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September 2006 | Choice News

Looking Beyond the Canvas

Columbia College Chicago graduate and up-and-coming artist Sandra Fettingis pairs up with socio-political artist Michael Newman for the September exhibit at the Chicago gallery estudiantres. "Field Test" is an exhibit that takes the viewer beyond the artists' work.

"I want to challenge the viewer to research the title and visual meaning of the work, whether that be asking the artists or, after the show, looking it up on Google," Newman said.

His installations force the viewer to take a second glance, if not smile in admiration of Newman's ability to merge elegance with a startling message.

Tucked away in the basement of estudiantres, Newman is fast at work on a piece addressing an American soft-drink company and Third World human rights issues.

Fettingis' art aims to awaken awareness of objects and details all around us. A smile leaps across her face when she describes the joy of discovering little surprises.

"I get so excited when I find a bird's nest tucked away or point out an intricate detail on a building that no one notices," Fettingis said.

This enjoyment of detail and discovery is evident in her work. For "Field Test," she is putting her efforts into reexamining the sky.

"When you're in the city, you forget to look up," she said.



Photo courtesy of estudiantres.

What Counts?

Compiled by Jenny Rough

40 million —Acres of residential lawn in the U.S., as estimated by the Environmental Protection Agency.

10,169 —The size of Rwanda in square miles (about 6.5 million acres).

10 —The average number of miles women in rural Africa walk each day to collect water (the waiting time can be as long as five hours).

238 —Gallons of water, per person, per day, poured on American lawns.

6000 —Number of children that die around the world each day from diseases associated with unsafe drinking water.

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Her work is layers of digital imagery on acetate plexiglass. She believes living in an urban environment can limit awareness of the Earth.

"Even in the city, you just see little slits of sky. I want to encourage people to get out more and get involved with nature," Fettingis said.

Receptions at estudiantres are known to extend past closing time because people just won't leave, Newman said. The crowd becomes absorbed in discussing the issues brought up in the artwork and the artists at this gallery do not intend to discourage that.

"If we can show people the problems, then maybe we can change it...I want the viewer to ask 'why?'," Newman said.

"Field Test" opens from 6 to 10 p.m. Friday, Sept. 15, at estudiantres, 5205 N. Clark St. The exhibit will run through Oct. 20. For more information, visit estudiantres.com/gallery.

—Taylor Swanson

Chubby Baby, Chubby Adult

As the worldwide baby food market continues to expand, parents are increasingly turning to organic options for their infants, despite the heftier price tag, according to recent studies. Organic baby milk and organic strained baby foods dominate the worldwide baby food market, according to a new market research report by RNCOS.

In 2005, Americans purchased \$90.5 million in organic baby food from supermarkets, up 17 percent from 2004, according to research by ACNielsen. In the last five years alone, organic baby food has increased 58 percent, ACNielsen reports.

Parents are turning to organic baby food for their infants believing it to be a healthier alternative, since the foods are not exposed to pesticides or other chemicals.

Paying closer attention to the dietary needs of infants is becoming even more important, researchers say, as a recent study in the July issue of *Obesity* shows that more young children—especially infants—are likely to be overweight when compared with infants more than 20 years ago. Researchers from the Harvard Medical School and Harvard Pilgrim Health Care tracked the weight of 12,000 children under the age of 6 for 22 years. In that time, the number of overweight infants increased by 74 percent. And it doesn't stop when

800 million —Gallons of gas Americans burn through each year mowing lawns.

\$70 billion —Amount the US lawn business pulls in each year.

\$4.8 billion —Somalia's estimated gross domestic product (GDP) for the year 2005.

Sources: Environmental Protection Agency, *Encyclopedia Britannica*, WaterAid.org, *CIA's World Factbook*.

Don't Get Mad, Get Active

We all know that going vegetarian is one of the most effective ways we can protect our health (not to mention that of the poor animals, who get to, you know, live). But did you know that it also helps the environment?

