



Hartz transplant [with video]

Former UVA museum director takes job in Oregon; Meanwhile, Berman exhibit is relocated, in part

by : Brendan Fitzgerald

The **University of Oregon's Jordan Schnitzer Museum of Art** boasts a fantastic collection of contemporary art—dazzling pieces from Japan, China and Korea, a wild array of prints. **Jill Hartz**, former director of the **UVA Art Museum**, will be the first to lavish praise on the space itself. "It's a much larger museum—it has a restaurant and a café, and 23,000 square feet of gallery space, larger staff, larger budget, a lot of major supporters..."

And now the space has a new executive director. Hartz, whose 10-year term as director of the UVA Art Museum ended with her silent removal from the museum's website, accepted the position in Eugene.

Hartz interviewed with Oregon twice during the spring, meeting with community members, a search committee and university president **Dave Frohnmaier**. "They really put me through an intensive process, culminating in a job talk, where I showed images of what I and my staff and everyone else here has been able to accomplish with the UVA Art Museum," Hartz says.



Art droppings: Irwin Berman's "Great Seal Trophy Stool," the companion to a short film about UVA's old mascot mutt, Seal, is on display with the film at Les Yeux du Monde. For the rest of his show, however, you need to hit the UVA Art Museum.

The Schnitzer Museum celebrates its 75th anniversary with a year-long celebration of exhibits starting in June, and Hartz will jump right into the mix. She mentions to Curt that she'd like to do a retrospective show next spring to look back at Schnitzer's

accomplishments—"Something like an 'Oregon Collects' show, where we get loans of major works from alumni and people in the community that really want to be part of the future." In fact, Hartz's first show at Schnitzer is a collection of contemporary Cuban art. Those of you in the cultural know remember that Hartz exhibited a collection of Cuban art at UVA in 2005 with sculptor **Irwin Berman**.

Which reminds Curt: Got a whiff of Berman's show yet? Keep reading.

Load of...

"When the shit goes down," advised hip-hop act **Cypress Hill** in 1993, "you better be ready." Whatever that warning means to you—a place to hide, a handful of moist towlettes—heed it now, because the **UVA Art Museum** placed its collective foot into an enormous pile. Take shelter.

Last week, Curtain Calls received a DVD copy of a three-and-a-half minute short film titled ***The Great "Seal" of Virginia***, a companion piece to sculptor and UVA Med School alum Irwin Berman's current exhibit at the museum, ***"Sedentary Pleasures: Uncommon Stools."*** But a companion piece to what? The film arrived with a press release that mentioned the film would screen at **Les Yeux du Monde** throughout May, so Curt dropped by the gallery to scope things out.

On a table in the center of Les Yeux's gallery stood a milking stool, modest in size and design. On top of the stool, seated like the world's most obedient canine, was a mass of blue and orange dog turds, curled like knots of rope. Next to the stool sat a collection of 30 or so DVDs, each a duplicate of the one CC received, ready for distribution.

In preparation for his seat-centric show at the UVA Art Museum, Berman had crafted a stool, all right; a visual pun in which one kind of stool bore up the other like the output of a dog that perhaps had a lot of **Fruit Loops** in its diet. The sculpture was finished before the film was even a thought; as Berman writes in his artist's statement, he discovered his true inspiration after the piece was finished.

"The marriage of this 'master concept' to a suitable visual format took shape only as I considered the colors of UVA, discovered the existence of the canine mascot, Seal, then created a story and 'educational message' around him," Berman writes. Short for "The Great Seal of Virginia," Seal the dog had an informal place as the UVA football team's mascot until his death in 1953; now, he has a literal place at UVA, in a burial plot near the corner of Alderman and McCormick roads.

The film was, er, fired off shortly after Berman's stool sculpture. With help from UVA alums **Michael Wartella** and **Sam Retzer** and associate professor of art **William Bennett**, Berman produced the short film, in which an enormous dog's face devours a Cavalier figure and then rains multi-colored shit down from the sky. The feces that appear on a star-topped stool in the film resemble the sculpture ousted from the UVA Art Museum.

During a phone interview, Bennett told CC that the film was planned as a fundraising perk for the UVA Art Museum and Department, something to be given away in exchange for donations during Berman's exhibit. Roughly three to four weeks before the show's opening, however, a decision was made to remove the film from Berman's exhibit.

"Somehow, somebody in the University administration—not sure who, how or why—decided this film wasn't appropriate for exhibition," says Bennett. Berman called Curt last week to inform him that the decision to remove *The Great "Seal"* and three additional pieces "reflected sound curatorial judgments by the Museum Director and Curator," **Elizabeth Hutton Turner**.

And so, for a moment, let's sidestep the mess on the cultural rug and talk about pedigree. Berman's film is a riot, superbly executed by Wartella and Retzer. The former is a cartoonist for **The Village Voice** and an animator for MTV's long-gone gonzo cartoon show, **"Wonder Showzen."** The latter is a soundtrack composer for films including ***Stomp The Yard*** and ***American Son***. A surreal puppetry feel pervades the movie, similar to the version of ***Dante's Inferno*** that the **Small Special Collections Library** screened this year, and the film is grandiose to a level of hilarious absurdity. *The Great "Seal" of Virginia* will screen during gallery hours until the end of the month.

CLAW of the Month

On Tuesday, May 13, a handful of bicep bruisers from the **Charlottesville Lady Arm Wrestlers** will mash palms with a group of gals from the **Charlottesville Derby Dames** to raise money for the start-up roller derby squad (who Curt visited a few months ago). At the center of this fest full of knuckles is **Reagan Greenfield**, who wrestles under the name **"Tragedy Ann"** and skates with the Derby Dames as **"Matilda Molish."** Visit c-ville.com to meet Tragedy Ann; we hear that she twists arms like bottle tops.

CLAW of the Month: Reagan Greenfield.

As if you needed any more incentive, **Cathy “The Punctuator” Harding** and yours truly will be the celebrity judges for the evening’s match. Buy some CLAW bucks to benefit the Derby Dames and use ‘em to bribe us.

Know any good poop jokes? How about art news? E-mail curtain@c-ville.com.

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