the river, the distance between points of interest—gave her soul a little more room in which to breathe. She was never without a smile, or without a wide-eyed exuberance for anything under the sun. Hallie would always get excited—it was really fun to watch—about the hidden drama hidden behind the most boring and dull Bard News articles, articles that felt like a chore to write for anyone else. I read through a few of those articles just the other day, one of which was entitled "Security to Bard Drivers: Slow Down." Sounds boring enough, until you find this wonderful piece of Hallie's humor: "Students offered other solutions [to the speeding epidemic]. These included more speed bumps, a zero-tolerance policy, frontal lobotomies, and monsters in the woods."

Hallie was also in a number of my literature classes,

and was very interested in writing. We sat together once at a Creative Writing department meet-and-greet where ex-Bardian authors talked about their craft, and I remember our conversation as we walked on a cold November night—one of those nights at Bard where you feel a shadow creeping after your soul, all the better to be shared with a friend. We talked about why we wanted to write, why we wrote. Outside of classes in Olin, and outside of the Observer office, my interactions with Hallie were few. It seems like every memory I have of her takes place on a campus path from one place to another, and was always a very animated and soothing conversation. At the time of writing this I am surprised with both how much and how little I remember of Hallie, now that some time has passed since I used to walk those paths, for how dear can an acquaintance with whom you shared a few walks be?

I'm getting this wrong. When somebody you know passes, you boil your memories down to a least common denominator, some gem of truth you will always remember to be valid and real even after your memory erodes with the passing of time. Perhaps all I will remember of Hallie some thirty or forty years later are these two things: Her hair was red. Red like you've never seen. It was a red wars are fought over, a red that would glimmer in the sunlight and catch fire in the rain. Hallie's hair was a color you cannot match in a box of Crayola, too bright and vibrant to be cheapened to a synthetic. The second thing I will remember is a gift of a lesson Hallie has left me in her passing: those friends, those acquaintances with whom you share a breakfast or a short walk to Olin hall or a cup of tea in the campus center, those friends you meet for fleeting moments headed in opposite directions and those people you smile at for no reason at all—these people are the dearest, dearest friends and their presence in your life will extend long after your final contact. These people are yours, and yours to keep.

The combination of these two lessons reads something like this: there's someone you haven't spoken to who has caught your eye. That person may be a girl with red hair, and you should take the time to appreciate the time you spend with her—time spent talking with her, time spent walking with her—for it will not last. Our time on this earth is fleeting, and though we are able to appreciate great beauty and we are able to feel invincible, we are vulnerable nonetheless. Every moment you share with someone else on this planet is a gift of immeasurable value, and, like a diamond, will only appear rich when given time to compress into a gem.

I'm willing to bet Hallie would be satisfied with such a lesson.

Bless you, Hallie.
Bless you.

Love Notes from Your Friendly EPC

by Laura Bomyea

EPC PROJECTS

Currently, the Educational Policies Committee (EPC) is taking a close look at several key issues in Bard students' academic lives. We are hoping to be involved in an ongoing evaluation among the faculty of SOTC forms. We are working to find solutions to the problems students face in trying to enroll in foreign language and lab science courses in the same semester. We are interested in thinking more about the curriculum, First-Year Seminar, the distribution requirements and many other important student issues.

In addition, we are pushing to open up a campus-wide dialogue about Interdisciplinary Programs at Bard, particularly the Gender and Sexuality Studies and the Studies in Race and Ethnicity Programs. If you are interested in any of Bard's Interdisciplinary Programs we urge you to let us know what you think the programs do well and what you might improve about them. You can send your thoughts to us by e-mailing epc@bard.edu or by sending a signed letter to the EPC Chair Laura Bomyea through campus mail.

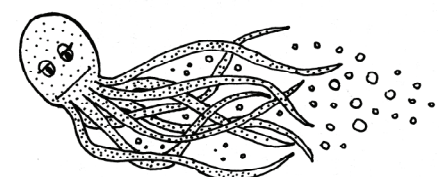
MIDDLE WHAT? HOW TO GET INVOLVED WITH THE MIDDLE STATES COMMISSION REPORT

Very soon, you, friend, will have the opportunity to go online and read Bard's Self Study Report for Middle States Re-Accreditation. What? Why would you want to read such a dull sounding document? Why would students care?

Maybe you've always harbored a secret desire to examine the intricacies of institutional planning at a small liberal arts college in the Northeast. Perhaps you are tickled by the very words institutional transparency. Or, maybe you receive federal financial aid and maybe you even like receiving federal financial aid and you want to continue to receive federal financial aid. It could be that you want to be enlightened on such topics as Bard's Admissions policy, the internal structure of the college, the College's views on assessment or the scores of programs Bard runs or participates in (such as Bard Prison Initiative, the BGIA program, the Clemente Course in the Humanities or the Bard-Rockefeller Semester in Science). Or it's possible that you would like to know exactly what Bard's mission statement is or what sorts of plans Bard has for the future. The Self-Study document holds answers to your burning questions about Bard. (And if it doesn't, Bard actually wants to know.)

Let's skip the gory details about how all colleges must be members of regional accreditation associations and how Bard is thus a member of the Middle States Commission on Higher Education. It's probably not worth explaining that the Middle States Commission requires all member colleges to complete an intensive, all-encompassing examination of their respective institutions every ten years in the form of a self-study and that, failing to complete this process in a manner satisfactory to the Commission, a college might not get accredited by Middle States, which would mean that college could not give federal financial aid to any of its students. And I surely don't have to add that the production of this self-study document is only one major requirement in the completion of this process and that, coming this March, Middle States will actually send a team of Presidents, Deans and other important folks from other colleges (Princeton, Amherst, to name a few) to Bard to meet with students, faculty, staff and administrators which will then allow this Middle States team to complete the evaluation process and recommend that Middle States reaccredit Bard, or not. You can't wait to read the report.

