

literature • art los angeles

FORTH

Issue 8

spring 2010

The Great Elephant Debate

Politics & Investigative Journalism
by Marco Mannone

The Pink Bus
& The Power of Trash
by Sofiya Goldshteyn

An Interview
with Novelist
Louis Bayard

L.A. County's
Marijuana
Debate

An investigation by
Julia Ingalls

PLUS:
San Fran Art & Lit
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Fiction by Matthew Flaming
Urban Art, Slam Poetry
& More!

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SARAH JANE BRUCE

Sarah Jane Bruce is an independent Art Advisor (SJB Fine Art Services) and Curator working in Los Angeles. Her show "Artificial Paradises", featuring the work of five Los Angeles painters will be presented at ACME gallery from May 1 - 29.

RYLAND BOWMAN

Ryland Bowman earned an MFA in Creative Writing from the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. He currently teaches as an Instructor at UNCG. His work has most recently appeared in New South, Backwards City Review and the online journal StorySouth. In 2009, he was awarded a North Carolina Arts Council Fellowship.

CHESTER AARON

Amateur boxer, professional soldier (one of the liberators of Dachau,) x-ray technician, union organizer, manure-disturber.

BIANCA KOLONUSZ-PARTEE

After living in San Francisco, Los Angeles and Manhattan, Bianca Kolonusz-Partee and her husband have recently settled in the Russian River area of Northern California, where she grew up. Bianca will continue to explore the American and eventually international shipping ports with the much more tangibly tangible of the natural world at her fingertips.

MICHAEL SHANKMAN

Michael Shankman was born in Boulder, Colorado in 1980. He studies Art in Florence, Italy and graduated with a B.A. in Global Studies from U.C. Santa Barbara in 2002.

DEB RIS

Deb Ris moved to LA from Bondi Beach, Australia over 12 years ago and was immediately struck by the condition of our local beaches. Several years ago, she was inspired to make objects of art using what she had been collecting, in the hopes of having us look at our consumption habits in a different light.

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Cover photography by Bona Hong.

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editor's note.

THE TIMES ARE a' changing'... Or so it seems. Wildlife has been captured and mistreated; California is on the brink of legalizing marijuana; the business of sex and slavery in our state is prevalent and thriving; and Spring is finally upon us. Hm...perhaps not much has changed at all since the 20th century. Though, I will propose, from the looks of this Issue of FORTH, that we are becoming more aware, perhaps more sensitive to the issues at hand.

Forth Editor and Journalist Marco Mannone, in being sent to the LA Zoo to "find a story that would go with our Spring 'Green' Issue," only happened to stumble into a strange and heated debate on the LA Zoo's elephant preserve, discovering intense and expensive arguments as to our state and city spending habits, as well as perhaps an overall mistreatment and oversight of wild animals in general. Forth Writer Julia Ingalls meanwhile did some investigation of her own into state spending, looking at the much debated Marijuana issue—why it hasn't been legalized and what significant points are being massively overlooked. Further journalism comes from Michal Zebede in her wrenching investigation of Sex Trafficking in California and a surprising group of Truckers who aim to combat this horrid trade.

And of course, we have some wonderful displays of green and recycled art from artists like Deb Ris and Bianca Kolonusz-Partee, as well as from the Sustainable Art Fair. We're also privileged to feature fictional work by author Matthew Flaming and an interview with author Louis Bayard. This issue is truly eclectic, including varieties of poetry, art fairs and exhibits, slam art, pieces from Northern California, and a strange and interesting new section, featuring short fiction by Forth Writer Sophie Kipner, tasked with personifying the articles at hand and drawing them all together.

In keeping with the green theme, we thought it the perfect time to go all-digital with Forth. As Spring is a time for renewal and rejuvenation, we've begun to reinvent ourselves, developing an even stronger online presence and developing ideas for an amazing, one-of-a-kind digital magazine, to be launched later this year. In going fully digital, we at Forth know we're not only becoming more environmental sound, but more technologically modern. And we're excited: A new digital product, with moving images, videos and slideshows where static photos used to be, play buttons to listen to the fictional pieces read by the authors, interactive components to supplement great pieces of journalism. It's all in our future, and we're excited to be a part of the community once again this Spring, promoting not only the best in Los Angeles art and literature, but supporting green artists, writers, and issues—becoming more generally aware and involved with our environment, both on a planetary level and a human level. We hope you continue with us, press on, go Forth, and enjoy!



JEREMY SHAWN POLLACK
Publisher & Editor-in-Chief

Fable of Contents

One writer is tasked with symbiotically integrating all the stories and characters in this issue of FORTH.

fiction by sophie kipner

CARRIER PIGEONS ANONYMOUSLY drop origami-like white notes through his window on 7th and Grand. Each one a clue: the first written in magic marker, “Billy.” The next came a few days later: “Bianca;” the last, “Noah.” In his dusty office turned makeshift crime lab in downtown LA, squinting to read the fine print through his grandfather’s magnifying glass in a room too dimly lit, amateur Crime Detective Morton FORTHston notices each note is sealed with an acronym: ACNAIB. Believing in circumstance over coincidence, he knows he is on to something, although he’s not quite sure what.

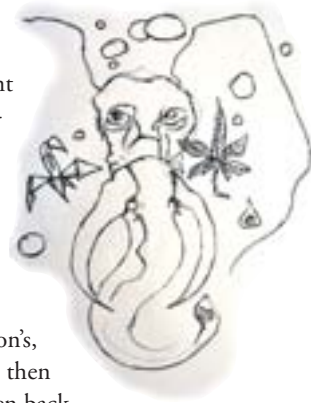
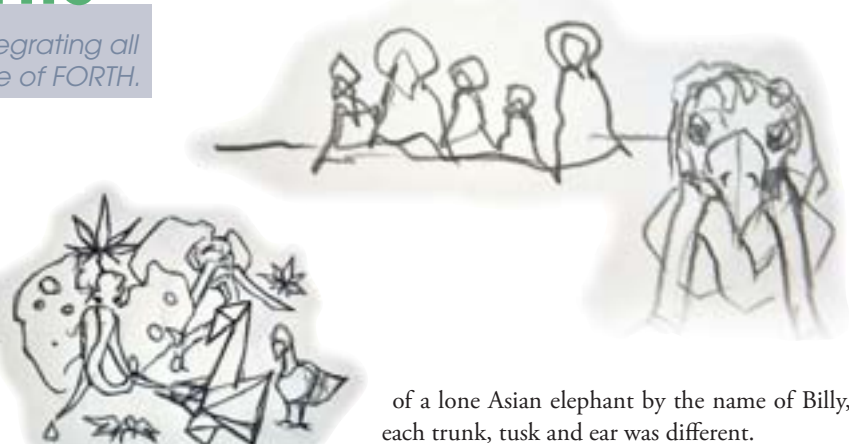
On this quiet Sunday night, Morton is a rarity. He will wake up tomorrow- unlike his co-inhabitants- remembering what he did the night before. Thankful for his severe allergy to marijuana, he is one of few locals unaffected by the rampant, widespread epidemic of memory loss plaguing the city since the drug’s legalization five years ago. After failing attempts to interact with the public, he found no use in trying as everything he said had to be explained. And then, explained all over again. Left happily to entertain himself with matters of importance, like crime solving, the modern day Francois Vidocq, a real life Sherlock Holmes, assigns himself to investigate the correlation between the high turnaround of caged Asian elephants at the Los Angeles Zoo and the increasing rates of amnesia among the middle to lower socio-economic classes. Perplexed for some time by the lower rates of memory loss among the rich, Morton would take his curiosities

with him as he drove cars full of tourists around LA in a Pink Bus, filled to the brim with artwork made of recycled trash. During one of his routine stops a few weeks ago at the LA Zoo, he noticed a change in the elephants on display. Each visit, despite the signs that indicated the residency

of a lone Asian elephant by the name of Billy, each trunk, tusk and ear was different. The connection presents itself: Billy the elephant is anonymous note #1. One sign down; two to go.

Relieved and equally pleased with himself for solving the first clue, Morton walks with an extra hop in his step into the kitchen and turns on the television while the kettle begins to boil. The news reporters repeat the statistics, continuing to instill fear and confuse the people, just as they did yesterday to an audience who has no doubt already forgotten. Although, as is the case with tobacco, the people keep smoking and the severity of amnesia’s affect increases by the minute. *Special Report* appears across the TV screen as District Attorney Steve Cooley stands at a podium next to Mayor Villarigosa, advocating the benefits of marijuana both physiologically and psychologically. Being one of the few people listening who would remember that both opposed the bill at their inauguration, a confused Morton starts to thread cause with effect. What would benefit city councilmen by legitimizing a drug that caused memory loss? Reconciling them, he hypothesizes that lying government officials, high turnover of imported elephants, and an amnesia epidemic all point to a childhood saying encapsulating it all: an elephant never forgets.

Monday morning’s sun rises and Morton heads to the zoo. En route, he hears a report on the radio about Truckers Against Elephant Trafficking, in which they interview a local artist and animal rights activist, Bianca Kolonusz-Partee. As he walks in through the Zoo gates, he bumps serendipitously into a half-naked man with ACNAIB indelibly written across his ribcage. Out of character, he asks the man what it means. The man lifts his pensive eyes to meet Morton’s, takes a moment to collect his answer and then tells him it’s the name of a loved one written back-





Photos courtesy of VICTORIA BROOKS and CAROLINE FLETCHER



pink bus

art journalism by
sofiya
goldshhteyn



THE PINK BUS AND THE POWER OF TRASH

WHEN I SAW my first pictures of the Pink Bus, a Pepto-pink double-decker that had previously only existed in my dreams alongside unicorns and cotton-candy clouds, I wanted to get on board immediately. From its overturned bathtub bar covered with melted vinyl records, to a ceiling with an array of lampshades hanging down like stalactites, it is a treasure trove of scraps that have been transformed into an entirely unique and surprisingly homey environment. Unfortunately for me, the bus is parked in Edinburgh, so I sought out its two creators – Reading, England’s Victoria Brook and Caroline Fletcher.

The Pink Bus was born out of Victoria and Caroline’s growing concern with trash and its negative impact on their surroundings. While in pursuit of their fine art degrees at University, they decided to use their sophomore year



project as an opportunity to take their apprehension and do something positive. They began collecting unwanted possessions donated by charity shops, front gardens, skips, and hedgerows, motivated by the desire to transform them into something beautiful. That was before they knew their idea would sprout wheels.

In transforming a rusty old bus into an art installation using junk, Victoria and Caroline hoped to make a difference in the way people saw their refuse and its long-term effects. They did not expect that in cobbling rubbish together they were also building a community. Having lived in Los Angeles long enough to let the sprawl of the city make crossing the East/West border akin to crossing the Alps, I could really appreciate the importance and difficulty of their achievement. From the shopkeepers they met in their search for just the right pieces of refuse, to the fans of comedy and music who got a chance to experience one-of-a-kind shows on the top deck of the Pink Bus, Caroline and Victoria harnessed the power of old cast-off objects to build a new environment. Here they share this transformative experience in their own words.

Sofiya Goldshteyn: The most obvious question first - does the bus run?

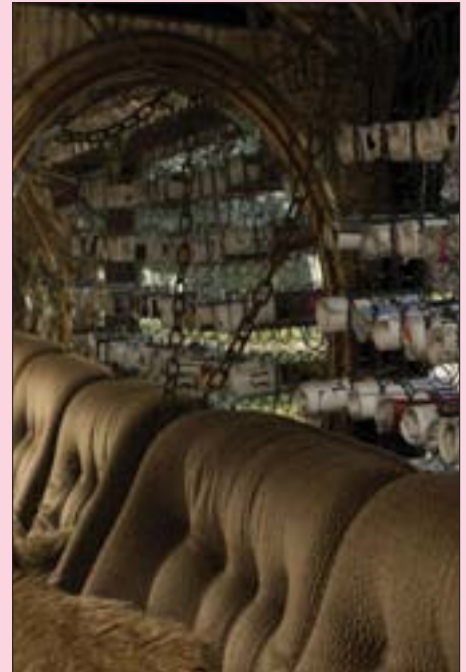
Pink Bus: The bus sadly does not run. It is a 25 year old Metroliner. When we were preparing to take it up to Edinburgh, we did try to get it fixed, as we wanted to run it on Biofuel. We had the support of SEPA (the Scottish Environmental Protection Agency) but financially, we could not afford the repairs at the time so we had to have it towed up instead. As soon as we have raised a bit of funding we will get it fixed as we think it would look very spectacular being driven around.

SG: I know the original inspiration for the Pink Bus was all the trash you saw, what other environmental issues are a daily concern for you and the people in your particular area of England?

PB: Air pollution. Coincidentally, since we begun our bus project, there has been a big campaign to encourage people to leave their cars at home and travel by public transport. This drive has been matched by investment in the transport system, but there is still a long way to go to make a noticeable impact on the levels of carbon emissions from cars. We think attitudes towards environmental issues are definitely changing for the better, but it is at a very gradual rate. People accept that they need to make changes, but perhaps are unsure as to how big a change has to be made to be effective.

SG: What kind of reactions have you observed from people towards your project and towards environmentalism in general?

PB: The people we collect our materials from are initially very surprised that we want to take away whatever they've discarded. Once we explain what we are using it for however, we have found everyone reacts very positively about their 'rubbish' being re-used. We found an old metal shop sign for Hovis bread left out in a garden and on approaching the owner he was very protective about it, even though he had left it in the elements (in fact he gave it to us strictly on loan, threatening to remove our kneecaps if it didn't get returned). We invited him to the unveiling of the bus with his Hovis bread signs mounted on the outside of the bus and he was so pleased to have them displayed and appreciated, he donated them (and we got to keep our kneecaps). The attitude to



sustainable art fair

THE SUSTAINABLE ART Fair made its debut on the LA art stage this year January 15th-17th at the Silver Echo Gallery. The goals of the fair included not only an exploration through art of the culture, technology, ethics, and challenges surrounding sustainability, but also a dialogue about greener ways of making art (hint: if you've been ignoring your lint trap, I have some exciting news for you).

