

THE BOHEMIAN

Monthly

OXFORD
60% COTTON 40% POLYESTER
MADE IN MEXICO

PEEK INSIDE
AXIS ALLEY:
Where ephemeral art
reigns — until
demolition begins

MEET BOODA MONK:
One of Baltimore's *first b-boys*

SILKY GLITZ WITH
ROWHOUSE GRIT
Van Maele's *Project Runway*-ready collection

WHERE TO PIG OUT?
A survey of the best bacon joints in town

INSIDE:
*jazz in the modern
age*, the BMA's
struggle with **visitor-
ship** and one critic's
take on why Balti-
more's rap scene will
never be truly
successful

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JANUARY 2011



PHOTOGRAPHED BY JOSHUA GLEASO

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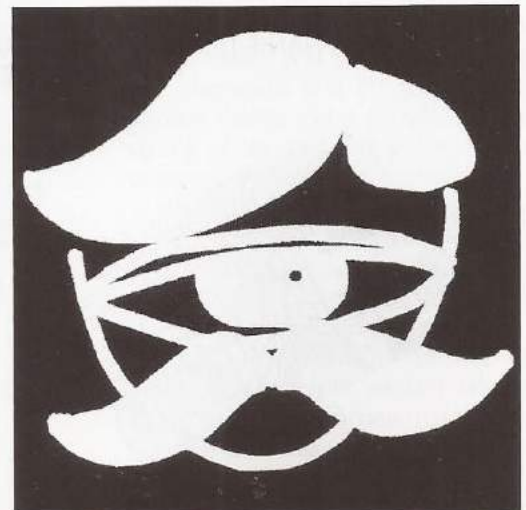
what
we've
got:

(Serving it up fresh)

YOUR

3 A.M.

MAGAZINE



A LETTER FROM THE EDITORS

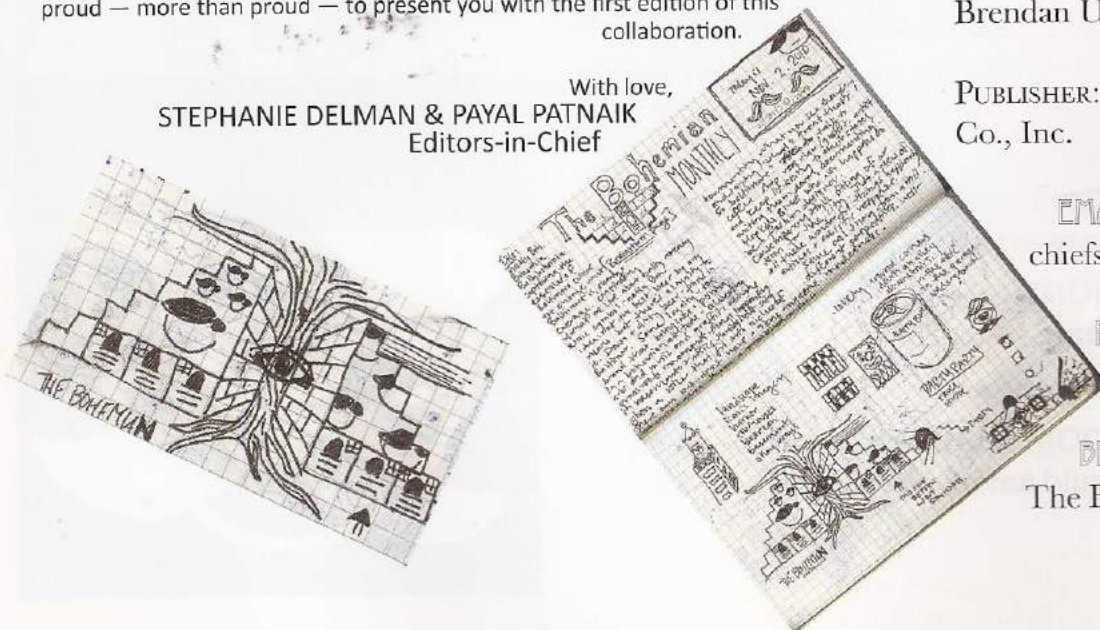
We, young Baltimoreans—some natives, most transplants—fiercely love this city, for all the reality and rawness of its paradoxical beauty. As the backdrop of *The Wire*, the city is often characterized by a staggering crime rate and struggling public school system with an indulgent hint of noir. At times the stereotypes can get to even us loyal city-dwellers.

But the more we looked, the more something beautiful began to grow out of the cracks in the pavement. The stories rolled in: A conglomerate of live-for-the-moment artists took over the condemned rowhouses of Axis Alley, painting and installing ephemeral art despite impending demolition, thus conjuring a new challenge to traditional artists' venues (see *Axis Alley*, p. 28). A biomedical engineering student at Johns Hopkins created a stunning collection of ladies' apparel, couture and ready-to-wear gowns of silk and organza (see *Van Maele*, p. 21). Basement bands made stages out of public spaces, gastronomists found pleasure and artistry in the small things (particularly, the small fried things). And the bigger the buzz grew, the stranger and more wonderous Baltimore seemed to be. It was a classic lemons-into-lemonade fairytale (in this case, maybe barley-into-Natty Boh). We were excited, and proud to belong to a community of the young, the thirsty and the proactive.

But something was lacking. Few held a microphone to the storytellers, and even fewer took a lens to the street art. The weeklies and dailies continued to churn out copies, cataloging with detachment the things so dear to us. We begged for a manifesto that would give credit to our city's irreplaceable and earnest eclecticism, composed by writers and artists still young and zealous enough to do the job right.

And one late night's brainstorm at Charles Village Pub turned into months of plans, sweat and depleted bank accounts. It wasn't easy going. But just when we feared that the idea of *The Bohemian* would dissolve at the summer's end, you stepped up. Yes, you! Our community came together and amazed us: writers knocking down our proverbial doors, artists capturing the city and handing it over on a flashdrive, everyday strangers inspiring and encouraging us. Now we're proud — more than proud — to present you with the first edition of this collaboration.

With love,
STEPHANIE DELMAN & PAYAL PATNAIK
Editors-in-Chief



EDITORS-IN-CHIEF:

Stephanie Delman
and Payal Patnaik

PHOTOGRAPHY & GRAPHICS EDITOR:

Daniel Litwin

ART CRITIC: Suzanne Gold

FASHION DIRECTOR: Amanda Boyle

FOOD COLUMNIST: Alexandra Byer

LITERARY CRITIC: Nancy Hoffman

MUSIC COLUMNISTS: J. Braedon Jones,
Jonah Furman

OUR GIRL IN INDIA: Pooja Shah

PROSE: Amanda Boyle, Jonah Furman

POETRY: Ming Wen

CONTRIBUTING PHOTOGRAPHERS:

Shanna Edberg, Joshua Gleason, Kathleen Hancock, Will Manning

CONTRIBUTING WRITERS:

Blake Edwards, Matt Garland, Nancy Hoffman, Rebecca McGivney, Chloe Pelletier, Mac Schwerin, Pooja Shah, Diana Stern

VISUAL ARTISTS: Amanda Boyle, Suzanne Gold, J. Braedon Jones, Chloe Pelletier

MARKETING AND PROMOTIONS: Remy

Patrizio, Mac Schwerin, Timur Sherif, Brendan Ullman

PUBLISHER: The Kutztown Publishing Co., Inc.

EMAIL US:

chiefs@bohemian-monthly.com

FOLLOW US:

@bohemianmonthly

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IT'S ALL ABOUT BACON

Pigging out with Alexandra Byer

When I was a child my parents forbade me to put maple syrup on my pancakes. But I loved the taste of the sweet, sugary syrup mixed with the crunchy, salty bacon.

Maybe my parents saw the mixing of the two as a crude, or maybe they never tried it and didn't know how delectable it really was. I would disobey their strict orders and pour so much syrup onto my pancakes that it would run off them and stream down onto the bacon.

Of course this was just a simple childhood rebellion, but at a young age I realized something quite important. Bacon tastes great with practically anything.

Paired with sweet or savory, bacon holds its own. Its salty, smoky taste and crispy texture yearns for a union with all sorts of conventional and unconventional flavors.

Luckily, here in Baltimore, there is never a dearth of those willing to push convention ... even when it comes to bacon.

If you, too, are looking for that childhood fantasy of bacon and syrup as I had so missed, head over to Golden West Café in Hampden. Order the "Elvis and Lisa Marie Pancakes." The Lisa Marie is one pancake and the Elvis is two — make sure you've got a

real big appetite if you're going for the Elvis.

You'll receive a massive, plate-sized buttermilk pancake, drenched in honey. There's maple syrup on the side but there's really no need for it at all. On top are pieces of sautéed banana and a spoonful of melting peanut butter.

You must cut into this mess of a pancake to find the real treasure, though: cooked in with batter is the bacon. Long strips of crunchy bacon hidden in the honey sodden pancake.

This meal is so sweet that I found myself searching for these bacon pieces to counteract the sugariness of everything else. This was good, but definitely more suited for sweet tooth enthusiasts.

For a milder, more traditional bacon experience, try The Lanvale sandwich from On the Hill Café in Bolton Hill. It's basically a BLT with a fancy name.

It's a filling sandwich with a hefty amount of applewood smoked bacon, and is served on a sourdough roll. I found the sourdough complimented the bacon's saltiness well and set it apart from a typical BLT.

If you crave just a straight-up savory dish, there's nothing better than the BATS crepe from Sofi's Crepes. This was absolutely my favorite meal on

Golden West Café
1105 West 36th Street

On the Hill Café
1431 John Street

Vosges Haute Chocolate
available at
Ma Petite Shoe
832 West 36th Street

Charles Village Pub
3107 Saint Paul Street

Sofi's Crepes
723 North Charles
Street
OR
833 N. Charles Street

DETITHERE

my Baltimore bacon exploration. BATS stands for bacon, avocado, tomato and sour cream — and when it's all put into the light, sweet homemade crepe and served hot, there is no denying it.

Though the sour cream threatens to be too heavy or overbearing, it blends nicely with the already creamy avocado, and the crunchiness of the bacon bits counteracts this smoothness from being too much.

Luckily Sofi's realized it's better to crumble the bacon than use whole slices, so you get the bacon flavor with much less mess. The whole crepe is folded into a neat triangle and prepared in a foil packaging so you can get your fix even on the go.

My last two bacon-y dishes fall far into the indulgence category. First we have Vosges Haute Chocolat's Mo's Bacon Bar. A bacon chocolate bar — what could be better? It appears as any normal milk chocolate bar but inside is applewood smoked bacon and alderwood smoked salt.

Unfortunately, this bar doesn't live up to its standards. Instead of a smoky bacon taste, you get a salt overload. The chocolate is a bit too rich at 45 percent cacao to be paired with other strong tastes. Just one piece is enough to stave off your initial curiosity.

Luckily, the Big Head Fries from Charles Village Pub can never be disappointing. The ingredients are just too simple and too good to dissatisfy: fries, cheese and bacon.

Pour some ketchup on the plate and you've got the perfect late-night munchie. Just be warned that there's no keeping these to yourself — everyone at the table will want a bite.



Jazz and blues.

Given the exuberant eclecticism of Baltimore's music scene, it can come as a bit of a shock to discover the city's general disinterest in jazz — or at least, its lack of the traditional jazz clubs that are ubiquitous in New York and DC. That said, its many live-music venues guarantee something for everyone, and if you keep up with the notice boards you're bound to find an act you like in your genre of choice.

Such was the case when I went to see Robert Frahm's jazz/blues trio at the Cat's Eye Pub last Wednesday. Cat's Eye bills itself as an Irish bastion of established county comforts: touts, ballads, and friendly conversation. Its clientele looks British Isles-descended but sounds mostly mid-Atlantic, including the staff; my Irish-radar was far from ringing. I also feel obliged to note that the bartender, though effusively polite and gracious, did not prepare my Guinness correctly. (For you discerning folk in search of a proper pour, head over to the James Joyce pub on President Street.) But this is just about the only complaint that I can level at the Cat's Eye, which offers a warm and intimate setting in addition to a musical act every night of the week.

You might be struck by the pub's tight space as you walk in, but don't let that fool you: with over 25 taps, the Cat's Eye presents a veritable who's-who of classic Irish brews, in addition to some popular domestic and European brands. Its liquor shelves are less impressive, but if you're a whiskey drinker you'll find yourself in good company. The pub's décor is fun and frenzied without seeming too oppressive (I'm thinking of Paper Moon Diner here). A series of Celtic murals line one wall, while the bar itself is covered in police and fire department patches from hundreds of districts. A mish-mash of naval, national, and beer flags hang horizontally suspended from the ceiling, as do two large model ships and (for no discernible reason) a tiny upended Christmas tree. If you plan on staying for more than a few minutes, you should get to the Cat's Eye early—musical acts start at 9:30 and by ten o'clock the crowds roll in. Some 40 people

showed up last Wednesday, despite the workweek.

As for the music, much will depend on the day you go, but I thoroughly enjoyed Wednesday's lineup. Frahm's trio played a lively set consisting of some old blues standards with occasional wanderings into jazz and fusion territory. The frontman himself is a talented technical guitarist, as was the youngest member of the group. Steve Potter set a smooth tone with the bass line and Phil Cunneff kept good time on the drums. After several songs and just as many brews, some of the pub's younger patrons began dancing on the middle of the floor.

Speaking of age, perhaps the coolest aspect of the Cat's Eye is its generational diversity: within a 25-to-60 range all ages were well represented. Not surprisingly, this is a defining aspect of true Irish pubs, where younger folks traditionally mingle with a middle-aged crowd.

