

art, culture and jets

New shows at the Weston look at culture through different media

RODNEY WILSON | CIN WEEKLY

In a world of 24-hour news channels, blogs by the billions and never-ending news feeds, information and opinion have become less commodities than commotion.

Art is one of our oldest forms of social commentary, but differs in almost every way from the wall of information that we encounter daily – art is disciplined, not derivative; considered, not compulsive.

This week, the Cincinnati Arts Association's Alice F. and Harris K. Weston Art Gallery in the Aronoff Center for the Arts opens three shows by artists who have translated social and political observations into their art.

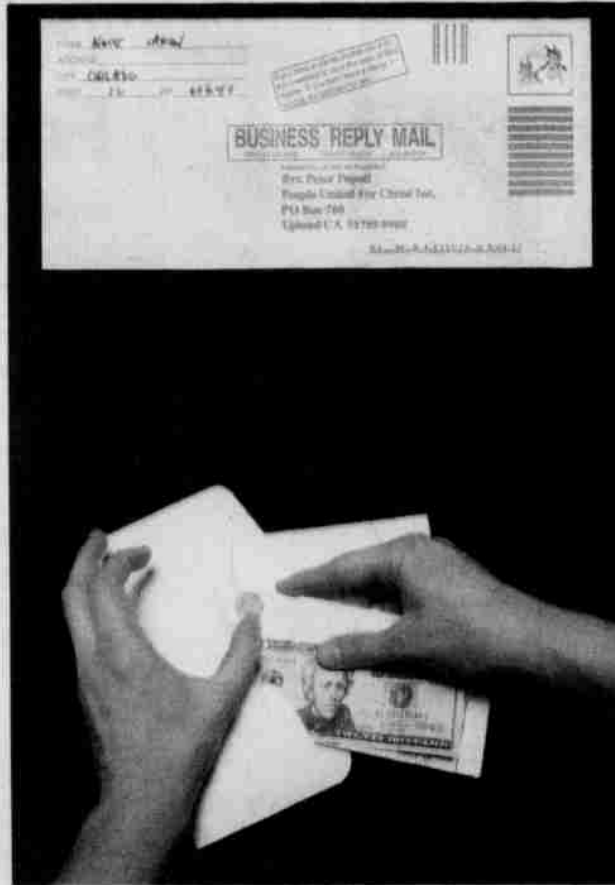
Cincinnati's Mark Harris mixes photography, video and other media to present *Utopian: Bands and Related Works*, a look at recent changes in Chinese culture. Nate Larsen, a Chicago artist, uses images and text to construct narratives that explore the topics of belief and skepticism in his show *Miracle Pennies and Other Stories*.

THE HAIRY HARRIER

The third exhibit, *Hairrier: The Hovering Drone*, by a local duo that goes by the name Dungeon Thud, is a bit less simple to summarize. Composed of a single piece – a built-to-scale Harrier jet that appears to have sprouted flowing, artificial human hair – the installation will function as the site of a performance piece combining lights, smoke and a 33-minute audio piece composed by the artists at 7 p.m. Jan. 25.

"We've spent a lot of time talking about its reference points and how it fits into this cyclical narrative in terms of a lot of performance art from the '60s and '70s in relationship to Vietnam – and sort of what's happening right now in relationship to Iraq," says Jimmy Baker who, along with Nathan Tersteeg, comprises Dungeon Thud.

"You come to this giant thing, and it's clearly crashed," says Baker of Dungeon Thud's performance piece that will open the exhibit. "And the performance is a very frantic, very cinematic experience of us in this crash site trying to yell, through the piece, overtop of this very dark, cinematic score. We sort of know how we've arrived at this situation, and the viewer can kind of create their own narrative around it, but we still know how we got to this state."



Chicago artist Nate Larson's "Miracle Pennies, Seed Gift," is part of the show *Miracle Pennies and Other Stories* at the Weston Art Gallery.

Though *Hairrier's* appearance seems whimsical – audiences of both the performance and the subsequent sculptural installation will be greeted with a visual pun, i.e. a "hairy Harrier" – Baker and Tersteeg trust viewers will delve beyond their initial response to read some of the deeper themes.

"We hope that people don't leave it at that," says Tersteeg of the piece's initial impression. "There's a lot (more) work that we've put into the idea than just an airplane that has hair on it. But certainly that also plays into the ideas, like the military term 'hairy,' describing a bad situation."

'A SONIC ART GROUP'

Baker and Tersteeg are both artists with their own individual careers, but Dungeon Thud provides the two a different, less strictly-defined way of approaching their creative impulses.

The duo's been known to play around town as a band, with Baker on drums, electronics, and vocals and Tersteeg handling Casio keyboard, effects pedals and vocals.

"I would say, in general, the scope of the project is contextualized by the art framework," says Baker of the audio side of their collaboration. "It's not like we've toured or sold T-shirts; it's not that kind of a project as of yet. Not that it couldn't turn into something like that, but the way that it's going, it's much more like a sonic art group than band-band."

"As a performance, I hope that there are people there who are interested in seeing a performance, who aren't just there to see an art piece," says Tersteeg. "Because people who don't necessarily have an investment in reading it as an art piece can do really well and have a great time. I think it's a really exciting performance."



Above: Mark Harris's "Meihaoyadian" is part of the show *Utopian: Bands and Related Works* at the Weston Art Gallery.

Left: Jimmy Baker and Nathan Tersteeg of Dungeon Thud have the show *Hairrier: The Hovering Drone* on display at the Weston Art Gallery.

JUST THE FACTS

WHAT: *Hairrier: The Hovering Drone* by Dungeon Thud (Jimmy Baker and Nathan Tersteeg), *Utopian: Bands and Related Works* by Mark Harris, and *Miracle Pennies and Other Stories* by Nate Larsen

WHERE: Alice F. and Harris K. Weston Art Gallery, 650 Walnut St., downtown

WHEN: The shows open 6 to 9 p.m. Friday, Jan. 25. *Hairrier* runs through March 22; *Utopian* and *Miracle Pennies* run through March 30. Gallery hours are 10 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Tuesday-Saturday and noon to 5 p.m. Sunday; later on Procter & Gamble Hall performance evenings.

PRICE: Free

PARKING: Nearby garages and lots. Valet parking is available at the northeast and southeast corners of Seventh and Walnut streets for \$7.

CONTACT: 513-977-4165, westonartgallery.com or www.myspace.com/dungeonthud