The report can be found at <http://inside.bard.edu/doc>. Forums will be held to discuss the document throughout the remainder of the semester. If there's something missing from the report, everyone wants to know.



Hannah Arendt Continued from page 3

Hitchens said "I think the idea of being a chosen people is a perfectly ridiculous one." Another instance involved Mr. Hitchens outright telling a woman that her question was dumb, and said "I ask permission of the Chair to ignore dumb questions." Who invited this man? Let me say, however, that most of the questions posed by Bard students actually did delve intelligently and articulately into the subject of Arendt's ideas and work, forcing the onstage celebrity to actually consider the appropriate matter at hand. While I wish I could have written an article of some interest to you, perhaps informing you of something stimulating that you may have missed, I regret to report that this was not the case. Nonetheless, it was at the very least a highly entertaining show. It is both perplexing and amusing that a man so clearly knowledgeable and astute could change his political orientation

from that of pre-911 Trotskyism to post-911 neo-conservativism. Hitchens is certainly not an unintelligent man, as Chomsky (once a colleague and now a bitter-rival) stated in an essay in Nation: "Since Hitchens evidently does not take what he is writing seriously, there is no reason for anyone else to do so. The fair and sensible reaction is to treat all of this as some aberration, and to await the return of the author to the important work that he has often done in the past." Hitchens has an intellect worth exploring, but the Arendt conference was neither the appropriate place nor time for it. 🍷



the Observer

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The Sex Column

by Fiona Cook and Genevieve Lynch

Molinaro, Continued from page 6

a scenario in the next decade in which New York Republicans turn to the articulate and congenial Molinaro to serve as their torchbearer for their party. In time, Molinaro would be a very formidable candidate. He might even be able to win. After all: if his political talents can persuade the principled liberals at Bard College to vote for him, of course the liberals in New York City would vote for him.

Do we really wish to aid and abet Marc Molinaro's rise to power? Does the Bard community really wish to express its support for someone like Marc Molinaro at the ballot box? If past voting trends are any indication, on Election Day we will do both. I am sure Mr. Molinaro's supporters will recall a few enjoyable conversations with him they have had, or point to a minor substantive good he has achieved for Tivoli, as a means of defense. But politics has to be more than a question of who has the nicest smile, or who has paved the road in our small corner of the world. Republicans like Molinaro, who pride style over substance and speak in liberal terms but deliver decidedly conservative results, are in power throughout this country. To some extent, such politicians have provided the backbone to the recent Republican monopoly of power. On Election Day, we should feign ignorance of Molinaro's considerable charms and refrain from voting for him. To do otherwise would represent an abandonment of a politics of any meaning, and a wholesale forfeiture of the principles we hold dear. 📧

Letters Readers From

To whom it may concern:

I am drafting this letter in response to the article on smoking kiosks by Jason Maustbaum, and also to address some of the emails I have received concerning the issue of smoking on the Bard campus.

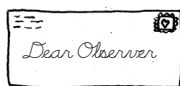
First, please understand that while I work for the American Legacy Foundation a non-profit dealing with issues of tobacco and smoking in the US, my work on campus has nothing to do with my capacity as a speaker with Legacy, or the foundation in general. I am steadfast in my belief that tobacco is a social justice issue, encompassing child labor, animal rights, environmental issues, GLBTQI issues, and others in its production and use. I have been a committed tobacco control activist for many years, and have fought for Bard to become smoke-free in residence halls.

I certainly cite the issue of fire hazard as a large part of the reason for this movement, but there are also a plethora of other reasons. For example, smoke-free workplace laws were on the books well before the NYS and Dutchess County clean indoor air acts, and as it stands, workers from B&G and Aramark work in dormitories. Thus, by virtue of the fact that dorms are workplaces they must be tobacco-free environments. Schools across the state of New York and across the country are placing restrictions on where students are permitted to smoke, so this is not a phenomenon specific to our institution.

Some people have written in to question the value of smoking kiosks, and this is certainly a valid inquiry. Change is a gradual process, especially when you are attempting to change a culture. To make the entire college smoke-free would be impossible, so measures must be taken to ensure a smooth transition to a tobacco-free environment. Kiosks have been effectively implemented in institutions of higher education across the country, and seem to be a fair compromise between smokers and non-smokers.

People have also written me concerned with the issue of cost. Spending money, as we all well know, is a necessary evil. To ensure compliance with the smoking policy as it stands, it is important to build kiosks so that those who smoke can do so in a place that is not designated as tobacco-free and is protected from the elements. The college does not endorse smoking, but it is important that students who choose to smoke are able to do so. That being said, I am aware that the kiosk pictured in the article is not very pleasant, and I have been working to explore other options. Please understand also that this is not a moralistic argument. People know that smoking and tobacco products are bad for them. It is not my intention, nor the intention of the school, to tell people that they cannot smoke. Though I would certainly like to see tobacco eradicated, I am realistic in my belief that it never will be.

-Sincerely,
Patrick Murtagh



It was with great interest that I read in the newest issue of the Bard Observer about the new smoking kiosks to be erected on campus. And now I feel I must ask:

Why, at a time when tuition is rising (although, when is it not?) and B&G and Security are fighting for a "living wage," are we allocating \$9,000 to this project? Why are we, as a college, a university of "higher education," ignoring the truth about smoking, ignoring the truth about what smoking does to the human body (not to mention the disgusting amount of litter it generates around our campus)? Why are we, as an institution, furthering such a deadly addiction among such young people?