Seven emerging and established artists contributed multimedia, kinetic and sound installations, as well as painting and sculpture in the hopes of attracting not only art lovers and tree-huggers, but also organizations and sponsors to assist in the creation of a larger art fair based on the same themes. Greg Schenk, the curator of the show as well as an exhibitor, sees the January show as a first installment of many, which will lead up to the big fair he hopes to secure funding for (to get involved, visit <http://www.sustainableartla.com>). Below are some of our favorite works from the fair.



KATHERINE CUTRIGHT, Untitled, mixed media (lint and metal), 3'x6'x6".

Cutright is an LA-based muralist, painter, and sculptor who is currently making mysterious objects out of the detritus of urban life in a search for hidden meaning.



GREG SCHENK, Human Powered Device #4, mixed media (bicycle, automotive electronics, lights), 4'x6'x2'. Spin Art Wheel (Human Powered Device #2) mixed media (bicycle, wood, aluminum), 6'x6'x2'.

Schenk is an emerging artist and the curator of the show. His latest work has been creating interactive human powered art devices, and exploring alternative paint-making processes.

DALIA MONSERRAT GARCIA, Untitled, mixed media (bees wax and string), 2'x8'.

Garcia is an LA-based emerging artist whose work in video, painting and sculpture discusses femininity, female roles, and the female self in our culture.



AARON DRAKE, Untitled, mixed media (recycled electronics), approx 24"x24"x24".

Drake's an LA-based composer and performer whose electronic work has focused on notions of authorship by appropriating and manipulating digital 'objects' such as .mp3, .jpg, .dmg, etc., as well as recycling and redesigning discarded sound making devices such as children's toys, synthesizers and radios. <http://www.aarondrake.org>



MICHELLE CHONG, untitled (Green Piece), paper, ink (recycled stickers), 3'x8".

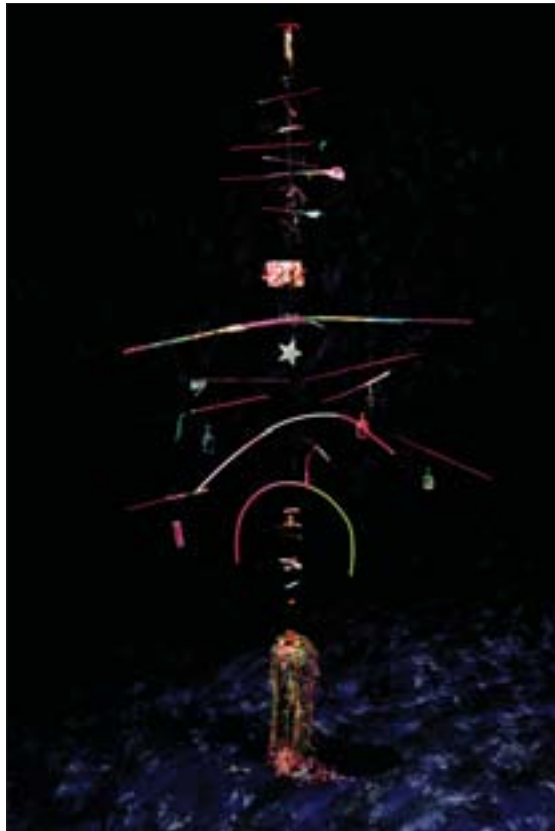
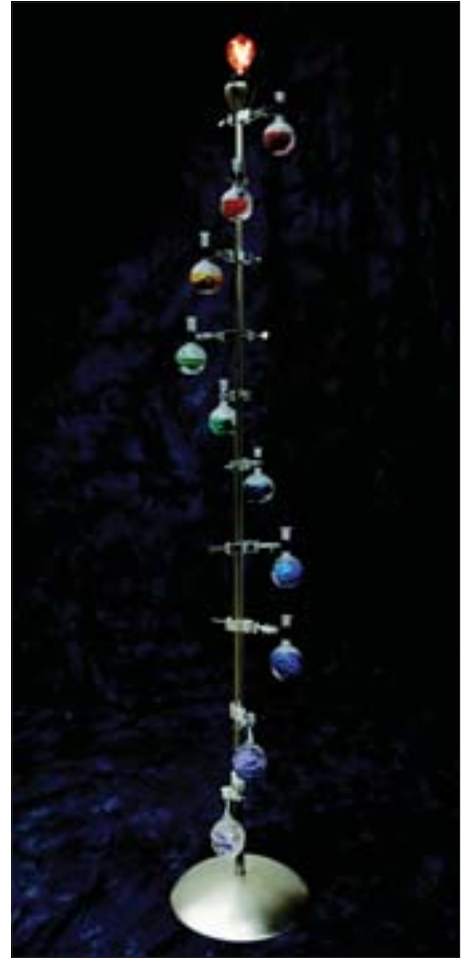
Chong, splitting her time between LA and Berlin, is currently exploring the formal qualities of text and working with graphic design. She appropriates stickers, posters, websites and banners, subverting their assigned meaning and creating new messages of her own. <http://www.michellechong.com>

GABRIEL BARCIA COLOMBO, Untitled, mixed media (suitcase, cinder blocks, video), 3'x3'x2'.

Colombo is a New York-based mixed media artist whose work focuses on the concept of collecting human beings as scientific specimens, a combination of curiosity cabinets, sleight-of-hand shows, laboratory practices and theories of human taxonomies. www.gabebc.com



mixed media by debris



(clockwise from top right)
“Water Balloons.” “DNA.”
“Ballgown.” “Patriot.” Marine
Trash Reborn as Art.
by DEB RIS.

*Deb's work will be on display at
Heal the Bay's Santa Monica Pier
Aquarium in celebration of Earth
Month April 17 & 18, 2010.*

*The Santa Monica Pier
Aquarium is located in Santa
Monica, California, at beach level
below the world famous carousel
on the Santa Monica Pier.*



Photograph by EPICARMUS

fiction by
**matthew
 flaming**

THE PHOTOGRAPH

AN EXCERPT FROM *THE KINGDOM OF OHIO*

WHETHER BEAUTIFUL OR TERRIBLE, THE PAST IS ALWAYS A RUIN.

When I look back on my childhood, my earliest memories seem like artifacts from a lost civilization: half-understood fragments behind museum glass. I remember the spherical alcohol lamp that glowed like a tiny ghost, ringed with dancing blue flames, which hung over the dining room table of the house where I grew up. I remember the sweet, oily smell of coal smoke, and the creaking of horse-drawn carriages on the dirt road outside. Most of all I remember the summer twilight over the mountains and how, on certain evenings, just before the sun sank below the horizon, it cast rays so luminous and golden that they felt like a solid, enveloping close into which a small boy could simply disappear. n intensity no light today seems to match.

hese images appear as snapshots of a vanished world—literally vanished, considering how much has changed between those years

and the present day. Since then, airplane flights linking the continents have transformed once-in-a-lifetime voyages into matters of a few hours spent in a comfortable seat. Things like telephones and automobiles, once improbable rarities possessed only by the very rich, are now taken for granted by average people. When I was young, the changing of the seasons was the most important punctuation of life: ancient rhythms that have since been replaced by electric lights that turn night into day and fragment each day into electronic-precision intervals measured by the punch-clock instead of the almanac.

Now, watching the young men and women dressed in skin-tight leotards rollerblade past the bench where I like to watch the sun sink over the Pacific on these warm Los Angeles evenings, I know that my world no longer exists. It has vanished utterly, and would be incomprehensible to these self-satisfied, bright-faced youths.

Thanks to the genius of human invention, things have sped up until I can hardly keep track anymore: the new-new internet, the new world order, the next big thing that seems to arrive every day (if the newspapers are to be believed). Carried on the tide of progress, we all seem to be fast-forwarding into a future where our memories become irrelevant relics from a useless and discarded past.

Let me be clear: I don't mean to glorify the "good old days," or to condemn the contemporary milieu. Whatever charms the past may have had, I don't believe those bygone times were any better than the present (at least, apart from my own preferences—and I won't pretend to speak for anyone other than myself). Instead, what I'm trying to explain is that I am a kind of dinosaur: a mem-

her of a near-extinct species, fumbling with arthritic talons on the typewriter keys as I write these pages.

Several years ago I took a composition course at the local community college. During those sensitivity-laden sessions (where bad prose was miraculously transformed into “challenging work,” and cliché into “irony”), the instructor taught us that a story should start by making clear where the narrator stands, establishing the voice. And that’s what I’m hoping to do here—only, rereading these last few paragraphs, I see that it doesn’t seem to be working. And to be honest, clarity in general isn’t one of my strengths these days. So maybe it’s best if I begin (again) by simply explaining how it all began.

IT WAS TWO YEARS ago when the little bells above the entrance to the antiques store tinkled and the door swung open, a sweating delivery man staggering through. I looked up from the book I’d been reading and stood.

“Got a shipment for you,” he announced, dropping the packages next to my desk. “Need your signature.”

I wrote my name on the screen that he shoved in my direction. “See you around, boss.” He gave me a thumbs-up gesture before departing into the brightness of the world outside. I looked down at the three large boxes.

It had been almost a decade since I’d opened my antiques store, and by then it was a reasonably successful business, located in a middle-class Los Angeles suburb. I should emphasize that I didn’t start the business because I was ambitious. In fact, I had opened the store for quite opposite reasons: as a refuge, a way of retreating

from life. Despite my decades of trying to feel comfortable in the world, I had never really managed to fit into this place (this sprawling California city with its constant noise, its nirvanas of vitamin juice and self-realization—or this twentieth century in general, for that matter). The store was intended to be a place where I could hide, where I could be alone and let the world forget me.

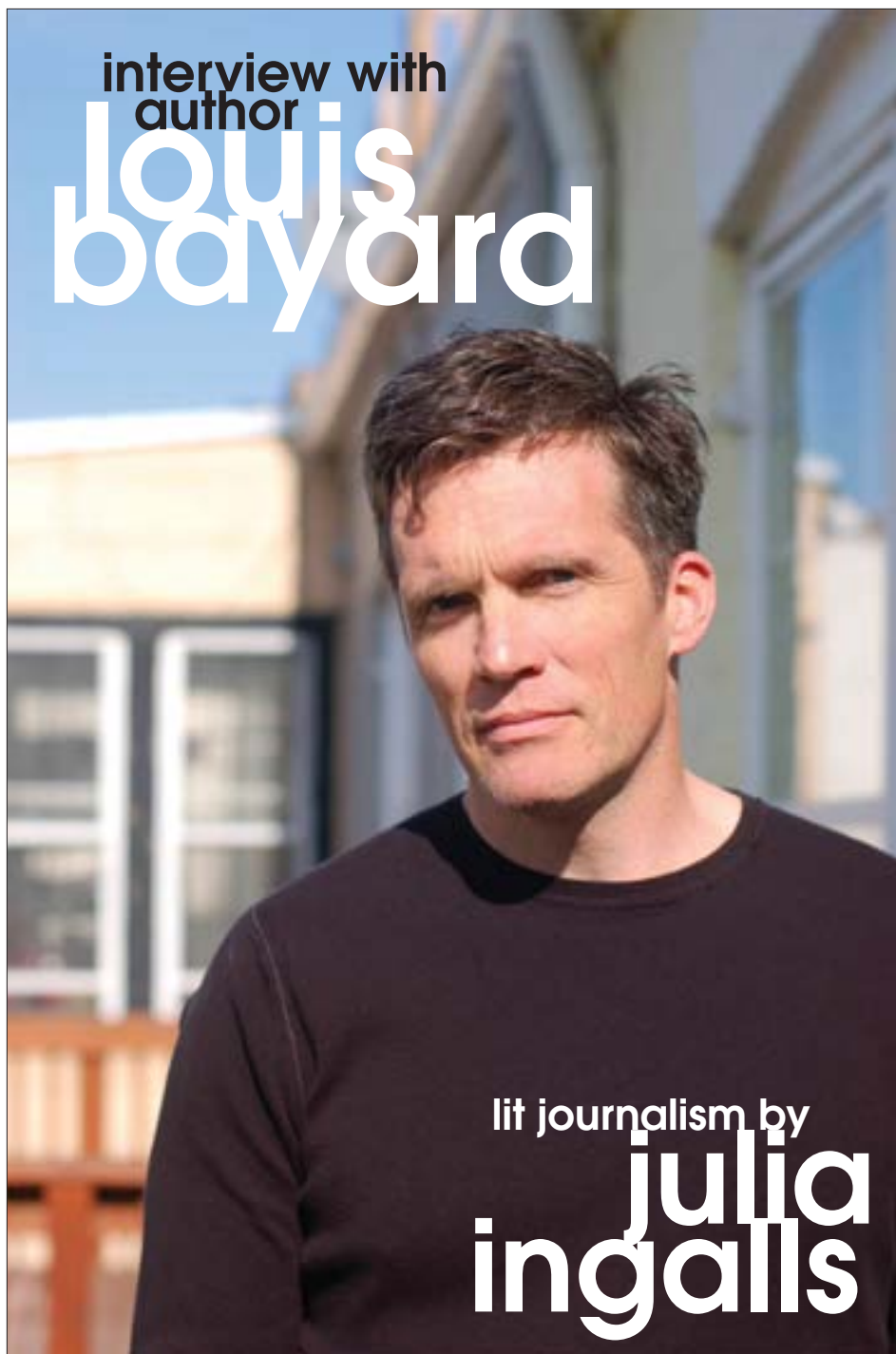
To my surprise, although I didn’t have much in the way of a gift for salesmanship or knowledge of antiques, the shop provided me with a modest but healthy income, until a larger, more polished antiques store opened a few blocks away. Since then, to compete, I’d been forced to sell less furniture and more historical knickknacks. For the most part these were old magazines and books that I purchased in bulk, mainly from estate sales in the Midwest: inexpensive curiosities that might attract casual shoppers who wandered in to purchase a fragment of the past.