PETA has recently published a series of informative articles showing how eating meat is one of the largest causes of global warming. "The billions of chickens, turkeys, pigs, and cows who are crammed into factory farms each year in the U.S. produce enormous amounts of methane, both in their digestive processes and from the feces that they excrete." Methane traps heat in the atmosphere at a rate 20 times greater than CO₂.

By way of example, they explain that driving a hybrid instead of a regular car saves about 1 ton of carbon dioxide a year, while switching from the average American diet to a vegan diet generates at least 1.5 fewer tons of carbon dioxide. See what they mean at peta.org and goveg.com.



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they get out of diapers—research has shown that infants who have rapid weight gain in the first few months after birth tend to be obese later in life.

—*Melissa Dittmann Tracey*

Cut Back Or Else

Call it an emissions mission.

Environment Illinois is going door to door—in Chicago-area neighborhoods and in the Illinois General Assembly—in an attempt to inspire mandatory statewide reductions in global-warming emissions from cars, power plants and industry.

The non-profit organization's Global Warming Solutions Campaign seeks a 10-percent reduction in global-warming pollution over the next 10 years and an 80-percent reduction by 2050. Scientists say the latter target is necessary to avoid catastrophic global conditions caused by increased temperatures and rising sea levels, the organization says.

"It's not too late yet," said state director Rebecca Stanfield. "But we've got to get started now, or it will be too late."

As of early August, Stanfield said, 30 state legislators had signed a pledge to support those 10-year and 2050 targets. She said the organization is pushing for pledges from a majority of the 177-member assembly.

Environment Illinois says any plan to meet its emissions-reduction targets must focus on, among other things, clean energy and on energy-efficiency standards on furnaces, appliances and residential buildings. The organization says Illinois must follow the lead of California and New Mexico, both of which it says have adopted concrete emissions targets.

That means conventional coal plants are out, Environment Illinois says. Stanfield said 14 such plants are planned in the state—in addition to the existing 23—and that the organization is calling for a moratorium on them.

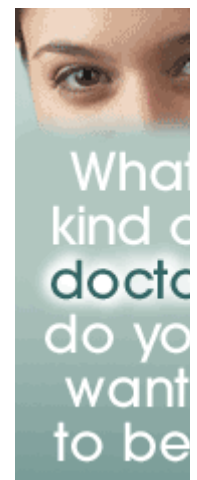
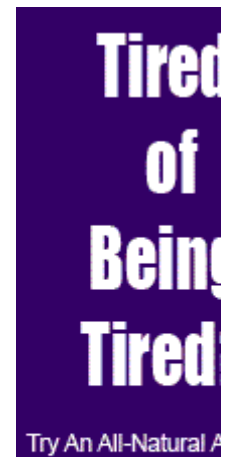
That also means the theater is in. Environment Illinois' website encourages residents to see Al Gore's *An Inconvenient Truth*, a documentary that focuses on the reality and dangers of global warming.

Sign up for Environment Illinois' global-warming news service—a summary of all recent news about global warming in Illinois—by sending an [email](#) and writing in the subject line: "SUBSCRIBE, Global Warming Team News Service." For more info, call 312-291-0696 or visit environmentillinois.org.

—*Pete Reinwald*

Healthy Neighborhoods in Fat City

Oh, Chicago! Your reputation for being a Green City is spreading worldwide, but Men's Fitness magazine also named you the "Fattest City in America" this year, supplanting Houston, of all places! Well, we all know how the local diet can tip the scales, but have you



ever considered that your home might be part of the problem?

On the pioneering frontiers of the Green Building movement are current efforts to marry it with the active living movement. The most promising and innovative project to emerge from this idea is LEED-ND, or LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) for Neighborhood Development.

Doug Farr, Green Building pioneer and principal architect for Chicago-based Farr Associates, has become the leading proponent of this new planning guideline which calls for healthy homes and compact neighborhoods where "everything you need is within a 10-minute walk." This helps promote regular healthy interaction between the residents and business owners, and greater levels of outdoor physical activity such as walking to transit stops or exercising in common green space.

