

*Arts and Entertainment***Boalsburg gallery takes community to heart**

by Zach Kelly

Boalsburg has always been regarded as somewhat of an artist's community. Whether it's the historic simplicity or just the way a person can allow oneself to take a moment to breathe slow and easy that contributes to the creative process, we aren't completely sure. But we are grateful.

And grateful people give back to a community that gives so much to them. Ken

It started at the site of a now defunct Boalsburg relic, the Country Sampler, where co-initiator Annie-hannah Mancini put together an impromptu gallery showcase last December, representing various artists from around the region.

Simply by word of mouth, the event became a huge hit, raising community members' eyebrows throughout the room. It appeared, though, that Hull and Mancini were on the same wavelength.

The gallery has an eclectic array of mediums, as two-dimensional paint and photo pieces rub shoulders with woodwork, jewelry, utilitarian pieces and even clothing.

Hull, Annie-hannah Mancini, Jennifer Kane and Harriet Rosenberg are such people, and have decided that the best way to juice Boalsburg creatively is to open the Boalsburg Village Artisans Community Workshop and Gallery.

"I didn't think there was so much a need [for the gallery], but there is just so much good art being made," says Boalsburg's artistic stalwart and gallery co-initiator Hull. "We realized the need for it after we took the jump."

The idea of creating a gallery and workshop space specific to Boalsburg artists only was a long way off last winter, so it's more than a little impressive to see how far the co-op has come since then.

"Let's do it at my place," was all Hull had to say, and with Kane and Rosenberg on board and ready to contribute, Boalsburg's artistic home base had officially been claimed.

Hull, who has lived as well as owned and operated a gallery in Boalsburg for the past 20 years, had most recently been living in his home at 203 E. Main St. and using the log cabin he built on that property as a gallery space for his own work. Thanks to the creation of the new gallery, Hull is now allowing his home to be used for gallery space, and is using the log cabin for his living space.

Despite the fact that one room in the gallery still has bathroom tile adorning the



Photo by Doug Bauman

This house on Main Street in Boalsburg is now home to the Boalsburg Village Artisans Community Workshop and Gallery.

floor, the gallery never feels like a home masquerading as a gallery. It's bright, intricately arranged and exudes a great deal of charm. It feels exciting.

"I've had this idea on paper for 20 years, and it has all come together so well," muses Mancini, as she frantically raps on the side of the large wooden desk towards the entrance of the gallery for luck. Mancini

speaks and gesticulates with such enthusiasm, it's clear that her excitement about the project is almost impossible to quell.

Mancini lives across the street from Hull (and now the gallery), and has been hoping to get something like this up and running in

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"Bike-In" movies being shown on parking deck

by Dalton Hance

Under the haze of a threatening drizzle, 20 to 30-something 20-to-30-somethings overtook the top floor of the monstrous new Beaver Avenue Parking Deck for a carbon-free good time. Resistance was reported to be surprisingly light.

At sundown on June 13, "supporters" of the Department of Public Works of Art gathered to celebrate community by bringing back the summer drive-in.

Only, instead of getting there with dad's climate-controlled Buick, (also known in the past for its drive-in-friendly back seat), they came under the power of their own toned thighs.

DPWA plans to host these events (and other random acts of community building) almost every Wednesday and the occasional Thursday or Friday throughout the bike-in season.

In the first of a planned series of summer bike-in films, the 1979 classic *Breaking Away* was projected on the side of wall and broadcast over a mobile speaker system—entirely free for all of the bikers, skaters, pedestrians and dogs who came to see.

As Borough Council debated how to cover the \$800,000 deficit in the public parking system—caused in part by the construction of the six-story white elephant in question—the mysterious and lethally sexy

Department of Public Works of Art determined a novel use for the existing infrastructure, proving once again that it isn't the asphalt, but the way the lines are painted on it that make for a car-centered cultured.

And just who are these dashing bipedal pedal-pirates? The DPWA claims to have no membership, no leadership, no meetings, no rules; it also claims to not make claims.

In actual attendance were a ragtag assembly of bikers and pedestrians, including rep-

representatives from several subcultures. There was even at least one professor: Richard Doyle, of the English Department. When asked for comment, he offered an enthusiastic "Praise Jah!" and said no more.

Throughout the evening it was unclear just who, if anyone, was in charge. Vague rumors of some kind of organizing catalyst drifted about but never quite stuck.

