

INFORMATION AGING

Thanks to the internet, more knowledge is available now than at any time in Earth's history. Or so I'm told. Author A.J. Jacobs, however, recently tried to learn everything the old-fashioned way, by reading the *Encyclopædia Britannica* start to finish,¹ and it's said that the only thing the now-deceased William F. Buckley Jr. didn't know is that he didn't know everything.² Of course, no one can know everything, but that doesn't stop opinion. Search for anything, and you'll find an endless number of opinions on it. The explosion of bloggery isn't half as impressive as the swarm of commenters now opining on seemingly every article on every news and features website in existence. How do people have so much free time?

Elsewhere, people are still questing for knowledge through drawing, painting, and good old-fashioned record-keeping. **Renato Umali** charts his mood every day with a number between 1 (bad) and 5 (great). He can then compile his daily moods over an extended period, say a given month (after a romantic break-up), or a chosen year (after his best friend moved away). Umali started this practice years ago as a path to self-awareness. That he is an avid online video gamer and blogger might in part account for the proliferation of his daily record-keeping far beyond mood, to tracking the foods and drinks he consumes (eggs, beer, meat), who he talks to and what new things he learns every day, his top dining-out experiences, and many other diaristic details of his life. Predicting MySpace and Facebook, Umali has superimposed the virtual world of information upon his own world of friends and family, in order to better understand himself.

Michael Banicki is the Audubon of arcana. He catalogs things in the world: disappearing things, ephemera, information sinking into the depths of history. Most importantly, he rates them, in paintings. Any strict ratings system would defeat his purposes, which to outsiders (everyone else) remain cloudy at best. Is the Northern Shrike really the best bird? By Banicki's standards, yes. No matter the esoteric workings behind his conclusions, readable as tiny colored squares on an x/y grid. Banicki has rated colors, too, and all the letters of the alphabet. Dacada, WI, a town so small its population barely registers, is among the top 50 of the 6,140 towns he has rated, no doubt helped along by the fact that the letters A, C, and D are among the artist's favorites. Why, why, why? Banicki's project might seem less a quest for self-knowledge than some absurdist or quixotic exercise, but taken as a whole, his lifelong work to value things in the world around him—the variety of which is astonishingly vast (bats, moths, moss, trees, rivers, lakes, streets, Negro League baseball players, jazz trumpeters, early Hollywood actresses, the list goes on) (and on)—makes him a champion of the underdog, rescuer of the lost, a true search engine for the overlooked. Rated high or low, he's saying everything in these paintings merits attention.

Time, math, demographics, quantum physics, and the periodic table of elements: we know the world can be reduced to numbers. **Annabel Daou** is concerned with fixed and fluid identity in time, and how languages are used to represent it: numerals, English, Arabic, and reversed and made-up languages. In her *a book of hours* project, Daou writes all the minutes of a given hour on drawing paper, using the language of numbers to map the passage of time. In one sense, these drawings literally represent

how she has spent the hours in her studio, but the drawings aren't like an unthinking clock. Instead, they chart a random, tangential, circular, whimsical, memory-driven course that marries time with the workings of the mind, rendering both abstract, freeing bound time from its linearity while binding the free mind to metrics. Minutes condense the vast scope of time into predictable, recognizable units, but Daou recharges them with the unknowability and individuality they deserve. Daou draws a picture of the world as filtered through an individual mind, and of the world, in its quantity, as a reflection of a person's interior life.

Incised in concrete above the vaulted mock-Tudor door of the former Inova galleries at Vogel Hall were the words "Know Thyself," an apt epigraph for the *Indexical Frontiers* show. Perhaps here, in the new glass-and-concrete Inova space on Prospect Avenue, we would better capture the spirit of the age with a new sign: "Show Thyself."

—Nicholas Frank, Curator



1. A.J. Jacobs, *The Know-It-All: One Man's Humble Quest to Become the Smartest Person in the World* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2004)
 2. A wanton paraphrasing of Dick Cavett, "An Uncommon Man," posted March 7, 2008 on the *New York Times* online blog: <http://cavett.blogs.nytimes.com/>



INSTITUTE OF VISUAL ARTS

Since 1996, the Institute of Visual Arts (Inova) at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee's Peck School of the Arts has established an international reputation as a contemporary art research center. It is comprised of three gallery spaces in the Peck School of the Arts: Inova/Kenilworth, Inova/Arts Center and Inova/Zelazo (the Mary L. Nohl Galleries).