So if you're on the lookout for a music spot with energy and pizzazz, look no further than the Cat's Eye Pub, located at 1730 Thames Street.

— Mac Schwerin

Music: what moves us

Baltimore indie.

One thing is that Baltimore is a city with all these holes in it through which you can see the gears working or not working, and it moves before you, totally coggishly with this or that jamming or interlocking. When it coalesces it makes total sense, but always — especially for those a part of the transient population, like yours truly — feels un-encompassing, nothing like a blanket, not something you live inside of but around. And by that I mean, the buses and the streets and how my own particular rowhouse (there are many others like it, but this one is mine) has this shitty plastic false hardwood and gray brown carpet all over it, all put there very clearly, and slowly, slowly my landlord fixes this and that, all piecemeal and that's how it is for the city as a whole.

What the music scene does, though, is it blankets and fills in the cracks of this place like something hot and liquid, liquid that solidifies though, and when Nolen Strals cusses out the dude at the Hexagon who hooted/hollered when somebody mentions D.C., you feel like you are down there in the foxhole with him fighting against the stuff that makes life hard and bad, joining together or some shit. And it fucking matters that this

next lo-fi bedroom project is the dude from INEVERY-ROOM plus Adam Lempel (the only Johns Hopkins grad I personally know of to have notably broken into all this business), and it's cool to see Dan Deacon at Carma's Cafe and have him borrow your pen before High Zero so that he and Stewart Mostofsky can jot down some notes on the composition you'll see him and a bunch of True Vine-y folks execute like an hour later.

It is edifying (and think how that word sort of means "to make into a building" or something) to see the rare private school kid smoking coolly a cigarette on a couch at Floristree during the Lower Dens' set opening for Future Islands, and you don't mind it even if his affectations and clothes and all that are totally obvious 'cause maybe he's like, mining out some space so that people can be normal-cool at his prep academy or not-quite-Ivy-league college. So the holes get filled up with this stuff, with Jason Willett recommending you some insane fucking record and seeing the kids from Needle Gun freak everybody out at 2640 and reading the doofishly un-self-aware-ly party-line stuff Brett puts up on bmoremusic.net or enduring Dope Body destroying like the mid 40% of your ear hairs at a house show (their first show (for which you

feel like a fucking champion, having been there (because it is about small victories (because the whole world of Baltimore music (and this is the beauty of it) is small enough that you can be a part of it, and it's not Brooklyn and it's not NYC and nobody who really gets it wishes for once second that it were))))). And this all turns Baltimore into something livable, even if just for a few years.

— Jonah Furman

CHATTER

WITH **Russ Smith:**

FOUNDER AND FORMER

OWNER OF CITY PAPER

RIFFS ON MAKING ENEMIES,
TURNING SHIT INTO GOLD, AND

THE VAPIDITY OF NEW
YORK'S "MEDIA FRATERNITY"

told by Stephanie Delman

When I meet up with *SpliceToday.com*'s Russ Smith at his unassuming Falls Road cottage-cum-office, the season's first storm is raging with pride and gale-force winds. As rain thrashes at the windows and his two sleepy employees patter around downstairs, Smith spouts off on the irrelevance of print dailies, how he nearly flunked out of Johns Hopkins in the 70s, and why he's no longer invited to *Vanity Fair*'s celebrations of the rich and elite.

Smith is 55-going-on 21, with a smirk and a perpetually dismissive attitude toward the middle-aged crowd. Once the founder and owner of *City Paper*, Smith now claims no affiliation with the "alternative" weekly and insists he hardly reads it these days.

"[*City Paper*] is edited by a bunch of 40 year olds trying to seem young. When you're 45, you can't go to a show at the Copycat on a weeknight and stay out until 3 a.m. and drink beer with the band, because you've got to get up in the morning to drive your kid to school," Smith says. "You've got responsibilities, plus your body just can't take it anymore. It's 'trying-too-hard' journalism."

Which is why the oldest regular contributor for *SpliceToday* — aside from Smith himself — is 28. Most of his writers are 21, and some are still in their teens. Smith admits to looking to his own teenaged sons for tips on staying youthful.

"I asked [my 18-year old] if he picked up *City Paper* the other week," Smith recalls. "He started laughing and said 'Hey dad, it's so cool that you started it and everything — but that's an old person's publication.'"

So what's relevant? Does the future of journalism — and arts and culture, for that matter — belong to kids who still use fake I.D.s?

Absolutely, according to Smith.

"In the last couple of years, people my age or older have started crying into their beers about what's happening to the industry. But it's not their industry anymore."

Smith says that when he was running the *New York Press* in the 90s — another "vintage" behemoth to his name — he had no qualms about letting the young writers treat the paper as a

stepping stone.

"The whole idea was that you couldn't afford to pay shit, but you gave exposure to writers you thought had talent but who couldn't get into the door of the *New York Times*," Smith says. "I'm risking immodesty here, but a lot of well-known people started at the Press: we worked with Bill Monahan [Academy Award-winning screenwriter of *The Departed*] and he would turn in these 20,000 word articles to hone down. It wasn't easy but it was worth it — now he's a millionaire living in Hollywood."

Smith ticks off other famed former "kid contributors": authors Dave Eggers and Amy Sohn, plus *New York Times* cultural news editor Sam Sifton, just to name a few. "We took chances on people," Smith sighs now, a hairsbreadth away from "back in the day" rhetoric. But at the root of this nostalgia may be the memories of his own past risks, and the uncertainty that they would ever pay off.

During late nights at Hopkins in the 70s, as his peers were pledging fraternities or "dicking around on their parents' dime," Smith would break into the headquarters of the under-

graduate newspaper *The News-Letter* — he was Chief at the time — to create his own paper, the rag that would go on to become *City Paper* and sell for \$4 million a decade later.

How did this untrained college student juggle three jobs, two newspapers, and academics? By the skin of his teeth, it seems.

Smith graduated a semester late, still scraping for the bare minimum of course credits. *City Paper* was born in May 1977, on what would have been his graduation day.

"That following fall was rough: back then Hopkins only allowed you two Ds on your transcript, and I had long since used up my allotment." Smith says he would have quit school altogether had it not been for his mother, who was sick at the time and "would have been very upset with me."

When Smith sold the paper a decade later and moved to New York, he picked up the moniker "Mugger" and a new abrasive attitude along with it.

"I used to council my writers. I'd tell them 'I can't tell you who to hang out with...but my advice is to stay away from journalists.'"

What's with the nickname?, I ask.

He had been struggling with a name for his column, a diatribe on "food, politics, sports and whatever else sprung to mind," when his brother almost fell victim to a robbery in TriBeCa.

"This guy held a gun to his head and my brother batted him away with a briefcase and ran — but then he tripped and ended up in the hospital anyway, with a staff infection on his leg," he says. "When I went to see him the next day I was like, hey, what do you think about *Mugger* as a name for my column?"

What soon followed was "something that made people say, 'whoa, this guy's an asshole,' or 'this is cool' — it was meant to provoke," Smith recounts.

And provoke, it did. Smith admits that the column didn't exactly serve to widen his social circle. He recalls being at a "media fraternity party" and running into *New Yorker* editor Adam Moss, who he had just slammed in the column.

"[Moss] said 'Hey Russ, I really like the *New York Press* — why do you keep killing me in print?' I said, 'It's nothing personal — I just think your magazine sucks.' And it was a little awkward."

Smith says that was his last media party for a while, as he preferred to hang out with his *Press* staffers. "We worked hard and then we'd go to a bar and drink and continue to think about the magazine — that was a lot more fun," he says. "I used to council my writers. I'd tell them 'I can't tell you who to hang out with when you're not at work, but my advice is to stay away from journalists.'"



"*City Paper* is edited by a bunch of 40 year olds trying to seem young... it's 'trying-too-hard' journalism."

artist: Suzanne Gold

"This seemed a mutual agreement, as he stopped being invited to 'big-wig' parties shortly thereafter.

"One of the reasons I've never gotten work at glossy magazines is because people still dislike me. That's fair enough. *Esquire* or *GQ*, they're awful but they pay well. They wouldn't touch someone like me," Smith recalls with a smile and not a hint of regret.

As the lunch hour ends and Smith walks me to the door, he glares at the rainy vista. "I hate cold weather," he says. "I prefer heat and humidity. Summer is perfect."

Then why not move to someplace more temperature, California or Florida? Smith shakes his head. "I couldn't do it. I just keep coming back to Baltimore."

On romancing the vote the pleasures and pitfalls of canvassing in Baltimore

commentary by Blake Edwards,
a legislative aide

The nation's midterm elections effectively dominated all that was our lives for the majority of the summer and fall. Here in Baltimore, with a highly competitive gubernatorial race taking place, as well as feisty newcomers challenging many of the more familiar faces in government, candidates and constituents alike were often placed uncomfortably close with one another. With all of the radio advertisements, television commercials, and print media that those seeking office employed as a device on the road to representation, no one in Charm City was spared from one of the least *charming* aspects of the campaign system.

As a self-proclaimed "informed voter," and as someone who has done a considerable amount of campaign work, I have experienced both sides of what is really just an awkward and prolonged speed-dating session of sorts. Like speed-dating, both parties have really good intentions on the surface and that's great. Also like speed-dating (from what I've heard...) both parties have some things that they would rather keep hidden for a couple of dates. Voter or campaigner, both sides hope that they can make each other happy long enough to reach the climax that they've been desperately waiting for. Whether it takes O'Malley or Obama to get those political juices flowing, the hope is that you didn't have regrets on the walk of shame following ten minutes of passion exercised in a sweaty voting booth just down the hall from the place where you ironically had your first kiss. Who would have thought that democracy would bring you back into Edmondson High School prior to the ten year reunion?

For those of you who enjoyed these dates with various Baltimore politicians and were able to make up your minds as to who you would vote for, congratulations on finding love, or some combination of the two. I wish you all happiness 'til term limit or scandal do you part. As for the rest of you who felt betrayed or deceived by the entire process, maybe it is time to look deep within and search for the reasons that you want more, but still do not know what more is or ever was for that matter. Though this process of choosing a candidate to represent you can be painful, it, like dating, does not always fall on the other party when you are not satisfied. After someone has pulled out all of the stops, answered all sorts of imposing questions, spent countless money, and fought for your love ... rather, vote, and still you feel no spark from any of your suitors and are less inclined to participate in the political process, you should kindly sit alone in your outdated living room and not be upset when government is not doing what it is supposed to do. And for those, who sit home, while attractive and intelligent 20-somethings with a knack for policy and a great sense of humor come to their door or call their homes to engage them after that first date, pay a little more attention and try not to feel like it is okay to be completely ambivalent to politics.

Do not send your seven-year-old to the door in an attempt to throw campaign volunteers off of their game or yell from an upstairs window with a forced cough that would not even qualify for best acting at a *Teen People* award show. Refrain from hanging up in the faces of those on the other end of the phone line or what's worse, changing your voice after answering the phone in a different one for the sake of, "She's not in, may I take a message?" And to, how about a random name like, Ms. Jenkins on Fulton Street, do not yell at the nice young fellow on the other side of the phone about the lateness of the hour when it is just after 5pm and *Wheel of Fortune* has yet to come on. Regardless of age, orientation, or affiliation, I firmly believe that there is a politician out there for everyone. If 2010 was a rough year for you, do not give up because there really are some good ones in the game. Trust me. As shown by a low voter turnout here in the city during these midterm elections, despite days of early voting at locations around the city, there are still too many people unwilling to mix and mingle with the candidates. Go on, give it a shot. This is the key for a better Baltimore, a better Maryland, and a better nation. Vote!



BOOK REVIEW: OCEAN STATE BY JEAN MCGARRY

critiqued by
Nancy Hoffman

Local author Jean McGarry's new collection of short stories, *Ocean State* (Johns Hopkins University Press: 2010), explores the bonds of family and community in the nation's smallest state, Rhode Island. Her characters are drawn through the lenses of life's major happenings — birth, death, marriage — and through these events her characters expand.

They are fully-realized individuals in their own right, but they fill the span from their own identities all the way to the *Ocean State* at large. A mother becomes a whole family as she stands in her soon-to-be-married daughter's house, cleaning obsessively to prepare for the couple to move in. Her history and the family's history saturate the pages. The expansiveness of this one character calls up a whole community of like families, the figures of which populate the other stories in the collection. This interpolation is *Ocean State's* great strength.

On a minute level, the prose of McGarry's stories rustles feather-like around its subjects. Periodically, this whispering prose pauses on a single image — the light on a patio wall, the silvery quality of a tailor-made suit — and these moments are real delights. They allow each story to pack a great deal of family and personal history into a small space, but still stop and gather up all the threads. The prose rarely ventures into the over-dense, so these instances are lyric oases in which a character's experience materializes in real-time.

One story may span a generation, but



immediate characters and the setting anchor each firmly. Often the family home, old or new, comes to the forefront. These places become the landmarks of the stories. The permanence of these landmarks lets the characters who inhabit them burgeon to encompass vast expanses. They also enable McGarry to sweep back and forth from a character's past to the just-coming marriage or to the newborn baby. Death is never far from the page, but the constant presence of a next generation softens its severity.

In general, these stories hit a sound balance. They are sensitive to their characters and for the most part, they pull the reader right along. Occasionally one too many family members, neighbors or friends come into the text and sorting out their relationships to the main character can be a challenge.