"The CDC says one of the best things you can do to prevent obesity is to climb a flight of stairs a day," says Farr. "Unfortunately, the existing planning models only reinforce 'couch-potato syndrome' by making us dependent on automobiles, and hiding stairwells deep inside buildings as last-resort fire exits. LEED-ND rewrites the codes so that the stairway and the sidewalk, for example, become part of a person's daily routine, tying them to their local environment while giving them a true sense of place."

Housing that follows LEED-ND's guidelines may have a healthier bottom line as well. In addition to the obvious financial advantages of green building, there are procedural, coding and permitting benefits for those who sign on.

LEED-ND is a historical partnership between the US Green Building Council, the Congress for the New Urbanism, the American Planning Association, Chicago's own Center for Neighborhood Technology, and the Smart Growth Movement. For more information, visit usgbc.org.

—*Charles Shaw*

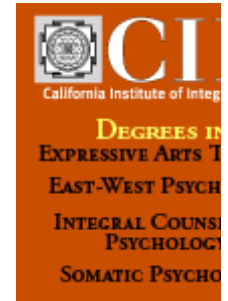
Invasion Update

Illinois trees are under attack, again! Last month, federal officials deregulated the last Asian long-horned beetle quarantine zone in Illinois, but now the emerald ash borer is invading the state.

The Illinois Department of Agriculture confirmed in July that the bright green beetle was spotted in Evanston. Other sightings include Wilmette and Kane County. The borer has already destroyed 20 million trees in Michigan, Ohio and Indiana.

The insect is believed to have been transported from Asia in 2002, when it was first discovered in Michigan. The borer feeds on the inside of ash trees, slowly gnawing away at the trees' ability to transport nutrients. Eradication efforts are already under way in surrounding states, and Illinois will now have to follow suit. The federal government is giving \$7 million in emergency funding to fight the beetle on Illinois soil.

The Asian long-horned beetle also traveled from Asia, appearing in the Midwest United States in the early 1990s. In order to declare an area free of the beetle, the pest must not be sighted for four consecutive years. Recent efforts to monitor the beetle include enlisting young people by incorporating nature walks and insect searches into the curriculum at



Chicago Public Schools.

The U.S. Dept. of Agriculture encourages keeping an eye out when around ash trees for this newest Illinois threat. The emerald ash borer is bright green and not much larger than a penny. If you spot the bug in Illinois, contact the Illinois Department of Agriculture immediately at the toll-free hotline 800-641-3934. For more information visit emeraldashborer.info.

—TS

Chicago Boosts its Growing Power

European chefs are trained to know the source of the food they use. They would never dare include vegetables in a salad without knowing where on the continent their greens originated. This is where American chefs traditionally lag behind, as they usually order from mega wholesalers with little connection to place and palate.

Here in Chicago, the produce we eat too often comes from the West Coast or south of the border, and the chef preparing it—or the consumer buying it—has little idea how the food was harvested and ended up on Midwestern shelves.

Enter Growing Power, a leader in urban agriculture, based in Milwaukee but now active in Chicago, too. Former pro basketball player Will Allen, who founded the organization, grew up on a rural Maryland farm. Following his successful stint on the court, he got into the corporate world for a decade, then jumped at the chance to sink his hands back into the soil.

Growing Power is now a leader in taking vacant city land and turning it into areas where people can grow food and, equally important, keep the garden in the local community. Allen's daughter Erika runs Growing Power's activities here in the Windy City, and the organization is digging into plenty of innovative activities.

Last year Growing Power hauled in 100,000 pounds of compost from its base in Milwaukee to build a garden at the Buckingham Fountain in Grant Park, where the city traditionally plants flowers. Papa Allen added red worms and employed his "livable biological brewing system," in which the worms break down food waste to make the soil fertile—so rich in nutrients that he could plant more crops in a relatively small space.

Worms don't make your mouth water? For those eager to sample the results of Growing Power's work with the community, pay a visit to the local Kendall College's School of Culinary Arts, which is working with Growing Power in an effort to help students understand where their food comes from. Kendall even has a restaurant within the college, so diners can enjoy tasty salads filled with greens grown right here in town. It's healthy and it's homegrown. Eat up! Call Growing Power at 773-347-1374 or visit growingpower.org.

—Jacob Wheeler



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