The mission of the Institute of Visual Arts is to engage the general and university publics with contemporary art from around the world through exhibitions and programs. Inova is recognized for the high quality of its programs and for the opportunity it offers artists to experiment in the creation of new work.

Bruce Knackert, Director of Galleries
 Nicholas Frank, Curator

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Gallery hours: Wednesday-Sunday,
 12 noon-5 pm & Thursdays till 8 pm

RELATED EVENTS

Adelheid Mers
 March 28-May 11, 2008
 Inova/Kenilworth

The 7th Annual Umali Awards
 April 26, 2008 at 7:30 pm
 Inova/Kenilworth

Renato Umali looks back on his year 2007 through awards such as "How I Like My Eggs," "Beer Consumption," "Most Frequented Restaurant," "Best Dining Out Experience," "Most Famous Person Spoken To," "Best Day" and, of course, the Top 10 people who have received the most DIWITTYs (Days In Which I Talked To You) will be honored in person. Semi-formal attire requested.



ARTISTS NOW!

This Department of Visual Art guest lecture series meets on Wednesdays at 7 pm in the Arts Center Lecture Hall, 2400 E. Kenwood Blvd.

March 26, 2008
Adelheid Mers: An Organogram of the Peck School of the Arts
 Adelheid Mers unveils the organogram of the Peck School of the Arts made for her exhibition at Inova and talks about her work as an artist who maps her readings of ideas, metaphors, organizations and other systems she encounters.

April 2, 2008
Nicholas Frank Interviews Michael Banicki
 Michael Banicki rates overlooked or underappreciated things and compiles them into brilliantly-colored abstract paintings. Curator Nicholas Frank asks Banicki if his Americana is a form of nostalgia or an implicit critique of the throwaway consumerist culture.

April 30, 2008
Renato Umali: What is a Divine Mind?
 Taking a quote from Borges's essay, "The Mirror Of Enigmas," as his starting point, Milwaukee-based multimedia/film artist Renato Umali considers the importance of the "mundane" as well as the impulse to collect and to re-collect. He touches on performance ideas, John Cage, and the question, "Is list-making an art?"



TITLE



DATES

March 28-May 11, 2008

MICHAEL BANICKI

OPENING RECEPTION

Friday, March 28, 6-9 pm

ANNABEL DAOU

LOCATION

Inova/Kenilworth
 2155 N. Prospect Ave.
 Milwaukee, Wisconsin

RENATO UMALI

TOWN RATING: 51ST - 100TH OF 6140 (2006)



ABOUT THE ARTIST

Is it often that you collect objects rather than information?

Well for sure! I've been collecting objects since I can remember. At age 3 or 4 it was gumball machine charms and marbles. Then coins and baseball cards. Though these collections have long since been "inactive" I still have them all. Later on, at age 10, I began collecting 45rpm records (I now have 6000+ and counting) and even the accompanying music surveys of WLS and WCFL in Chicago at this time. Most recently I've collected tramp art, state glasses, small town newspapers, crystals, and the bottlecap figures. I can go on and on.... I once sat down and wrote out a list of over 50 collections that I have; breathing, inactive, or closed.

Do you find that collecting and making a collection seem to open a can of worms?

Oh, I don't know. I'm so wrapped up in collections, gathering information, connoisseurship, and knowledge of the collections, that the words untenable and overload come to mind. So I'll just throw up my arms and shrug.

—excerpt from a *Feature, Inc.* interview with Hudson (1999)

Michael Banicki was born in Chicago in 1956 and is a graduate of Northern Illinois University. He has shown regularly with Feature, Inc. in New York since 1989, and has also had solo shows at the Arts Club of Chicago, Feigen, Inc. and The Suburban in Chicago, and Hermetic Gallery in Milwaukee. Numerous group show appearances include Skidmore College, the Tweed Museum, Rutgers University, Contemporary Art Museum St. Louis, Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago, College of DuPage, Whitney Museum of American Art (Downtown), Shedhalle (Zürich), Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Cleveland Center for Contemporary Art, Erie Art Museum and the Cable Gallery (New York).