Each character links the reader closer to the family and to the community, so these extra names aren't really necessary to creating a holistic feeling. Fortunately, these moments are few; most of the stories succeed in their attention to the main players.

McGarry's closeness to her characters serves her well; we dig into her characters' lives and witness their passions and weaknesses with a placid eye. Like the

doctor of "Transference", we understand their inner workings, and through them we understand the workings of many.

The narrator of the standout "Dream Date", a young girl navigating first dates and teasing sisters, crystallizes this viewpoint. Her frank, childish voice bounces between contemplating Danny Mac's dreamy blue eyes and explaining how she has to hold her underpants up by the waistband. These fancies do wonders for buoying up the tone of the whole collection, which otherwise might run the risk of becoming too melancholy.

The stories of *Ocean State* plunge into the world of mysteries not commonplace, but nevertheless universally relatable: the clues a deceased father leaves to his daughter, the design of a wedding dress, the task of naming (and thus claiming) a newborn. Each story illuminates people and events beyond its own realm, all the while with soft prose blanketing the telling. From the landmark moments of its characters' lives, *Ocean State* deduces a world and invites us to experience it as well.

Literary
Critic

I MET KAREN ABOUT THREE YEARS AGO. SHE HAD JUST MOVED HERE. TO BALTIMORE.

SHE KEPT TO HERSELF. DIDN'T TALK ABOUT WHERE SHE CAME FROM.

Murderland is dead on arrival

critiqued by
J. Braedon Jones

Over the last 40 years, countless hard-working and devoted people dedicate their time, if not their lives, to reassuring critics and fans alike that comic books are not a medium only for children. Stephen Scott, author of the new Image comic series *Murderland*, is not one of these people.



I love comics and I love Baltimore city, and I love to see comics set in Baltimore city, but what Scott did with *Murderland's* first two issues can only be described as an insult to any reader who wants to take comics seriously.

From what I can gather, *Murderland* (so titled

because of a local euphemism describing Baltimore's once stupefying murder rate) is about a shape shifting assassin named "Vagin Astucieux" who can change her hair, or her face, and grow weird bits of bone from her knees. She is involved with a character only referred to as "The Arabber." For those of you not in the know, arabbers were a type of street vender once found all around the mid-Atlantic and now only really live on in Baltimore city. The Arabber seems to be impervious to pain or injury or at least to multiple knife wounds and gun shots. Other than that we don't know much about either character or their mission and...in all fairness, you won't care.

Stephen Scott just doesn't write well. Reading *Murderland* feels like you are reading the Livejournal of a 16-year-old Spawn fan. The dialog and narration is bombastic and pompous, the action is excessively and awkwardly violent, and the plot just doesn't make much sense yet. His attempts at writing a Baltimorean accent are awkwardly laughable and after the first scene you find yourself wondering, "What the hell am I reading, and why am I reading it?" You're reading because it's supposed to be set in Baltimore (like *The Wire*! Ain't that cool?), but you sure couldn't tell by looking at it.

Scott is joined on *Murderland* by experienced illustrator David Hahn, who has worked on acclaimed comics like *Fables*, *Lucifer* and *Batman*, but you

certainly wouldn't guess that from looking at *Murderland*. The layouts are jumbled and confusing and all of the characters designs look the same aside from their dress. I cannot say that Hahn is a bad artist, but he's certainly a boring one. What's worse is, as much as this comic tries to center itself around the city of Baltimore, Hahn's art does nothing to give you the feel that you are in Baltimore.

There is a scene in the *Ultimate X* (an X-men comic written by Jeph Loeb) set in Charles Village. The scene is no more than a page or two long, but in two or three panels illustrator Arthur Adams captures the essence of Charles Village perfectly. You see the Skittle-colored row homes, the blossoming trees, the people biking in the streets. Having been a Charles Village resident for the last four years, I could virtually take you to the house where Jean Grey was staying in the comic. It's not like Adams drew addresses on the houses or anything, but Charles Village is one of Baltimore's many neighborhoods that has a very distinctive aesthetic.

Hahn never gets that even though he draws scenes set in Druid Hill Park and "West Baltimore": pretty recognizable places ... if you've ever seen them. Instead every scene in the book feels like generic spy background #32-39. The whole affair feels cheap and it is difficult to believe that the same company that produces the *Walking Dead* would let this comic get published.

In all fairness, this is the first of a series written by a freshman author. Image does have a good track record lately with properties like the *Walking Dead*, *Invincible*, *Spawn* and *Chew*. I cannot say that *Murderland* is off to a good start, though. Even though the story on the flip side of issue two (The oh-so-poorly-titled "Jiggity-Jig") has some of the local flare I was hoping for, only two pages at the end of the second issue is too little too late. If I pick up issue three, it will really only be out of morbid curiosity.

TOP RIGHT: A page from the *Ultimate X* comic, during which Jean Gray stays in Charles Village. The artwork reflects the Charles Village setting. BOTTOM LEFT: A page from *Murderland* that takes place in Druid Hill Park but the artwork fails to capture any unique qualities of the park.

Voices

*a collection of poems & prose
from our peers*

OUR HERO, IN "THE MYSTERY OF DOING A THING" Jonah Furman

And fiendishly back at it, O.H. is, eliciting fiendishly loud clicks from his sector of the dark dorm room. All this after a long hiatus centered roughly around a stupid mindfucky train he'd let through his head a week prior, about how B.O.-stinky undergrads shouldn't write meta plays for the showcase thing, and how he should right a polemic send-

ing all that business straight up, but which polemic itself would have to be a B.O.-stinky meta play, which sent him spiraling spiraling. Ending at a nice little place where the real drama, he was convinced, occurs way before pixels on laptops, that there is a wu wei zugzwang little storm that occurs for the real polemicist, that recursion is the mark of a cursed (and re-cursed) man, and only those who feel the burden are really awake alive conscious on & on.

Which stopped him right in his tracks, obviously, fairly, understandably. And he let the point belabor itself beneath his psoriatic scalp and twist itself into untasty pretzels of doubt and discontent and the big-p Purposelessness which had plagued him before and plagued him still. And he, maybe not actually but in certain ways, writhed on his dorm floor, on pointillist pukey carpet, clutching at parts of himself, and combed at his flesh with dainty fingernails and all that and rolled around like a wild beast and all that, in such agony such anguish. And he, O.H., exhausted from all that roiling, emotional ducts all sere and throbbing with catharsis, certain parts of his face and hands nicely flushed, perennially ill-shaven, hair meticulously disheveled, clothes all askew, single-socked, head cocked with gentle defeat, looked in the mirror and realized that all this stewing business was just no fun at all and he sat back down at the computer, and resumed click-clacking on plastic.

TRAIN HOPPING Ming Wen

Who knew the heart could beat with the intensity of a locomotive? Myself. if you can't count the lug nuts, don't do it. If you die here they will identify you from a pile of rot jammed between the ten ton tires, a blight on the glimmering top edge of rusted track.

Otherwise, what could have been a way to ride a grown-up's Radio Flyer Wagon will have been an unfortunate accident you travelled out to Boston Street Station to investigate. An old man in the yard tracked me with a glare.

"How old are you, twenty?" I nodded.

"I'm 59. I retire in two years.

Don't let me see you do it."

Perched on a coal car,
the bushes and gravel road
that leads to freedom
and nowhere rattle past.

Only my shaky body,
this house on wheels,
and the mute sky
remain stationary.

Have you ever seen
the wheels of death
shining by your feet?

There are no grooves there,
only faith that weight will hold them,
keeping them as pristine as the finish of the table
back home before dinner.





WATER

Amanda Boyle

I keep microwaving water while she, my roommate, stands in her periwinkle terrycloth bathrobe, telling me about how the world is going to end.

"Don't you get it? Haven't you noticed? The heat keeps rising and the sirens are more frequent now. Especially in the mornings."

I take teabags from the orange cardboard box. Our neighbor, who has the same name as me, comes in the front door. She's holding a violin case. We say our name, greeting each other.

I assume there's a violin in the violin case, but I'm more excited about her other gift a plenty: a Styrofoam carton of twelve eggs. "Great!" We'd planned this: omelets for the morning. They're brown eggs, organic, because my neighbor loves farmers markets.

My roommate slinks off as my namesake and I begin cracking the brown eggs on the edges of bowls.

I bought mushrooms the day before, non-organic because I'm cheap, and take those out, to clean with a paper towel and chop up. A few plump tomatoes,

too. "I love a good omelet," my namesake neighbor says.

I have another roommate. She thinks our roommate is crazy and that we should turn her in...to someone. She isn't really thinking of doing it. I think what she really wants to do is just kick our roommate out and put up an ad on Craig's List for a new one, who doesn't drift to the windows every time a siren passes by, afraid it's someone we know down there.

I always handle our roommate. She can't be babied, or else she'll never learn that despite everything, the world is an okay place. I'll bring her an omelet later, curl under the down comforter with her and tell her about a dream I once had. "I was on a New York subway car with my parents and my aunt and uncle.

It was a dining car though, which they don't have in New York. One of us notices that it's taking an awful long time to get to Grand Central, that hey, the last stop was 33rd and more time than usual has passed and we're not there yet. A lot of other people are noticing this. And then we see out of the front window—I guess we're in the first car—the first shadings of a light. It's another subway car coming to meet us head on. And it's just quiet and my head and heart are throbbing, thinking what! but I calm myself. Because this is what is going to happen. And

I've decided it's okay, because there's nothing I can do. Then I woke up."

"Of course, you can't die in a dream," she'll say.

"But think. Dying is just like going to sleep, I bet. And you know how you never are aware of those few seconds before you go to sleep? That's what dying is like, I bet. You won't even know it. You'll never know it when you die, that you're dying."

"Oh," she'll say. Or maybe she'll argue another point. I've never talked to anyone who died, so I'll just have to go back and forth with her, they're only my theories.

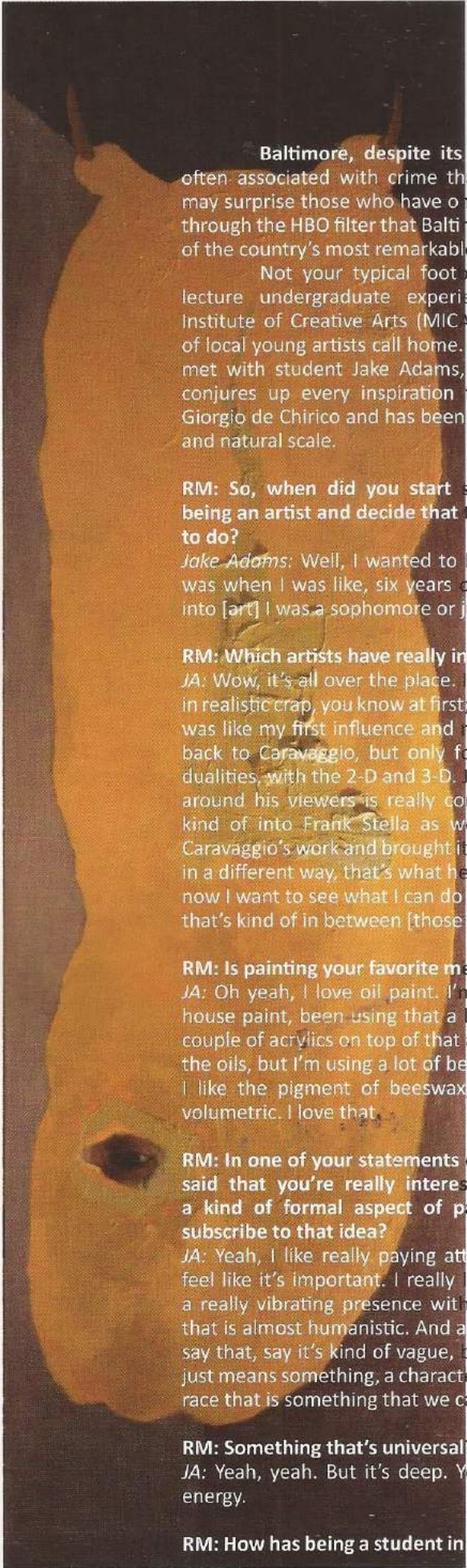
"Well, I think I'd like to die in my sleep, anyways. Extra unaware then. Wouldn't you?"

We'll have the comforter wrapped around us so that only our neckless heads are there. "No," I'll say, "I'd rather like to die in a ballgown."

"Oh!" She'll like that. "What color?"

"The color of crushed raspberries." We'll stay in bed talking about ballgowns and then skinny-dipping and then names--good names for children, characters in epic novels, or dogs--and suddenly it will be dark out. My namesake neighbor is long gone with her violin, we'll peel ourselves out of bed and go outside to walk on the pavement—pavement so indifferent to us—in short sleeves or short dresses, because it's getting warm out.

Art 101: *Jake Adams*



Baltimore, despite its multitudes, is more often associated with crime than the visual arts. It may surprise those who have only viewed our streets through the HBO filter that Baltimore is home to some of the country's most remarkable art institutions.

Not your typical football team-and-biology lecture undergraduate experience, the Maryland Institute of Creative Arts (MICA) is where hundreds of local young artists call home. **REBECCA MCGIVNEY** met with student Jake Adams, whose prolific work conjures up every inspiration from Frank Stella to Giorgio de Chirico and has been featured on the local and national scale.

RM: So, when did you start seriously considering being an artist and decide that this is what you want to do?

Jake Adams: Well, I wanted to be a farmer, but that was when I was like, six years old. When I got really into [art] I was a sophomore or junior in high school.

RM: Which artists have really inspired your work?