Through the small windows of the shop, dusty beams of sunlight illuminated the cluttered interior of the space: the worn upholstery of armchairs, an assortment of Edwardian-era dressing tables with age-silvered mirrors, a curio cabinet bearing a row of ormolu clocks (all motionless, since I couldn’t stand the sound of their ticking). Outside, the shapes of palm trees shimmered in the heat.

I slit the packing tape on the first of the boxes and began to inventory its contents. Issues of *Time* magazine and *Life* magazine, covers displaying images of celebration and catastrophe. A newspaper clipping and a small black-and-white photograph that had been taped together fell out of one of the magazines and I stooped to pick them up, glancing at the picture. A snapshot of three people sitting at a table in a bar, two men and a woman.

The next thing I remember was the door swinging open, a

► Continued on p. 26



Photograph by GINA EPPOLITO

“Once, without realizing it, they spent ten minutes conversing about two entirely separate topics. Alex was talking about S/M lifestyles, and Patrick was talking about living in New York, and they didn’t realize their error until Alex said, with an air of finality, ‘Well, it’s a lot to go through just for an orgasm.’”

—*Fool’s Errand*, Louis Bayard

LOUIS BAYARD

ALTHOUGH NOVELIST LOUIS Bayard undoubtedly deserves a much longer introduction, all you need to know is that he’s as hilarious over the phone as he is in print. Enjoy.

Julia Ingalls: You’ve written five novels. *Fool’s Errand* was about the quest for love, *Endangered Species* was about the quest for family, whereas the novels *Mr. Timothy*, *The Pale Blue Eye*, and *The Black Tower* seem to be about the quest for identity.

Louis Bayard: Oh, wow! That sounds good.

Jl: We’ll put it together as a blurb, I guess. But do you agree with that? What made you want to write in the past?

LB: You’re talking about binding all this together, that implies that I put much forethought into this than I really did. What happened is that I’ve written these two books. They were put out by a small press, and they sold decently for a small press book, but I got an itch for a larger audience. I had this particular idea about Tiny Tim, of all people. I’m not even sure where it came from. I was talking to my agent, and I mentioned it, and he got intrigued by it. This historical thing grew out of writing about Tiny Tim.

I didn’t set out to be a historical novelist. I’d never written that way before. I’d never written a thriller before. It was really a self-education to put that together. That’s the logistics of how that happened. Because the book did well enough, the publishing industry being what it is, they kind of want you to do more of the same thing. The next book was about a real-life French detective who inspired Poe [François Vidocq]. They’ve all been linked that way. There’s at least some tangential link. Maybe the second and third book, not so much. But I can see where identity plays a part, and where family plays a part in a lot of these books. *Mr. Timothy* is the creation of an alternative family. *The Black Tower* is about trying to reconnect with his parents after their deaths. I can see all of these things resonating.

Jl: *The Black Tower* specifically seems to be written at a much more cinematic clip. The chapters come at you much faster. Was that intentional?

► Continued on p. 22

art journalism by
sofiya
goldshteyn



PORTS AND PACKAGES: THE PLEIN AIR ART OF BIANCA KOLONUSZ-PARTEE

BIANCA KOLONUSZ-PARTEE makes pictures of the things we ignore using pieces of the things we discard. Cezanne painted his Mont Sainte-Victoire over 60 times, Monet recreated his water lilies dozens more. The subject of industrial shipping ports may not seem so romantic, but to Bianca they are every bit as potent. Industrial ports are universal gateways, through which we receive nearly everything we use everyday. Not that we notice them. In fact, you might say we make a point of ignoring them. This is particularly easy in a city like Los Angeles, where the unpleasantness can be easily lost in the endless sprawl of our mega-city. Even in denser cities like New York and San Francisco, where the cranes and docks are unavoidable, most of us are so inured to the sight that it

becomes part of the white noise of urban life. We tend to remember the Empire State Building and the Golden Gate Bridge.

Bianca believes this is typical: “The average person in LA, unless they live in those areas doesn’t really think about [shipping ports] or see them.” And yet, according to the Long Beach Alliance for Children with Asthma, the amount of air pollution blowing inland every day from the Long Beach/Los Angeles ports is equal to that generated daily by three million cars. Children in Long Beach face some of the highest levels of asthma and permanent damage to lung development in Southern California. Diesel pollution from the ports’ trains, ships, cargo conveyors and trucks poses such significant risks to local residents



as cancer and premature death. “There’s all this processing going on that you can visually see and smell. It’s causing the same amount of pollution and damage as it is in New Jersey, but the San Pedro and Long Beach ports

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(clockwise from top left) “Red Hook.” 10”H x 26”W, 2009. Recyclable materials, colored pencils, adhesives, map tacks. “Jersey Meets Manhattan.” (detail). 6-1/2”H x 62”W, 2009. Recyclable materials, colored pencils, adhesives, map tacks. “Outward Inward 2” (detail). 40”H x 180”W, 2009. Recyclable materials, colored pencils, adhesives, map tacks. “Outward Inward 2” (preliminary drawing). “Outward Inward 2.” (see details above). by BIANCA KOLONUSZ-PARTEE.

art journalism by **sarah
jane
bruce**

**BLURRING THE BOUNDARIES:
ART BASEL MIAMI SETS THE TONE FOR 2010**

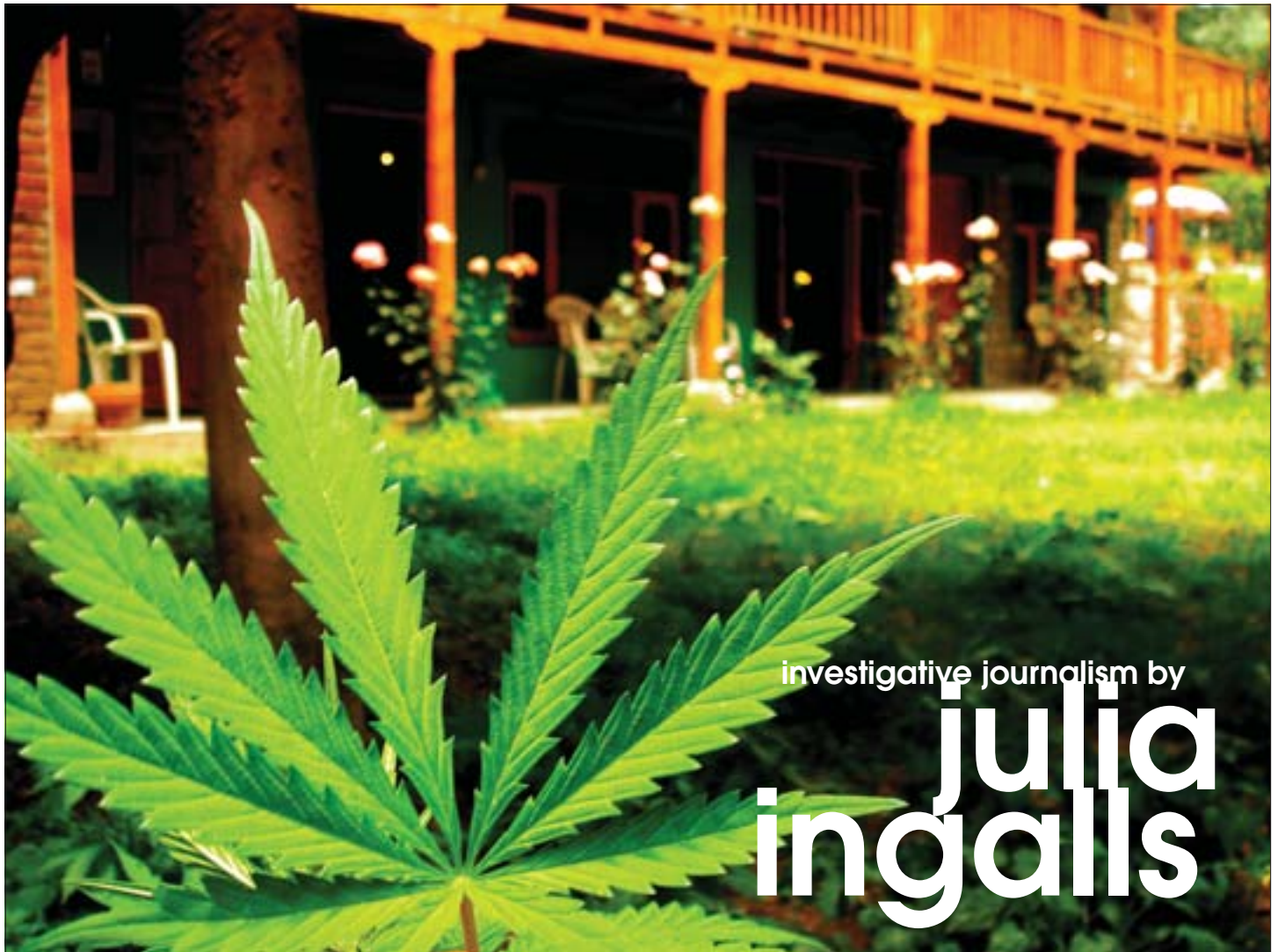


LAST DECEMBER THE art world breathed a collective sigh of relief as Art Basel Miami beach got under way. The mood at the fair was noticeably cheerier than 2008, when all the air kisses, hand shakes and fake smiles could not disguise most participants' fear of the coming apocalypse. Since the recession continued to batter the art market for most of 2009, this year's fair was still more subdued than the all out bacchanals of years past, but as they say, "the show must go on," and it did.

Nowhere was this more evident than at Jeffery Deitch's beachfront party at the Raleigh Hotel. Deitch's annual private bash has become the place to see or be seen on the opening night of the fair, and this year guests were treated to a superb performance by indie darling Santogold. Deitch's role as the unofficial ringleader of the downtown New York hipster set now has interesting implications for L. A., as he was recently appointed director of the Los Angeles Museum of Contemporary Art. This is the first time a major art dealer will run an American museum, and it remains to be seen whether Deitch's street/pop/kitsch aesthetic will infiltrate the hallowed halls of one of L.A.'s most respected institutions.

The blurring of boundaries between the traditionally public and private sectors of the art world was a recurring motif at ABMB. One of the city's major non-profit exhibition spaces, the Bass Museum, debuted "Where Do We Go From Here?" an exhibition of selections from La Colección Jumex—Mexico's largest private collection of contemporary art. The fair's festivities also included the debut of the museum-like De La Cruz Collection Contemporary Art Space in Miami's Design District. Home to the personal collection of Rosa and Carlos De la Cruz, the exquisite three story space outshone any of Miami's current public exhibition spaces.

Los Angeles artists featured prominently throughout the fair and its festivities, from Pae White's transformation of the Collins Park Oceanfront into a glowing village to Shepard Fairey's inclusion as a speaker in the "Art Conversations" series. Fairey's acceptance into the fine art world from his previous categorization as "street" or commercial artist is another indicator of how much the landscape has changed. In his talk at the fair, Fairey stated, "I think that initially, I wasn't interested in the art world because it's such a narrow conversation. It's more the spillover to the rest of culture that I've been impressed by." If the beginning of 2010 is any indication, the spillover has become a deluge. ■



investigative journalism by
**julia
 ingalls**

Photograph by ELPABLO

IT'S THE REVENUE, STUPID

WHEN I THINK about marijuana, I think about district attorney Steve Cooley. Bongs, inner clarity, and cancer patients simply don't exert the same visceral pull as the man who wants to be the next state attorney general. Steve Cooley is my personal figurehead of dope.

The D.A. grants few interviews, but his positions are well known. Over the past year, the Los Angeles City Council has drafted several proposals to attempt to regulate the 137 medical marijuana dispensaries operating with permits in the city of Los Angeles. On each occasion, the D.A. has said that he will prosecute those who attempt to sell marijuana. Compromises, addendums, even thousand-foot proximity limits from schools do not soften his political stance. Apparently, Mr. Cooley thinks of voter

intent as more of a survey.

But what a survey. According to a Gallup poll, 54% of Americans in the west supporting legalization. With dispensaries facing a variety of perplexing legal issues, it may be simpler to just outright legalize it. As of January 2010, there is a bill in the state assembly to legalize marijuana and place a \$50 tax on each ounce sold. People familiar with addition and multiplication vouch for the economic feasibility of the plan, and the subsequent financial boon to the state.

So what is the dark side?

Many people in law enforcement feel that medical marijuana dispensaries are perfect fronts for crime/terrorist organizations. Oddly enough, fronts are not exclusive to drug operations. Perfectly legitimate businesses can set themselves up as fronts for lazy retired crime families. An otherwise pleasant seeming coffee shop on the West Side of Los Angeles

was, for years, run by an unscrupulous Asian crime family with very insecure hairnets. And was the coffee remarkable? No.

Then there's the problem of setting up a board to regulate medical marijuana. Where does the money come from to appoint a board who will watch over the dispensaries? What about malpractice insurance? How will the law be written, if everyone is far too stoned to do it?

The state assembly has a much better plan. Legalizing marijuana without classifying it as a medical substance will eliminate thorny bureaucratic issues, close doors to Evildoers (who are currently battling to be recognized as a separate entity from jazz fusion band the EvildoneIts) and boost revenue.

Or will it?

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poetry by
**ryland
bowman**

F-STOP

Trout feeding in the current,
creek steaming in the cold;
we stood in the willow brake,
highway out behind us,
looking for the moose we'd seen.
I wondered if sex would be the same
after what we'd read about the grizzlies,
how the smell, during their early fall
eating, struck them. You counted towards
menstruation: guard set on the cycle,
nights wary on the tarp.

A sweep of bluebirds
banked above the mist.
Your camera clicked. Earth, full
of urges, listed from star to star.

NORTH FORK OF THE NEW

Thin oil for the cold car.
Paint peeling off the Subaru.
Leaves on the windshield wipers,
chocks behind the wheels.

A place you can rent for cheap
about five miles out from town,
Game Land boundary
running along the ridge.

Morning or night,
something to conjure by,
like seeds after a burn:
good weed in a glass jar,
a stack of songs on the dusty floor,
a broken-in pair of boots.

investigative journalism by
**michal
 zebede**

**TRUCKERS AGAINST
 SEX TRAFFICKING:
 “YOU CAN BE HEROES”**

THE FASTEST GROWING criminal enterprise in the 21st century is human trafficking. Surprised? So was I. Even more of a surprise is the role played by the United States. Each year, 50 thousand people are trafficked into this country, making America a main destination for modern-day slaves. The top city through which these victims enter the US is the glitz-and-glamorous city of dreams, our very own Los Angeles.