When campus employees are protesting for the ability to survive in the area in which they work, please explain to me why the school views the aiding of students in their smoking as a proper use of funds. Bard College exists for its students, and providing them with spaces in which they can slowly kill themselves in comfort is anything but serving the student body -- both figuratively and literally.

I am extremely upset that the administration would use money that my family is paying for my education to construct smoking kiosks so students may continue a disgusting and deadly habit, while polluting both the air and themselves, in comfort.

I do not want to attend a college that takes an active part in promoting the death of its students, and it is my sincere hope this project is discontinued.

-Ben Reed

Class of '08

Dear Ladies,

I heard that there is now a vaccine for HPV. REALLY???

Love,

Totally Psyched.

Dear Totally Psyched

Yes, I'm totally psyched, too. Recently, two separate drug companies (Merck and GlaxoSmithKline) have developed vaccines against certain types of HPV, which are 100% effective at preventing several strains of the virus. This is great news!

HPV, the Human Papilloma Virus, is one of the most common sexually transmitted diseases in the United States. Some strains of HPV can cause warts of the penis, scrotum, vulva, vagina, anus, rectum, urethra, cervix and mouth. Also, research has shown that 99.7% of cervical cancers are caused by HPV infection. It is estimated that 20 million people in the U.S. are currently infected with HPV and over 6 million new HPV infections are diagnosed each year. Based on national estimates, 80% of sexually active men and women will acquire an HPV infection at some point in their lives.

The majority of HPV infections are asymptomatic, and clear with time. Sometimes, as stated earlier, HPV causes genital or rectal warts or precancerous changes of the cervix. HPV is an extremely contagious sexually transmitted virus and can be transmitted through sexual activity that does not necessarily involve intercourse, but only skin-to-skin contact or contact of mucous membranes. This means that HPV can be transmitted even with the use of a condom. HPV is difficult to identify and avoid in people who are sexually active because it is so often asymptomatic.

There are 35 different strains of HPV linked to infections of the genital tract. Of these 35, four are particularly troublesome. HPV types six, 11, 16 and 18. Types six and 11 cause 90% of genital warts, and types 16 and 18 cause 70% of cervical cancers. These four types of HPV are the types prevented by Merck's "Gardasil" vaccine. FDA approved "Gardasil" will prevent 90% of genital warts and 70% of cervical cancers in those who are vaccinated. The vaccine has been approved for use in women from age 9-26. Currently, the vaccine is only available for women, though trials are being conducted to assess the possibility of vaccination for males. The vaccine is very safe. In clinical trials that have included thousands of women all over the world no serious side effects were noted. Some participants in the studies complained of minor skin irritation and pain at the site of the injection, but that was the extent of side effects from Gardasil injection.

The course of vaccination is recommended as follows: an initial dose followed by doses at one or two months and six months (three injections in total). Each injection costs approximately \$120 (CVS of Red Hook charges \$180 per injection.), and is covered by many, but not all, insurance providers. Due to the steep price of the vaccine, I strongly recommend that you research whether your particular health insurance provider covers the cost of the injection.

Bard health services does not have the physical Gardasil injection kit in their dispensary—the providers at health services will write or call a prescription for Gardasil into a local pharmacy for you after a consultation, and will give you specific directions about picking up the vaccine. It may seem obvious, but it ought to be stated here that HPV is not the same disease as HIV or Herpes. Although these viruses can all be sexually transmitted, they do not cause the same health problems or symptoms, and they do not all have the same treatment. The HPV vaccine in no way vaccinates against HIV, Herpes or any STD other than some types of HPV. Also, even if a woman is vaccinated against HPV, she still ought to continue to get Pap tests. If you have any questions about the vaccine you should not be shy about asking your doctor. I hope this information has been useful for you. If you have any more questions, feel free to e-mail me at g1139@bard.edu as well, and I will consult a physician and (hopefully) get back to you with some answers.

(All information in this article was obtained from a packet distributed to physicians by the New York State Department of Health.)

Dear Lust Mages,

Last Friday at Smog, I asked the boy I had a crush on to come over for a drink after the show. Before I could even hand him a beer, we were making out and naked. I thought the sex was going great, but before I realized what happened he faked an orgasm. I didn't even know men faked orgasms! Now I am hurt and confused. Did I do something wrong?

-ANONYMOUS

Dear Anonymous,

What you are describing is actually really common. According to an orgasm study featured in Queendom.com, a website offering "fun" surveys for people with way too much time on their hands, 72% of women and 25% of men have faked an orgasm. I will leave it up to you to interpret the reputability of the site, but the fact that men are admitting to their faking is evidence enough that this is a real phenomenon. I took a small, personal survey of a couple Bard men, and half of them told me they have faked an orgasm. And speaking from personal experience, it happens. There are several reasons men fake orgasms; some are the same as women. They could be fatigued, have sexual anxiety, or are desensitized from prolonged friction. And while cigarettes, alcohol, and drugs are known to inhibit a hard-on, they can also make climaxing difficult. In addition, there are several antidepressants that decrease the male libido, and therefore decrease the ability to climax. In the end, I really can't tell you why he faked an orgasm, but I can guess that he was trying to be considerate. Most men and women who fake orgasms do so because they want their partner to know the sex is good. However, the opposite affect is usually what occurs. I guess in the realm of faking orgasms ignorance is bliss, but if the partner finds out, it results in a decrease of trust in the relationship, even if it is only sexual. Engaging in sexual activity with a partner allows that person to understand your body. If you fake an orgasm, if you lie about what gets you off, how will your partner know you have not lied about other things? When a person fakes an orgasm, their partner assumes that whatever they were doing at the time was the right thing. They will continue to use this technique, which results in the fakers continual dissatisfaction. There are a lot of valid reasons for faking, but when personal sexual satisfaction is at risk, all I can say is DON'T FAKE! If you ever have sex with this person again have a conversation with him, even if it is awkward. Ask him what he likes and dislikes. You don't even have to mention his fake out. Communication is the most important technique to having good sex. He will probably be relieved you asked and the sex will get better.

