Talk Radio
by Eric Bogosian
October 3-4 and 7-11, 2008

Eurydice
by Sarah Ruhl

Brighton Beach Memoirs
by Neil Simon
November 24 and 25, 2008

Cyrano
by Edmond Rostand
February 13-March 1, 2009
A co-production in Theatre Memphis

The Spitfire Grill
Music and Book by James Valcq
Lyrics and Book by Fred Alley
February 26 and 28, 2009

Miss Julie: Freedom Summer
by Stephen Sachs
February 27 and March 1, 2009

The African Company Presents Richard III
by Carlyle Brown
April 12-18 and 23-25, 2009

Tickets: 678-2576
www.memphis.edu/theatre
Near the end of a wet, chilly winter in Nashville, a revolution took place on the campus of Vanderbilt University. The Commodore’s Louie Greco Art Gallery – in the Old Gym, at the edge of the quad, misty campus – had been transformed into a site of protest, torture, and sparring. No, this was not an aggrieved case of particularly brutal academic politics; it was an example of the power of art to give voice to the voiceless, bearing witness to violence committed under the official guise of legitimate power.

Of Rage and Redemption: The Art of Oswaldo Guayasamin

Vanderbilt University Fine Art Gallery

Nashville

Of Rage and Redemption: The Art of Oswaldo Guayasamin was organized by the Center for Latin American and Iberian Studies at Vanderbilt University and the Vanderbilt University Fine Arts Gallery. Curated by gallery director Joseph S. Malla, the exhibition opened in December 2015 and will travel to a number of venues across the United States. These works incorporate representational imagery of struggle, direct social and political activism, and technical virtuosity.

Guayasamin began his career as a precocious art student, working his way through various art schools and eventually attending the School of Fine Arts in Quito. He held his first exhibition in 1942 at the age of 23. While he was still in his 20s, Guayasamin was establishing his formal vocabulary: painting, sculpting, collecting. By the 1950s, he was the first artist at the Equatorial National Arts Council of Ecuador. Seven years later, in 1955, he was one of the first Hispanic American painters to be invited to the Fourth Biennale of Sao Paulo. Guayasamin emerged as the second most important painter in South America’s history; he was South America’s best painter at the Fourth Biennale of Sao Paulo.

The Path of Tears period reveals political concerns that fueled that movement and would continue to be central in Guayasamin’s own mature work. The paintings that make up the Path of Tears period reveal the influence of European painters, especially Picasso. A painting like 1977’s “The Bull and the Condor” is not only a visual reference to the Spanish painter’s poster art, but it imitates Picasso’s pre-1960 distortions of space and time. “The Bull and the Condor” also reflects South American folk traditions that equate the Andean condor with the nation and the bull with the Colonial Spaniard. One of the boldest, most beautifully painted images in the show, this piece demonstrates Guayasamin’s growing preoccupation with the abstract political realities that were affecting the lives of his people, giving his work a new depth that went beyond the documentary, narrative portrayals that make up his earlier work. The paintings in Vanderleit’s retrospective that represent Guayasamin’s most important work begin to emerge, in technique, subjects and content. Paintings like “The Accident,” “Dead Children” and “Mother and Child” to the Old Gym’s gallery walls with their muted palettes and somber trajectories are on the rise of conspicuous outlining of figures. These works incorporate representational imagery of struggle, direct social and political activism, and technical virtuosity. Although it is correct to observe these antecedents in his work, it is a mistake to dismiss his images because of them. Guayasamin’s aesthetic importations are complex, not just to the point of distraction from the work’s affecting content and medium exceptional in the wake of political nightmares. By the 1980s until his death in 1999, Guayasamin’s work took another turn during the period he dubbed Tenderness.

In “The Tortured” and “Meeting at the Pentagon,” Guayasamin’s more overtly political work gets the last laugh in critics of such preoccupations. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, cultural centers like New York were occupied with Pop Art, minimalism and other mostly non-political trends. Though Guayasamin’s subjects may have seemed relatively cut out of sight, they always fit in with contemporary South American traditions, and standing between them – as they bookend the Vanderleit show – is nothing short of a work by any American living through the political manipulations that have characterized the machinations in Washington since 9/11. In Guayasamin’s work we see the influences of Picasso, Matisse and Gerhard Rode, as well as social and political activism, including the macabre vocabulary of Dia de los Muertos traditions. Although it is correct to observe these antecedents in his work, it is a mistake to dismiss his images because of them. Guayasamin’s aesthetic importations are complex, not just to the point of distraction from the work’s affecting content and medium exceptional in the wake of political nightmares. By the 1980s until his death in 1999, Guayasamin’s work took another turn during the period he dubbed Tenderness.