But in the words of Tzighe, a victim of trafficking here in LA, “there is hope.” Hope, which sometimes comes from rather curious places.

“She was young. I don’t know how young, because it was dark and it’s hard for me to tell black peoples’ age,” began one trucker’s story. Help was coming, I thought, from a world that was drastically different from my own—comfortable, liberal, all-embracing LA.

It was Lyn Thompson who realized that truck drivers have an unusual proximity to human trafficking, and are thus ideal for identifying victims. Her initiative Trucker’s Against Human Trafficking aims to stop sex trafficking—especially forced prostitution—by reaching out to these members of the trucking industry.

As a result of the organization, the National Human Trafficking Hotline, to which Lyn’s awareness campaign directs truckers, has received countless calls from drivers across the country concerning human trafficking activ-

ity. Since the LAPD and the FBI rely heavily on tips and leads, these calls have proven fundamental to the liberation of trafficking victims nationwide.

Here’s what’s remarkable about this. These people care. These truck drivers from middle America are incredibly concerned and morally compelled to take action. Obviously not all of the truckers care, but a few of them do, and these few are spreading the word through the network of truckers like gospel through a grapevine.

“Personally, I think anybody that ignores it, I’m not sure I wouldn’t want to give them a bloody nose,” said Scott Weidner, President of Transport for Christ.

As I spoke to these individuals with backgrounds so drastically different from my own, I guiltily found myself wondering why they got involved. Why do they care?

So I asked them. I asked them the question that I have so often asked myself. Their answers are dispersed throughout the words that follow. I suspect that for the truckers, it’s a matter of human dignity and personal pride that leads them to feel sympathetic towards the sex slaves; more sympathetic, that is, than the average American newspaper reader—sympathetic enough to take action.

THE VISIONARIES

Trucker’s Against Human Trafficking began as an initiative of Chapter 61 Ministries,



an anti-slavery organization in Oklahoma. Women in Trucking is an affiliated group, as is Transport For Christ, an organization working to diminish the demand for prostitution among truckers. “We started this seeking God,” explains Lyn Thompson, a devout Christian from Oklahoma and the founder of Truckers against Trafficking. “Everything we do is based in prayer.” Again, a foreign world, I thought. But it occurred to me that Lyn’s reason for caring—religion, conservatism—had something fundamentally in common with my own concern. I care about sex trafficking because I care about sex. That’s the fault of my conservative, religious mother (who grew up in the bubble of Jewish Costa Rica), and the resulting sex-is-special upbringing from which I no longer try to break free.

In October 2008, Lyn and her co-founding 5 daughters put on a human trafficking awareness conference, where Phil Gazely, Social Justice Advocate on Human Trafficking, was invited to speak. Phil mentioned the role of gas station attendants in identifying trafficked victims, which he hopes will become “a movement.” The gas station outreach idea began in the mind of Kevin Bales, president of Free the Slaves and a key player in America’s fight against human trafficking. Lyn decided to take the idea one step further.

Since then, she’s been educating truckers about the issue, and raising awareness nationwide via radio shows, websites, webinars,

subjExive journalism by
**marco
mannone**

Photography by BONA HONG





WHERE THE ELEPHANTS ROAM: HOW A LONE JOURNALIST STUMBLED INTO THE MIDDLE OF A HEATED POLITICAL BATTLE

WRITER IN A CAGE

BILLY HAS NO idea what he's done wrong. Just another confused statistic behind bars, sentenced to life for a crime he never even committed. Now, without any means to plead his case, the 23 year-old is slowly losing his mind. Celebrities, politicians and activists have been fighting over him for several years, and a major trial – with a \$42 million price tag – is set to go to court this spring. Advocates for Billy's life-sentence declare he is getting exactly what he deserves, while critics denounce his wrongful imprisonment as a cruel means to an end that could result in his premature death.

Billy happens to be an Asian Elephant, but that is beside the point. This is a life or death situation, with millions of dollars fluttering through the air and a Mayor's reputation at stake.

But I digress... There is simply no way I could have known that going to the Los Angeles Zoo to write up a "routine environmental story" would lead to uncovering a conspiracy filled with politics and money, death and cover-ups. After all, us writers are no different than the restless animals pacing the Zoo's cages: waiting for the Muse to get close enough to the bars so we can lash out like starved lightning and get a taste of inspiration. I know this now... In fact, at the dawn of this horrible new decade this may be *all* that I truly know. My official assignment was to go to the Zoo and prance around like a jerk to indulge Forth's latest asinine theme: how "Green" is L.A.? Well shit, it doesn't take Al Gore to drive over the Sepulveda Pass and see the brown cloud of death choking us all to realize we are doomed, doomed, doomed.

But enough with diving-board theatrics... let's jump head-first into this murky cesspool and swim beyond our depth. Humble arts & literature publications still in their infancy are soft targets for the flaming arrows wielded by powerful organizations such as the Los Angeles Zoo in conjunction with the City of Los Angeles – so, it is safe to say, the Forth staff can expect a few fires around the editorial office soon. Let's not forget that as of 1997, the Zoo became its own city department, with

a clearer voice to the City Council and more direct control over its operations. Money is at stake here... and lots of it.

WELCOME TO THE (FAKE) JUNGLE

I went to the Zoo without an angle or a care (and slightly hungover). Following instructions, Forth photographer Bona Hong and I checked in at ticket booth 11 for our free guest passes. With time to kill, we decided to check out a gift shop where I purchased an elephant mask: the best \$7.99 I ever spent. Bona suggested I wear my sunglasses over it so that I could "blend in."

Gangs of pregnant women pushing baby-strollers gawked at the Elephant Man. I instantly became an attraction, Mr. King Shit Freakshow -- more stimulating than the 1,100 depressed animals laying around behind bars licking their genitals. As a child I adored zoos, the concept of zoos, even the putrid stench of zoos. When my parents took me to the Buffalo Zoo (the third oldest in the nation) I was transported to a new and exotic world. But now, years later, they don't really mean that much to me any more. In fact, I can't even remember the last time I've been to a zoo.

We entered the Administration Building to meet with its public relations and marketing director, Jason Jacobs. He greeted us warmly and lead us to a golf-cart, zipping us through a maze-like path.

"So I know nothing about zoos," I held my recorder up, bored out of my skull, "where do all these animals come from?"

"You can trace all of their ancestries back to their wild relatives, but a majority of these animals are the latest of several generations to be born in captivity."

I never thought of it that way. You go to the zoo and imagine all the daring adventures behind catching each animal and shipping them across the globe, but in reality, they all come from a long-line of domesticated lifers. Except for the lions. They were acquired through the Wildlife Waystation who rescued

► Continued on p. 20



them from being someone's *pets*. "That's another story altogether," Jason said with a half-cocked smile.

As we park and head into the veterinary clinic, Jason told me about the intricate process in which zoos from all over the world coordinate specific animal populations, sometimes shipping certain creatures from one country to another to mate with their own kind. Who knew zoos were responsible for transcontinental booty-calls?

"But planned breeding isn't always about increasing numbers," Jason said, leading us down a hall, "For example, the Sumantra Tiger is endangered, and we could theoretically breed as many as we like. But the problem is, there is nowhere to send the tigers back to. Their natural habitat is being destroyed and they would be worse off in the wild. So we have to make sure there are enough, but not so many that zoos cannot care for them."

Are we replacing God by default? It seems the more we destroy what He created, the more we have to take over His job. Wouldn't it have been easier not to shit all over Sumantra in the first place and let the damn tigers take care of themselves?

Walking through the clinic, we passed a wall of nets – ones that could catch a butterfly and ones that could engulf a bear. We were greeted by Dr. Curtis Eng, the Zoo's director of veterinary health services. He gave us a tour

of the state-of-the-art facility, where the latest medical technologies are utilized. Case-in-point: the first recorded full cancer recovery for a rhinoceros has taken place in their digital diagnostic room. When I mentioned that it's cleaner and more modern than most human hospitals I've seen, Dr. Eng nodded.

"It's kind of scary," he told us, "we have various medical professionals that help us with our research, and one of them is a prominent cardiologist from U.C.L.A. She has mentioned more than once that this facility is cleaner than most hospitals in Los Angeles." Mental note: if you get sick in L.A. it pays to be a Komodo Dragon or a flamingo as you will receive better healthcare at the goddamn Zoo.

Jason continued to zip us around in the golf-cart, dodging herds of tourists every inch of the way. At the center of the grounds, a giant fence had been erected around a construction sight. The fence was covered with a vinyl mesh making it impossible to see what was going on behind it – except for one vantage point that overlooked the sight. At a passing glance, this 3.6-acre zone looked unimportant: a giant, muddy pit crawling with men in hard-hats, operating bulldozers and a crane. Initially, this \$42 million project meant nothing to me. "The new Pachyderm Forest will feature a variety of features for the elephants including bathing pools, waterfalls, varied topography, sand pits, shady retreats and grassy hills,"

Jason beamed proudly.

"Where are the elephants now?"

"We have one elephant, Billy, and he's in a temporary holding area. But once the Forest is complete this summer, at least three females will be joining him." Perhaps suspecting an ulterior motive I did not yet understand, Jason chimed in, "You know, for the over 120,000 children that visit the Zoo every year, this is the only way for these kids to ever see one of these magnificent animals up close and personal."

THE BATTLE FOR BILLY

The tour eventually ended, leaving me unimpressed and craving a powerful cocktail.

"So what're you gonna write about?" Bona asked me as she packed her camera.

"The mating rituals of the Sicilian Donkey," I replied with a bitter tone.

How "Green" is the L.A. Zoo? Well, they do their part to conserve endangered species, I'll give them that much. For example, the Zoo has been a part of the California Condor Recovery Program for years, and has played a major role in saving this majestic species from becoming extinct. Their latest challenge: the extremely endangered Peninsular Pronghorn of Mexico, who's population has just gone up to 250 thanks, in part, to the Zoo's dedication.



But you can read all of this in a brochure, and since I'm in the magazine business, I drove back to the West Side without a story.

No story, that is, until I began Googling the Zoo for research. It turns out that \$42 million mud-pit, and the solitary elephant it intends to house, has been the subject of heated debate between various warring factions of this city for several years now. In addition to countless animal-rights activists, TV legend Robert Culp has been trying to egg on a lawsuit against the Zoo in conjunction with real estate agent Aaron Leider since '07. They allege the Zoo withheld medical care to their elephants, confined them in too small an area, and even used bull hooks and electric charges to control them. To top it off, this vocal celebrity activist is claiming construction for a new elephant habitat will be an epic waste of taxpayer's dollars – especially during a time of economic despair. The California Supreme Court has denied a petition by the City to review a Court of Appeal's decision in September of '09 allowing the animal welfare suit to go to trial. So despite L.A.'s evasive efforts, the gavel comes down sometime in March / April and the Shit Show will commence.

Curious about all of this, I decide to call up Mr. Leider himself to pick his brain on the lawsuit he is filing against the City, asking him, "On what legal grounds are you suing the City?"

Leider informs me, "There is a law that states that the City cannot keep acquiring property that it cannot maintain. The elephants are considered property, and the death-rate clearly shows that these animals do not fare well in captivity. It costs approximately \$156,000 annually to care for a single elephant in captivity. This is on top of the \$42 million to expand the exhibit. As taxpayers we're paying for all of this and will continue to pay for the suffering of these animals. It's our right to do this."

It turns out, us Angelinos are "only" coughing up \$36 million as \$5 million of the project's budget was made in private donations. But still, that ain't exactly pocket change. And the question remains: is any amount of money able to prevent these animals from dying prematurely? I ask Leider, "Fifteen elephants have died there since 1968, correct?"

"They only claim twelve because three of them were leased to the Zoo, so they don't *technically* consider them their property. You have to understand, this new exhibit was approved in '06 when the Zoo lied to the City Council about these deaths, covering up all the facts, saying the elephants were perfectly healthy. Seven years ago, there were four elephants: Tara, Gita, Ruby and Billy. Tara died in '04 at the age of 39 (the average life expectancy of their species in captivity is in their 40's, while in the wild they can live up to

70). Two years later, 48-year-old Gita dropped dead – literally – in her outdoor paddock. Believing 47 year-old Ruby was on her last legs, the Zoo preemptively "retired" her to the Performing Animal Welfare Society sanctuary in San Andreas to avoid another death on their hands with this multi-million dollar project in the works. The sanctuary gives them access to 100 acres of land and even a Jacuzzi for the more arthritic members of their family. It's the most humane alternative for them right now."

"So this thing is set to go to trial soon, right?"

"Yes. We won in the Appellate Court and the City desperately doesn't want to go to trial with this. Just in the preliminary hearing, the stuff that leaked about the Zoo they were freaked by. The City went to the Supreme Court to try and overturn this, and the Supreme Court shut them down. So just the fact that the City did that is a sign of desperation. If they have nothing to hide, then they should have nothing to worry about."

"What kinds of things are they concerned about?"

"For example, out of all that grand construction going on over there, you have to realize a bulk of that is for people and not the elephants. These special trees that they're going to be planting that will make it look so

◀ **BAYARD.** Continued from p. 12

LB: Cinematic is probably a good word for it. I definitely wanted to keep that moving. I was just remembering a key thing in the writing of that book for me—I usually just write the whole way through, and then read it all whole way through, but because I was going on vacation and I didn't want to bring my laptop—see, these are the way things happen, like these silly little things—so I just printed out what I had. I was astonished by how much fat there was in the book. There was a lot of larding—most of it, research. One the traps of being a historical novelist is you do a lot of research usually, and then you want to shoe-horn it in there wherever you can to reassure people that you've been working really hard, and you deserve a gold star for all your hard work, and then you go back and read it with an unbiased eye, and think, "I really don't need that. Readers don't really need to know that." I wound up scissoring away a lot of that stuff, and the result was so lean that it forced the whole book in that direction. I liked that it was moving so rapidly.

