



Installations in "Because I am Don't Want to Get Old (Making Time)" at the Marylhurst Art Gym through March 31, she's added locks from family and friends.

gallery guide | reviews | events

THE OREGONIAN • A&E • FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 27, 2004

► "We've always been looking for a way of getting more **BANG** for our buck." — Malcom Rogers on expanding Boston's Museum of Fine Arts

D.K.'s hot sheet



ED CHAPPELL

ROBERT RAUSCHENBERG

Robert Rauschenberg still has a lot of attitude. The renowned Pop artist recently gave a rascally interview in *The New York Times Magazine* with Deborah Solomon. In the interview, Rauschenberg offered his thoughts on everything from what kind of photographs he likes to his feelings about death. To read the interview, go to www.nytimes.com/2004/02/15/magazine/15QUESTIONS.html.

Expect a merry time that could get out of hand at Reed College's Arts Week. Better known as RAW, from Wednesday, March 3, to Sunday, March 7, the campus of one of the country's best liberal arts colleges will be filled with art exhibits, rap performances and other forms of artistic mayhem. Bill Shannon, damali ayo and KRS-ONE will be among the week's headliners. For complete details on RAW, including admission to some events, go to <http://web.reed.edu/raw/>.

Of special note: One of the highlights of RAW promises to be The Modern Zoo's "Disposable" exhibit. Six artists and artist groups — Bruce Conkle, Kaosmosis, Brenda Mallory, T.J. Norris, Rob Off and L. Aili Schmeltz — have each been given a roll of plastic sheeting to make an artwork based on the theme of interaction. Hmmm. Reed College's Vollum Lounge from March 3 to 7.

— D.K. Row

Gerry Snyder casts his Lot

By HARVEST HENDERSON
SPECIAL TO THE OREGONIAN

When Canadian theoretician Marshall McLuhan wrote "the medium is the message," he was referring, in part, to the ability of technology — specifically TV programming — to shape the way we process information. Whether the machine spits out truffles or tacks, people will eat it up — so long as it's served warm.

Of course, before television was a graphite smudge in an inventor's sketchbook, other media shaped the way humans thought. The Bible, for example, remains a powerful narrative vehicle in Western culture, and it — specifically the Genesis story of Sodom and Gomorrah — is what spurred artist Gerry Snyder's current body of work at the Ronna and Eric Hoffman Gallery of Contemporary Art at Lewis & Clark College. Titled "Far From Here," the huge collection of colorful, semi-surreal paintings and drawing studies meshes classical landscape, comic-style narrative and characters, a dash of Bible study and communication theory, and even Snyder's pet pug, Buddy, in a visual discourse on myth and media.

The story of Sodom and Gomorrah is widely documented in the arts canon: the morality tale about promiscuity and male homosexuality, in which God rains down his trademark fire and brimstone on the Sodomites and spares just one devout family. That family — Lot and his unnamed wife and two daughters — is forced to evacuate their home under the chaperonage of two angels, who warn them never to look back. Lot's famously unlucky wife, who casts one glance back toward her burning home, is transformed into a pillar of salt for her hesitance.

However, some aspects of the story are lesser known. For example, there is the scene in which Lot, heckled by Sodomites, offers the throgs his virgin daughters to rape. Then there is the story's end, which finds righteous Lot and his

Continued from Page 25

partment at the College of Santa Fe since 2000. He has a master's degree in media and video arts from New York University, which may explain the storyboard or comic strip layout of his work. Wood panels adhered or lined up in succession give his paintings a cinematic feel. Comics and movies are, after all, another narrative medium, and "Far From Here" is essentially about storytelling.

"Stories like Lot and his daughters," Snyder notes in the exhibit essay, "show the power of myth to embody larger social values no matter how unreasonable. Often these stories are irrational or problematic because they sustain explicit cultural positions."

Modern myths, the ones we continue to unravel through television and popular history, make a strong showing in the exhibit, in pieces like "Father Knows Best," "John Wayne" and "Alamo," but it's the story of Lot that fascinates and propels Snyder. So much so, in fact, that he's devoted 160 paintings to the subject. Though he claims not to cast judgment, the absurdity in Snyder's paintings challenges the meaning and authority of an inherently flawed story.

"Lot et al.: Main Feature," a

triptych composed of 10 wood panels, depicts the fall of Sodom and Gomorrah. In the first grouping, two figures swoop earthward — perhaps the angels visited upon Lot by God — while a crowd of presumable Sodomites mills about with all the purpose and certainty of gummy candy (which they also vaguely resemble).

The second grouping shows the family crossing barren terrain, one large central figure looking back to the left. It's likely this is Lot's wife, but since the figures are transgendered, it's difficult to say. In the third set of panels, two figures grope each other crudely behind a shrub while Snyder's pet pug, Buddy, makes a cameo as a passive observer.

It's like a behind-the-scenes view of the classic tale — there's not a burning building or salt pillar in sight in the final version, though myriad other scenes do appear in the backstory of "Film Trailer," "Story Development," and other "Lot et al." pieces. Like a good filmmaker, Snyder knows that the most engaging bits of a story often go untold. The parts everyone knows about — the parts parceled out by the machine — are not always where the true message lies.

Portland with paintings that mesh everything from classical landscape to communication theory.

motherless daughters, now refugees, having incestuous sex to continue their bloodline.

These are the curious contradictions — divine retribution for one supposed sexual transgression and apparent disregard for another — that led Snyder to explore new visual representations of Lot's story.

Snyder's own visual contradictions force viewers to question

what they see. His halcyon landscapes evoke the formal refinement of old master pastoral painting, but are peopled with beautifully rendered but bizarre protagonists that are as lumpish and cartoonlike as children's rubber toys left out on a hot day. They are brightly colored, amiable, pear-shaped hermaphrodites. Some have legs, while others hover above an embryonic wisp of a tail.

Many are without arms and mouths to express themselves, powerless and dependent on divine intervention, gawking fearlessly at genie-like creatures emerging from the clouds.

Formerly dean of academic affairs at Pacific Northwest College of Art, Snyder has been an art professor and chairman of the art de-

27

THE OREGONIAN • A&E • FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 27, 2004

review

Far From Here, Paintings by Gerry Snyder

Where: Ronna and Eric Hoffman Gallery of Contemporary Art at Lewis & Clark College, 0615 S.W. Palatine Hill Road
Closes: March 14

Please turn to Page 27