

## LETTERS

### FOR SCHAMUS

#### To the Editors:

Laura U. Marks, in her recent account of the Toronto Film Festival ("The Indie 300," *Afterimage*/vol. 21, no. 3, p.4), informs *Afterimage* readers that "(t)he difficulty of distinguishing between 'indie' and 'Independent' filmmaking reemerged in James Schamus's introduction to the second screening of Beth B's feature film, *Two Small Bodies* (1993). Schamus, the coordinating producer for the Independent Television Service's 'TV Families,' was so involved in listing his accomplishments as executive producer for Tom Kalin, Todd Haynes, Ang Lee, and others that he almost forgot to introduce B, who he described as the 'doyenne of the New York downtown art film scene.' This faux pas was especially pointed since B's film had a German producer. . ."

While I love to brag as much as the next independent—or is it indie?—producer, I was probably doing so at a location other than the one Marks places me at, as, unfortunately, I wasn't at either of Beth B's screenings in Toronto, and have no idea who might have been introducing her there.

Still, many thanks to Marks for her appreciation of the TV Families package at Toronto, and I hope she will appreciate with similar critical intelligence the rest of the series—as well as all the other films and programs I've helped to produced.

—James Schamus  
New York, NY

#### Laura U. Marks responds:

Upon making some calls to the Toronto Film Festival offices and to Beth B, I learned that Schamus's evil doppelgänger was B's sales representative, Jeff Dowd. I apologize to all who were affected by my mistake, and thank Schamus especially for his good humor.

## ORCHESTRAL MANEUVERS IN THE DARK

### After the Culture Wars: Is there a Future for Public Funding of the Arts?

The Eastman School of Music  
Rochester, New York  
November 6, 1993

GRANT H. KESTER

On a cold Saturday afternoon in early November the prestigious Eastman School of Music in Rochester, New York played host to a day-long conclave of leading figures from politics and the arts who were brought together to discuss the future of public arts funding. The morning segment of the conference was organized around three "roundtable" discussions that focused on questions of artists' First Amendment rights, the standards employed in arts funding decisions, and the amount of money that the U.S. government should spend on the arts. The afternoon was devoted to a public

symposium, "Federal Funding for the Arts: Is the NEA the best approach," moderated by Robert O'Neil, President Emeritus at the University of Virginia. Symposium participants included former congressman John Brademas; attorney and former Nixon White House Counsel Leonard Garment; congresswoman Louise Slaughter (D-NY), choreographer Garth Fagan of the Garth Fagan Dance Company; Michael Morgan, assistant conductor of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra; Christopher Rouse, a Pulitzer Prize winning composer at the Eastman School; Andrea Gill, a ceramicist who teaches at Alfred State University; and Douglas Dempster, chair of the Humanities Department at the Eastman School.

The symposium was clearly centered around Brademas and Garment, who were co-chairs of the NEA Independent Commission, a damage-control device established by President Reagan during the early days of the arts funding controversies. Although the

## AFTERTHOUGHTS



"Hearing for Battered Women Who Killed an Abusive Spouse, 1991," *Prison Project*, by Janet Dodson.

On the conference horizon, among the standard fare of yearly events from MLA to CAA to SCS to SPE are a number of new potential stars. The "Black Women in the Academy: Defending Our Name, 1894-1994" conference, hosted by MIT and organized by MIT's program in Women's Studies, Wellesley College, and Radcliffe College from January 13-16, provides a range of provocative panels from "Rapping, Writing, (Re)producing: Locating Women in Black Nationalism" to "Black Lesbians in the Academy." Workshops such as "Black Women and the Academy: Solutions: Toward a Social Change" and "Identifying the need for scholarly response to the media attention on the violence stirred by events like the Anita Hill/Clarence Thomas hearings, and the election focus on 'family values,' conference panels include the organization, African American Women's Center of Ourselves, from which the Contact MIT's Conference Series 253-1700 for more information.