JL: It really does accentuate scenes. For example, the scene in the morgue at the beginning at the book with the piano forte in the next room, is incredibly realized. It's fun to read because you're there, you know.

LB: Good. That came out of research, which is where a lot of great ideas come from. I read something about the morgue and how the morgue-keeper lived in the same building, and his family was next door, that was inspired by the reality of it. I was fascinated by that juxtaposition.

JL: It comes across really well.

LB: Good!

JL: To give you your gold star for all your research.

LB: [Laughs.]

JL: You got a master's degree in journalism from Northwestern. You must have always wanted to be a writer from when you were growing up. Why did you choose journalism as opposed to trying to write fiction directly?

LB: I should say my college senior year the-

sis was a book of short stories. If somebody had rushed a printed collection and turned me into the next David Leavitt—I'm trying to figure out who was the ideal at the time—um, I would have gone that way, but nobody was rushing to publish these, so I liked the idea of journalism because it I thought it get me out in the world and introduce me to some more reality than I had experienced at that time in my life. Since I had anticipated going into journalism, I realized I would need to get some clips. I thought a master's program would be the best way to go about doing that. I left there fully convinced that I was going to become a newspaper reporter. But I couldn't get a self-respecting newspaper to hire me. So I became a flack in Washington and stayed on there in that capacity for various people and organizations. And eventually became a freelancer, which is what I've been since '95.

JL: Wow. Congratulations on that.

LB: I've served a lot of masters. A lot of the work I've done is not by-lined. I write junk mail, I write newsletters, I've paid the bills in a lot of different ways.

JL: Is that difficult to switch from one style of writing to another? How do you make sure that your writing remains what you want it to be when you do a lot of commercial work and then you get back to fiction?

LB: I do the fiction work the first thing in the day. I'm at my freshest. If you wait longer in the day, things always come up. It's like those people who put off exercise until 4'o'clock, something happens, the phone rings. I write as long as I can, which some days is all day, and some days it's just an hour, but I try to get at least an hour a day. The discipline comes in stopping and going on to the other stuff that is frankly less interesting but is more immediately remunerative. I've developed a pretty good balance over the years. I sit down and do it. Any professional writer just kind of has to do it. That's how bills get paid. You don't have time to futz around. But we all have our own procrastination tools.

JL: It seems like you consistently write really hilarious, wonderful columns. I'm thinking specifically of the work you do for Salon.com. Specifically, there's an essay you wrote called "Attention: All You Memoir Fabulists." My favorite example is Walt Whitman's 'Song

of Myself' where you say, 'Reviewers have flagged the following line: Do I contradict myself? Very well, I contradict myself.' And you say, 'We should change the second line to 'Sorry.'"

LB: That article was prompted by an example of a memoirist who had been fabricating her story. People saw it as a fabrication, but really, the issues we think are uniquely modern have an ancient providence. And the whole question of telling the truth about one's life lies outside of time, because we all tell fictions about ourselves and our lives, whether we're conscious of it or not. We're all fictionalizing. It's a vexed area, trying to decide if something is fiction or non-fiction and where the line is.

JL: Would you consider doing a novel in a slightly more contemporary historical period like the 1960's or the 1980's?

LB: I would love to. I'm not wedded to horses and carriages by any means. The book I'm working on now, half the story is told in the modern day. It's really quite refreshing not to have to ask myself, 'What the hell would they be wearing?' I have this basic frame of reference. On the other hand, I found to my surprise I had to do almost as much research about modern day stuff because there is only so much in the world I experience on a daily basis. It's taken a lot more work on the front end than I thought it would.

JL: Is the book about the Elizabethan "School of Night?"

LB: Yes.

JL: And the contemporary period that you're working in, is that literally modern day?

LB: It's literally modern day. It's like, now. And it's Washington, D.C., where I live. In a way, I'm revisiting some of the terrain of my first two books. And using a little more comedy as well. Or trying to, anyway. It's interesting; I'm right in the middle of it, and I'm conscious that I'm using different registers. The historical tale is set in 1603 England and has a more tragic register. The modern day is more of a caper, has more of an antic quality. I'll be interested to see when I do the critical stuff of re-reading the manuscript, whether those different registers come together or clang against each other.

JJ: How much time do you allow yourself to edit your work after you write it?

LB: Part of it is that when I have it to where I want it, I send it to my editor and she goes through it pretty diligently. I make response to her edits. *The Pale Blue Eye* was substantially re-written between the first and second drafts because of what my editor rightly suggested about structure and shape of the story, things like that. But I don't know. I give myself a few weeks to go through it and hack away at it. Usually, it's hacking away. Most writers are like that. We write more than we need to. There's a great quote by Roger Ebert, in an obituary for Paul Newman. I think they quoted Roger Ebert saying, "He spent the first half of his career figuring what to put into his acting, and the last half deciding what to take out again." I think that's true. As you get older, you realize it's much more of a taking out. You know the stuff, you know you don't need as much. That's the mistake I see in aspiring young writers. They blast you with words. They want their voices to be heard. It's hard to convince them they could be heard much better if they just pare away a lot of that stuff.

JJ: It seems it also has to do with structuring it so you don't get lost in tangents—which, I suppose, is the same as cutting it down.

LB: Sometimes it is a plot fix. I honestly think plot is relatively easy to fix, or it can be. The stuff that can't be fixed is if the voice is insecure. For that reason, I always take the longest time with the first chapter. The current book, I spent several weeks on the first chapter, because I wasn't happy with the voice, and who the narrator was, and it took me a while to get fine with it. Once you get that in place, it goes much faster. There's no substitute for a sure, confident voice. Plot—you can lift things up, move things around. In *The Pale Blue Eye*, I actually removed an entire character. Not a main character, but a secondary character. She served no plot or function, she was there really just to entertain me. And that was harder in a way than killing off a character, to remove a character entirely. It requires a lot of juggling. In the end it was worth doing.

JJ: What do you think is your ultimate ambition—well, that's kind of a strange question. Let me put it a different way.

LB: [Laughs.]

JJ: Do you feel accomplished? Are you looking to write "The Perfect Novel"?

LB: I don't know. I think I may have given up on writing the next "Great Gatsby." I think that falls to one or two people in a generation. I like writing in genre, I like the idea of writing entertainments. I have no belief that my work will necessarily outlive me. But I think you can write some thoughtful things in the context of genre. Some of my favorite writers have been genre writers. Raymond Chandler, Ruth Randall, Patricia Highsmith, in the same way that Dostoevsky did, but they do it in the context of a particular entertainment form. The trends I like in literature today is that a lot of those genre lines are being blurred, and you're seeing people like Michael Chabon writing detective novels.

JJ: For a while there, it seemed that literary fiction was at an incredible remove from plot or narrative based fiction. I think it's good to weave them back together. I think either extreme becomes dull, but if you somehow interweave them.

LB: I agree. I wonder how much of that had to do with academia. For a while, in parts of academia, the whole idea of a story was cast in doubt, the idea that fiction should tell a coherent story. I was rather frustrated with the idea that we should always remind our readers that this is fiction. I love the illusion of being swept up into a story, and not having the writer constantly nudge me and say, "This is just fiction you're reading." Well, I know that.

JJ: Do you pick the cover art on your novels?

LB: I get to weigh-in. I suppose if I ever chose to exert it, I would have veto. I try to be open-minded about it, because I recognize that I don't always know what works in the marketplace. If I truly hated a cover, it wouldn't fly. It becomes more of a collaboration between me and my editor and my agent. I feel lucky to have a team helping with this stuff. Authors are frequently not good at anything but writing. We're not good self-promoters or marketers, and certainly not visual artists.

JJ: Why do you think that real-life 18th century French detective Francois Vidocq [a principal character in *The Black Tower*] is no longer as well known as his fictional counterpart Sherlock Holmes?

LB: That's a question I asked myself. One of the reasons I wrote the book was to make him better known in America. He was back in the 19th century—his memoirs were best-sellers on both sides of the Atlantic—he was well-known enough that Poe and Melville and Dickens could allude to him, and readers would know who he was it. I'm not quite sure what happened to him. I'm not sure why he ended up in the dustbin of history. I sometimes wonder if it's the funny spelling—the ocq at the end of the name—people don't know how to pronounce that. Holmes, of course, is such an easy thing to spell.

JJ: That's sad, but you're probably dead-on. I have to admit my ignorance: I had not heard of Vidocq before I read *The Black Tower*.

LB: I hadn't either, until I read the *Murders in the Rue Morgue*. That was the first time I saw his name in print. Because the character Dupin was immediately at pains to elevate himself above Vidocq's example. It's like, who is this guy? It's a slaying of the father impulse, saying 'I'm better than this guy.' Kind of like Holmes would later do with Dupin. There's this whole history in detective fiction of the next generation of detective rising from the ashes of the previous one.

JJ: Who is the 21st century's detective? Who embodies that?

LB: Among the writers currently out there? I think the model is still Chandler and Hammet. I'm not sure we've had our 21st century guy yet.

JJ: Do you think the prevalence of crime drama on television could be the template?

LB: Maybe that's it. Maybe it's the forensic scientists. All the CSI guys. The idea that we can solve crimes by putting attractive people in laboratories.

JJ: Don't forget the cool music.

LB: Yeah, the cool music. And these very dramatic lighting effects! Which I'm thinking in any laboratory would be like, "I can't see." These like, Chiaroscuro compositions. "Can anybody see through their microscope? I can barely see you." ■

Louis Bayard's new novel is The School of Night.

◀ **PINK BUS.** Continued from p. 7

environmental awareness is slowly changing in households but by being able to take people's waste and turn it into something visually unexpected and entertaining is a very effective way of promoting change.

SG: You didn't know from the beginning that you wanted to use the bus as a performance space, right? What are the unique benefits of having such an unusual venue?

PB: When we first begun the project, I don't think we thought past the bus being anything more than an installation piece. But after holding a party on the bus to celebrate our degree marks and thank everyone involved, it became clear the atmosphere on board was completely unique. As a venue, the atmosphere is instant as soon as you enter the bus, and the intimate 'stage' at the front of the top deck creates a performance experience like nothing else, particularly when watched from the double bed.

SG: I bet! What are your favorite parts of the bus?

PB: We love our double bed on the top deck, which became one of our performers, the comedian Paul Foot's stage as he conducted bedtime story shows from it to a pajama-clad audience. We also have a 'love corner' for our romantically inclined visitors which is complete with Mills and Boon wallpaper, pink chandeliers, posters of great lovers (Kylie Minogue and Jason Donovan, Barry Manilow and Rod Stewart) and a velvet heart that sings love melodies when squeezed (we were very excited to haul that treasure out of a skip still working).

We find that although we put the bus together, there is still new angles to see it from and things to find, particularly as on every flat surface we have papered up old newspapers, song sheets and discarded documents so there is always something waiting to be read.

SG: That's awesome! What was the best part of working on the bus for you guys?

PB: We felt the most rewarding part of creating the installation was meeting the people who donated all their unwanted possessions. As well as gathering items from our local community, we also had a team of charity shop volunteers who collected up all their unsella-

ble stock for us each week. Although charity shops try not to throw away a lot, they have to get rid of items that they can't shift and so it ends up in a landfill. Even now, despite the fact that the bus is packed to bursting with objects, we can remember where the pieces were found, why we chose them and who they were given by. We both feel that the best part of using recycled materials is the history of the object that is contained within it.

SG: That's beautiful, and you really feel like you're looking at something special when you see any of the objects on your bus – especially the stuffed animals, those really struck me and made me think about their past lives. And of course, all ordinary objects have such lives.

PB: Yes, Germano Celant sums this up well in "A Bottle Full of Notes and Some Voyages," in which he discusses Claes Oldenburg's and Coosje van Bruggen's interest in the mundane and everyday objects: "It is on the stage of the 'everyday' of the world of things and objects in the world, that the self, through the process of its imagination, gambles with constructing an 'alternative' to the world, a history and identity of its own." It is this identity that interests us; how is it that individual people can sometimes project something of themselves onto inanimate objects and make them their own. It is this essence that we are tried to capture.

SG: What are some of your favorite objects you found for the bus?

PB: When we were looking for the bar materials, we found an old curved bath surround in a front garden on top of which we melted on vinyl records to make the perfect bar top. One of our favourite finds was a car seat cover with "pink wheels" written on it which is now on the driver's seat. This particular item we rescued from the bottom of a skip. At times it felt very much as though the bus had already created itself and then exploded, scattering its contents, and our task was to put it back together. It was a very organic process.

SG: What are some of the ideas about waste that you'd like to impart on your viewers?

PB: Most of the objects we gathered had already been designed and manufactured to fulfil certain functions and had since become obsolete. Redeploying them in a new environ-

ment, brought a new perspective and challenged the roles they were created for. We hope that by doing this we inspire the potential in the huge amount of objects we waste.

SG: What were some of your influences or inspirations for the Pink Bus?

PB: The root inspiration was Christoph Buchel's exhibition, "Simply Botiful," an installation piece set within a warehouse in London's Brick Lane. The show is a series of illusions, playing on the psychological and environmental connections we have with material objects.

We strongly connected with the carved out habitats that Buchel created. Like Buchel, we like to impart something about the people who once owned the objects and that sense of remnant energy prevents it as merely being a pile of rubbish. Our visits to the Whitley estate (an expansive post- World War 2 housing estate in Berkshire, Reading) that houses a wide range of different people have further inspired us, meeting people and photographing houses and driveways that display similar hoarding, with some people creating cocoons of protection built around their individual living space.

Celant has a great quote about this: "The self is constantly confronted with the irrepressible oscillation of the things of the world, and risks getting lost in the labyrinth of their infinite travels. In order to avoid that loss and to face down the terror of being drowned in the world's avalanche of objects, the self tries to capture some of these things, to make them its own, it gives them personal value, whether positive or negative."

In a similar way, we have become drawn to observing how people hang on to so much. The way they are kept, stored, hoarded, can tell us something about their lives. It is likely that our interpretation is not the actuality, but we have satisfied our own need to understand how these objects function within people's lives.