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The Art of Oswaldo Guayasamin: Of Rage and Redemption

Guayasamin was attempting to finish “The Temple of Man” before his death. The temple is an eternal flame for all victims of political violence, a “shrine of eternal view” to the victims of all political violence, everywhere. Completed posthumously, the temple is surrounded by a series of large murals that document the history of the peoples of South America, from the original, indigenous inhabitants, through the colonial and revolutionary periods, up to the present. Completed posthumously, the Temple contains an eternal flame for all victims of political violence, a “shrine of eternal view” to the victims of all political violence, everywhere.

Guayasamin’s last exhibitions were displayed in 1995 in the Luxembourg Palace in Paris and the Palais de Glace in Buenos Aires. The artist died on March 31, 1999, at the age of 75. His passing was marked by national tributes by the indigenous people who had loved so deeply, his death is still considered to be the terrible loss of a national treasure by the peoples of Ecuador.

After leaving at Vanderleit’s Of Rage and Redemption: The Art of Oswaldo Guayasamin will embark on a national tour that will include galleries in Texas, Florida, Pennsylvania, California and Washington D.C.

Joe Nolan
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The Art of Oswaldo Guayasamin

Vanderbilt University Fine Art Gallery

Notable Works:

Pink: Not Her Favorite Color
Pink: New Work by Libby Rowe
Belmont University, Leu Art Gallery
January 22, 2008 – March 6, 2008
Nashville

Pink is more than just the title of Libby Rowe’s exhibition at Belmont University’s Leu Gallery or the name of the color that she has slowly grown to loathe; it is a personal experience. As soon as you enter Pink, you immediately confront an array of sculptures, videos, participation-required physical activities, and other thought-provoking artwork that allow you to examine your own world within Rowe’s take on society’s views of what it means to be female. Rowe derives her art from numerous stereotypes about feminism, extending beyond existing views, often reaching back to images contrived during the June Cleaver-era of the 1950s and ’60s.

Although all of the work in her most recent Pink gallery was made specifically for this exhibition, Libby’s first ideas for such a display originated while she worked on a master of fine arts degree in photography at Syracuse University during the mid-1990s. After completing her thesis and finding herself at an artistic standstill, Rowe began making collages, combining ideas from imagery she loved in random books and her own thoughts. Rowe explains the significance of this time period: “It gave me a natural conceptual transition. I was thinking I had to stay in photography, but was reminded that I am an artist above all, so for me, the idea is my medium.” In addition, the combination of renovating old artifacts and utilizing the latest technologies, part of her heritage from childhood, became a signature that gave her work a socially progressive edge.

After Rowe came to Vanderbilt in 2003, what began as a few sculptures and photo collages soon turned into much more. Every additional Pink work revealed Rowe’s latest reflections about what kind of relationships people had with their own bodies, views about the accepted social definitions of being a “woman” and questioning who controlled such definitions.

Rowe included several observation pieces in the current production of Pink. In these, the audience can either look at a variety of sculptures of lingerie or videos of Rowe participating in “feminine” activities (i.e. jumping rope, getting a manicure, sewing a dress, and so on). The majority of pieces, however, are participation stations where the audience engages actively with the artwork. One wall features plaques hung with strands of fake hair coming out of them to allow viewers to style or braid them in any manner they want. Another activity allows viewers to change into pink high heeled shoes, with an assortment of sizes provided. After putting on the high heels, viewers walk a pathway labeled with pink vinyl, trying to maintain perfect posture while balancing a porcelain tea cup and saucer on their heads. If the cup falls, then the participant returns to the starting point. But don’t worry, visitors don’t have to pay for the cups that fall off and break on the ground; they are only asked to sweep up the debris.

The two most fascinating and thought-provoking pieces were the “not a sir” photo collage and “web of lies.” “Not a sir” — a group of photos taken of Rowe at all of the locations in Nashville where she had been mistakenly called “sir” — directly confronts historical social definitions of men having short hair, deeper voices, and wearing particular types of clothing, definitions that Rowe deals with on a daily basis living in the South.