On a side note, here are several helpful hints to tell if your partner is about to climax:

Men

The penis becomes more erect and the balls pull tight against the body. Pre-cum forms on the tip of the penis. His blood pressure increases. Its not like you would check this during sex, but it does result an increased circulation of blood and, therefore, flushing of the cheeks, neck, and chest (another good reason to keep the lights on while fucking). The pelvic muscles contract and the balls tighten further. **ALL THIS RESULTS IN EJACULATION!**

Women

The vagina swells and the clitoris becomes erect. Her body needs more oxygen and her breathing quickens. Her blood pressure also increases. Her cheeks, neck, and chest flush. Rhythmic vaginal and anal contractions occur. The first contractions are the strongest and they begin to decrease over several seconds. **ALL THIS RESULTS IN AN ORGASM!**

Send sex questions to g1139@bard.edu or

fc138@bard.edu

STANDUP COMEDY MICROPHONE QUILTS STANDUP COMEDY WORKSHOP

Cites Racism As Main Reason For Split **BY CARL KRANZ**

THE CUT-UP'S AT BARD'S STANDUP COMEDY WORKSHOP WERE GIVEN QUITE A SHOCK EARLIER THIS WEEK WITH THE SUDDEN DEPARTURE OF THE MICROPHONE USED FOR THE WORKSHOP'S WEEKLY WEDNESDAY NIGHT EVENTS. IN A SMALL STATEMENT TO THE PRESS, THE MICROPHONE ANNOUNCED THAT IT WAS STEPPING DOWN FROM IT'S POSITION; CITING A CONTINUED INABILITY TO COME TO AN AGREEMENT WITH THE COMEDIANS ABOUT WHAT WOULD CONSTITUTE "suitable material" IN FUTURE SHOWS.

"For years, I have enjoyed my time working with and being held by the members of the Standup Comedy Workshop, and I consider it a very wonderful part of my life." "However, looking back at the material used over the past two months at Standup Comedy, I felt as though it [the comedy] wasn't moving in the right direction," said the talented and reclusive microphone in a rare interview granted to the Observer. "I've put most of my career into this Workshop, but I realized that it was time for me to move on and explore other ventures."

Relaxing in his single unit foam packing case in the back of the Materials Closet in the Campus Center, the microphone, best known for his appearances on the groundbreaking sitcom, *A Dose of Truth*, elaborated on his dissatisfaction with Standup Comedy Workshop, its content, and his reason for departure.

"Everything came to a head one Wednesday a few months ago. I remember thinking how relatively large the crowd was that night, which was surprising to me, especially considering we had had a relatively poor show the previous week," The microphone said. "Anyway, the first performer, whose name eludes me, came up to me and proceeded to shout out racial slurs left and right. They weren't even jokes. This guy was just mocking other races: blacks, Chinese, Arabs, even Jews. I had never been so embarrassed to be in front of so many people I didn't know. I wanted to curl up into a ball and roll away. If only I were capable of doing such a thing."

The microphone also added that his views did not necessarily represent the views of the student population.

"For some reason, the audience loved the act. It seemed, from where I was standing at least, that the audience was rolling around on the floor, eyes filled with tears, just because they were laughing so hard. After that, I tried to convince myself that the material was actually funny because so many people had liked it. It seemed like I was the only one who wasn't on board because more and more of the comedians began switching to this kind of act. Then, a couple of weeks ago, during a mic-check, I was listening to one of the comedians make flatulence noises into me. I thought things were finally getting back to normal. But then the person started explaining to everyone in the room that 'fart noises are funny because they're Chinese-y,'" said the microphone who, being blind, was unable to identify the comedian in question. "That's when I finally realized that the material really wasn't funny. The comedians were simply racist sons-of-bitches."

The material being used in the Comedy Workshop was not the sole point of dissatisfaction for the microphone. He also claims that he never received benefits for his work every



The microphone, seen far right, with the cast of *A Dose of Truth*

"I finally realized that the material really wasn't funny. The comedians were simply racist sons-of-bitches."

week.

"Sure, there was the applause from the audience every night, and Dan [Wilbur] was as nice and funny as any man could be, but I still feel as though I should have been entitled to at least one meal from Down The Road. I mean, I worked at Down The Road."

In spite of the microphone's claim that the decision to leave the workshop was his own, others felt otherwise.

"I know that the microphone says he quit, but I think that's absolute bullshit," said Reed Sharpton, a frequent attendee of the Standup Comedy Workshop. "So often, I would come to watch a show, and it seemed as though the microphone would constantly mock the comedians and the material that they would do. Every time, it was the microphone saying stuff like 'I could have written better stuff if I were dead,' or 'my grandfather worked the Catskills, and I get stuck with stuff like this?' I realize I was pretty high every time I went, but that microphone sucked anyway, and I'm glad he's gone. Those comedians are hilarious."

The leader of the Comedy Workshop, Dan Wilbur, was unavailable for comment, but released a statement, making it clear that the microphone's departure was his own determination and the microphone "in no way, shape, or form was ever asked to leave. He will be missed and it will be difficult to find a microphone as well liked to replace him."