SG: That's really interesting, viewing the world as an avalanche of objects, and making up your own histories based on the way a person hangs on to their stuff. I hope you keep sharing the bus with people, the discussions and thoughts it stimulates are really worthwhile... Speaking of sharing, what is the next stop for the Pink Bus?

PB: We are currently applying for funding to take the bus to a series of Festivals coming up throughout the year. The bus has recently been the anchor exhibit to The Royal West of England Academy's Autumn Exhibition and we hope that other galleries will be interested in showing it. The bus is also for sale and so if it is snapped up by someone it will provide us with the funds to continue making work together. We feel the bus is best when it's inhabited and so our goal is to keep bringing it to new audiences. We also get people bringing

their unwanted possessions on board and taking things away from the bus so it is continually evolving.

SG: **I love the interactive aspect of that! And I'd really like to see what your artistic process will evolve into next. Have you started thinking about your next collaboration?**

PB: The next idea we are exploring involves storage facilities. We are inspired by the idea of the secrets, the excesses and the forgotten in storage warehouses. We are currently look-

ing into taking over a floor of a storage facility and creating installations in each of the bays for an audience to walk around. The eerie atmosphere and voyeuristic element we feel will provide a memorable viewing experience.

SG: **Sounds creepy and fascinating in all the right ways. I can't wait to catch up with you then, I'm sure it's going to be amazing!**

■

◀ PORTS. Continued from p. 13

seem more remote."

Bianca's keen attention to the 'forgotten' parts of our landscape began before she moved to Los Angeles for graduate school, but it was there that her professors recommended she look at the work of photographer Allan Sekula for ideas on how to get closer to her subject. Sekula would hang out in longshoreman bars, befriending the denizens and eventually gaining unprecedented access to shipping yards, ferries, and their inner workings. Bianca knew that as a woman, building friendships with longshoremen in the comfort of their watering holes would not be right approach for her, so she tried to find her own way in. "I just had to be a total nerd about it – I studied the maps, and I spent a lot of time [at the ports]."

Yet her initial plein air sketches for the port series proved challenging, to say the least. Plein air work is a constant battle with the elements: fading light, shifting spatial relationships, lousy weather. Bianca eventually transitioned into using video to capture details of the port landscape, upon which she would base her collages. This was not a transition without some angst since Bianca is quick to lament the way technology can remove us from directly experiencing the world around us. But in this case, the video camera has set Bianca free: "I am now using technology to get closer to the landscape. With video I have more time to look at the birds flying in, I have time to look at the water, the air, the movement of things."

Bianca sees meaning in the details of these places society ignores. "We're disconnecting too far from the landscape, the further we get away from it the less we care about what happens to it." The ports are our dirty secret,

the cost of a consumerist lifestyle. But Bianca is not out to proselytize or point fingers. To avoid knee-jerk reactions, she even refrains from incorporating corporate logos or other such easy targets for capitalist critique. "The work for me is very political and very environmental, but I would never have it be overtly political...It is a place you can have your own thoughts."

But Bianca's work eschews the coolly detached intellectualism of 'thoughtful' or 'political' art. It is, unequivocally, beautiful. And while it is nothing new for an artist to bring the 'forgotten' or abject into the gallery – Kiki Smith and Paul McCarthy have made long careers of it – few have addressed such ugly things with such formal beauty.

The striking intricacy of Bianca's cityscapes is revealed when your face is five inches from them, your eyes endlessly running over tiny strips of every color and pattern imaginable. As soon as you take a step back, the illusion of painted lines springs up, the meticulous strips turning into brushstrokes. Citing Cezanne as a big influence because of the way he could define a space with just a few planes, Bianca hacks away at her structures until only the most integral lines are left. The visual depth of the collages, especially the largest work *Outward-Inward 2*, is enhanced by the fact that some colored strips have been pasted over and over, the layers raising away from the gallery wall like mountains on relief maps. She likens the visible thickness to the erasure marks she leaves when drawing, a tangible record of her process.

The joy of discovery comes when a line of ink gives way to the hatch pattern of a security envelope or the vibrant red of what surely must have been a candy wrapper; Bianca's medium is not limited to paint or ink: she is mak-

ing art from packaging. In this case, the medium has an obvious intrinsic connection to the message. Shipping ports are the universal gateways to the cheap, prepackaged goods that fuel our lives. Goods we consume; packaging we throw away. It seems ludicrous to think of the billions spent designing the perfect wrapper or box for everything we consume, when it all winds up in the trash heap. Our trash is incredibly expensive, and also highly designed for maximum aesthetic appeal. Bianca's shredding renders this packaging anonymous, breaking it down into its most basic components, and using those to rebuild our cities in vibrant color.

When Bianca first started to use packaging as her medium, she was really proud of herself for being so green. However, her Prius-owner-like self-satisfaction didn't last. Bianca didn't generate enough trash to populate her collages. Soon friends and relatives from around the country were called upon to carefully gather their most picturesque packaging, box it, and mail it in. The irony to convey the environmental impact of importing while receiving packaged trash in the mail did not escape Bianca. "It made me realize that I'm just as attached as anybody to all the packaged stuff we have."

Despite seeing marshland destroyed before her eyes, Bianca is positive about the future of our environment, "I feel like I'm hopeful. The landscape is stronger than anything we can create." Since the last time she painted at the Oakland port, some of the industrial property has been converted back into marshland; there is even a new park. At this rate, we may one day look back on Bianca's urban port-scapes as relics of a faded past, nostalgic for trash in our unsullied future, wistful for our own Mont Sainte Victoire. ■

◀ PHOTOGRAPH. Continued from p. 11

young couple entering the shop. I looked up from the photograph, trying to wipe away my tears with shaking hands. The couple stared at me and I stammered something about the store being closed. They hurried away, and I closed my eyes again.

I told myself that the photograph didn't make any difference or change anything. But already I understood that, whatever I might want to believe, everything had changed. All my efforts at forgetting and indifference were abruptly meaningless. Like it or not, I would have to go back and unbury everything. Somehow I would have to find a way of telling this story: of salvaging some fragment from the scrap heap of the past.

It has been two years since then, and I'm still struggling to fit the pieces together. At one time I imagined that I could be a good scholar, but if I'm honest with myself I never was—and, at any rate, I'm too old for such efforts now. Despite my hours spent hunched over library books and staring at the glowing hieroglyphics of computer screens, I still can't prove anything.

More than once, in fact, I told myself that writing this story was a waste of time, a lost cause. But in the end, the cunning of desire always triumphs over the cunning of reason. (Or, as Byron put it, "There is no instinct like that of the heart.") So that even after I'd decided to give up, at the least expected of times—sitting in my apartment, watching the electric nighttime silhouette of Los Angeles—it would all come crowding back to me...

Well, at least it's a good story. (Of course I'd have to say that, wouldn't I? But really: it is.) It's a story about conspiracies and struggles to reshape the world; about secret wars between men like J. P. Morgan, Thomas Edison, and Nikola Tesla. It is about one of the strangest and least-known mysteries of American history: the existence and disappearance of the Lost Kingdom of Ohio. It is

about science and faith, and the distance between the two. Most of all, it's a story about a man and a woman, and about love.

In my imagination, it begins with a day in the heart of winter. I can picture it effortlessly: the gray sky and the leafless trees, the solemn profile of a young woman standing near a riverbank. A whisper of cold on my cheek as I look up to see the first flakes of snow beginning to fall—

But that's not right. That scene comes much later—or, looking at it another way, much earlier. Really, the only place I can honestly begin is in the middle of things, with New York City, in the year 1900. With the construction of the first subway tunnels through the dark bedrock beneath the metropolis, and with a young man so distant from where I sit now that he seems an unrecognizable stranger: a mechanic, an adventurer, and perhaps also a criminal, named Peter Force.



◀ **ELEPHANTS.** Continued from p. 21

lush and natural? They're going to be *electrified* because the elephants will knock them down. They will be put there for *our* aesthetic pleasure."

"So if you win this lawsuit, what happens to the construction? Does it stop cold-turkey?"

"Not at all. The new exhibit is there to stay. What we're proposing is to release Billy to a sanctuary where he has freedom to roam. The Zoo can then place half a dozen smaller species which coexist into that space and let them have more freedom."

"Sounds reasonable. So what can people do to support your cause?"

"The people of Los Angeles should rally together and ask Mayor Villaraigosa to keep his promise that he made before he was elected to place Billy in a sanctuary. He stated publicly and repeatedly that elephants do not belong in zoos and should be sent to larger preserves."

A little web surfing reveals that the Mayor did, in fact, endorse Billy's freedom a couple years back. May 13th, 2005: *"I have believed for some time that a zoo is not an appropriate place for an animal as large as an elephant. I think we need to move the elephants out."* April 12th, 2006: *"I've said for a long time that I think we need to take the elephants out of our zoos. I believe that."* April 19th, 2006: *"I don't think zoos are big enough to house elephants. Nature preserves are more appropriate places for elephants."*

I have no choice but to call the Mayor's office and demand some sort of explanation. Why would Villaraigosa use Billy as a campaign gimmick, only to change his mind once he was elected? I get as far as Press Aide Rachel Kruer, who encourages me to send her an e-mail that she will forward to the "proper channels." Days go by without any response, so I follow-up with the Press Aide over the phone and she tells me, "I'm looking into it, but we're not sure yet if this is something we want to officially comment on or not."

If the Mayor is too scared to make a statement, surely the PAWS sanctuary will have something to say about this, right? Kind of.

"If the Zoo should decide not to keep Billy, and if we make critical statements about them publicly, then it might cause problems. I don't think it would be wise for us," president and founder Pat Derby told me over the phone.

"What is the conflict of interest here? Can you at least tell me if you endorse their handling of Billy?"

"We've complained for many years. There are some improvements with their new exhibit, but we're opposed to bringing in more elephants with Billy. It's an incredible amount of money to spend for such a small space."

"What kind of trouble can the L.A. Zoo cause for your sanctuary?"

"If we're openly antagonistic, I fear that if the Zoo ever did decide to send Billy

somewhere else, they would not consider sending him here. We would happily take Billy if that situation ever arose."

"Well if we can't discuss the present, how about the past? They sent Ruby to you a couple years back. Is she still alive?"

"Ruby is alive and doing wonderful. She has bonded with three other African Elephants."

"Why did they send her to you?"

"They sent her to the Knoxville Zoo at first, and she did not do well there at all. They had to bring her back, and they had no other options, so they sent her to us. And we're totally thrilled that they did."

"Too bad they can't do the same for Billy."

"I think there is an incredible amount of arrogance. If Billy has so many neurotic behaviors, and they've had him since he was four, they are obviously not doing something right. There are no guarantees that they will, even with a different space."

THE ELEPHANT IN THE ROOM

Of course, the Zoo has claimed to have learned from their mistakes, and the new Pachyderm Forest is supposed to be a splashy monument to their newfound wisdom – like

▶ Continued on p. 28

◀ **ELEPHANTS.** Continued from p. 27

suddenly realizing that keeping a Sperm Whale in a fish-bowl might not be such a good idea, after all. The Zoo touts it as a groundbreaking achievement while the critics say the new 3.6-acre paddock will be inhumane. Why the discrepancy? Well, for one thing, the average free elephant wanders anywhere from 10 to 50 miles a day in the open. Confined to 3.6 acres, no matter how pretty it is, might not be enough to maintain their mental health.

Yes, it turns out animals – like people – go a little Joaquin Phoenix if they are cooped-up in small spaces for long periods of time. “Zoochosis” is defined as such: *zoo animals exhibiting signs of extreme depression and related psychological conditions as they struggle with the confines of their captivity.* According to critics, Billy’s frequent head bobbing is an indication that he’s losing his bowling ball-sized marbles – as this obsessive behavior has never been recorded in the wild. The Greater Los Angeles Zoo Association (GLAZA) claims it’s a “comforting or thumb-sucking behavior.” Accordingly, if Billy were to use his trunk to pour gasoline over himself and light a match, the Zoo would probably claim he was “chilly and wanted to get cozier”.

These aren’t Sesame Street allegations by any means, so it’s time to hear the Zoo’s perspective on all of this. I get their PR man Jason Jacobs on the phone, who berates me, “I just don’t understand how you came to the Zoo to write up an environmental story, and now all of a sudden you’re asking about our elephants. How does that happen?”

“Look, man. I stumbled into this thing by pure accident.”

“This wouldn’t be the first time the activists have sent a reporter out to us to do a hatchet-job on what we do.”

“I’m not an activist. I’m a journalist. To be perfectly honest, I don’t care to endorse either side. It’s my job to take a story apart and examine the pieces.”

Jason sighs heavily, “Do you know how many people are protesting this new exhibit? Twenty at the most. Do you know how many people visit the Zoo every year? *Over one million.* The people who are making this an issue represent a small minority.”

“So why do they try to make this an issue?”

“They are making an issue out of things that have happened in the *past* and *half-truths.*”

“Half truths? What’s in it for them, financially or otherwise, to make up these allegations?”

“They’re animal-rights activists. They don’t... they just don’t believe in elephants... or that any zoo should have elephants.”

“So they’re anti-elephant?”

“They just don’t understand that our elephants are treated very differently today than they were 20 years ago. We don’t bring them inside at night any more and chain them up. That hasn’t happened since 1993.”

“So what’s their problem? Why don’t they just back off?”

“Animal-rights activists will *never* be happy. They will get celebrities and stage press conferences at the Zoo or in front of City Hall because they want to attract media attention. And if you get media attention in Los Angeles, you have it across the world. Our animals receive excellent care, and our new Pachyderm Forest will be larger than San Diego’s African Elephant exhibit. We have the San Diego Zoo’s support on this. I mean, what are Los Angelenos supposed to do? Drive hundreds of miles north to the PAWS sanctuary and spend \$200 a person to see the elephants? They don’t even let children under 13 go there.”

“So why did you guys send an elephant to them in ‘06?”