“Web of lies,” a pink web made of strings in a design similar to a spider web, hung in the corner of the room. Providing blank white tags and a pink pen, Rowe asked viewers to write down one lie on a single tag that they could remember telling themselves and then hang it on the wall. A couple of weeks after the exhibition opened, it was difficult to find remaining space to hang a tag. This fact, and the filled-up guestbook, revealed the immediate and deep impact that such a creative endeavor had on its numerous observers. “Web of lies” originated because of the blunt manner in which Rowe continues to approach her art. She persists in pushing limits by continually addressing her personal fears, taboos, and lies, ideas central to “web of lies” and “not a sir.”

The frontiers are my prison
But I must go on
I'm the only one this evening
There were three of us this morning
She died without a whisper
I have changed my name so often
...
Alice Aycock’s Expanded Site Specificity

Two recent projects in Tennessee reveal how Alice Aycock’s installation works extend beyond selected sites into wider terrain. This exposure results from the artist’s engagement with spatial metaphors culled from the hazy, shifting parapsychology, and other less speaking forms of discredited science. Aycock’s recent installation in Nashville, together with another work slated for 2009 in Knoxville, explore the fervent dynamism of her fundamental redefinition of site specificity.

In downtown Nashville, one approaches the Cumberland River down Broadway to see at the horizon an assemblage, both sturdy and whimsical, consisting of flying red arcs that seem to mark the end point of the city’s main artery. The brightly colored trusses are far too curvilinear to belong to a discredited science. Aycock’s recent installation in Nashville, together with another work slated for 2009 in Knoxville, explore the fervent dynamism of her fundamental redefinition of site specificity.

Knoxville, 2007, steel, aluminum, neon, and halogen lights, 100 x 100 x 60 ft.

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The title’s reference to ghosts locates those unseen or perhaps erased features of a city as the resonances that we sense even if we do not detect them empirically. Juxtaposition, particularly in the form of overlaying new sculptural forms atop old trusses, causes the viewer to apprehend that the superimposition preserves both the once-related sculpting gone and the vague memories contained within.

Aycock has long been fascinated by industrial landscapes, which she has pondered from afar as if such odorous examples were the air and water flow that Leonardo da Vinci had studied in the early 16th century, Aycock discovered that the dramatic forces of beneficent that produce tomasella also form the basis for activating a fixed terrain on the ground by extending a sculpture into the air. By marking the traces of both natural phenomena and such manufactured forces as electricity, Aycock sculpts forms that apparently hover above the ground to further activate the surrounding space. To be sure, those floating, colorful ribbons in the Knoxville work will be held in place as high as 30 feet above the ground with cords made of aluminum or steel. The artist says about Whirlwind: “The project is a metaphor for the labyrinth of dynamic possibilities and interconnections, which occur in the university environment. The acquisition of knowledge is not a static series of steps but an incredibly dynamic, energetic and creative ricochet of information. Ideas are not at rest.”

Gregor Kalas
Gregor Kalas is an assistant professor of the history and theory of architecture at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville.
Marius Lehene, “Intre,” Cement and mixed media on board 24”H x 26”W 2006

‘construction and a process.’

Lehene uses construction materials and processes as metaphor to demonstrate that cultural meaning itself is a surface. Lehene’s work suggests destruction of landscapes and disaster through the use of distressed and deteriorating surfaces. The top of the canvas is spattered with a heavy concentration of pure color that floods the surface, creating a thick cold horizon line.

‘White Perimeter’ almost seems to be the negative version of ‘Jetgirl.’ The sub-surface looks as if it were made with a mixture of coagulating and cream colored grout. The surface cracks and is splattered with the amber tones of glue or resin. The embedded plant material is scattered with a pale ash-like dusting, leaving the entire work to appear to be the grey sands of a landscape devastated by some form of natural or man-made disaster.

Rich surfaces are the fundamental language of Lehene’s work. Whether the piece is a minimalist abstraction, or a simple compositional structure derived from landscape or architecture, the tactile layering of the surface creates a rich narrative. The rough application of commercial construction materials forces Lehene’s work to live in a place between art and its subject. Graffiti scrawled across an applied cement surface on plywood has an authenticity more dynamic than a recreation in paint alone.

