

**SCREENING, TALK & BENEFIT FOR THE CRITICAL ART ENSEMBLE:**

**Sunday October 3, 2004 at 7:00 pm, \$6**

**Ocularis at Galapagos Art & Performance Space**

70 North 6th Street (between Wythe and Kent)

Williamsburg Brooklyn, NY 11211

organized by Marianne Shaneen with Autonomedia

venue tel/fax: 718-388-8713

<http://www.ocularis.net>

**by subway:** take L train to Bedford Ave. stop (at North 7th St), go West on North 6th for 3 blocks, Galapagos is on the right between Wythe & Kent.

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**FILMS BY: Manual DeLanda, the Critical Art Ensemble, Peggy Ahwesh, Eli Elliott, Dara Greenwald, Eric Henry, Keith Sanborn, Rachel Mayeri, and the United States Dept of Defense**

**WITH COMMENTARY BY: Nato Thompson (MASS MoCA), Greg Sholette, Keith Sanborn, and John Henry (Institute for Applied Autonomy)**

**Our MC will be the provocative rabble-rousing "Philomena" from the Bindlestiff Family Circus!**

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For nearly 20 years, the Critical Art Ensemble has produced art, performance, and texts critically examining the relationships between science, politics, social life and the State. Since May 2004, some of this work has triggered a Federal investigation and lawsuit, with a founding member facing numerous indictments, possible prison time and excessive fines (details below). In the face of huge legal defense bills in this case, many fundraising events are being organized internationally and online.

On October 3rd, 2004, Ocularis will present an evening of film and video work with a focus on science and political critique, with commentary by some primary figures in the Critical Art Ensemble's case. Filmworks range from animations about bioengineered "Frankencorn" and documentary work around the Human Genome Project to a video "cut-up" of a Department of Defense training video and an archival DoD propaganda film on how to deal with biological warfare.

Speakers include the curator of this MASS MoCA show on interventionist art where subpoenas were delivered to the CAE, and a member of the Institute for Applied Autonomy, who developed the "TXTMOB" phone-messaging technology widely used during the Republican

Convention protests. Books by the Critical Art Ensemble will be available, and all proceeds will go to the Steve Kurtz Defense Fund.

**\*\*\*\*\* FILMS INCLUDE \*\*\*\*\***

**Critical Art Ensemble: Four short films**

From 1986-1993 Critical Art Ensemble made numerous low-tech films and videos. In 1993, the launch of the visual digital revolution through the use of graphic user interfaces and the WWW signaled an end, for CAE, of the cause for legitimating low-tech production in mass media. CAE abandoned video production at this time to explore on-line and digital graphic possibilities.

**Peggy Ahwesh: She-Puppet**

Re-editing footage collected from months of playing Tomb Raider, Ahwesh transforms the video game into a reflection on identity and mortality, acknowledging the intimate relationship between Lara Croft and her player. Moving beyond her implicit feminist critique of the problematic female identity, she enlarges the dilemma of Croft's entrapment to that of the individual in an increasingly artificial world.

**Eric Henry: Bear Witness III and Pirates & Emperors (or, Size Does Matter)**

Bear Witness III, a music video for Dan the Automator, is a four-part study in hubris. Each section explores a different ego trip-military, cosmetic, scientific, and engineering/industrial-and takes it to its logical conclusion. Pirates & Emperors (or, Size Does Matter) is a wry political cartoon about bullies big and small. It is set to original music and animated in a style reminiscent of the popular "Schoolhouse Rock" educational video series. It illustrates the notion that if you are a successful enough bully, you can pretty much write your own ticket and go by the name "emperor" or "president" instead.

**Rachel Mayeri: Stories from the Genome**

Part cloning experiment, part documentary, Stories from the Genome follows an unnamed CEO-geneticist whose company sequenced the Human Genome in 2003-a genome that secretly was his own. Not satisfied with this feat, the scientist self-replicates, producing a colony of clone-scientists to save himself from Alzheimer's. Mayeri's video comments on the dangers of short-sighted, self-interest in contemporary biotechnology and its appropriation for profit of human genetic information.

**Keith Sanborn: "Operation Double Trouble"**

A detouring of a US government propaganda film.

**Eli Elliott: "ASSCroft"**

A hilarious 4 min. PixelVision piece touching on the Patriot Act.

**Dara Greenwald: "Strategic Cyber Defense"**

4 mins. of jaw-dropping paranoid pathology from the Dept of Defense, a warped 'in-house' training video chopped up into the perfect mix of shredded clueless hysteria.

**The US Federal Civil Defense Administration: What You Should Know About Biological Warfare (1952)**

How can we protect ourselves against the threats of germs and toxins? This Cold War-era government film teaches viewers how to fend off threats from unconventional bioweapons.

**Manuel DeLanda: Ism-Ism.**

This rarely-seen film documents Manuel DeLanda's graffiti activities between 1977 and 1979. Instead of tags and other more familiar forms of art interventions on the street, DeLanda attacked commercial billboards, morphing the faces of people in ads into bizarre looking monsters.

**Speakers for this event will include:**

**-Nato Thompson**, MASS MoCA curator of May 2004 show "The Interventionists: Art in the Social Sphere - a brief survey of interventionist political art practices of the 90s" which was to include work by the CAE, but instead saw the issuing of subpoenas to those CAE members present at the opening.

**-Greg Sholette**, artist, writer and activist. He was a founding member of the REPOhistory artist's collective and of Political Art Documentation and Distribution, and is co-editor the book *The Interventionists*, and a forthcoming major book on post-war art collectivism from University of Minnesota.

**-Keith Sanborn**, artist, theorist and curator, has been working in film, photography, digital media and video since the late 1970s. He has also translated several of the films of Guy Debord into English.

**-John Henry of the Institute for Applied Autonomy**, an art and engineering collective that develops technologies for political dissent. Projects include the development of robots that can leaflet or draw graffiti, and the text messaging "TXTmob" tool used by protestors at the Republican National Convention.

**Background on the case:**

Since May 2004, Steve Kurtz, founding member of the acclaimed Critical Art Ensemble and professor in the Art Department at SUNY Buffalo, has been under Federal investigation on Grand Jury charges relating to bio-terrorism under the PATRIOT Act. The investigation

stems from Steve's possession of biological equipment and bacteria seized by the FBI from Kurtz's home, materials which can be found in any high school science lab, but was used to create art critical of the unrestrained use of biotechnology and the history of US involvement in germ warfare experiments (including the Bush administration's earmarking of hundreds of millions of dollars to erect high-security laboratories around the country). In July, Steve and his collaborator, Robert Ferrell, Professor of Genetics at the University of Pittsburgh, were formally charged with four counts of mail and wire fraud, each carrying a maximum sentence of 20 years in prison and a \$250,000 fine. The Federal charges have been met with a huge outcry from artists, scientists, researchers, and professors. Clearly the absurd and disturbing charges are an attempt to use the Patriot Act to target and intimidate artists and researchers who are critical or controversial, and to curtail artistic and intellectual freedom.

For more info on Steve's case, please visit

[www.caedefensefund.org](http://www.caedefensefund.org)

and

[www.critical-art.net](http://www.critical-art.net)