“That was our African Elephant, she was an older female, and we felt the sanctuary would be best for her. Also, we wanted to focus on Asian Elephants and PAWS had a herd of African Elephants, so we thought that would be a good fit.”

“Is it basically a nursing home for old elephants?”

“There is a need for sanctuaries. They’re for animals who don’t have options. But if all elephants were sent there, how is the average family supposed to show their children these magnificent animals? Can you imagine a world in which the only way to see an elephant is in a book or on TV?”

“That’s a compelling point.”

But the question remains: is our own convenience worth the suffering of any animal? The centerpiece for the Zoo / City’s argument is that the children of Los Angeles “deserve” to see these animals in person. More and more, I am beginning to believe that seeing an elephant is not a right, but a privilege. A privilege that we should most likely earn.

Jason concludes our conversation by saying, “Look, it’s my day off and I need to cook up some ribs. I would be more than

happy to talk to you about this more in person. If you would like to go down with me to San Diego and see their African Elephant exhibit, I think you will realize what we’re doing here is special. We’re not hiding anything. We take our mission very seriously.”

There is something to be said for an animal-lover who eats ribs. It would seem logical that those who love and care for animals should be vegetarians, but who am I to argue that some animals deserve to be protected from poaching while others deserve to be sliding through our colons? Jason encouraged me to contact Councilmember of the 4th District, Tom LaBonge. The 4th District has jurisdiction over the Zoo, and LaBonge would be a good person to speak with on the City’s side. Instead, I get one of his “representatives” on the phone.

“So Jason gave me the Zoo’s perspective on this situation, and with the impending lawsuit coming up, I wanted to get the City’s take on this.”

“Uh, can you be any more specific?”

“The people who are making these allegations, what do you think they’re angle is? What are they trying to get out of this?”

“Um, I don’t mean to be evasive, but I feel like you should ask them that question?”

“Well, is there anything else the City would like people to know? Anything the City would like to clear up?”

“Um... I don’t know what is unclear. I don’t really know what you’re asking.”

“The allegations are false. The case is unfounded. So there is no issue as far as the City is concerned, correct?”

“No, we’re not saying that. We’re saying we have confidence in the City attorney’s office to do a good job. Councilman LaBonge supports the Zoo wholeheartedly and has since he was elected in 2001, and this case is no exception to his staunch support of the Zoo.”

“Staunch support despite the allegations that the Zoo’s only elephant is exhibiting signs of severe stress and mental agitation due to his captivity?”

“The Zookeepers, the people who deal with this elephant on a daily basis, assure us this is just the elephant’s way of anticipating being in contact with them.”

“So his constant head bobbing is just good-natured, social body language?”

“Uh... the bottom-line here is, the people that care for Billy every day, they know him very, very well. They have a very special relationship with him.”

FORGET IT MARCO... IT'S THE L.A. ZOO

Clearly, the Zoo has a relationship with Billy that is so obviously special, this “representative” of Tom LaBonge did not want to be mentioned by name. Not since the 2008 Presidential Election have two political sides been so diametrically opposed to each other. And, as usual with any Shit Storm, the Facts get buried under tons of feces while the Opinions reign supreme. All I can make out of this mess is that just as we don't blame the troops fighting in Iraq for following orders, we can't point fingers at the Zoo's diligent staff for this whole elephant debacle. No sir. As usual, the problem lies within Management. Access to too much money with not enough oversight is a tune we've been forced to listen to for a while now -- and I don't know about you, but my ears are bleeding. Has greed permanently infected the very last fibers of this great nation's DNA? Is there no cure to

this chronic corruption?

Jesus. Listen to me ramble. Here I was going to the Zoo to find out how “Green” they are, and I come back with the elephant-equivalent of *Chinatown*. What's next? Elephant incest? This much is clear: Asian

“Is there
no cure
for this
chronic
corruption?”

Elephants are fucked. They apparently have two choices in this world: lose their minds in a cage, or get hunted for ivory in their quickly-dwindling natural habitat. Come to think of it, us humans pretty much face the same dilemma every day. It turns out, Zoochosis ain't just for animals. Herded along highways and crowded

into cubicles, are *we* really any better off than Billy or his fallen comrades? When you take a step back (and it's any two-bit journalist's job to do just that) the entire Modern Condition is so utterly insane it's hard to take sides any more.

That the City of Los Angeles is spending \$36 million for elephants that we shouldn't even have in the first place... while 82,000 *human beings* are left starving and sick on its very own streets on a nightly basis... is too depressing to fathom. Tell you what, L.A. -- the next time us taxpayers have to cough up \$36 million, it sure as shit better be for a state-of-the-art homeless shelter on 6th Street in downtown, where the nightmare of the human soul knows no end. Otherwise, you run the risk of a good, old fashioned riot -- the kind where man and elephant alike can stand together in the righteous conviction... that basic moral decency is still worth fighting for... even in this unfair city we call our home. ■

◀ **REVENUE.** Continued from p. 15

REVENUE: THE LAW, AND THE GROWERS

“You gotta look at how the government works,” Jeff Joseph, the owner of the dispensary Organica, explains. He's been running Organica since 2007. The majority of his clientele are card-carrying cancer patients. As a State Board of Equalization tax-paying business owner, he has a sharp grasp of revenue, and the keen understanding of human nature that anyone dealing with the public on a regular basis must possess.

“[The government] has two different aspects. They have taxation, but they also have law enforcement. The laws that they're enforcing, that's their business. Their business is not law changing. That's our job. The law makers want to represent their constituents. But until the constituents' voice is loud enough, they don't really want to do anything. It's a hot potato. Law enforcement is going to interpret the law to benefit them. Everybody's going to interpret the law to benefit them, whoever's interpreting.”

When asked about the potential revenue provided to the government by taxation, Jeff

says, “Let's look at this way.

“They already have a revenue basis. The people who are able to actually enforce the law already have the revenue base. They look at the tax as a threat to the revenue base.”

But this fear about a threat to the revenue base is not purely on the side of the law. If legalization were to become a reality, how would large-scale marijuana growers feel about taxation?

It should be noted that interviewing large scale growers is a bit like using carrier pigeons; it doesn't seem like it's going to work, but it does, somehow. As it happens, large-scale growers in California are pro-legalization. They foresee that if marijuana is legalized, large-scale corporations will take over, and a “King of Beers” situation will result, turning homegrown growers into the equivalent of microbreweries, whose high-end product will attract the discerning buyers.

Since the first wave of dispensaries opened, these large-scale growers have witnessed an increase in their sales. In some places, such as Humboldt county, growers feel that legalization would “bring legitimacy to a very old industry.”

But taxation does not necessarily excite them. Much like law enforcement, they are somewhat reluctant to part with a revenue stream that is working for them, in favor of an

untested method.

So what is the solution?

As Jeff says, “[The law is] enforcing the statues that are there. We get the other side saying, well, people voted for this, we want to see this happen. You got a conflict of interest. People need to make a clear law. That'll be the first thing.”

LAWSUITS AND FEES

Before a clear law can be made, however, it's much better to start suing people. At least, as of March 2010, this seems to be the solution of city attorney Carmen Trutanich, who filed a lawsuit against Organica, among others, to prevent over-the-counter sales of marijuana.

But not to worry. Public advocacy group Americans for Safe Access filed a counter-lawsuit against the city on behalf of the dispensaries.

The lawsuits were prompted by the February 3rd signing of a city council bill limiting the number of dispensaries to 70. The law hasn't quite taken effect, as its passage hinges on the city approving the fees that the dispensaries will pay to remain in operation.

It's the revenue, stupid. ■

◀ **TRUCKERS.** Continued from p. 17

awareness conferences, and wallet-sized cards with detailed instructions on how to identify a victim.

Why truckers? A massive amount of sex trafficking takes place at highway rest stops, truck stops and gas stations. Usually, victims of sex trafficking put on a smile for their buyers; they've been threatened from their pimps that if they do otherwise, they will be beaten and tortured, or their families will be killed. But if a girl sees one client repeatedly, a relationship may begin to form, and eventually she might trust him enough to confide. Transient populations—like truckers at a truck stop—are ideal in the eyes of traffickers, because the men won't be there long enough to “remember her face, or form a bond,” explains Lyn.

In addition, the victims “are transported primarily across interstate freeways,” says Phil Gazely. “What we're doing is getting people to be our eyes and ears.”

Truckers, then, are in a two-fold unique position to spot victims of trafficking. The initiative is to educate these truckers about sex slavery, to help them identify the signs, to inform them that the “prostitutes” they encounter are not all there of their own volition.

THE HEROES

One massive truck stop in Ontario, just half an hour outside of LA, is particularly notorious for “prostitution.” In fact, prostitution got so bad, that the city of Ontario had to put up a fence around the station to keep the prostitutes out. Nevertheless, the problem persists. Chaplain Michael DeBay, who permanently ministers out of a trailer at the Ontario truck stop, told me “I hate to say it but they're like cockroaches, those prostitutes.”

At night, truckers at the Ontario station and elsewhere find themselves uncomfortably solicited by a bang on their truck door, or a shout over the radio: “any guys looking for some company?” In the words of Stephen King, truck driver, “You'd be in your truck and they'd be beating on your door and you'd tell them no, go away.” But most truckers didn't turn down the knock at the door. The organization Transport for Christ is devoted primarily to preventing truck drivers from turning to prostitutes.

“There's always a good handful of truck drivers,” says Chaplain DeBay, “that make it

bad for the rest of them”—that is, by having sex with prostitutes, thereby tainting the trucker reputation. I've come to learn that truckers generally care a great deal about maintaining an honorable reputation. Dave Bowman, trucker and head of Christian Truckers Network, alludes to the problem: “Now we're getting our reputation damaged and tattered by a small group of truckers who will haul anything for a buck including human slaves.” In other words, truckers are not only the heroes, but the villains of the story. Or at the very least, accessories to the villains. And it's up to the truck driver to reclaim their dignity—much like the sex slave whose dignity has been ruthlessly stolen from her.

In LA, an estimate of 10 thousand women are currently being forced to work as prostitutes. But the typical truck driver has no reason to suspect that when he calls for a prostitute over the radio, he may well get a sex slave instead.

“Most truckers think these women are doing it just to make money, and treat them just as prostitutes,” says Stephen King, who has been a trucker for 15 years. Now that he's been taught to recognize the signs of trafficking, he has spotted a great deal of suspicious activity.

In August, Stephen was chatting with a man who (due to the economic crisis) had recently lost his home and was living out of his car at a truck stop. He told Stephen that he had seen a vulnerable young girl offering her services. The two men reported the situation to the national trafficking authorities. Later, they learned the girl was 15 years old and being held against her will.

At a different truck stop, Stephen spotted 2 girls with a suspicious man. This caught his attention because one of the girls had a black eye. When the man went to the bathroom, the 2 girls entered the chapel, where they found Stephen, approached him, and said “we need help.”

Because these girls are being moved all the time, they have no idea where they are. An inability to identify surroundings, coupled with the confusion that naturally follows, provides an important red flag for truckers who are on the look out.

One anonymous trucker reported the following. When a young woman asked him if he wanted to buy her services and he declined, she said “you see that white Cadillac over there? I'm gonna get the hell beat out of me if I don't bring back a certain amount

of money.”

Similarly, Keith Thomas, a trucker from Indiana, reported a “young girl knocking continually and desperately on his truck door.” Had he not heard about Truckers Against Trafficking earlier that week, “I would not have thought of human trafficking. I didn't even know human trafficking existed until I heard Lyn on the radio.”

* * * * *

The above cases might lead one to believe that once awareness has been raised, truckers merely help out because the crime literally comes knocking at their door. After all, it's harder to take action when sex trafficking is merely a headline in an easily closeable newspaper.

LAPD's Kimberly Agbonkolor, Program Manager of the LA Metro Task Force Against Human Trafficking, explains: “As long as we as a community ignore [trafficking] it will continue to flourish.” A fundamental step which is often overlooked is the acceptance of human trafficking. “We as a society still cannot grasp how slavery can exist today; we see it as something that we have abolished hundreds of years ago,” explains Daphne Phung, Founder and Executive Director of California Against Slavery.

But, if these vast amounts of women are being forced to sleep with 25 men per day, “someone has to see it,” says Kimberly. The truckers do. But it takes more than that; Kimberly describes a fear-induced silence in some communities, which prevents people from reporting instances of human trafficking.

In other words, the blunt proximity to human trafficking is only the foundation of the truckers' concern. What enables them to overcome the fear, potential repercussions, or even laziness to report suspicious activity is, I propose, a personal connection to the crime.

Bear with me for a few paragraphs as I indulge in an anecdote to prove my point:

I was mid-interview with a victim of human trafficking in LA. As she told me her horrific story, her face was only a few inches away from mine. Curiously, at the moment when her second wave of tears was on the verge of erupting, I found my mind wandering. Shit. I'm going to be late to this dinner. The dinner was in half an hour, with a friend of a friend of a friend, who was quite well connected. I still had to pick up a bottle of wine—or a box of chocolates—where does one buy fine choco-

lates in this part of Los Angeles? How much money should I spend on them? Oh my god, It's 5:42. If she's not done talking by 5:43 I'm going to have to interrupt her.

"She was never convicted! My trafficker did six months of house arrest, and that was it!" The tears had begun.

Perla is a woman of remarkable strength who thought she was following the American dream when she was transported from Mexico; instead, she was locked up in an LA sweat shop and forced to work as a slave. After 40 days, she managed to escape, in spite of threats from her trafficker that her children would be harmed.

"Perla, I'm so sorry, but I have to go," I said. "Do you think you could finish up in about one minute?" I really did feel bad. I felt worse than bad. I felt horrified—what the hell have I become. Here was a victim of modern-day slavery, and I didn't even have the courtesy to let her finish her story. This was a tale of extreme injustice, of helplessness and hopelessness; this was a violation of basic human dignity.

Why didn't I seem to care?

After tormenting myself for a bit, it dawned on me that something was missing from this case. Sex. Perla had not been forced into prostitution, but into sweat shop labor. Even with the injustice of trafficking literally staring me in the face, I was simply not as moved as I had been when, for example, I spoke to a woman, Gaby, who at 13 had been forced to have sex with 10-20 strangers a day. When Gaby was done with work, her pimp would put salt on her vagina and tie her up before simultaneously beating and raping her. I'll admit: Perla's story, which was not one of sexual exploitation, didn't haunt me in the same way.