Accidental Vestments

The most intriguing group of work in the exhibit was the immigrant series. Three of these pieces featured plywood-embedded tee shirts that, while neatly folded, looked as if they had survived a fire, with the different colors of earth staining them spread across the plywood surface. The two shirts alternated with horizontal lines of cracked red earth, holding down old envelopes from the Department of Homeland Security with “U.S. Citizenship and Immigration” written in return addresses. A repeated stamp of a walking horse was added to the bottom of every envelope. A dollar bill could be seen through the address window of another.

Positive Negative

The natural wrinkling of the paper, from the material that was used to frame the background for these materials was covered underneath a large square of yellowed translucent paper. The natural wrinkling of the paper, from the material that was used to face it to the surface, was enhanced by white stripes drawn with a flat, broad brush. Black arrows drawn on each cardboard panel from each edge of the piece. The printed text that formed the background for these materials was covered by a linear, black asphalt painting of energetic vertical strokes, suggestive of overlapping trees. The interplay of surfaces, textures and found materials in these pieces convey meanings that range from ambiguous to fairly literal, but leave unfragmented as a reminder that much of memory is obscured by time.

In the remainder of the exhibit, Lehene’s manipulation of his materials results in a very empirically satisfying visual experience.

Denise Stewart-Sanabria
Survive Fashion: Graffiti in Fashion's Current and Past.
One of the more jaw-dropping groups of prints in the show is eight photographs from the series Snaps that Sada Tangara documented in 1998. There’s a single body, in others groups of bodies lie intertwined. At the age of 14, Tangara was homeless and living on the streets of Dakar, Senegal. He was given a disposable camera by a local charity and asked to document the lives of other children like him. The children in these pictures aren’t dead. By a local charity and asked to document the lives of other children like him. The children in these pictures aren’t dead. By a local charity and asked to document the lives of other children like him. The children in these pictures aren’t dead. By a local charity and asked to document the lives of other children like him. The children in these pictures aren’t dead. By a local charity and asked to document the lives of other children like him. The children in these pictures aren’t dead. 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Just as Proust refigured people and events from his own life into his works, so, too, does Sudden transpose personal memories and concerns into art. The installation’s kayaks symbolize the Greek themes with a subtle reference to Plato, for whom all laws of nature, the diurnal sequence of birth and mortality, and the generation of life. A plummet inside echoes the previous allusion to the Greek philosopher’s idea/forms, seem to mirror two finished boats below, the latter analogous to Plato’s concept of mundane reality, as shadowy and insubstantive. A second video taken on the artist’s property at the site poses the poignant query, “What does it all mean if you can’t remember the ones you love?” In striking contrast to the bees’ vibrant energy is the last boat, charred in the center and draped with a black shroud. An opening the shape of an inverted teardrop shows a video tape recounting her passion for a mortal artist, its fatal consequences, and her ultimate intervention before the man and his wife drink from the waters of Lethe to their oblivion. The final scene poies the poignant query, “What does it all mean if you can’t remember the ones you love?”

FOR THE WATERS OF LETHE

For the Waters of Lethe
A Multi-Media Installation by Richard Sudden
In collaboration with Jason Vise/filmmaker
Mag 26–June 21, 2008
Whitespace Gallery

Atlanta

Early in the past century, Marcel Proust discovered his “mémoire involontaire.” Restoring to the tired, lifting him from the “medioirse, contemptible, nothing,” Long before Proust, the aging writer the past in all its sensory richness, involuntary affairs. Not unlike Proust, initiates in mystery cults were taught that Mnemosyne’s filigree offered omniscience. And sculptor’s statue of Euphrosyne was cremated to drink both from Lethe, the spring of forgetfulness, and from that of Mnemosyne. In the “the bucket” concept of remembrance and forgetfulness, Richard Sudden chooses the Greek personifications, Mnemosyne and Lethe, both rivers in the Greek underworld, to structure his multi-media installation, For the Waters of Lethe (2008).

The viewer enters a semi-darkened space, at once mysterious and subliminally disquieting. Two unframed, weather-scarred canvases occupy the left wall. Inscribed on the first, the installation’s title in Greek partially obscures earlier letters. On the first, the second canvas suggests where a missing picture once hung. An adjacent circle of withered roses recalls a wreath shaped the female vulva, making them symbolic instruments of conception, birth, but also of death, each kagia representing a stage in the life cycle. A frame without its covering, the first boat stands for the inception of life. A document inside echoes the previous allusion to nature’s laws and to fate’s control of human life. Below, a larger weight appears to underscore the “freight” of human existence. Shielded within a vase nest in the second kagia is a crystal ball—illuminated by a crimson laser, a reference to the generation of life. Lighted from within and covered with a canvas “skin,” the third boat displays in the concept a beekeeper’s honeycomb structure. Signifying life’s ephemerality, the hive’s industrious bees designate not only of bees and order but also remembrance and rebirth. In Greek thought bees symbolized the gene pools of initiates and were associated with the Sibyl of Delphi. Jung claimed that bees embody a spark of divine intelligence. Recapturing this rich legacy, Joan Denvavar sees the bee as an emblem of “the vital principle and [of] the soul.”