JA: Wow, it's all over the place. I was really interested in realistic crap, you know at first; I suppose Caravaggio was like my first influence and now I'm kind of going back to Caravaggio, but only for his play on spatial dualities, with the 2-D and 3-D. Just the way he wraps around his viewers is really compelling. I guess I'm kind of into Frank Stella as well, because he took Caravaggio's work and brought it to the same level but in a different way, that's what he was known for. Right now I want to see what I can do to dig into something that's kind of in between [those approaches].

RM: Is painting your favorite medium to work in?

JA: Oh yeah, I love oil paint. I'm kind of getting into house paint, been using that a lot. And then I'll do a couple of acrylics on top of that and then go on top of the oils, but I'm using a lot of beeswax too nowadays. I like the pigment of beeswax, which is like really volumetric. I love that.

RM: In one of your statements on your website, you said that you're really interested in an aesthetic, a kind of formal aspect of painting. Do you still subscribe to that idea?

JA: Yeah, I like really paying attention to the craft, I feel like it's important. I really like the [art] that has a really vibrating presence within it, like a presence that is almost humanistic. And a lot of people, when I say that, say it's kind of vague, but to me, humanistic just means something, a characteristic from our whole race that is something that we can relate to.

RM: Something that's universal?

JA: Yeah, yeah. But it's deep. You feel it. It's like an energy.

RM: How has being a student in Baltimore influenced

your work?

JA: Pretty good. It's interesting because you get into a lot of trouble you wouldn't normally get into, you know? Which is a good thing.

RM: Have you found the city particularly conducive to your work?

JA: Yes, I think so. It's a wild city. It's small, but it's concentrated—there's almost too much culture for its size.

RM: It's really amazing. I'm from New York, and it always seems so cold and not open to creative people at this point because it's so expensive.

JA: Yeah, the art world is so messed up right now. I don't really agree with it. It's like getting to the point where if we ever revolutionize art, it's going to be revolutionizing the art world, but not the art itself. Pretty much everything has been done, so it's time to give art a different context.

RM: Do you think art has become too consumerist and too focused on selling?

JA: Yeah, I would say so. I think it would be interesting though to see different ways of selling art. Like if art was cheap, if it was only \$1, but if there were mass quantities of the same thing or different things like that. More [art could be] available to people who aren't educated about art due to a price. I think it'd be interesting to play around with that.

RM: Do you think museums succeed in doing that at all?

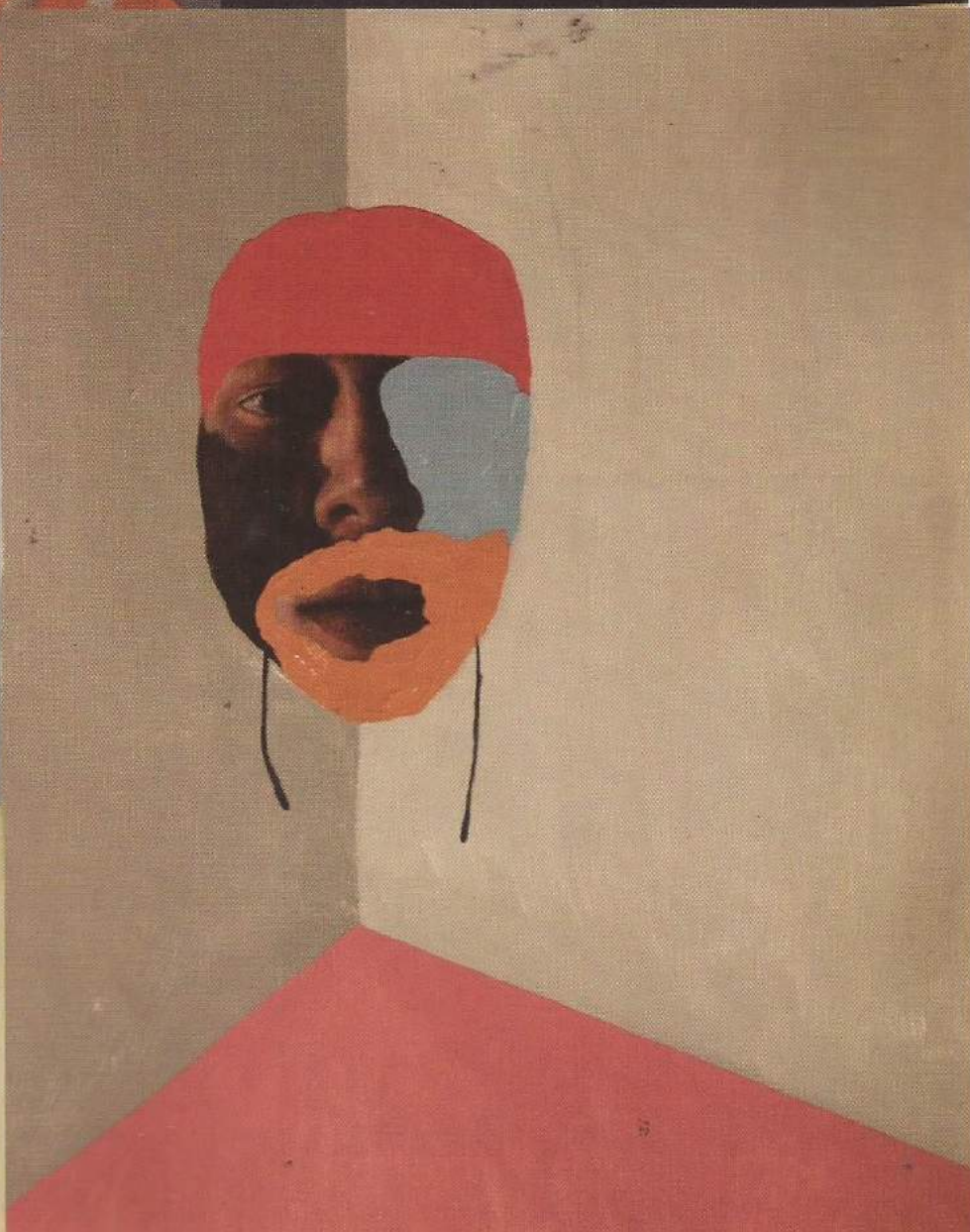
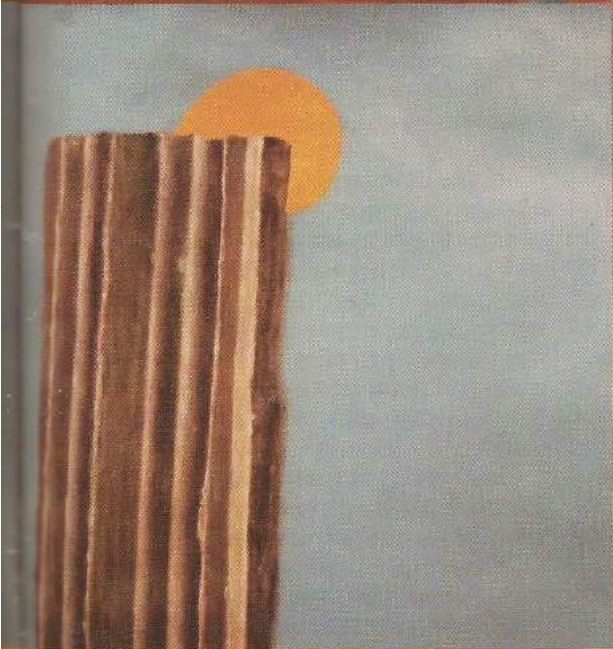
JA: I think museums make it [possible] for people to see the artwork, but it's so... different to own a piece of art, there's that connection. It's a big deal because it's a perception that you can get daily, your reflection.

RM: And a museum does something to a work that's different than when you own it.

JA: Yeah, well, museums are so healthy. I love museums. Because you can go call the BMA and just skim through some prints and their inventory. It's cool, it's a good thing. Especially in Baltimore again, there are good factors going on.

RM: So, what are some of your favorite places in Baltimore?

JA: There's this one place, the creepiest place. Have you ever been to the cemetery? I forget the street names, I've been there a couple times, but you're driving down this road, it's the ghetto, it's the hood. Boarded up houses, crack houses all over, you know? And at the end of this long road is this giant tower that's just a huge archway into a cemetery and the cemetery goes on forever. That always stayed with me, that little thing, that road, that's such a long road, and it's an unnecessarily big entrance to a cemetery. It's ridiculous.



In a community with such polarized demographics, how does the **Baltimore Museum of Art** appeal to the average working-class citizen?

investigation
by Suzanne
Gold

With the opening of the Baltimore Museum of Art's *Warhol: The Last Decade* exhibit on October 17 came a cavalcade of Warhol-related events and evenings geared to incite the citizens of Baltimore to pass through the museum's hallowed halls in search of culture and beauty. Warhol doppelgangers roam the galleries, kicking up a cloud of celebrity and, in effect, transferring the focus of the museum visit from the art on the walls to the viewers themselves.

The BMA has joined the ranks of modern museums worldwide in a new, renewed dedication to the visitor as perhaps the most important moving fixture of the institution.

While in days of yore, the art, the object, the artifact occupied the most important post in the museum, more recently, the departments of Education

and Programming have had more prominent roles in directing the funding and focus of the museum.

I had the chance to sit down with the BMA Manager of Family Learning Lauren Haney to discuss how the museum can encourage visitorship in the uniquely striated Baltimore community.

"The idea, and my role here, is to really promote family learning and intergenerational learning at the museum. So, that includes kids, parents grandparents, aunts, uncles, everybody. Really encouraging a dialogue between each other, but using art as the vehicle for that discussion," she says.

"And, for us to find connections between our lives and our human experience through the stories that art tells."

During her yearlong reign as Manager of Family Learning, Haney has developed countless family-oriented programs, days and festivals, all designed to invite youngsters and their parents and grandparents into the museum for a more directed session of museum learning.

Free Family Sundays invite mom, dad and the kids to interact with the art in a non-traditional, activity-based manner. For the Warhol show, Haney and her team planned workshops where kids can identify the brands they find in grocery stores and in their homes, bringing details of their personal lives into the museum and learning how to screen print them, mimicking Warhol in the technique for which he is most known.

Haney's job in particular reflects a growing desire to be able to express the values of an exhibition through a thought-provoking programming season, which can be a challenge,

especially for the kids.

"You want to make sure that the shows are accessible," she says. "While some of the concepts and themes are abstract, there's still fun in the techniques of how the art was made." For the Warhol exhibition in particular, "it's an opportunity to talk about screen printing, for example."

Free Family Sundays, therefore, become an opportunity for kids to make their own versions of the Campbell soup cans and the Brillo boxes. "We're going to make our own brands," she says.

These kinds of creative processes help to unveil the art in the museum in a more meaningful light, but they also serve as motives for families to consider the museum as a viable entertainment option on a given weekend.

One of the biggest demographic issues the BMA faces is giving members of a lower socioeconomic status reasons to enter the museum.

Haney and her Family Programming team want to push the message that the museum is not just a building filled with "rich people's art on the wall." Furthermore, it's not just a place where certain races or creeds can find meaning.

Baltimore's vibrant black community therefore poses a welcome challenge to programming at the museum.

"Close Encounters," a recent development along that vein, invites 4th grade students in Baltimore City public schools to the BMA for two guided visits, followed by additional sessions in their home classrooms, in which representatives from the BMA work onsite with the kids to solidify what they learned in the museum.

Haney is always looking to forge new pathways into the school system, reaching out to teachers and PTAs, asking what the museum can do to be more relevant to children's lives.

Another program on the horizon



for the museum is "Neighborhood Days," in which the museum plans to reach out to five different schools in various neighborhoods and bring the art to them, rather than waiting for the school buses to start rolling in.

Hands-on art-making, family guides and tours, and shuttles to and from the museum are all on the docket.

Mostly, however, the desire is to permeate the feeling that the museum wants them to become a part of greater Baltimore culture, inviting folks to take pride in the city in which they live and play an integral part.

"It's key to be able to show the museum at its noisiest, to show that it is living and has life. That's when people feel most welcome," Haney says. But further, she recognizes that people sometimes have trouble initiating a relationship with the museum. She says wants to create programming that communicates: "We want you to come!"

While the programming and education departments have little to do with the planning of exhibitions, there is a museum-wide awareness and desire to pull from the uniqueness of the Baltimore community.

"There's all kinds of inspiration happening in the city," Haney says, "and Doreen Bolger, Director of the BMA, is at every opening and every event, taking it all in."

Another programming package on deck is a new Family Fun Stop, which will involve a costume pack filled with garments inspired by art in the collections of the BMA. Haney and others are currently collaborating with local clothing designers like Jill Andrews in Hampden, as well as costume designers from Baltimore's Center Stage to create actual costumes for kids to try on, creating new avenues by which to enter the art in a completely new and visceral way.

How does an institution — a museum in particular — remain relevant to its city? Furthermore, how can it actually draw from the uniqueness of the city itself for inspiration and resource?

The BMA is full of ideas. Haney, in particular, may have benefited from her exposure to the young ones of Baltimore. After all, in her words and with a smile that reveals the delight she takes in her trade, "My job is to think like a kid most of the day."

[They] want to push the message that the museum is not just a building filled with "rich people's art on the wall."