Consider who else cares, enough to take action. Daphne Phung, founder of California Against Slavery,* was appalled to learn that when young girls are bought and sold for sex, the girl frequently gets blamed instead of her trafficker (as a result of society's inability to grasp modern-day slavery in America). Daphne first encountered trafficking when she began writing her senior thesis on sex slavery in Southeast Asia, where she was born.

More directly, the Coalition to Abolish Slavery and Trafficking in LA uses a survivor-centered approach to combat the phenomenon, training liberated victims to speak out against human trafficking.

Over the past year, I have spoken to so

many who fight against human trafficking (social activists, victim therapists, human rights lawyers), and I've come to the conclusion that everyone who cares enough to take a stand is personally connected to the issue.

What about our truckers. How does trafficking relate to them—especially the non-Christians, or the ones who sleep with consenting prostitutes—on a personal level?

Many help out of guilt. I spoke to several truckers who had slept with a prostitute at least once in their past. After they learned about human trafficking, they began to wonder whether they had purchased sex from a consenting woman. "I didn't realize they were being forced into it," said one trucker.

There is one part of the story that I have not yet explained. One has to wonder why these good-natured, altruistic truckers are prone to prostitution in the first place. The answer is simple: Loneliness.

"They're out there on the road and they're lonely. And these prostitutes—they know it," says Chaplain DeBay. As Keith Thomas put it, "you're gone so much that your kids grow up when you're not around. I've been married 30 years to the same girl, and that's pretty fortunate. Most of these guys don't make it with the same wife, because they're away so often."

Another driver sat in her truck for 5 days without stepping outside or speaking to anyone.

Hell, these truckers are so lonely that in addition to rambling on, they started throwing my questions right back at me: how did YOU get involved in fighting human trafficking? And I was happy to talk to some of them, more than others. (Becoming a trucker is a lot like becoming a professor—many times, people go into the profession due to a lack of social skills.) During one interview, I thought to myself, Poor thing. He just wants somebody to talk to. So I listened for a little while.

Chaplain DeBay said, about a driver who had come to confession earlier that day, "I'll probably never see that guy again. That's the beauty of this in a way." Thus it seems that the victims of trafficking aren't the only ones whose faces are forgotten within the transient world of the truck stop.

IN SUM AND IN CONCLUSION

"I know God hates injustice," says Lyn Thompson. It's her closeness to God, and His presence in every aspect of her life, that fuels her. "It's not just a Christian issue. This is an issue of humanity," says Scott Weidner. And, for the truck drivers, I can't help but return to the words of Dave Bowman, "It is a matter of pride in being a trucker."

Truckers against Trafficking reaches out to drivers with "you can be a hero." A hero has pride. A hero has dignity. A hero does not sleep with sex slaves or transport them. Why not become a hero.

The tale of Truckers Against Trafficking, then, is a 3-part story; that of the victim, the visionary, and the hero. But these storylines were not as separate as I initially expected them to be. Even I, the spectator, managed to become intermingled.

When I spoke to Keith, I was touched by his dedication to basic human decency, and to helping others. "It's a 'me' mentality out there," he said. "If you're continuously thinking about 'me,' then your life gets pretty miserable."

"Wow, that's a lot of wisdom right there," I said, to which he replied with a blush of a laugh. I went on, "I'm a writer and I think about those issues all the time—helping others, making your own happiness. You know what I mean?" He did.

And then I thought: I've really come to like this trucker who's on the other end of the phone, somewhere out there on the road. I rather hope things turn out alright for him.

Against all odds, a trucker ended up being the person in this story with whom I identified most. Perhaps it's through forming these personal connections with one another, by digging deep to the basic shared level of human dignity, that little by little, we too can become heroes. ■

** California Against Slavery needs signatures by March, for their proposal to strengthen anti-trafficking laws in CA through ballot initiative. Sign now at californiaagainstsavery.org or visit castla.org to get involved.*

BEYOND

san francisco art & lit



poetry by
**chester
aaron**

NEMATODES

Over the last thirty-five years I have collected eighty-five varieties of garlic from seventeen different countries.

They differ in: appearance, size, skin colors, number of cloves, taste.

To defeat the gophers, I plant in wood boxes with wire bottoms.

Planting-time: September through November.

60 boxes, 150 cloves planted in each box.

I harvest May-June, hang them in shade for three weeks.

Some varieties do not survive soil-change, weather-change.

Some do not survive gophers and/or wild turkeys.

Some are diseased and doomed even before planting.

For fifteen years I have sold my garlics all over the world.

Then, suddenly, two years ago: the worst

harvest ever.

I lost close to 80% of my entire crop of rare garlic varieties not to gophers or turkeys or diseased seed but to nematodes.

Nematodes: microscopic parasites in the soil. The best defense against nematodes: predatory nematodes.

They eat those nematodes living in the soil but do not eat the garlic.

In a telephone call to a woman farmer in Texas I described my tragedy. She did not say a word. Over the next two months, in the mail or UPS, I received packages from farmers all over the country.

Farmers to whom, over the years, I have given free seed.

I have recovered about 90% of those rare varieties I lost.

I fed predatory nematodes into the soil and planted.

This year's crop looks like it might be the best ever.

SADIE

(French Germinadour, a Hardneck Purple Stripe Garlic)

My father was born in Russia, my mother in Poland.

They grew garlic in our garden in Pennsylvania, near Pittsburgh.

If I had an ear ache Poppa pushed a garlic clove into my ear.

If I had a toothache Momma made me chew garlic cloves.

In combat, in WWII, in Germany, Russian troops did not have penicillin.

I would see Russian soldiers pull garlic cloves from their pockets to rub on their wounds.

I am convinced my cat Sadie lived a record twenty years, because of her love for garlic. Why? The gophers she killed and ate had digested my garlic.

Sadie became addicted. She would not eat kibble or milk unless I squeezed a clove of garlic into the bowl first.

She preferred a variety called French Germinadour (sent to me years ago, from Marselly, by Lise-Helene Trouilloud.)

One morning I saw Sadie coming across the field to greet me. She did not see the Red-Tail Hawk drop out of the clouds and plummet down through the sky.

I did not have time to scream. I did not have to.

Apparently alerted by the feel and sound of compressing wind, Sadie, at the last moment, flopped over onto her back and clawed at the chest and belly of the hawk.

The astonished hawk lifted itself out of range of Sadie's claws and, deserting several floating feathers, climbed back into the sky.

Sadie was not a soldier, Russian or Polish or American, but she could fight to save her life. Thanks to garlic?

paintings by michael shankman



TEENY BIAGGIO

(Transylvanian, a Softneck Silverskin/Artichoke garlic)

Teeny Biaggio is twelve years old.

Her mother brought her to my farm to interview me for a paper for her sixth grade English class.

We sat outside, on the deck.

When, suddenly, several bats flew out from under the eaves Teeny ran screaming into the house.

"Teeny," I said, "bats eat thousands of mosquitoes a year. Bats help us live."

Teeny said, "At camp, every summer, I get sick from mosquito bites."

The first night of the full moon Teeny's mother brought Teeny to help me plant garlic brought to me from Transylvania by Professor Robin Miller of Brandeis University.

Teeny and I dug fifty holes in the soil.

I placed one tablespoon of bat guano in each hole.

"What's bat gu-wanno?" Teeny asked.

"Bat-shit. It has nitrogen and other elements the clove needs to grow."

In June, when I harvested, the Transylvanian garlic was the most beautiful of all the varieties produced in all the boxes.

I sent a card to Teeny, at Summer Camp, telling her the news.

Teeny Biaggio sent me a card from Summer Camp

telling me she had not been bitten by one single mosquito.

Why? Because Teeny Biaggio had taken my suggestion that she make a mix of crushed garlic and olive oil and spread it on her skin.

"I am going to write a paper," Teeny said, "about why I love bats and bat-shit."



With his recent paintings, Michael Shankman reveals interiors and exteriors of collapsing homesteads of suburban areas of Colorado, the area where he grew up. Centuries ago people migrated to this uninhabited frontier to build new lives, full of promise. Shankman sees similarities in the present-day migration of hopeful newcomers who continue to make their way to this mountain region, to build their homes among the skeletal remains of their predecessors' dreams. The population of the Front Range has nearly doubled in twenty years, altering the landscape dramatically. Where once there was open space and farmland, suburban sprawl now extends to the horizon. Shankman's small, square, modular panels mimic the standardization of newly developed enclaves, their modesty a reflection of their fragility. The artist defines with paint brushes and pigments the inescapable reality that we have come no closer to finding Utopia in the American West.



Slam
urban art & literature

“EVERYDAY” BY MIKE MCGEE

Everyday I rewrite her name across my ribcage
so that those who wish to break my heart
will know who to answer to later
She has no idea that I've taught my tongue to make pennies,
and every time our mouths are to meet
I will slip coins to the back of her throat and make wishes

I wish
that someday
my head on her belly might be like home
like doubt to doubt resuscitation
because time is supposed to mean more than skin
She doesn't know that I have taught my arms to close around her
clocks
so they can withstand the fallout from her Autumn

She is so explosive,
volcanoes watch her and learn
terrorists want to strap her to their chests
because she is a cause worth dying for

Artwork displayed are part of the Vox Humana Live Art Performance, which took place at the LA Art Show in January 2010. (CREDITS: Woman's Face, opposite page left, is a collaboration between Retna and El Mac. Geometric below is by Kofie. City with the boy, right, is by Mear One.)

Photography by TOMMY TUNG



Maybe someday
time will teach me to pick up her pieces
put her back together
and remind her to click her heels
but she doesn't need a wizard to tell her that I was here all along

Lady
let us catch the next tornado home
let us plant cantaloupe trees in our backyard
then maybe together we will realize that we don't like cantaloupe
and they don't grow on trees
we can laugh about it
then we can plant things we've never heard of

I've never heard of a woman
who can make flawed look so beautiful
the way you do

The word smitten is to how I feel about you
what a kiss is to romance
so maybe my lips to yours could be the penance to this confession
because I am the only one preaching your defunct religion
sitting alone at your altar, praising you out of faith

I cannot do this hard-knock life alone
You are all the softness a rock dreams of being
the mistakes the rain makes at picnics
when Mother Nature bears witness in much better places

So yes
I will gladly take on your ocean
just to swim beneath you
so I can kiss the bends of your knees
in appreciation for the work they do
keeping your head above water

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◀ **FABLE.** Continued from p. 5

wards so his heart can read it. Morton imagines crawling inside the man's lonely ribcage and from the inside, next to his heart, he sees the name: Bianca. Connecting the dots, he crosses sign #2 off his invisible list, although he's now faced with having to find her.

His favorite crime thriller writer, Louis Bayard, is giving a talk tonight on his new book, *The School of Night*, at The Lawrence Asher Gallery in Beverly Hills. He heard Louis is one of the few unaffected by amnesia, but either way, it's worth the risk; Louis wouldn't forget what's already been written. At the gallery, whilst looking at himself in a mirror, he notices ACNAIB reflecting from behind him, barely in view. Turning around in haste, he walks over to a visually arresting installation piece—a featured landscape made from colored pencils, product packaging, adhesives and map tacks, to find none other than Bianca Kolonusz-Partee's signature on the bottom right-hand corner. He finds the artist in the crowd and explains the series of events that have led him here, to be standing right in front of her. Bianca discloses what she believes to be the

cause he's been searching for. As it turns out, Cooley is allegedly behind an elephant salivatrafficking scam, pocketing more money than what he could get if the laws were reversed. The natural laws of supply and demand, she explains. The room now redolent of weed as the two share notes, trying not to breathe in too much.

Morton quickly learns the following key facts: the city has been covertly selling elephant memory on the black-market for an audacious fee. Cooley has been using the zoo as a cover for trafficking these elephants into the city, using and disposing them one by one. Billy, the longest-lasting elephant to date, has proven to be a valuable resource as his memory depletes at snail's pace in comparison. Affluent customers are told through the grapevine that rubbing fresh Elephant saliva in a slow, circular motion on one's head cures amnesia. Sold as "Elephant Ram juice," the cellular components in the saliva are believed to stimulate the hippocampus; the fastest route for absorption being through the head.

Outraged by the sexual nature with which the "Elephant Ram Juice" is extracted and applied, Bianca and Morton jump in the Pink

Bus and head towards the zoo. Picking up more trash along the way, Bianca assembles scraps, wrappers and tin into artwork in the back. After summoning help from all the members of Truckers Against Elephant Trafficking, support was not light. Hundreds of 18-wheelers begin to break through the locked gates at the zoo to rescue the tortured animals. Witnessing the act as each long-necked giraffe, cuddly wombat, hissing hyena and kind-eyed elephant cram into the trucks, Morton realizes he's stumbled upon sign #3: Noah. Smiling richly like the Cheshire Cat, he dusts off his hands as a bona-fide crime detective.

The next morning, as the smog settles once again along the LA skyline, the unsuspecting zookeepers arrive to find thousands of art installations in each cage, where Billy and his friends stood just hours before. Each statue magnificently sculpted and poised as if it were the animal itself. Looking in awe at a sea of energetic, bright colors, decoupage fabrics on wood and bedazzled eyes of rhinestone, the zookeepers and visitors notice nothing out of the ordinary, simply because they couldn't remember the difference. ■

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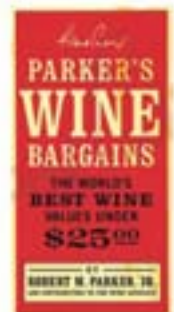
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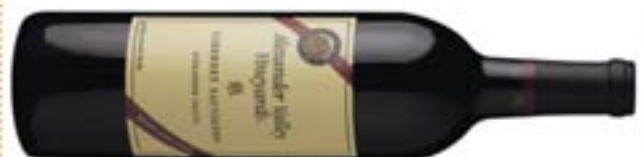


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