When asked who organized the event, one moviegoer responded, "Shhh!" and pointed to the screen. This reporter can only assume she meant to indicate that the movie itself was the responsible party.

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Reading's Johnny Action Figure grows up

by Jeffrey Carton

Summer has arrived and as many college students struggle to land their first job or admission to graduate school, others might head to the beach for some long-needed vacation. Then there are those who will rock.

Reading-based quartet Johnny Action Figure is hitting the road this summer starting in New Brunswick, N.J. and trekking up and down the east coast on a tour they booked without an agent.

"We booked it entirely through email and MySpace," said guitarist and vocalist Chris Sheehan. "We sometimes wonder how anybody booked a tour before the Internet."

Johnny Action Figure rolled into State College in June for their gig at Sozo's. It is an important gig for Sheehan, who just having graduated from Penn State is able to return to play in front of old classmates and fans.

After having played Movin' On and Heritage Hall on Penn State's campus,

"I think us separating at different colleges was a major turning point in our commitment to the band. We decided that we truly wanted to pursue music and we weren't going to let varied locales get in the way of that."

--Chris Sheehan

band members say that there is no place to big or too small for them to play.

"The hardest part about being on the road is occupying the down time," said guitarist and vocalist Brendan Fullam.

"We have so much energy during and after the show, but it starts to fade after having to drive for ten hours. It's hard to carry it on when we're not on stage."

"We love being part of a different scene every night," said Sheehan. One of the biggest highs on the tour came when they encountered a fan who drove from Clearwater to Orlando, Fla. to come see the band twice in as many nights.

"It's rare for someone in our home town of Reading to drive an hour to see us in

Philadelphia, and this girl Sam, who we had never met, drove two hours."

When the band formed in 1999, its initial goal was not to achieve rock stardom, drive fancy cars or own the biggest house on the block. Band members hadn't even entered high school yet.

"I wanted to play in a band before I could play guitar," said Fullam. "The people I idolized played guitar so I just had to learn to as well."

The band began practicing in Sheehan's basement and performed at friends' birthday parties. But Johnny Action Figure had no intention of becoming the best local cover band, and although the band members were still a couple years away from

being admitted to an "R" rated film without their parents, it did not take long for one of the most notable promoters in Reading to discover their music.

"Johnny Action Figure were a bunch of 14-year-old nice kids with a ton of raw talent, drive, and fire in their eyes to try to succeed as a band," said DRP Records President Frank "Phobia" Fields.

Later, with the members attending Penn State, Lebanon Valley College and American University, getting together to play became increasingly difficult.

But the four young rockers persisted, and managed to play up to four gigs per month. In 2004, the band merged two of their first EPs to form their first full-length record titled "Johnny Action Figure."

"I think us separating at different colleges was a major turning point in our commitment to the band. We decided that we truly wanted to pursue music and we

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Indeed, as the evening wore on, the film began to assume a cryptic kind of authority. *Breaking Away* tells the story of the decaying community of "Cutters"—the sons of laid-off quarry workers growing up in the shadow of Indiana State University.

The Cutters struggle to get jobs and girls, as a faceless, transient group of rich and irresponsible college students passes through the community as though on a four-year vacation from involvement in the world.

Having cut the stone that built the university, the Cutters have been forgotten and ground to dust in the process. That is, until a bicycle race gives them the opportunity to prove their worth against the mass of collegiate consumers.

In the end, it is bicycles that revitalize and empower community. At the conclusion, the assembled parking deck audience clapped and cheered.

DPWA plans to host these events (and other random acts of community building) almost every Wednesday and the occasional Thursday or Friday throughout the bike-

in season.

The venue is subject to change—even in the middle of a performance—as the movie theater is entirely mobile. DPWA insists that it is able to strike anytime, anywhere. It claims allegiance with various shadow organizations: Critical Mass, Food Not Bombs, the Free Love Coalition and the Discordian Society.

Dodgy and paranoid messengers tentatively assured this reporter that a screening of *The Road Warrior* is scheduled for Thursday, July 5 on the top of Beaver Avenue Parking Deck at sundown.

The location, film and time are all subject to change—like everything else. All is flux. Go with the flow.

While the DPWA communicates almost exclusively through esoteric scrawls on alley walls and with messages to its members often disguised as mundane urban litter, occasional communiqués can be found on the bikestatecollege listserv.