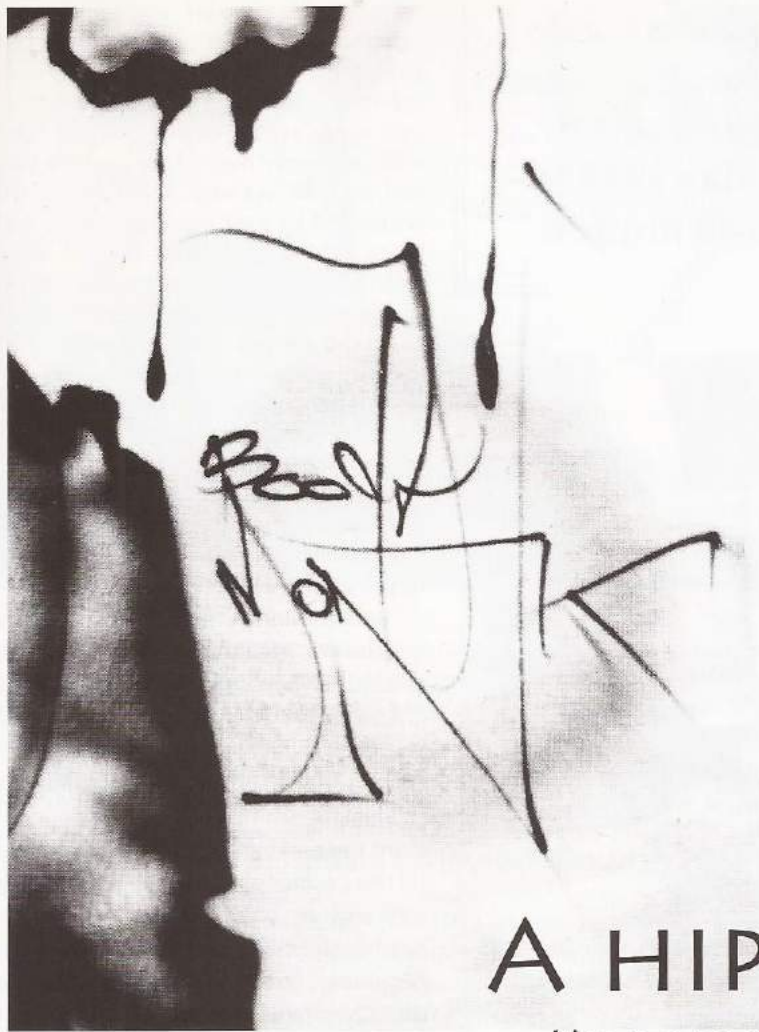




But it wasn't the end...

Captured by Joshua Gleason

After storms subsided on the last day of Whartscape, Baltimore accommodated: shows were moved to different venues around the city. Sonar served as a last minute space for concert-goers, but was later closed down due to fire code violations.



A HIP HOP PIONEER

WRITTEN BY DIANA STERN

PHOTOGRAPHED BY WILL MANNING

Designed clothing, boom boxes, vinyl records, and other creations pop and sizzle behind Booda Monk's tattoo shop window at 132 25th St. His palette takes from Baltimore's day and night sky, the colors of which he would study and compare when he was learning his craft. Booda paints koi fish on canvasses and laid-back yet energized hip-hop characters on shirts, even spray painting a half-mannequin that hangs from the shop ceiling. This artist cultivates elements of Baltimore's landscape, people and style into something unique, and his nook on 25th St. offers a haven for urban art.

He is a hip-hop jack-of-all-trades: b-boy, MC and DJ, as well as a graffiti, airbrush and tattoo artist. Booda Monk's connection to his contextual culture runs deep. He formed his first graffiti crew, Phat Scool Bandits, with a friend in '83. He joined a b-boy crew in '85. Since then, he's opened for Wu Tang Clan and Busta Rhymes, among others, as a dancer. When he is not in shop laying down hip-hop tattoos or freshening up a shirt, he may be painting graffiti with his crew LBX, also known as lead by xample. He has been a pioneer of Baltimore hip-hop culture.

"Back then, we didn't call it hip-hop. It was just something that developed around me that I took to," he said.

Booda's passion for hip-hop is Baltimore-brewed. His style is rooted in family and the streets of West Baltimore, between Falls Park, Liberty Heights and Waldorf Junction. When he was a baby, his two older brothers exposed him to all kinds of music on the radio — from jazz,

to funk, to hip-hop. He said television also impacted his craft early on.

"Ernie Barnes is my favorite artist. He influenced me a lot. I used to always see his paintings on *Good Times*," Booda Monk said.

Parliament-Funkadelic album covers affected his creative flow as well. "They were really spaced out," he said. "They used to scare me as a child."

P-Funk cover nightmares were one unexpected catalyst to his career.

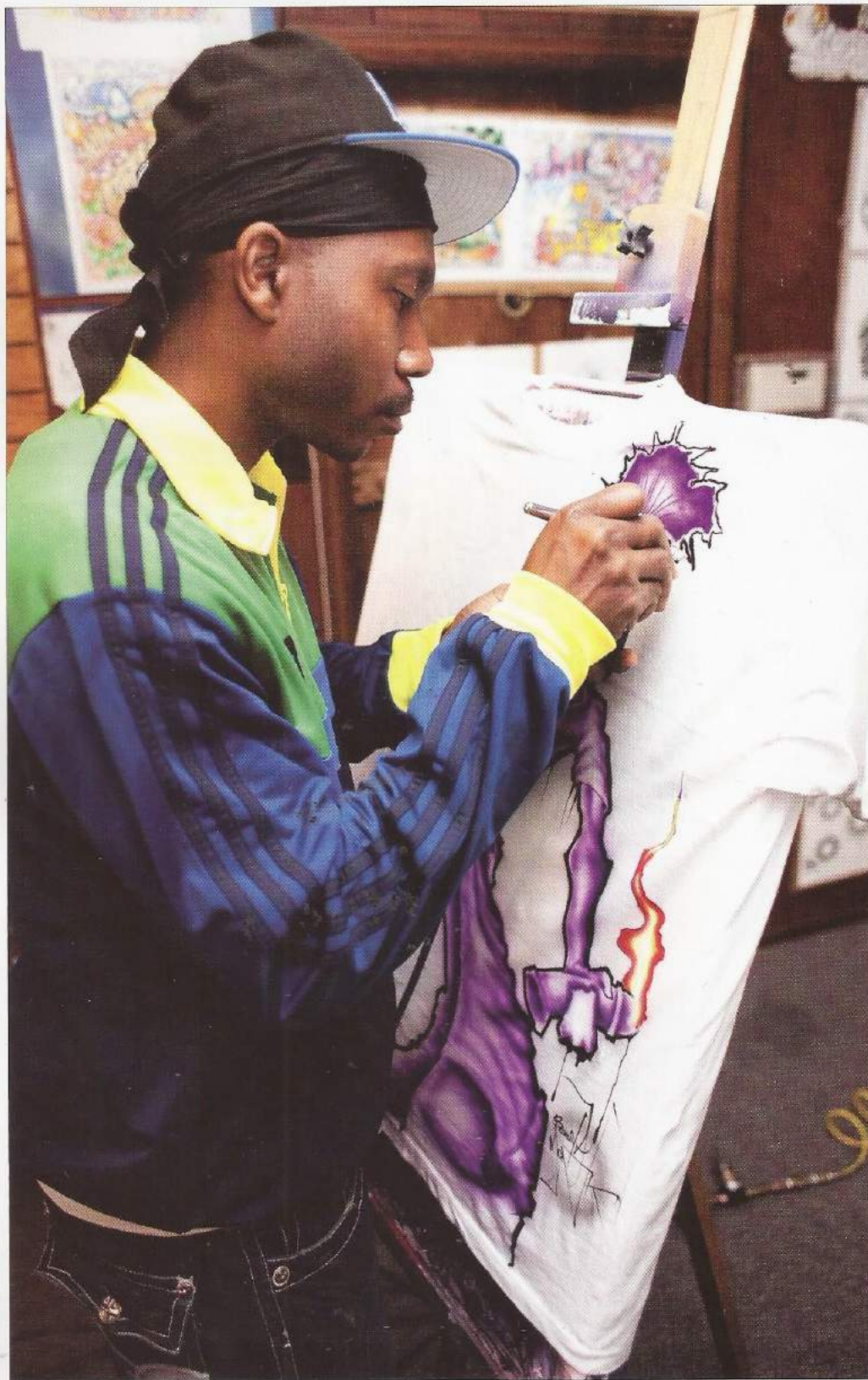
"I wanted to put certain things aside, but I couldn't because it would haunt me at night. [My] dreams would call me back to it. It was so intense that I would have to write things down or draw them. My dreams were like reality. A lot of times when I woke up, I couldn't separate reality from the dream. I had to draw the stuff, get it out of my head."

As he grew older, Booda translated these visions into physical art. He wove himself into the select generation that cultivated hip-hop 1.0, the fluidity and all-inclusiveness of which is best described through his depiction of an average day, "back in the day".

"Just hanging in the streets, [hip-hop culture] was there for me," he began.

"Say I'm sitting on a bench. There could be somebody right there catching a handstyle. And I'd watch it, and the person might run off real quick. There might be a fight down the street, but I'm still there watching the handstyle trying to learn ... Then after the

"There's certain things I just wouldn't do. certain jobs I just wouldn't take. because what I have inside me outweighs money... I would never sell myself short like that because I stand for something much higher."



fight, someone might have a boom box. Then there might be some cats around the corner getting down. So I might go over there, start b-boying. Then at nighttime, someone might knock on my door and say, 'Oh, we're about to go hit this bridge.' So I'd pack my bag, and go with those kids. It was always around me; it wasn't something we learned in school."

He sat behind the counter at his shop and turned down the sides of his cowboy hat. "Hip-hop-wise, I'm the only person in Baltimore who can do all the elements," he said, and began to reflect on where hip-hop has gone.

"Graffiti in Baltimore has changed, as far as the style. But me, I like the style from back in the day ... We were trying to get graffiti accepted by society."

Booda Monk's and other pioneers' mission to legitimize graffiti has succeeded in ways. For instance, this fall, graffiti artists Retna, from Los Angeles, Shepard Fairey, creator of the iconic Obama "Hope" poster, and Baltimore artist Shinique Smith were commissioned to paint the parking garage of Las Vegas hotel the Cosmopolitan. In the past decade, rap, and arguably hip-hop as a whole, has transformed from the neighborhood beginnings Booda Monk described into a multi-billion dollar industry.

"As long as people don't lose the inspiration from the culture and don't get too involved in the money aspect, it's okay," Booda cautioned.

Despite having more legal venues now than it did in the '80s, street graffiti lives. Some people engaging in this illegal art form have no interest in its origins.

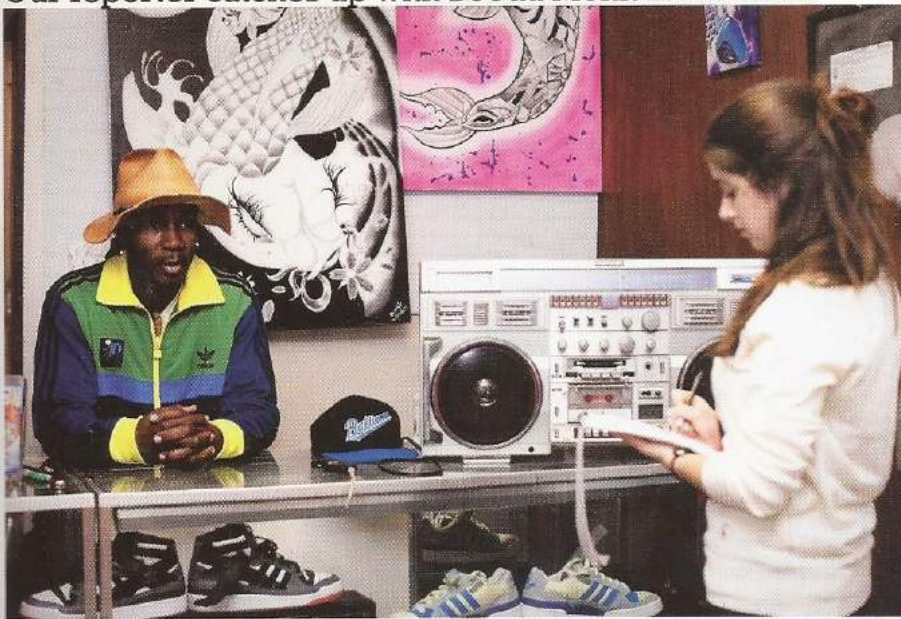
"In Baltimore, I think the younger kids are not trying to learn from the older pioneers. They're watching the magazines, and they're not really learning the foundation of [graffiti]. So, they're trying to create or mimic something when they have no context for it," he said.

Before magazines, YouTube videos and instructional DVDs, graffiti artists would ask questions of the more skilled and experienced artists. This face-to-face communication formed a community that respected its elders. The same went for popping, locking or b-boying.

"If, when I came up, I wanted to learn how to windmill, how to pop, how to six-step, I had to watch somebody. I had to learn. I had to ask questions. How can I get my arm to jerk? How can I wave it down? They would break it down for you."

Since hip-hop has solidified into a

Our reporter catches up with Booda Monk in his store.



concrete movement, this grassroots learning style has faded. Booda says that some people doing graffiti now “don’t care” about the pioneers. “Right now I’m not happy with a lot of the artists that are coming up,” he stated.

He addressed the more “ignorant” users of a spray can:

“You’re going to wonder one day, ‘Ok, well, how did Booda do his lines? How did he get his lines so clean?’ When you had the chance to learn, you wanted to battle me. You wanted to go over my pieces instead of asking me, and I would have been glad to teach you [my techniques]. I try to talk to them, but they don’t want to hear it.”

