

VISUAL ARTS

Curious, amusing
and ingenious

BY MARY LEE PAPAS

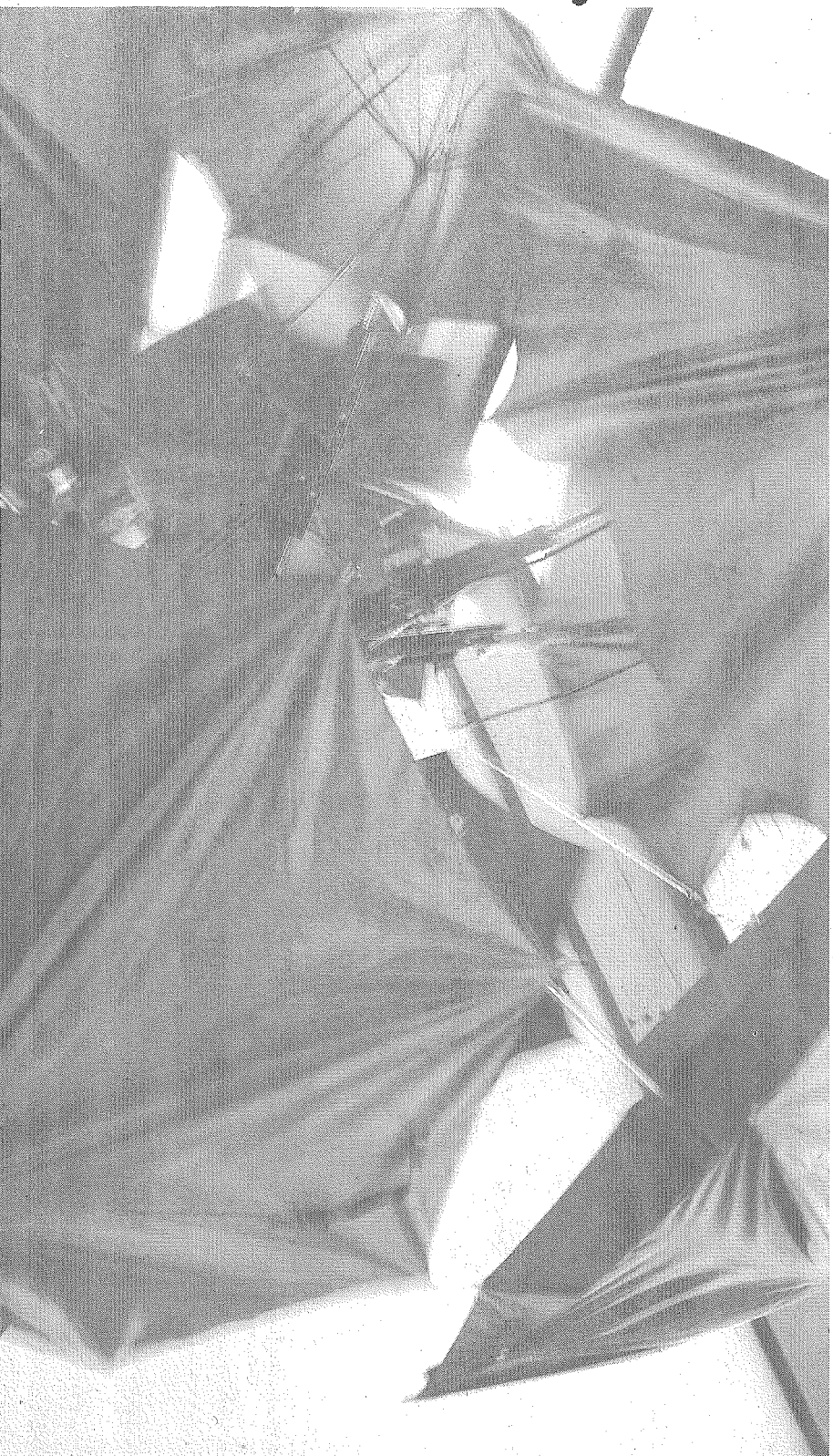
The Stutz Art Gallery, a corridor of crooked walls, is a space that lends itself to installation. Any visual encounter in this small space has an element of unpredictability to it due its incongruence. It's especially enticing with the current efforts of former Stutz resident artists **Greg Hull, Larry Endicott, Susan Wait** and **Emily Kennert**, on view in an exhibit called *Return of the Residents*.

"Supersubberbia," a miniature stenciled landscape scaling the length of the south walls by Kennert, is conceptually ingenious. Intellectually embodying Indianapolis' contemporary suburb culture, it speaks volumes about home, family, work and conditions of the American way of life, or as Kennert's artist statement reads, "The transitional state of our current modernity."

Beige prefabricated housing bordering I-65 plays the protagonist in the scenes set off by little clusters of green trees. Mass produced with neutral siding and roofs, the rows of cookie cutter box homes recede in skewed perspective into the horizon line suffocated by a vast, overcast Indiana sky. The repetitive, yet very specific, pantama bends around the walls as if they were turns on a highway. It's a many-sided meditation on the literal and figurative illusion of home and the new, real Indiana landscape. Kennert's installation, an intrinsic quest to explore neoteric Midwestern culture, is both fascinating and effective in surveying this human experience. Demonstrating that art is more than trivial play or aesthetic escapism, this is art for life's sake.