To subscribe:

<http://lists.riseup.net/www/info/bikestatecollege>

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weren't going to let varied locales get in the way of that," said Sheehan.

When the tour plans were completed, the band took another hit when their drummer left the band and got married. However, Brad Rittle, who also drums in a band called Relegate, headed by JAF's bassist, quickly replaced him.

Inspired by artists from Elvis Costello to Tom Petty, JAF's catchy riffs are sure to leave any listener begging for an encore.

In 2006, the band released the seven-song EP, "Asks the Room to Stop Spinning" featuring "Your Fortune's Gonna Leave You," which the band holds in high regard as one of the first songs where the lyrics were written before the music.

"Right now, this band is ready to take on the world," said promoter Fields.

"The songs are brilliant; the attitude of this band is exactly what I want on my label. We will try to help this band become a huge success."

"We concentrate on building a solid mass of music instead of just singles," said

guitarist Fullam.

"We really like the idea of being able to take our time and experiment with recording, a luxury you might not have while paying hourly at a studio," Sheehan added.

Traveling in a 12-passenger van nicknamed "Castle," the band has scores of dates at small and mid-sized clubs.

The second leg of the tour wraps up in mid-July at "The Barn" in Brooklyn, Conn. The band will continue to tour into the Midwest in August, before the bassist and the drummer return to college.

Sheehan and Fullam plan on continuing to tour and play acoustic sets in addition to gigs with the full band.

"I know we have the potential to sign with an indie label sooner or later," said Sheehan.

"Johnny Action Figure has a good shot at finding some success whether it be big or moderate. I'd even be happy with moderate."

For more information:

<http://www.johnnyactionfigure.com>

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the region after she returned in 1995 with a Master of Fine Arts from the University of Massachusetts, Amherst.

"What is 'gallery'?" she asks, guiding her way through the impressively packed (though not disorganized) sections of the space. "It's an educational space. We as artists need to share work and knowledge of our gifts and talents. I'm very strong on education."

So, it appears, are the rest of the members of the co-op. There are 12 artists now being showcased, though the gallery believes it is capable of holding 16. All artists are required to hold workshops as part of their residency, as well as showcase and sell their art.

The gallery has an eclectic array of mediums, as two-dimensional paint and photo pieces rub shoulders with woodwork, jewelry, utilitarian pieces and even clothing.

Standouts include Paul Kocela's woodwork (which has an almost dreamlike quality to it), Harriet Rosenberg's inventive, and oddly hip, clothing and Kane's impressive landscapes on canvas.

Perhaps the gallery seems to work so well is because the sense of community is so in tact; the space can perform like a community gallery should. Residency and commission fees are as low as possible, and all residents have equal say in gallery matters. It's policy like this that artists hope allow the space to achieve a rare fluidity.

"We don't want it to be stagnant, we want people to come and go. It's constantly changing. Put anything up in the main



Photo by Doug Bauman

The front of the fireplace in the new gallery is used to display an antique camera and a variety of prints and photos. This display shows off the matting services available at the gallery.



Photo by Doug Bauman

A fireplace mantel serves as a display area for some of the new art being displayed by local artists.

room, get the word out for yourself, and use [the gallery] as your home base," Mancini explains. At one point, Jennifer Kane comes rushing in and takes one of her paintings down hurriedly, after deciding it wasn't for sale.

Part of the continual tide-shifting at the gallery can be attributed to "The White Room," a space where guest artists can apply for a one-month residency to showcase their art in, well, a large white room around the back of the gallery. Of course, "White Room" residents will also be required to offer workshops.

It's a perfect way to further synthesize the symbiotic relationship between community and gallery. And apparently, that relationship is a healthy one so far.

"We have non-members giving us money

because they like what we are doing," explains Hull, who is mainly acting as a participant and "landlord" at the gallery while hard at work on a new book. "People are really looking out for each other."

And as people look out for the gallery, the gallery will be looking out for the people. Though it has been open since Memorial Day, the gallery will be shutting down a portion of the street and hosting a grand opening gala July 14.

"Our connection is absolutely community," Mancini says earnestly.

"If in a year from now it's not working, then that's enough. It was only for this time," she says, pausing for a moment to greet a young couple coming in to take a look around. She smiles.

"My feeling is it'll be here for awhile."

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