The Women's Caucus for Art's 1993 conference this year in New York City February 16-19 and overlapping the College Art Association's February 16-19 schedule will provide a focused series of events on women artists and scholars. The WCA conference, as it has in the past, co-sponsors several panels with CAA—"Contested Territories: Asian American Representations of Sexuality and Gender," "Daughters of Feminism: Feminist Passage Out of Art History" and "Media Spectacle and the Politics of Representation: Cultural Commodity Narratives." Perhaps even more engaged sponsorship will be manifest in the series of exhibitions scheduled for a handful of New York City Soho galleries and a few of its women's health family planning centers entitled, broadly, "The Women's Health Show." WCA cites women's "vision" and "indignation at the way society has chosen to care for and dispose of their bodies" as the organizing principle for the series. Participating in this project are Denise Bibro Fine Arts with "Diagnosis: Breast Cancer," and Ceres Gallery's "Examining Room," both curated by Mary Ann Wadden; Soho 20's "Pasando la Mano/Laying the Hand," curated by Maria Elena Gonzalez and Donna Thompson; "Caught Between Mind (Urge) and Body," at the A.I.R. Gallery and curated by Betti-Sue Hertz; Art in General's "Gathering Medicine" by Miriam Hernandez, Regina Leys, and Carole Byard; City College Gallery's "Girl Trouble" curated by Tess Timoney and Kara Lynch; "Site Reading" at Granary Books curated by Monica Chau. In addition work will also be presented at the Women's Center Community Health Clinic in the Bronx, The Community Family Planning Council

Health Center in Manhattan, and Caribbean House Center in Brooklyn.

Performances including new video-based work entitled "Check Up" by Mary Ellen Strom will be presented at the Cooper Union Center. Strom's work will be organized around four themes—sexual identity, suicide, menopause, and breast cancer. For her commissioned video/installation/performance Strom will work with three performers who disclose information about their different identities and their relationships to sexuality and reproduction. An on-stage coordinator will manipulate live surveillance video from outside the Center with five on-stage video monitors screening pre-recorded television

documentaries, and sound. The exhibition of galleries, individual community health centers, the WCA, and the Community Family Planning Council of New York make this event possible. Lois Banon of the Cooper Union will moderate a panel also at Cooper Union of artists and professionals from the health field to discuss the paralleling of racism and sexism in the art world. Contact the WCA at (212) 224-2222 for more information.

The second annual conference on Feminism, Art, and Art this year subtitled "The Illustrated Woman" will be held at the Center for the Arts Forum Yerba Buena Gardens in San Francisco on February 5. Performance artist Orlan will be the keynote lecturer, describing her ongoing plastic surgery performances "Opération-Réussie." This year's conference follows on the success of the first Feminism, Activism, and Art conference that focused on women's violence. The conference culminated in the book *Critical Condition: Women on the Edge of Violence* (1993) organized by City Lights Publishing editor Amy Scholder. The book provides an overview of the conference, and might have been even better if it had attempted to expand on some of the issues raised and discussed in abbreviated form at the conference. Even so, it is notable in light of the upcoming events at WCA and Scholder, in her introduction to the book states:

"We were shocked to discover that, given a general topic of Violence and Violence, the participants focused almost exclusively . . . on the issues of incest, rape, domestic violence, and the price women pay for defending themselves. We couldn't open a discussion of women who kill or who commit violent acts without there being a discussion of self-defense. We couldn't raise issues of the media or of images of women in popular culture without confronting discriminatory values that determine whether women's lives (or deaths) qualify as newsworthy."

Women's safety, as well as women's health, seem to be entering another cycle of timeliness. Contact The LAB at (415) 346-4063 for more information.

## CONTENTS

### News

AFTERTHOUGHTS page 2

ORCHESTRAL MANEUVERS IN THE DARK by Grant H. Kester page 2

ITVS 1993 OPEN CALL GRANTS page 4

### Features

ACCESS DENIED:

INFORMATION POLICY AND THE LIMITS OF LIBERALISM

by Grant H. Kester page 5

VERTICAL HOLD:

THE RACIAL POLITICS OF NETWORK TELEVISION

by Bill Gaskins page 11

### Reviews

SERIOUS RESERVATIONS by Cylena Simonds page 14

### Notices

page 17

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