For now, the microphone is scouting for and is optimistic that he will be able to find work in the near future.

"I've received a lot of calls from places needing employees, like SMOG and Open Mic Night. I even got a call about working at Kline at the front desk. But before I get back to work, I'm gonna write a bit and try to finish 'The Great American Novel.'" ←

I Must Insist, I Only Have One Hand But Both Are Present

a commentary on life's foibles by Tom Shepherd

My fat, balding boss with gastronomic irregularity nearly fired me last week, because I am, as he said, "a habitual chicken-pecker". He asked me, "Are you proud of this?" Proud? No, I thought. **How can one be proud of their inability to type in an efficacious way?** After all, I am a male secretary and my job necessitates quick keyboarding skills. Do I possess them? I once did, and they were vestiges to my great masculinity. These are memories now – quick lightning flash remembrances of my lines flying across the computer screen. But a secretary that lives on memories is about as good as a pickled dick – nice to look at but functionally useless.

I am ashamed, but this shame has one simple origin: I lack a right hand.

About every person I know and care for has told me that I have both a left and a right hand. Chicken fuckers. They do not know what it is like to suffer. **Yes, I do have two hands, but I only have one hand.** It is a left hand. And, yes, one could phrase it as follows, both hands are present, but, I must insist, I only have one hand.

Am I senile? No, I do not believe so, and neither does my left hand. It is pecking out this sad confession. If only you could see this struggle. I can only type fifteen words a minute, and sometimes after doing this measly amount of typing I simply breakdown, cry, and curse the idols of the office gods scattered

around me – the stapler, the water cooler, the mini-refrigerator, the inspiring kitten poster that tells me not to be depressed. All these are manifestations of a transient, material reality that I have come to desire and despise.

There is a story behind the demise of my processing skills. It is strange and terrible; it haunts me to this day.

When I was young, I did not always want to be a highly qualified, male secretary. I wanted to be a conceptual rape performance artist. What is a "conceptual rape performance artist," you ask? It is this: you go on stage, yell out rape, and then proceed to throw yourself about until you can determine exactly what airy phantom is actually disgracing the anus of your person.

The market for a "conceptual rape performance artist" was at the time and still is very small. Non-existent, to be more precise, but I **never let these small realizations affect dreams.** So, in order to support my art and being unable to squeeze more money out of my bankrupt parents, I took a day job.

As any artist knows, this is demeaning. One only does it with the most detached sense of irony and with the thought of the billions who will understand and worship you later in history. You do it, but you do it while scorning your bosses, turning up your nose, and remembering to yourself, "I paid nearly \$200,000 dollars for my college degree, and this asshole barely graduated high school. Life has a way of rewarding stupid spending habits."

With this inward acknowledgment that all your knowledge rests on the fact you spent most of your time at college drunk or too crazed off Robotusen to have actually learned a thing, you accept the menial life so your suffering art can bloom. Unfortunately, with the state of my art's market, I was relegated to a life lived in obscurity and marginal happiness, which forced

me to take a job at a nearby desensitizing cream factory.

I was, at this time, living in Sioux City, Iowa. I call this period of my life, The Provincial Years. And years and years went by in rural America. I performed conceptual rape after conceptual rape at church events, VFW halls, school talent shows, knitting clubs, and so on. I booked myself wherever I could. No one got "it," and after handling so much desensitizing cream with so little artistic recognition, I called it quits and decided to pursue a career for which, according to a junior high school aptitude test, I am well suited: office secretary.

I went back to community college, devoted my hours into developing **a nice phone voice**, worked as hard as I could to get my typing skills up to the unheard of three-hundred words a minute. I studied the nuances of Microsoft Word, Excel, Access, and Power Point; I was a veritable master, and put that shit Word anime, that annoying Two-Eyed Notebook, in the grave. I was master of the front desk, and having learned, "Hello," in thirty-two languages and several other little tidbits, I was prepared for the satisfaction of a career I had so long denied myself from pursuing.

Then, years later, I my typing skills waste away. I did not know why, but, little by little, my word speed slowed: three hundred into two hundred into one hundred into fifty and finally into that pathetic number mentioned above, fifteen.

So, at the end of my tail the cause, as far as I can tell, is the desensitizing cream. No, it has to be more than just the desensitizing cream. Yes, there, too, was the mental trauma of years conceptual rape, and there, too, was the sadness and melodrama of an artistic life lost to the mediocrity of the historical era in which it exists. The stupidity of humanity has destroyed my dreams and, I must insist, has made me realize this: I only have one hand but both are present. ←

Beckett Centenary at Bard

by Len Gutkin

From October 7 through October 16, Bard celebrated the 100th centenary of Samuel Beckett's birth with a series of performances at the Fisher Center. The centerpiece of the performances was, predictably, *Waiting for Godot*, expertly acted by Ireland's Gate Theatre Dublin and directed by German Beckettian Walter Asmus. Johnny Murphy and Barry McGovern as, respectively, Gogo and Didi, did wonderful jobs individuating their characters while hitting every note of Beckett's text: the irony, the wit, the existential angst teetering on the brink of bathos and redeemed by belly-laughing humor. Stephen Brennan, as Pozzo, delivered the magisterial "qua qua qua" monologue so brilliantly you almost forgot you knew it was coming. Alan Stanford, looking a bit like Oscar Wilde on a particularly pudgy day, crafted a really nasty and convincing Pozzo, although—and this is hardly his fault—I had a little trouble following his accent.