The hierarchical structure that kept order is breaking down in ways.

“If you have a pioneer, someone that’s been doing it since the 80s, that went up [with a mural or tag], you can’t go over that person if you’re not ready. Nobody’s really paying attention to the rules right now ... I blame a lot of the pioneers as well, because some of them are not being stern in how this thing is supposed to go. Sometimes [graffiti] is a free thing, but at the same time you have to follow the foundation in order to learn, so it can grow, so that one day you can get to a certain point, and you’ll be able to pass it down.”

He attributes the loss of the foundational, person-to-person learning style to technology.

“We respected it more back then because we didn’t have Internet. We didn’t know what somebody was doing in Germany. If we heard somebody was nice on another block, another neighborhood, across town, we would go and battle them, just based on word of mouth. Now, you can go onto the Internet and type in anything, and to me, that’s not cool.”

The instantaneous of hip-hop “news” from around the world is a far cry from the contained knowledge Booda and his friends would pick up from one Baltimore neighborhood or another.

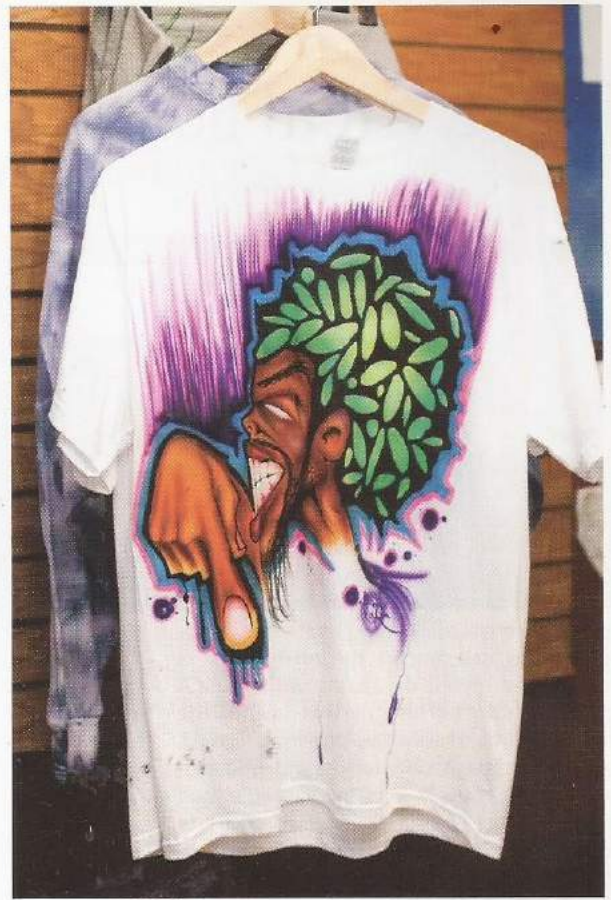
He admits the accessibility has a payoff, that some contemporary dancers are doing “phenomenal” moves, and he recognizes 21st century graffiti artists’ drive. “It’s cool to have that fire, and say, ‘Oh I want to go out and just bomb’, but you have to learn first, you have to humble yourself ... [Hip-hop] is built on competitiveness ... But you’re going to have to learn from somebody,” he emphasized.

Booda also notes hip-hop culture’s changes over the airwaves.

“The stuff you hear on the radio, to me, is garbage, because it has no substance to it...Back in the day, if they were rhyming like that, they wouldn’t get any kind of time on the mic or anything. To me, the people on the radio right now are wack MCs.”

Though hip-hop can slip into “wackness,” Booda still “loves it all”. He praises it for retaining its ability to “help the youth come up and feel positive about themselves.”

“[Considering] everything in hip-hop right now, real hip-hop outweighs the bad.” He continued, “I feel as if I will never stop loving hip-hop. It will always be a part of me... Change is good; things just don’t stay the same.”



Eighteen years after graffitiing his first wall, Booda’s last frontier was skin. High demand for Booda Monk tattoos readied the artist to pick up the needle in ’01. He did his first piece on his best friend while listening to another friend explain how to tattoo over the phone — eager to learn from others, once again.

He opened up his first tattoo parlor five years ago, and now owns the eclectic store and parlor Booda Monk’s Hip-Hop Tattoos. “I don’t get too much into what other businesses are doing,” he said. “I try to stay somewhat up to date with it, but I just do what I do, that’s all,” he concluded with a smile.

“I’m different,” Booda laughed, “in every way possible. I learn from different people, but what I always try to do is put my twist on it ... My dance style, my graffiti style, everything that I do, is different, and I try to make it [all] my best. I see everything that I do on the same level, because I love everything that I do. Or if not, I’ll just trash it,” he said smiling.

Booda has made his two-dimensional art profitable while still MCing, DJing and dancing, but he has limits on commercializing those passions.

“Right now you get paid thousands of dollars for being ignorant, and it’s sad,” he said, referring those who exploit hip-hop as a medium for disrespect. “There’s certain things I just wouldn’t do, certain jobs I just wouldn’t take, because what I have inside me outweighs money ... I would never sell myself short like that because I stand for something much higher.”

You can find one of Booda’s murals at the graffiti alley behind Loads of Fun at 120 W. North Ave. The wall’s current designs were created during a reunion and celebration of the graffiti pioneers featured in the ’83 documentary “Wild Style.” Booda Monk’s mural is a free style piece that says “Anery,” a type of boa and allusion to his side business of breeding snakes.

The critical bouncer

The Wavves at the Ottobar

The Wavves song "Weed Demon" sets an eerie tone for its brief two and a half minutes. The standout from Nathan Williams's second album is a bizarre aural excursion into the territory of altered states, one that succeeds in transforming Wavves's patented angst into a condition gripped by paranoia.

Arriving at the Ottobar on the night of Wavves's show I found myself sharing Williams's paranoia. For me, an undergraduate senior, the nation's unemployment rate alone is enough to bestow the sentiment — with or without chemical assistance. As strange a topic as it seems for a concert, the job market was what I found myself discussing with a MICA sculpture student. This guy was one of the many locals making up the pre-show crowd, which brimmed with hipsters and weirdoes of every subset: goths, punks, hippies, all united under an oppressive interweave of cigarette smoke. One pre-show patron baring an uncanny resemblance to the late Branch Davidian leader, David Koresh, paced nervously near the entrance.

Truth is, there is no point in disparaging these sorts of social labels and stereotypes. They simply exist, for no particular reason, as byproducts of human social evolution gone astray from the norm. Even so, sociological development theories can only go so far in explaining why a man wears leggings, and more importantly why any woman, however feral looking, finds herself attracted to such a male. Flashback to the vision: a mustachioed dude in zebra-patterned leggings sucking face with a girl in horn-rimmed glasses (prescription not confirmed).

Most of the Ottobar's patrons didn't seem to take note of the couple. They continued smoking; looking fashionably bored while the David Koresh man hummed the chorus to "No Hope Kids." On second thought, maybe he better resembled a bespeckled Jesus, resurrected to kick ass and to be weird.

WWWD. What would Wavves do? Would Wavves, the perpetual SoCal stoners that they are, endorse this sort of public presentation? Hell, would they consider themselves part of this clique of the drearily hip? Would Wavves care about any of this overly zealous analysis?

The short answer to each of these questions is a capital "Fuck no, and fuck you for even asking," an abrasive sentiment that was conveyed quite clearly once the man-boys took the stage.

Despite their flannel and skinny jeans, the band contrasted nicely against the Wham City crowd, and succeeded in injecting some west-coast abrasiveness into the confined space of the Ottobar. Bandleader and perennial shit-head Nathan Williams spent little time engaging the audience, save for a brief back and forth with a woman over whether or not she had snorted coke with Drew Carey. Drummer

ears
on
the
show

The New Pornographers at Rams Head Live!

The crowd at the New Pornographers is an interesting mélange of people who either look like they're present in order to stalk Dan Bejar — sporting a similar crazed hairstyle and vehemently avoiding any form of eye-contact — or people trying desperately to look like they know who Dan Bejar even is. On one end of the spectrum, a handful of middle-aged couples are trying out a band they most likely heard about on NPR. They were presumably drawn in by a big name like Neko Case who rocks out old-school in high-waisted jeans and no bra. Envious hipsters in the crowd have clearly (and, in some cases, unfortunately) been inspired. This brings us to the other end of the spectrum. Here we have our usual indie concert culprit: the flannel-clad hipster taking pictures on his iPhone while regurgitating obscure band facts he read in Pitchfork on the cab ride over. Standing on the balcony at Rams Head, I have a fantastic view of these people, almost like looking at a kind of social Petri dish. The past-their-prime couples are the most uncomfortable, albeit entertaining to watch. It's clear they've spent a long time getting ready to go out on the town, making special care to dress 'for the concert scene'. The women wear leather boots and chunky jewelry, while the men have decided that a blazer is a not only daring but awesome fashion decision when paired with converse sneakers — clearly an unprecedented fashion statement. However, once the hipsters start to dance, flannel rippling and dreads flying about, the old folks start to look pretty antsy. This element of the concert experience clearly was not implied in the three-minute NPR album review. In some cases the elders will nod along, possibly advancing to a shuffle-ball-change sort of maneuver during the more catchy songs like Spanish Techno. In most cases, however, they will retreat to the bar and feign that their intimate conversation is more riveting than the live musical performance taking place six yards away. As we get farther into the pit, the mood elevates. Most everyone left in the crowd is dancing at this point, and not only that — the dancing is getting weirder. While we've started the night with some fist pumps and the occasional head bang, the rapid elimination of the middle-aged community has left us with more room. Twirling is happening. Even the elusive but wondrous hipster-on-hipster booty grind can be spotted by a trained eye. By the time John Collins starts up the 'Heyla' cadenza of "Bleeding Heart Show," everyone is wildly consumed by the music. It's an amazing feeling. By the end of the night, we know why we're here — a favorite band, either new or old, seen through the lenses of every kind — Baltimore dives into the music with none of Brooklyn's pretension, none of Los Angeles's disaffection, and a space to make our own.

— Chloe Pelletier

eyes on the scene

Billy Hayes struggled to get a word during the exchange, despite his multiple attempts to break in with: "Drew Carey is a Republican. I'm not even kidding." However, Hayes eventually held his own with a diatribe on genital sores and his own disastrous experience attempting to use Proactiv as treatment.

I can't say Wavves sounded great live. The listening experience was excessively raw, sloppy at points, and in general, too loud to be able to distinguish one instrument from another. Live staples like "So Bored" and "No Hope Kids" sounded as coarse as they do on record, and even new material (like the excellent "Green Eyes" and "Super Soaker" from this year's relatively polished *King of the Beach*) couldn't escape degeneration into Wavves's signature aural scribble.

"Weed Demon," originally an acoustic track, was the night's pleasant surprise. Williams and Co. succeeded in transforming the comparatively mild-mannered tune into a bombastic stoner anthem that fit well with the rest of their ear-splitting set. Even so, the Wavves performance left something to be desired. There was no encore, no gracious "thank you" from the band. All that was offered by Williams and company was a giant figurative middle-finger, which to their defense, was exactly what the Baltimore audience wanted and expected.

In this sense the band deserves credit — visceral, abrasive music needs no showmanship, in fact it's better experienced without it. The acid-spitting surfer-punk genre, atop of which Wavves clearly sits needs only a few choice ingredients to succeed: sweat, booze, guitars, drums and a measure of irreverent chaos. To this end Wavves's 50-minute set was nothing short of impressive.

Regardless, something tells me that this sort of roundabout praise wouldn't much impress the boys. I imagine that for Williams, Hayes and Pope, praise is measured in the amount of complementary weed that gets thrown at you after the set's finished — and judging by the pungent odor lingering over the Ottobar parking lot post-show, I'd venture to guess that Wavves is more than living up to its own measure of success.

— Matt Goriand

SILKY GLITZ & ROWHOUSE GRIT

styled & written by Amanda Boyle
photographed by Daniel Litwin

MICHAEL VAN MAELE came to Baltimore from his native Michigan in 2008 to study biomedical engineering at Johns Hopkins University. On top of working one of the most notoriously difficult majors at the school—if not the world—Van Maele became an active member in the theater and musical community. This man does not live life half way: in the little free time he has from those endeavors, he has pursued a life-long passion: designing and hand-making two fashion collections for Fall 2010 and Spring 2011 under the label name Van Maele. Both collections walked at their respective DC Fashion Weeks.

brooch by VAN MAELE

all clothes by VAN MAELE
all accessories stylist's unless otherwise noted
all shoes models' own





Here we present looks from Spring 2011 highlighted against an exquisite Baltimore locale. Van Maele told us that for this last collection he was largely channeling a Parisian aesthetic. He told us he was thinking of “the streets of Paris in the nighttime during a summer rain. I was pulled toward luxury fabrics which have since become emblematic of my brand identity: silk jersey, charmeuse, organza, and silk/wool blends.” The collection was luscious and wonderfully detailed—a band of gold crocodile skin accents one chic black dress—while remaining wearable for varied settings. He has night looks of luxury and day looks of equal beauty. “I try to see what women wear when they feel best about themselves,” he said.