Suspended from the ceiling, Hull's mechanized sculpture "Indeterminate Volume" employs a Minimalist aesthetic. Ordinary black umbrellas open and close intermittently, abstracting time more than space. Rhythmically, the kinetic gizmo swifly transitions from one umbrella to the next with the nylon material creating a quiet swooshing sound reminiscent of an ocean wave. The theatrically imagined large spherical object appears to breathe as if mimicking something cellular or organic. Curious and amusing, this piece successfully interacts with viewers and its environment. It's a spectacle that's cause for conversation. Wait's installation, composed of cassette tape film and other similar rubbish from obsolete technology, climbs to the ceiling from the floor. The spiderweb of shimmering brown

Many-sided meditations



PIC OF THE WEEK
Work by **Greg Hull** is part of the Stutz *Return of the Residents'* exhibit.

ribbons merges with the architecture and winds its way around the air conditioning vent. The plastic cassette sheaths are staggered through the netting as if technology is its own black widow. Wait's ability to embrace space and meld it thoughtfully to a concept is unparalleled locally.

Two separate wall sculptures by Wait, "Logo Landscape 1" and "Logo Landscape 2," composed of blue Astroturf, multicolored neon cable and twist ties, electric tape and an assortment of hardware store accessories (Wait works exclusively with discarded materials), are assembled similarly to a latch hook rug. Visually booming, the abstracted canvases demand attention. Emblematically puzzling, a certain subordination to product and lifestyle branding is raised by these neutralized, color heavy signs. It's a subtle commentary on how, visually, these lifestyle labels ultimately capture our attention. "Nucleus Origin" by Endicott, a

photographer, is a series of six color transparencies of a glowing girl against downtown Indianapolis settings that include Mass Ave. and the Mapleton Fall Creek Neighborhood. She looks as though she's disconnected or isolated somehow from the active surroundings she inhabits. The conceptual grouping maintains the glossy look that defines Endicott's work, including stylistic lighting devices and an overall commercial appearance. Displayed in wall-mounted SPI light box fixtures, the ghostly female figure in each vignette looks like energy, the essence of an apparition. She is the embodiment of a nucleus from which all else stems — whether that is in the form of a past life or one that has yet to be.

Four very different approaches to space and environment are presented well by this local all-star cast. The Stutz Gallery serves as an excellent venue for this work and for offering artists the residence opportunity. *Return of the Residents* continues at the Stutz Art Gallery through June 11; 833-7000.

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Applications for the 2004-2005 Stutz Residency are available at www.stutzartists.com/residency.htm.

THEATER

Ben Rose as Lincoln and Bryant Bentley as Booth, two brothers sharing a small urban apartment, in Suzan-Lori Parks' Pulitzer Prize-winning play 'Top Dog/Underdog' at the Phoenix Theatre.

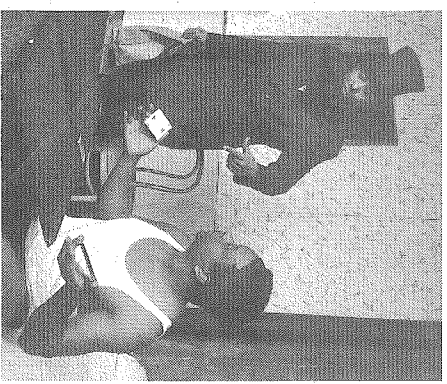


PHOTO BY DAVID RUARK

Lincoln and Booth

BY LISA GAUTHIER

Suzan-Lori Parks is the first African-American woman to win a Pulitzer Prize for Drama — namely, for her play **Top Dog/Underdog**, which is currently on stage at the **Phoenix Theatre**.

It is the story of two black brothers, curiously named Lincoln and Booth, who share a cramped sleeping room and live hand to mouth. Lincoln works in an arcade as Abraham Lincoln, all costumed up, including white face paint, and customers "shoot" him. Booth doesn't work, but he dreams of being a three-card monte hustler. Like Lincoln was a few years back, Lincoln has left that life, though he was the best at what he did.

What we see here is what "just getting by" looks like. Much in the way that an August Wilson play shows us a slice of African-American life, so does *Top Dog/Underdog* — but it is rougher, darker and lacking in the charm that Wilson uses to pretty up the edges.

Ben Rose, fresh off Phoenix's upper stage in *Take Me Out*, makes a complete transformation into his new character, Lincoln. Lincoln is laid-back, and is taking life's punches — big ones, even, such as Booth having slept with his ex wife — in stride. Booth, played by **Bryant Bentley**, is constantly stimulated — moving, pacing, hands tearing through air. Bentley gives an all-out performance, manning to always

next week:

VIOLET AT BUCK CREEK PLAYERS