Despite the significant strengths of the individual performances, I couldn't help feeling that a show as familiar as *Godot* might have benefited from a less strictly orthodox presentation. I found myself, at times, feeling that I had seen it all before. Indeed, every directorial decision seemed designed to convince the viewer that he or she might be witnessing *Godot* at its 1955 British premiere. This was both a strength and a weakness. The Gate Theatre provides a useful historical simulacrum for the student of Beckett, but the show might have achieved a greater vibrancy and sense of relevance if its director had not hewed so closely to the tyrannical imperatives of the Beckett estate.

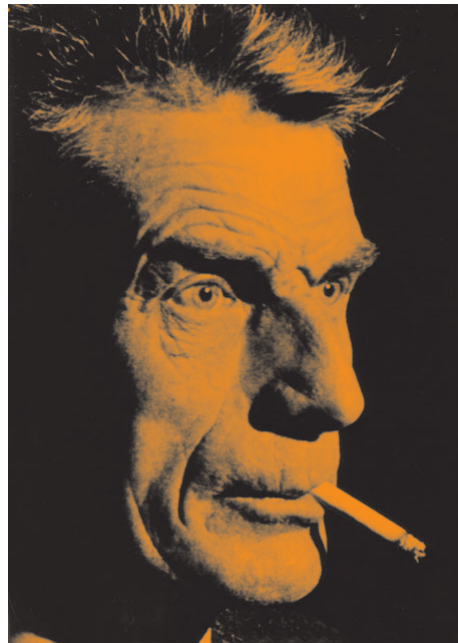
More exciting, though less attended than *Godot* were the monologues put on by the Gare St. Lazar Players Ireland at the Fisher Center's Sosnoff Stage and Theater Two, much more intimate spaces than the gigantic Sosnoff Theater. The first of these consisted of dramatic monologues of selected fiction (1966's *Enough* and three of the *Texts for Nothing* of the late fifties, as well as the "play" *A Piece of a Monologue*).

Enough was performed, with almost no dramatization at all, by a rather shy and damaged-looking Ally Ni Chiarain. The effect was devastating. *Enough* recounts its narrator's vaguely slavish relationship with an older, eventually decaying, friend. Chiarain and her director, Judy Hegarty Lovett, refused to sensationalize the narrative in the least and the result was subtle, quiet, and deeply sorrowful. *A Piece of a Monologue*, performed by a nearly invisible Conor Lovett and directed by Walter Asmus, was similarly powerful, and its staging highly effective. The sole lighting was a dim, old-fashioned street-lamp that stood next to Lovett and faded to black as the monologue came to its close. *Texts for Nothing* (III, VIII, XII), also featuring Lovett and directed by Judy Hegarty Lovett, were, I felt, less successful, in part because they seemed a bit over-dramatized. Beckett's thirteen *Texts for Nothing* are some of the most delicate, most self-dissolving works of modern literature and they evaporate when pushed too hard. Lovett recited them like some sort of Irish existentialist Jerry Seinfeld, and though the performance at times captured the delicate grace of *Texts*, all too often that grace was overwhelmed.

Worstward Ho, performed by American actor Lee Delong, was the least-attended event of the series. In fact, a majority of its audience, on the evening I went, consisted of actors and crew from the two companies. This is a shame, because the monologue was a triumph. *Worstward Ho*, one of Beckett's last works, is a very short "novel," originally written in English and only translated into French after Beckett's death. (He considered it "untranslatable.") This makes it unique among Beckett's mature work, most of which he wrote in French and later translated into English. Delong's performance, directed by Judy Hegarty Lovett, dramatized the text only as much as was strictly necessary, and at no time did the presentation seem forced. I cannot imagine a more difficult task for an actor than memorizing a thirty-some page monologue as abstract, repetitious, and minimalist as *Worstward Ho*, containing such apparently anti-dramatic passages as, "First the body. No. First

the place. No. First both. Now either. Now the other. Sick of the either try the other. Sick of it back sick of the either. So on. Somehow on. Till sick of both. Throw up and go. Where neither. Till sick of there. Throw up and back. The body again. Where none. The place again. Where none. Try again. Fail again. Better again. Or better worse. Fail worse again. Still worse again. Till sick for good. Throw up for good. Go for good. Where neither for good. Good and all." Yet Delong not only performed with apparent effortlessness, she captured the extraordinarily subtle rhythms, the prodigal ebb and flow, of this very spare prose with a preternatural poetic sensibility. Alas, there was almost no audience to watch her do it.

The final performance of the series consisted of some wonderful dramatic recitations from Beckett's first "three-in-one" set of novels, *Molloy*, *Mallone Dies*, and *The Unnamable*, (mistakenly labeled "The Beckett Trilogy" in the program notes, though Beckett himself explicitly rejected that designation). Conor Lovett performed for a heroic three straight hours, granting each novel about an hour. The overly-dramatic rendition that marred his performance of *Texts for Nothing* was not a problem here, because the far more narrative *Three Novels* (as they are properly termed) could accommodate such theatrical flourishes. Indeed, Lovett's performance was near-perfect. He illuminated the humor of the work without sacrificing any of its pathos, and he had the audience alternately rolling in the aisles, staring disconsolately at their shoelaces, stunned by the bleakness of the vision—sometimes both at the same time. 🍌



This Video Game is Beautiful and I Need New Pants

By Noah Weston

On the rare occasion that someone listens to me talk, I expound like whoa about how I think video games are the highest commercial art form available. It takes a bit of convincing, but usually, I get my point across or the person just walks away. For my own sake, I interpret abandonment as eager agreement. In any case, my point holds. Video games offer unparalleled immersion, placing participants in control of a dynamic experience that you cannot get from anything else on a screen. To say otherwise signifies either a fatal case of stupidity or the fact that you've never played Clover Studios' new PS2 action role-playing game, *Okami*. Like a leaflet from an escort service, *Okami* has fluttered from the heavens to validate all my big talk about the merits of video games, and in a way that is so painfully stylish and fun that haters will have to add a side of humility to that dick casserole they deserve for doubting me.

