

Arts Beat

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A Room Where Anything Goes

Pyramid Atlantic Cracks Open the Vault to All Sorts of Artistic Expression

By JONATHAN PADGET
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Climb the stairs to the main gallery of Pyramid Atlantic, a center known for the art forms of making prints, paper and books, and you'll find just what you expect. Works by Billy Colbert—silkscreen printing on aluminum—line an expansive wall in an exhibition called "Menagerie," while display cases and shelves throughout the room hold other items reflecting the center's nearly 25-year history.

But venture into the digital classroom behind the main gallery and you'll find the entrance to a much different venue: the Kunst Vault. The walk-in space, complete with its original massive metal door, is one of the quirkiest features of the former restaurant supply warehouse in downtown Silver Spring that has been Pyramid Atlantic's home for a little more than a year.

On view now in the vault is Trish Tillman's "Ceteris Paribus," an installation of video projection and the kind of LED clusters normally used to illuminate outdoor building signs. "I've always wanted to use light in my work," Tillman explained at an exhibition reception last week. "This was a great opportunity to experiment with that."

Tillman's use of video and LEDs is a first for her; she hopes the two light panels that mirror each other in the vault, combined with video footage of blades of grass moving against a watery background, will suggest the brain's response to information. She also displays several chromogenic prints, her customary medium, outside the Kunst Vault.

Tillman is the latest artist to take advantage of Pyramid Atlantic's broad curatorial vision for the vault: Those invited to show there are free to explore any media—video, sound, light—even if the result falls outside the center's usual focus.

Such experimentation might seem like tricky territory for a highly specialized arts organization to get into, especially when Pyramid Atlantic is in the midst of a \$4.8 million capital campaign to support expansion plans. By 2007, the center hopes to add a museum, lecture hall,

cafe, store and residence space for artists.

But founder and executive artistic director Helen Frederick says the center's constituency has embraced the surprises the vault yields with each new artist. (She chose "Kunst," the German word for art, to honor the late artist Dieter Roth, who used the word constantly while teaching her at the Rhode Island School of Design.) Besides, Frederick says she finds that work in the vault is often not as far removed from the center's emphasized art forms as people may think.

"You might have printmaking as your basis . . . but out of that grows a lot of other imagery," she says. "Video, light—it's another way to transfer information. Printmakers are much more flexible than other artists. They transfer images all the time."

Guerrilla Film Fest

At the top of the home page on the Guerrilla Film Fest's Web site, you'll find an altered quote by iconic revolutionary Che Guevara: "As long as imperialism exists, it will, by definition, exert its domination over other countries. Today that dom-

ination is called Hollywood."

Scroll to the bottom of the page and you'll find links to the festival's corporate sponsors.

Alas, even guerrillas have to market themselves nowadays. (And Che *must* have meant "Hollywood" instead of what he really said, "neocolonialism," back in the day.)

"I'm happy to get it," local filmmaker John Hanshaw says of corporate support for the fifth edition of Guerrilla Film Fest—a program of six short films and one feature planned for Saturday.

So, just what makes a film "guerrilla" to Hanshaw, who launched the about-twice-a-year festival in 2003?

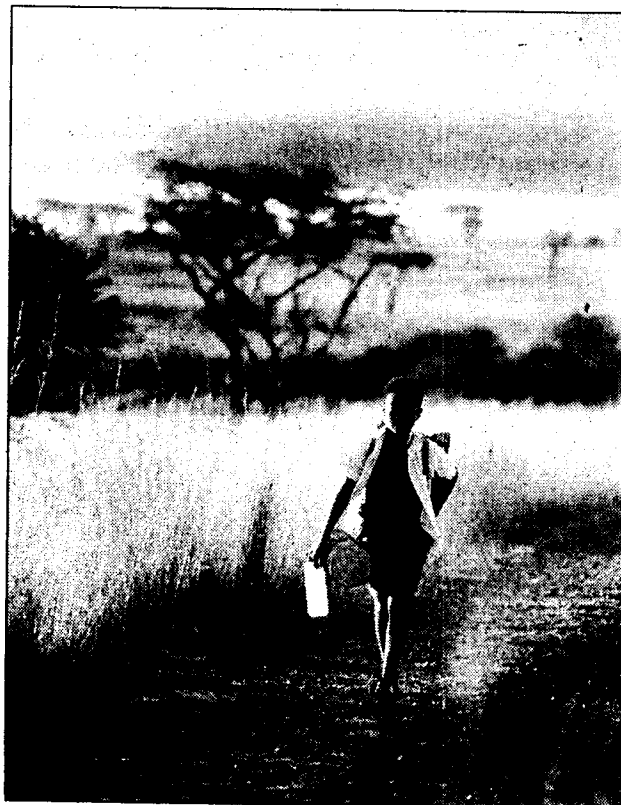
"Guerrilla' for me is about doing something alternative . . . on a shoestring budget," he says. "You're an underdog and you're trying to make something work on limited resources."

Hanshaw sees a surge of "upstarts" in filmmaking, thanks to the spread of technological resources to the masses. Still, he looks primarily to other festivals, rather than individuals, for programming ideas.

Selections for Saturday, for example, have been featured recently at events in Brooklyn, Indianapolis, Los Angeles, Aspen, Palm Springs, Montreal, Madrid and even Cannes.

Shorts include the violent, screened-in-reverse "Take It Back"; a sci-fi thriller, "Natural Selection," set in 2097 Los Angeles; and a German comedy, "My Parents." The feature is a South African drama, "Beat the Drum," about a Zulu boy who loses his parents to AIDS and goes in search of a long-lost relative while carrying his only worldly possession—a small drum given to him by his dying father.

Billy Colbert's "Menagerie" and Trish Tillman's "Ceteris Paribus" at Pyramid Atlantic Art Center, 8230 Georgia Ave., Silver Spring, through March 18. Open Monday-Friday 9 a.m.-5 p.m., Saturday and Sunday 11 a.m. to 5 p.m., evenings by appointment. Free. Call 301-608-9101 or visit www.pyramidatlanticartcenter.org. Guerrilla Film Fest at the Carnegie Institution, 1530 P St. NW. Saturday at 7 p.m. (shorts program) and 9:30 p.m. (feature film). \$12 each, \$15 for both. Call 202-234-2889 or visit www.gfilmfest.com.



Junior Singo stars in "Beat the Drum" as a Zulu boy who searches for a long-lost relative. Guerrilla Film Fest will feature the movie.

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