RIGHT: MIMI GU

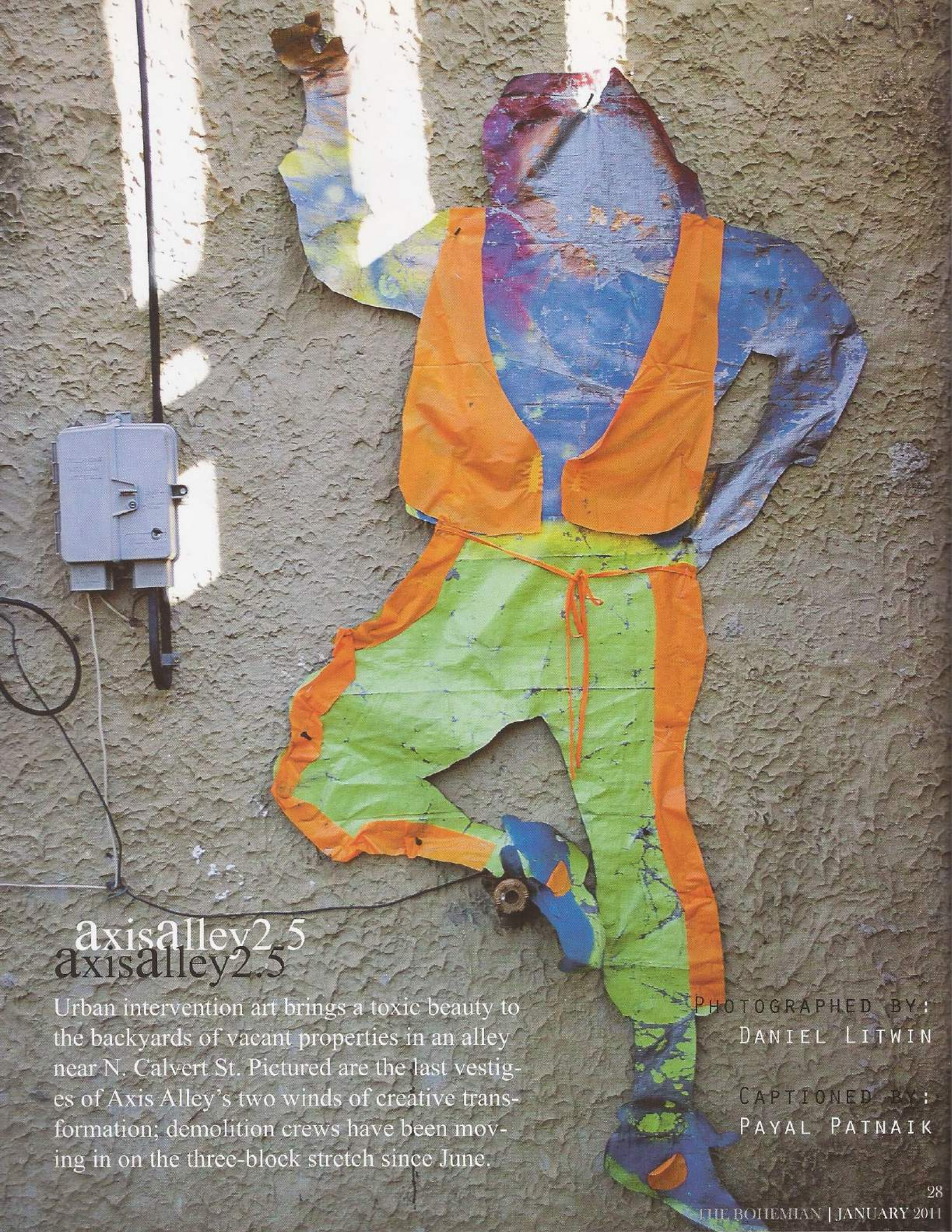
Painting by Artist of the Month, featured on page 12.







VAN MAELE has further aspirations in the world of fashion. At the Fall 2010 Fashion Week he was approached by a scout for the fashion-design reality show *Project Runway*. He is applying to be on the 9th cycle of the show, but will also finish his degree at Hopkins. In the meantime, he is working on a couture collection for Fall-Winter 2011, which will include his first menswear looks. Visit his website www.vanmaele.com for more information and photos from Fashion Week.



axisalley2.5 axisalley2.5

Urban intervention art brings a toxic beauty to the backyards of vacant properties in an alley near N. Calvert St. Pictured are the last vestiges of Axis Alley's two winds of creative transformation; demolition crews have been moving in on the three-block stretch since June.

PHOTOGRAPHED BY:
DANIEL LITWIN

CAPTIONED BY:
PAYAL PATNAIK





Nestled between Calvert St. and Hargrove Alley, Axis Alley was a forgotten nook until Sarah Doherty moved into the neighborhood. A MICA faculty member, Doherty organized 22 pieces to inhabit the backyards of the vacant properties until early summer of this year. The alley first began showcasing its work October of last year, after Doherty worked with city agencies, community organizations and artists to bring a creative edge to the alley that was otherwise 85 percent vacant. Last May, the alley unveiled its second artistic wind to the public. The alley is still accessible, despite construction breaking ground, although some of the pieces are now demolished. The alley is parallel to the 20th to 22th blocks of N. Calvert St.



CAN YOU GO HARDER, BALTIMORE?

ARTICLE AND ARTWORK BY J. BRAEDON JONES

Baltimore is not a rapper's city. Don't get me wrong, the omnipresent voice of Rick Ross claiming to be "Big Meech" can be heard blasting from every other car in the city, but that's hardly a local phenomenon. Baltimoreans love rap. We just hate Baltimorean rappers.

Over the last 10 years there have been countless (read as five to six) local rappers who were "about to blow," but few have ever made it beyond the range of 92.Q. But that's not a reflection of their skill. There are plenty of ill emcees that say "tew" instead of "two," but what they fail to realize, and what most people don't understand, is that Baltimore, like Detroit, D.C. or New Orleans, has its own sound, and around here DJs call the shots.

DJs made hip hop. Kool Herc carried a party in the back of his truck and was the coolest dude in the world for doing it. Rappers were only invented in order to praise the DJs while they were mixing. No rapper should have ever developed past the skill level of Flavor Flav, but talented MCs, like current Baltimore resident the Chief Rocker Busy Bee, chose to take some time from glorifying their DJ to shine a little light on themselves. Because of this many of you may now know the lyrics to "Pretty Boy Swag." History made.

But Baltimore, thanks to the efforts of countless DJs, some spectacular clubs and more than a few well-timed proms, has developed its own vision of hip hop that takes it back to the basics. Baltimore Club Music is pure and uncut hip-hop, and has become the mainstay of the local music scene. For any rapper that ever hopes to be the B-More Jay-Z, they need to understand and capitalize on this scene. It's possible to be a successful rapper without the backing of the city's DJs, but it's pretty unlikely.

In order to respectfully call itself hip-hop music, a song must do one of two things: Speak for the unspoken or shake butts. The digital revolution has encouraged a return to these humble roots in that there are a slew of rappers out on the internet, building their brand and receiving a lot of attention for giving a voice to ... well, themselves. And

that's fine. Like Terrance Howard managed to wheeze in *Hustle & Flow*, everybody's got a verse, and every verse deserves to be heard. Unlike DJs, however, rappers have the responsibility of literally speaking to their audiences and rap audiences just love to hear about the streets. Any streets, every street, Sesame Street, it doesn't matter. Hip-Hop fans love the underdog and, more importantly, we love to hear ourselves in the music.

As the spokesmen for hip hop, rappers have to be as accessible. If the audience can't feel it then fuck it. It's trash. The easiest way for a rapper to build that connection with an audience is to represent their city, province or cul-de-sac. There must be something relatable about you to be a rapper. You would be hard pressed to find a rapper whose hometown, or at least the city from which they operate, isn't common knowledge in the hip-hop community because they love talking about it. The only non rapping musician that gives their home town more shout-outs is Bruce Springsteen, and the Boss doesn't sing about Jersey even close to half as much as Redman raps about it. Economist and hip-hop fan Cedric Muhammad once likened being a prominent rapper to being a politician, and I whole heartedly agree. The best rappers take their constituencies very seriously because, like a politician, they represent them.

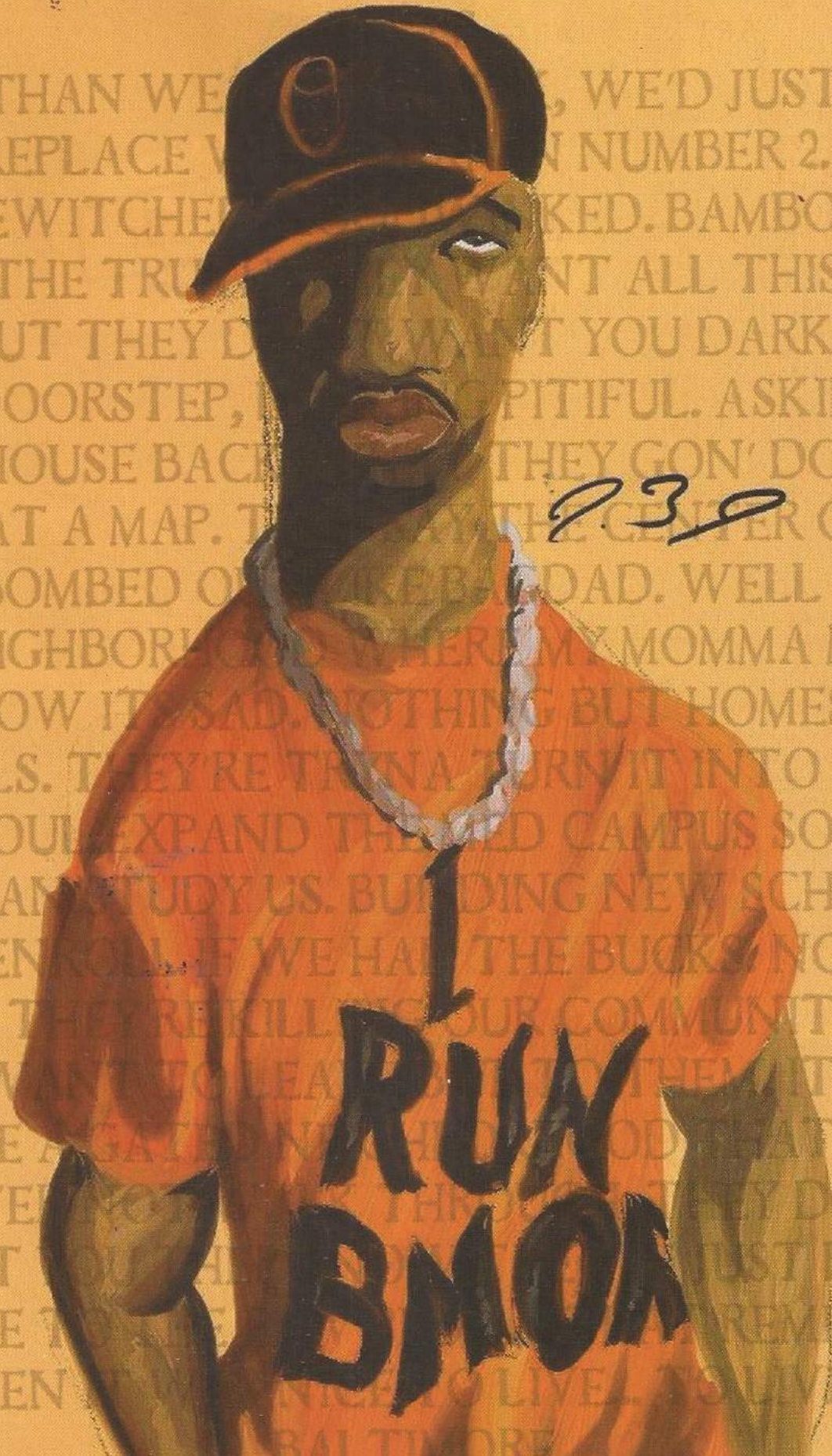
For instance, with the release of their debut album in 1994, OutKast completely revolutionized Southern hip hop. The electric blues of Stax Records and the funky grooves of Parliament permeate through southern rappers slow, Chevy riding, music, and no group made the sound more popular than OutKast. At the very peak of the East Coast/West Coast rap beef, it was OutKast that was awarded new artist of the year by *The Source* magazine and it was OutKast that clearly stated, "The South got somethin' to say." The brilliance behind OutKast was that they had a built in fan base by capturing the funky grooves and thick drawls that had moved through the south for so long and introduced the rest of the world to something new. Not to mention how many asses shook to "Player's Ball." N.W.A. did the same for Compton and California. Common and Twista did it for Chicago. Wale's trying to do it in DC. When done right, this hip-hop thing can be a lot bigger than just music but Baltimore's rappers just do not understand the power of this synthesis.

There are hundreds of rappers in Baltimore that rap well, and there are dozens with the charisma and skills necessary to be successful, but none has used those skills to capture the heart of the city in an effective way. Yes, Lab Tek Won has been Baltimore's underground hero for almost two decades, and he is a magnificent rapper. Yes, Black Sunn is a promising

The Wire was shot on Baltimore streets, featured Baltimorean actors and was created by Baltimorean writers. Any Baltimorean rapper that ever hopes to succeed has to create that same authenticity.

