



Artists Fred Gutzeit (left) chats with a friend at the Sideshow opening.



Guy Benfield's performance art distorts mannequin.

Photos by Rebecca White

On view: father, son & a Holy Ghost

Conversing with artists at Secret Project Robot, Sideshow & Jack the Pelican gallery

I can't believe it. I'm one of them. I'm a photograph-taking, deadline-fearing, story-chasing journalist. Yes, that's right. I'm a member of "The Press." And even though I've been a member of this both favored and feared aggregation of news hounds for a while now, its verity only just occurred to me *this week* when I noticed how comfortable the artists I interviewed were. This is in contrast to the familiar look of staid separation that can sweep across unsuspecting faces when I reveal my "true" journalistic identity.

An extreme example of this would be when an artist I interviewed once spoke to me as if he was reading his own press release off the top of my forehead. This artist also appeared to gain an inch in height and acquire an upper-class British accent mid-conversation once I mentioned what I did. Though these aren't the majority of artists I meet, the artists who are unable to "be real" are a cumbersome nut to crack. It usually takes a lot of probing to get past the elaborate garnish they think you want to hear and get down to the meat and potatoes that is the essence of their work.

So how have I come to bypass the occasional bull, for lack of a better word? Luckily, I didn't have to try too hard, but I'll tell you, this is a first! In fact, I got one of my favorite quotes this week. It was a real nugget of truth, if I've ever heard one. It came from painter Fred Gutzeit, who showed this past week at Sideshow (319 Bedford) with sculptor Peter Reginato. The exhibition was



Sculpture by Jason Robert Bell.



Burg 'n' Point

Rebecca White

called "Original Sins," and when I asked Gutzeit to expound upon the name he said, "The first sin is putting your art on a t-shirt."

It was then that I noticed that he was wearing a t-shirt with a print of one of his own paintings. It appeared, in fact, to be the very same painting he was standing in front of at the time. Touche.

Mr. Gutzeit!

The painting was titled "Unfinished Symmetry," a visual reference to Schubert's unfinished symphony. "I like to think of paintings as musical compositions," said Gutzeit. He was a man of few words, but he stuck to the essentials!

Another man of few



Arthur Jones self portrait at Secret Project Robot.

words was Australian artist Guy Benfield. His first North American solo, "Mother Door Spirit Level," opened at Jack the Pelican gallery (487 Driggs Avenue) on November 17 and runs until December 23.

When I arrived at the opening, I saw that the performance piece that Benfield was doing as part of his show, had already started. People were lined up with cameras. They were photographing each of Benfield's introspective and jolted movements as he, wearing clothes drenched in paint, dragged his body against one of the gallery's walls. Afterward, he interacted with

a mannequin that was dressed in hippie attire and a wig. He pushed the plastic human against the wall then downward, where it ended up broken in two at the waste.

When the performance was over I left, I didn't give Benfield the chance to skirt my questions. He had disappeared after the performance, leaving the crowd to search for deeper meanings on their own.

At Secret Project Robot, I got my share of artist details. The group show, "Return of the Masters," with Chris Uphues, Jason Robert Bell, Arthur Jones, and Robert

Bell, was quite the scene of who's-who's and hipster hob-nobbers. Oh yes, and plenty of in-your-face art.

There was one piece, by Uphues, that literally got in my face a few times. He had taken colored strings and extended them from one of the walls to various points in the gallery, creating a spider web effect. It was from within this virtual spider web that I took a picture of artist Arthur Jones' self-portrait—a nude rendition of himself painted on the wall. I tried to find Jones everywhere, to see if he really looked like the cartoon semblance, but he was nowhere to be found.

Who I did find was artist Jason Robert Bell and his father, artist Robert Bell. Robert was showing a collection of drawings while Jason had made Biblically-inspired sculptures.

"This is the Holy Ghost," said Yale graduate Jason Robert Bell of a large sculpture of a white ghost. "It came from the idea of unveiling a sculpture. I thought, What if the unveiling was the sculpture? So me and my dad sewed the sheet and it started from that."

The Holy Ghost was surrounded by four other sculptures, which were all references from the Book of Ezekiel.

This was the first show I have been to where two of the artists are related. "It's my father's 70th birthday soon. He's always encouraged me to be an artist." Their work and more pictures can be seen at www.tetragrammatron.com.

Send comments and tips to burgpoint@courierlife.net.