Getting this out of the way: in *Okami*, players take the role of a wolf who is the corporeal incarnation Amaterasu, a sun goddess—it's relevant, but only to a point. You could be playing as a fajita and this game would still be stunning. As Amaterasu, your endeavor to slay the 8-headed beast Orochi and bring peace and fertility back to a cursed Japan. In order to achieve this, you harness the power of weapons such as giant shields, magic prayer beads, and crazily fucking huge swords. How does a wolf, a creature with no opposable thumbs, do this? The answer to that is that it's a video game.

The most important asset you have as Amaterasu, though, is the "Celestial Brush," an instrument that allows you to freeze time and paint a variety of brush strokes that each have a supernatural effect on the situation. You can paint words

slashes, gusts of wind, the sun and moon, lily pads, and even cherry bombs. Although it would seem to interrupt the action of the game (again, time freezes while you paint), the more you stroke, the more natural it seems, and the game retains its fluidity. Clover's known for imaginative play mechanisms, though never one this risky. This time around their daring paid off.

More than just a means to conventional gameplay ends, *Okami's* brush distinguishes the title from others in that it demands creativity and a constructive engagement with the environment, rather than just beating the shit out of things. Mind you, simulated violence and combat will always occupy a supremely dope place in video games (as they do in *Okami* itself), yet *Okami* begs of players a will to cultivate, to make things whole. The amount of fighting in the game is considerable, as Orochi's minions are numerous (that's the corniest thing I can bear to write in this review), but acts of development and growth eclipses the violence. By building more bridges, reuniting loved ones, and restoring more life to the natural world. Even the

• This shit is delightful, at times bordering on sublime. •

battles require more than fast reflexes, usually prompting you to figure out crafty ways to bring down enormous monsters with both your weaponry and your little bristled friend.

Above all, playing *Okami* is to struggle to tether yourself to practical objectives in the face of all-consuming awe at the gorgeous world you're in. With setting and characters entirely rendered in impressionistic paint strokes, it looks like nothing you have ever seen in a video game. You will find yourself exuberantly tearing through fields, taking in the greenery, forgetting that you have fifty hours left to complete before you can call it a day. This shit is delightful, at times bordering on sublime. It's a game that demonstrates how video games can stand alongside any other contemporary media in transcending mere entertainment into the realm of art. Disagree if you'd like, but not until you play the thing.

As important as "play" is in gaming and in life, it may

be too quaint a term for what *Okami* demands of you. The emotional stake one can invest into this game outstrips that of any other I've played in terms of both complexity and depth, to the point where I quickly run out of superlatives to hurl its way. If you own a Playstation 2, you should own this game. If you don't own a Playstation 2, you should endear yourself to someone who has one, along with a copy of *Okami*. 🍌

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FILM REVIEW:

The Prestige

By Kirianna Buteau

Reviewing *The Prestige* might require a few magic tricks of my own—just to explain, without actually discussing any plot events in detail, precisely why the movie is awesome and why it proves director Chris Nolan is one of the best in the business.

(This is assuming, of course, that people don't already hold such an opinion after his brilliantly structured *Memento* and the thrilling *Batman Begins*.) However, here is my attempt, entirely free of spoilers, and also free of comparisons to the original novel or to the competing magician movie *The Illusionist*, neither of which I'm familiar with, nor must anyone be in order to enjoy *The Prestige* thoroughly. I left the theater with a big old grin on my face, and not just because Thom Yorke accompanied the closing credits.

The premise is often given as something like, "The

story of two rival magicians in London." Doesn't sound terribly interesting when you keep it that vague... It's a little bit more than a movie about magicians. More important than watching the development of the clever magic tricks of Algier (Hugh Jackman) and Borden (Christian Bale) is watching the development of the story's utterly fascinating psychological themes. Like in *Memento*, things are not told in a precisely linear fashion; the film opens with an important image, a crucial sequence, and then a great deal is sets of flashbacks beginning at differing points in time, interspersed with the aftermath of the opening sequences. The audience follows the progression of the friendship to rivalry as one thread, the progression of Algier's personal revelations as another, and the progression of Borden's as one more; they are chronologically separated from each other, yet bound together through the reading of diary entries, and the juxtaposition of different key moments in each flashback set is far more useful to illustrating the actual changes in the characters than a linear plot would be—also like *Memento*.



work. It too plays with memory, how we perceive things around us, and the various guises we wear around different people. Still, it lacks a protagonist with a diagnosable memory problem. The true significance of memory and identity is instead made

apparent through the innumerable plot twists. If this doesn't sound intriguing enough, believe me, the film offers more. Scarlett Johansson is fairly unremarkable in her role, but Jackman, Bale, and the wonderful Michael Caine contribute solid performances, the latter two lending a flavor of *Batman Begins*. (Luckily, Caine interacts more with Jackman than Bale, so there isn't an inundating feeling every scene of Bruce Wayne playing with cool magical gadgets.) David Bowie makes an almost unrecognizable appearance due to age, a mustache, and no tight pants à la *Labyrinth*, but he and Andy Serkis as a duo are absolutely splendid. Much of the visual trickery is standard stage magic captured on film, but the sparse special effects are fine. Great cinematography, extremely skillful editing given the storytelling method, and a pretty nice soundtrack are also draws.