MICHAEL BANICKI

2AM-3AM (2006)



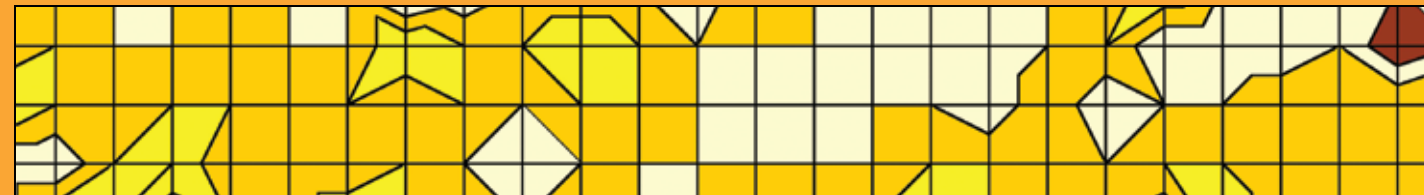
ABOUT THE ARTIST

a book of hours consists of a book of 120 pages, a series of drawings, and a soundscape by Greta Byrum. The book traces the last six months of the artist's life through a sequence of words and moments in time. The words and time repeat from page to page, referencing the rhythm of prayer, of chanting, and of the endless looping of time through the book itself. The series of drawings represent different hours of the day and night as well as specific moments, liminal time, and leap-seconds. The drawings use a sequence of passing minutes and hours to create a visual image of time. The space created is constructed by a random rotation of the paper and then by precise manipulation and obstruction using overlaid paper and repair tape. While the original medieval books of hours were used to list the appropriate texts for each liturgical hour of the day, they eventually became records of life itself. As they became more highly decorated, they were sought after as works of art. Dealing with one of the functions of religion, one of its structures, extrapolated from the whole system, and referring to the ideas of eternal calendars and endless time, *a book of hours* represents this incessant passage between time and art.

Annabel Daou's recent solo exhibitions include *sex & politics* at Conduit Gallery, in Dallas, TX, *a book of hours* at Gallery Joe in Philadelphia and *AMERICA* at Josee Bienvenu Gallery in New York. Recent and upcoming group shows include *Text Messages*, Adam Baumgold Gallery, NY and Homebase, NY. She is working on a solo show for the Bell Gallery at Brown University in early 2009 and a project for the Islamic Art Department at LACMA in 2008. As a founding member of the dB foundation, Daou co-curated *Aporia* at the EFA Gallery, NY (2006) and *Aporia:Aporia* (2007) at Los Angeles Contemporary Exhibitions (LACE). She is currently working on *Disarmory*, a New York art fair, and an accompanying newspaper, *THE DISARMORY*, both productions of the dBfoundation. Daou was born and raised in Beirut, Lebanon, and moved to New York in 1999.

ANNABEL DAOU

APRILS (2007)



ABOUT THE ARTIST

Statistics have always fascinated me. I like the fact that a baseball player's career—encompassing even all those clutch hits or circus-style catches—could be neatly reduced and summarized in rows and columns of numbers. The dramatic and the mundane collapse into each other, giving shape to a season. If one could do that to a baseball player's career, why not do it to a person's life? And instead of tracking home runs, how about counting the days in which you talked to your mom? After a time, you could create a chart that visualized this interaction with your mother. How would that line look? What would other lines look like and what would those lines represent? And where would they lead?

Renato Umali has born in Manila, Philippines and grew up in Jersey City, NJ. He earned a Bachelor of Arts in Music from Northwestern University, and received a Master of Fine Arts in Film and Video Performance from UW-Milwaukee. Much of his current work is derived from data collected via a meticulous record keeping process in which he records various details about his life on spread sheets. His work takes form in performance, video and, more recently, digital archival prints. He teaches in the UW-Milwaukee Film Department and maintains a piano studio for private instruction.

RENATO UMALI