In striking contrast to the bees’ abundant energy is the last boat, charred in the center and draped with a black shroud. A second video taken on the artist’s property at the site poses the poignant query, “What does it all mean if you can’t remember the ones you love?” In striking contrast to the bees’ vibrant energy is the last boat, charred in the center and draped with a black shroud. An opening the shape of an inverted teardrop shows a video tape recounting her passion for a mortal artist, its fatal consequences, and her ultimate intervention before the man and his wife drink from the waters of Lethe to their oblivion. The final scene poies the poignant query, “What does it all mean if you can’t remember the ones you love?”

Just as Proust reflected people and events from his own life into fictional tools, so does Sudden transpose personal memories and concerns into art. The installation’s kagias derive, of course, from Sumerian tradition of boating. But, even more important, the artist’s fascination with memory and its loss undoubtedly stems from his own mother’s center with Alzheimer’s. As Proust so elegantly wrote, “For with the perturbations of memory are linked the intermittences of the heart.”

Sheri Fleck Rieth and Herb Rieth
Southside Gallery

Oxford

It was impossible to ignore the most obvious conceit in the recent show pairing the work of Sheri Fleck Rieth and Herb Rieth at the Southside Gallery in Oxford. "It brought together the work of a mother and her adult son. The danger in such a combination is that viewers might look specifically for the work that would acknowledge the relationship between the artists. Fortunately, the Rieths are strong individuals, and their work demands enough of the viewer to render the novelty of the juxtaposition an interesting side note.

One result of the pairing was an increased sense of contrast and comparison between the two bodies of work. They simply had to be seen as parts of each other. Shared aspects certainly exist: an interest in flatness and surface, the combining of abstract and representational imagery, and, most notably, the by-now-common post-modern idea of combining abstract and representational imagery, and, most notably, the by-now-common post-modern idea of combining abstract and representational imagery, and, most notably, the by-now-common post-modern idea of combining abstract and representational imagery, and, most notably, the by-now-common post-modern idea of combining abstract and representational imagery, and, most notably, the by-now-common post-modern idea of combining abstract and representational imagery, and, most notably, the by-now-common post-modern idea of combining abstract and representational imagery, and, most notably, the by-now-common post-modern idea of combining abstract and representational imagery, and, most notably, the by-now-common post-modern idea of combining abstract and representational imagery, and, most notably, the 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MEMPHIS, TENNESSEE
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Memphis, Tennessee 38159-3299
615.322.2471 www.vanderbilt.edu/sarratt/gallery/htm

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Mississippi River Fugues
Margaret Cogswell
September 6 through November 1, 2008
Cogswell’s site-specific, mixed media installation combines original video and audio recordings to capture the vibrancy of the Mississippi River’s environmental, economic and social history as well as the voices and music of the people intimately connected to and affected by it. This project is supported in part by the Tennessee Arts Commission and the First Tennessee Foundation Panel Series.

Anybody and Nobody:
Andy Warhol Photographs
September 6 through November 1, 2008
Andy Warhol viewed his life as his art and his compulsively recorded everything. A selection of Polaroid and black and white prints provide a glimpse into the working process of one of the most influential artists of the 20th Century.

MFA Thesis Exhibition
Yijun Liao, Chandler Fulton Pritchett, Robert G. McCarron
November 6, 2008 through January 10, 2009
Three Master of Fine Arts candidates present their work in print, photography, video and ceramic in fulfillment of their degree.

Bonnie Baxter: Rewind
November 6, 2008 through January 10, 2009
Baxter transforms a decade of her autobiographical work combining traditional printmaking and electronic media. The installation is built around sculptures reminiscent of Peter Voulkos’s work of clay casting multiple molds from images of self-portraits. The exhibition is supported by The University Parks Time and Talent Fund and the Concordia University Press.

Art Museum
Of the University of Memphis