The Prestige isn't perfect; the dialogue is weak on occasion, and I managed to predict a good deal of even the really weird twists. The twists are so excellent that it doesn't especially matter, though—I didn't get an overwhelming sense of "best movie ever" but this definitely deserves to pick up some awards, and I daresay that I'm worried to see *The Illusionist* now because I don't know that any magician movie could top this one too easily. 🍷

FILM REVIEW: DARWIN'S NIGHTMARE

by Katy Kelleher

"*Darwin's Nightmare*," a documentary by Hubert Sauper, was screened on Friday, October 20th in the Avery theatre. The film explores the devastating effects of globalization on the small Tanzanian communities that live around Lake Victoria. Through numerous interviews with pilots, fishermen, prostitutes, children, factory owners, journalists and ministers, Sauper creates a clear picture of the exploitation of Africa and the terrible repercussions of the money-driven fish industry.

The film focuses on the effects of the introduction of the Nile perch into Lake Victoria. The Nile perch have devoured all the other fish in the lake and are rapidly speeding up the process of eutrophication. If the environmental damage is not halted, the largest lake in the world may turn into an empty sinkhole. The environmental effects of an invasive species like the Nile perch are truly astounding. However, what are more important are the effects of colonization and the subsequent exploitation of Tanzania. The Nile perch are present throughout the movie; their cannibalistic tendency to eat their own young seems incredibly symbolic given the other problems discussed in the documentary.

Sauper continually asks the people he is interviewing one important question: what are the planes bringing when they come to pick up the fish? Russian planes fly in daily to Mwanza airport, leaving with up to 500 tons of Nile perch, yet no one seems to know what they bring as cargo. Some of the pilots say it is machinery, some say they are empty. As the film goes on, we learn that many of the planes are bringing in weapons to fuel the warfare that rages in nearby countries.

The role of weapon importation is not the only troubling issue that Sauper focuses on in this film. He splices together scenes of suffering and horror, making this the most depressing movie I have ever seen. The people interviewed range from a night watchman who stands around wishing Tanzania would go to war so that he could have a steady job, to prostitutes who sell themselves to pilots and later end up dead. One of the most disturbing scenes is when Sauper films young children sniffing home-made glue out of an empty soda bottle and passing out in the street.

Although Sauper raises some interesting points in his documentary, there is a lot that he fails to explain. He wants to blame all of the problems of Tanzania on capitalism and the EU, but this seems to ignore the issue of the corrupt Tanzanian government that allows the exploitation of their natural resources and the environmental degradation of their lands. In one scene, a group of Tanzanian government officials are watching a film about the environmental problems of Lake Victoria caused by the Nile perch. One of them stands up and says, "What about the beautiful areas?" He claims that they were only showing one side of the issue, and most everyone seems to agree. It is this kind of blind refusal to accept the reality of a situation that makes it almost impossible to bring about any sort of lasting change. The people of Tanzania cannot afford to eat the fish fillets that they are exporting; instead, they feed on the rotting carcasses covered with maggots that are dumped onto the ground. Watching this movie left me feeling empty and depressed, for although Sauper is trying to help by showing the world the terrible state of Tanzania, he fails to offer any hope for the future, or any way out of this mess. 🍷

{ SHORTBUS REVIEW }

by Thomas Houseman



It's easy to use sex for its shock value as a tool to incite interest in an otherwise dull and uncreative story. But when John Cameron Mitchell, the writer/director of *Hedwig* and the *Angry Inch* tackles the subject of sex, the result is not just shocking, but shockingly good. Mitchell's newest film, *Shortbus*—his sophomore effort and followup to *Hedwig*—is a fascinating study of the role that sex plays in the relationships of people who are sexually uninhibited, or just think they are. While the film is rated NC-17 due to extreme sexual content (and there is a lot of sex in the film), it often supports the complexity of the various relationships in the film.

Shortbus is a story about a group of New Yorkers who are all involved with a sex club that shares its name with the film's title. Sophia (Sook-Yin Lee) is a sex therapist who has never had an orgasm, a fact that is straining her marriage to Rob (Raphael Barker). Jamie (PJ Deboy) and James (Paul Dawson) are a gay couple who had been monogamous for five years until James suggests bringing other men to their relationship. Severin (Lindsay Beamish) is a reclusive professional dominatrix who uses sex as a substitute for genuine human contact. As the five of them rely on *Shortbus* more and more to help them deal with their problems, their personal demons come out and relationships start to collapse.

The reason why you might not know any of the actors from *Shortbus* is because John Cameron Mitchell handpicked

them to be in the film based partially on their willingness to have actual sex on screen. None of the sex in *Shortbus* is simulated and the realism of what is shown on screen makes the fictional relationships seem far more real. It certainly doesn't hurt that the actors all give fantastic performances, in particular Paul Dawson. Dawson's portrayal of James is incredibly touching, as he tries to maintain a relationship that he cannot fully embrace because of his depression. He and PJ Deboy have great chemistry on screen and the twists and turns of their relationship are some of the best parts of the film. Another standout is Lindsay Beamish, who plays Severin, a woman who tries to avoid human interaction except when she is paid by rich college boys to be a dominatrix. Severin, like many of the characters in the film, might be seen as unrealistic, but the characters are written so perfectly and the performances—in particular Beamish's—are so excellent, that the characters in the film seem like real people.

After only two films, John Cameron Mitchell has established himself as one of the best new filmmakers. His willingness to tackle any issue and present it in a way that is both realistic and incredibly entertaining. With *Shortbus*, Mitchell has clearly refined his skill as a director, and made an important film that tackles relationships, both gay and straight, the way few films have. As long as John Cameron Mitchell continues to write and direct with the same talent and voice he has shown in his first two films, there may just be hope for American cinema. 🍷