MY CITY'S IN A SITUATION IN WHICH GENTRIFICATION COULD ELIMINATE SOME PROBLEMS WE'RE FACING. ALL WE'D HAVE TO DO IS CHANGE SOME

MORE THAN WE... WE'D JUST HAVE TO BE REPLACE... NUMBER 2. WE'VE BEEN BEWITCHED... BAMBOOZLED FROM THE TRU... ALL THIS NEW SHIT, BUT THEY D... YOU DARKENING THEIR DOORSTEP, ... PITIFUL. ASKING FOR YOUR HOUSE BACK... THEY GON' DO? JUST LOOK AT A MAP. THE... THE CENTER OF THE CITY'S BOMBED O... DAD. WELL THAT'S THE NEIGHBORHOOD... MY MOMMA MET MY DAD. NOW IT'S SAD. NOTHING BUT HOMES WITH NO SOULS. THEY'RE TRYNA TURN IT INTO A MEDICAL SEOU... CAMPUS SO KOREANS CAN STUDY US. BUILDING NEW SCHOOLS. WE'D ENJOY... IF WE HAD THE BUCKS... NO SUCH LUCK. THEY'RE KILLING OUR COMMUNITY. WE DON'T WANT TO LEA... THEM... IT'S SOON TO BE A GATE... THAT YOU BETTER... THEY DON'T WANT... MUST BEING POLITE TO... REMEMBER WHEN... LIVE IN



939

upstart with a solid online following. Yes, Los' meticulous rapid fire flow produced the best remix to Lil Wayne's "A Milli," but none of them sound like Baltimore. What's truly frustrating about the whole thing, though, is that it can be done. It can be done because a lot of people have come close.

DJ Class had a number one single in the country with his song "I'm the Shit" and it was nothing but a watered down club mix. There are four or five different versions of that song featuring the likes of Kanye West, Trey Songz, Jermaine Dupri and Lil Jon, and DJ Class just did a Bmore Club remix to Usher's number one single "OMG." DJ Class, however, is not a rapper. The rhymes on "I'm the Shit" are butt (including Kanye's verse), but it doesn't matter. Why? Because these songs sound like Baltimore, and Class has proved that, even without a solid rapper. Baltimore DJs are good enough to do this on their own, and that Baltimore has a marketable sound (anybody remember "Whoa Now!" by Brich?). For the life of me I cannot comprehend why no local rapper is trying to hop on the bandwagon. The only one who seems to have had sense enough to even try is Mullyman.

Mullyman is one of the most popular rappers in the city and is easily the best hope we have for a proper Baltimorean rapper. He's been at this rap thing for a long time and he's nice. Mullyman raps with a passion that hasn't been heard since DMX's first album, and he has the skills to back up his powerful flow. More importantly, he is unquestionably and unapologetically Baltimorean. With his album *Harder Than Baltimore*, produced mostly by local club disc jockey DJ BooMan (now available on iTunes), Mullyman demonstrates what a Baltimore rapper should sound like. From the accent, to the imagery, to the subtle influences of Club music in his beats, he presents the city in a manner that no other rapper has. Mullyman has been shown a lot of love in the DMV and does appear on MTV. But he's still pretty unpolished and the album reflects it. While his rhymes are nice, his songwriting skills could use some work and finesse. But the potential's there. The project isn't perfect but it's certainly a step in the right direction.

The reason *The Wire* was such an effective, popular and genuinely good show was because it felt real. It was shot on Baltimore streets, featured Baltimorean actors and was created by Baltimorean writers. Any Baltimorean rapper that ever hopes to succeed has to create that same authenticity. If you want to represent what life in Baltimore is like, you can rap about the crime, you can rap about the drugs, you can rap about the women, but if your rhymes don't smell like Old Bay, then you're wasting your time. Trap music and booty shake songs are universal at this point. That raw passion at a 130 beats per minute that we call Baltimore Club music? That's ours, and we should embrace it.

JANUARY PLANNING AHEAD EARLY CALENDAR

Five:ten readings

**JANUARY 15: Ken Sparkling,
Shya Scanlon, Robin Black**

Writers Michael Kimball and Jen Michalski launched the 510 Reading Series to bring mainstream and experimental fiction writers to Baltimore. The series takes place at the Carriage House on Hargrove Street. Visit the blog 510readings.blogspot.com for more information.

The Wind-up Space

JANUARY 8: 5 p.m. Vinyl Happy Hour with **JoJo South**. Join the owner of JoJoSouth Record Shop to talk music.

JANUARY 10 and JANUARY 24: 7 p.m.–10 p.m.: Dr. Sketchy's anti-art school: sessions started by Molly Crabapple where you can learn how to make cabaret life-drawings. There will be models and "boozy fun for all."

JANUARY 11: 9:30 p.m. Out Of Your Head: Improvised and Experimental Music Collective

Need a lift?

Sometimes buses can't quite cut it. New Zipcars are being added to the Baltimore market. Readers who are interested in signing up will receive \$75 in driving credit with the promotion code: **bullman75**.

Jan. 15

@ 910 Live
Dub Nation Two Year
Anniversary

Jan. 31

@ Rams Head Live!
Girl Talk concert



Bohemian night.
Captured by Joshua Gleason

his auto are about 250 rupees per day. That figure, compared to the meager 20 rupee payment by the first two passengers this particular day, sent my mind into a tumultuous anxiety.

"I'm not worried," Uday said when I asked how he is able to sustain his business. "Somehow, I will find a way to make ends meet. I can only have faith in God and do my job well."

While a traditional market economy relies on forces of supply and demand to determine prices, in a gift economy, the recipient is able to set a price based on what he views to be the value of the goods received.

This element of undetermined prices is the second characteristic element of a gift economy transaction. The recipient is able to measure the value of the gift he sees fit, rather than being bound to prices established by the market or the provider.

Uday's selflessness and conviction in the gift economy become clear at the end of each ride he gives.

The passenger leans over to check the meter and asks Uday the fare, most often with apprehension at the thought of parting with a sum of cash. But every time, Uday flashes his Hollywood-esque smile and replies, "Whatever your heart desires."

The idea of "paying from your heart" is unheard of in the rickshaw business, where an underlying tension seems to always exist between driver and passenger — each party negotiates to try to hold on to every rupee they can.

Uday's passengers have different reactions when he explains his concept, varying from gratitude to disbelief.

Soon after he inaugurated his experiment with the gift economy, Uday came across an old woman trying to hail a rickshaw. The woman asked Uday to take her roughly four kilometers away. Uday welcomed her into his auto, but the woman explained that she only had three rupees, for what would surely amount to a 35 rupee ride based on the metered fare.

Uday replied, "Auntie, a payment based on the meter amounts to nothing more than money. But three rupees given from your heart — that is surely wealth!"

After arriving at her destination, the woman got out of the auto and

touched Uday's head kindly as a blessing.

As explained by the *Dictionary of Ethical Politics*, each transaction of the gift economy calls on the recipient to consider the value society gains from the act of consumption. A traditional supply and demand model dictates price to be the inherent value of the product, based on its relative scarcity. In contrast, the gift economy model is driven by the belief that each selfless act of giving will benefit society as a whole, and this external value may be factored into any payment.

As Uday sees it, a payment dictated by market forces is nothing more than money — but a payment given voluntarily is an investment in the wealth and prosperity of society.

The third and final element of the gift economy is more like an effort to define what this model strives to be, rather than a necessary component of each transaction.

"Whereas market economy transactions tend to be bound within a single, reciprocal exchange, gift economy transactions involve catalyzing a process of selfless giving which induces the recipient of the benefits to, in turn, confer a benefit selflessly on another," reads *The Dictionary of Ethical Politics*.

"People today are so obsessed with money," Uday shared. "One rupee here, one rupee there. But when you give a gift, the value exceeds the cost."

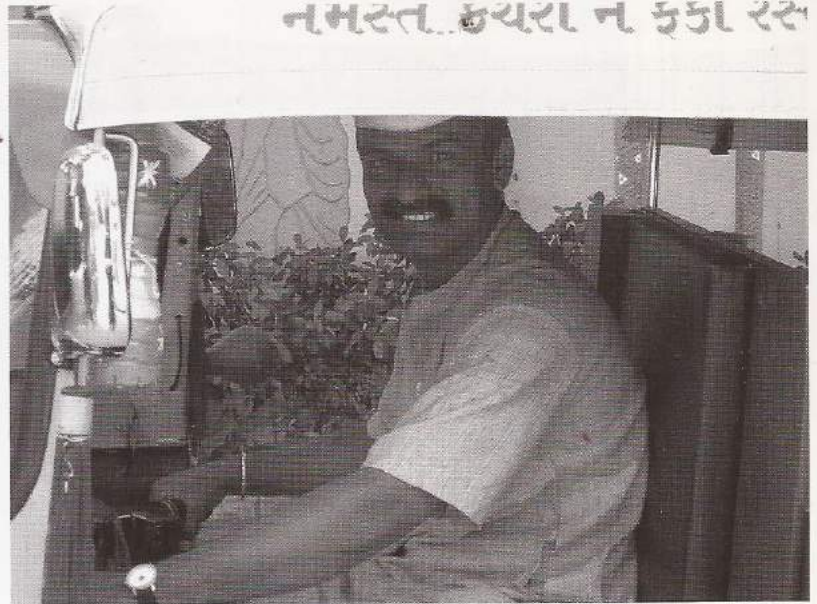
Uday hopes that if even five of the twenty passengers touched by his experiment each day are inspired by the spirit of giving, the ripple effects of the gift economy will spread far beyond his single auto.

It's a utopian idea — a society in which selflessness and goodwill not only drive, but also sustain the market.

If Uday has been able to implement this model in the urban setting of Ahmedabad, can it be adopted in Baltimore as well?

Acceptance of the gift economy requires a shift in the way a population perceives value — transactions must involve an awareness of the societal consequences of material consumption and the interconnectedness between all players in a market.

Indian history and culture, especially in



Ahmedabad, are closely tied to this idea of interconnectedness. Mahatma Gandhi resided in Ahmedabad during vital years of the Indian independence movement.

A focus of Gandhi's strategy for a prosperous India was *Swadeshi*, or use of indigenous goods.

Gandhi advocated for the importance of supporting local businesses and artisans, for the economic and social well-being of a community.

Swadeshi is not intended to generate hatred of malice for foreigners, but instead as a reminder that if each man looks out for the interest of his neighbors, a service will be done for humanity as a whole.

While the benefit of *Swadeshi* for a nation is clear through a strictly economic viewpoint, the rapid pace and consumption-centered lifestyle in Baltimore (and other metropolitan centers) do not necessarily cultivate the instinct to slow down and lend a hand to our neighbors.

The gift economy can only survive if a population keeps in mind the interests of others, rather than measuring value based as it applies solely to the individual — thus benefiting society as a whole.

It's unclear whether Baltimore is ready for a gift economy taxi service, or how such an experiment will be received in a population that adheres strictly to the rules of the market economy.

This concept may not yet be sustainable in the western world. But until a pioneer like Uday introduces the idea, the seeds of giving that are buried within our capitalist system may remain unwatered.

It's a utopian idea — a society in which selflessness and goodwill not only drive but also sustain the market.

THE GIFT ECONOMY: AN EXPERIMENT IN SELFLESSNESS

Writer POOJA SHAH has spent the past three months in Ahmedabad, the largest city in the Indian state of Gujarat.

One afternoon, she took to the streets of Ahmedabad to witness the response of an idea implemented by a very special native of the city.

“First, we’ll stop for *chai!*” Uday smiled widely under his thick black mustache as he revved the engine of his

auto-rickshaw. Uday soon parked the auto in a shady spot near a bustling snack stand. Buzzing with the anticipation of picking up the first passenger of the

auto-rickshaw. I don’t have a habit of drinking coffee or tea when I’m in the States, but there’s something about the milky, ginger-infused Indian brew, that you don’t need to be a caffeine-addict to enjoy. It’s the perfect accompaniment to all things worth celebrating, anticipating or deliberating — and I had the feeling my day with Uday would involve a sampling of all three.

Uday has been driving an auto-rickshaw — familiarly called an auto — in Ahmedabad for nearly 20 years. This afternoon, I joined him as he drove through the city streets, testing out a new social experiment: the “gift economy” auto-rickshaw.

We downed our last drops of tea and Uday motored off. Sitting beside him in the driver seat of the auto, I had a panoramic view of Ahmedabad streets at lunchtime. After being a passenger in countless rickshaws, I was excited to be on the other side of the ride.

day, I sat nearby and looked hopefully at each passerby.

After about ten minutes my excitement began to wear off. November in Ahmedabad is not the usual chilly gray weather I’m used to in Baltimore. Even in the shade, the 90 degree weather and humidity were killing my buzz. I looked over to Uday, but he showed no signs of weariness.

Ten more minutes passed. Then fifteen. Finally, two boys approached Uday and to my relief I was soon sitting in the natural air-conditioning of the open-frame rickshaw as we delivered them to their destination.

It takes a certain type of person to be a rickshaw driver, I quickly learned on my day out with Uday. This job requires a great deal of patience and resilience.

“Oh, I never get bored out here,” Uday said animatedly. “I love Ahmedabad and I love driving my rickshaw.”

Beyond his enduring spirit and energy, Uday is cut from a different cloth than most in his profession. In an effort to spread some love and positivity in what he views to be an increasingly consumption-driven society, Uday has recently adopted the concept of the gift economy.

Rather than presenting a fare based on the meter, like most rickshaw drivers, Uday explains to his passengers that their fare has already been paid for, as a gift. They are not obligated to give any payment, but if they wish to pass on the gift to a future passenger, they can pay any amount they desire — in the spirit of “paying it forward”.

According to the *Dictionary of Ethical Politics*, a gift economy transaction has three essential elements, the first of which is selflessness on behalf of the provider. The gesture must truly be one of gifting, without any expectation of payment by the provider.

This may seem out of place in a profit-earning setting, but Uday, whose livelihood depends on his income as a rickshaw driver, has put his confidence in the generosity of the public. The fuel and maintenance costs of running



CAPTURED BY: WILL MANNING

