

One Per Cent Art

Margaret Valiant is fond of saying that the richness of a city's culture can be correlated to the number of its municipal fountains. If this is true, then does the new civic fountain reflect a growing cultural awareness in Memphis? Perhaps it does, but the fountain, like all our civic art, is fortuitous. Civic art is just an attractive (sometimes not so attractive) ancillary to projects of the various departments of city government. Planning in art is non-existent in Memphis.

Memphis needs a program with the express purpose of expanding the visual arts and of encouraging and employing the city's artists to create art for public places. If the dubious citizens need a model to mimic, then gaze in amazement at Seattle. In the three years since its inception, the Seattle Arts Program has helped create 18 public arts projects with over 100 individual works produced by more than 60 artists. Those figures, as impressive as they are, fail to measure the civic pride and economic rewards that have been generated by the program. Indeed, the visual and aesthetic environment has been enhanced along with the well-being of the people of Seattle.

The solution to the problem is found in the commitment of money.

The Seattle program is funded by 1% of the City's capital improvements budget. This public arts fund is administered by a Municipal Arts Commission in accordance with a comprehensive Municipal Arts Plan. Members of the Commission act from the premise that art is a daily public need and not simply a luxury of the few who can afford it.

The Commission has a specific procedure to follow in the selection of a project. An Artist Resource Registry contains a file of photographs depicting the works of the city's artists. Before a work is selected, the Commission consults the Registry; thus favoritism due to personality or reputation is minimized and aesthetic considerations are maximized.

Continuing public arts programs have proved highly successful in San Francisco and Baltimore, as well as Seattle. They are all but an amplification of Ms Valiant's proposition: the quality of a city's culture can be gauged by its continuous and planned commitment to public art.

If you are interested in more information or in discussing a similar program in Memphis, contact me at P. O. Box 3570, Memphis, 38103.

— Don Donati

3. Development of mass transit,
4. Any combination of the above,
5. A tunnel design through the park,
6. Not to build I-40 at all.

It was not incumbent on Volpe to choose an alternative but on the State.

Brinegar did not then "inherit the case"; rather the State reapplied for Federal approval and aid. On January 31, 1975, he wrote, "With respect to the State's current proposals, I believe, as did Secretary Volpe, that the open cut design through Overton Park cannot be approved under applicable law." He recommended that the State's re-evaluation be limited to three alternatives:

1. A cut and cover tunnel through the Park,
2. A cut and cover tunnel under North Parkway,
3. Low capital transit and arterial street improvements.

It is up to the State to prepare an alternative to comply with Federal laws. It has never been the responsibility of any Federal Secretary of Transportation to choose a route from alternative suggestions. The Secretary's job is to approve or disapprove the State's proposal.

The *Commercial Appeal* considers itself a journal of record, a self-image which allows it to report the minutiae of daily events without having to explicate them.

— P. Waters

in Midtown said. "I thought the paper recycling idea was real good, but if you don't do something with it the paper just gets out of hand." The bins did not have lids, he said. And they were not emptied as promised by the City, according to the managers.

The City's bins were quietly hauled in and the its participation as quietly ceased. But several community groups have expressed interest in reinstating the recycle program, with or without the City's aid. The Sierra Club has appointed a special committee to develop a community recycle program.

— T. H. Barker

Center city

VOLUME III, NUMBER 25
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Humor Hits Bluff

As I was about to enter the Seed health food store the other day, I was stopped short by a proclamation taped to the door announcing that the *Buffoon* was available inside. I entered half expecting to find some piebald fool jesting and capering amidst the wheat germ and yogurt, toes and dogeared cap jingling merrily. Instead, what I found besides wheat germ and yogurt was a monthly tabloid published in Memphis by Full Court Press and appropriately dubbed the *Bluff Town Buffoon*.

The *Buffoon* is a sometimes clever, sometimes insipid parody of the average daily newspaper. Its feature stories are pseudo-serious scenarios based on topical events and presented in exemplary journalese. They adhere closely to fact but have a whimsical, if not bizarre, twist. For example, the headline for one-half of the November issue announced: "Carter Claims Victory In Record Low Turnout; Ford Shoots Self." The story relates a realistic and reasonably accurate account of the election complete with maps, polls, analysis of voting patterns and the Ford suicide. It is not such an absurd scenario considering the much publicized emotional stake which Ford had in winning and his deep despondence after defeat. I say that the headline was for one-half of the November issue because it is really two issues in one. In an apparent attempt to avoid committing a journalistic gaffe similar to that committed in 1948 by a prominent newspaper which proclaimed Dewey the victor over Truman, the *Buffoon* cleverly

coppered its bet by running an alternative scenario in which Ford defeats Carter.

In addition to its feature stories, the *Buffoon* offers a medical-advice column, a women's column, letters, television news, a television program guide and a classified section. But, while these sections are sometimes humorous, they are not consistently so and lapse at times into vulgar and banal word play, perhaps the result of a small staff trying to maintain the same level of humor over too long a stretch.

The creator and editor of the *Buffoon* is Gordon Alexander, who with associate editor and co-founder Tom O'Neil does most of the writing. He is a former student at the Memphis Academy of Arts and a Memphian by way of Jackson, Mississippi and New York City. He describes the *Buffoon* as an effort, growing out of a long-time interest in politics and satire (which he calls the purest form of humor), to establish in Memphis a high quality periodical of social and political satire dedicated to making people laugh.

Between three thousand and thirty-five hundred copies are printed each month, and sold for thirty-five cents each in record shops, book stores, contemporary clothing stores, and paraphernalia shops in Memphis, Clarkesdale, and Oxford. They claim about one hundred subscribers, including readers in New York, Phoenix and Cincinnati. The December issue will be a special, anniversary edition featuring the best of the *Buffoon*.

— Harry Sayle

Media-Ogre

HERE'S TO THE RECORD

On November 20, 1976, the *Commercial Appeal* printed a correction:

It was reported in Wednesday's edition of *The Commercial Appeal* that two former United States Transportation secretaries, John Volpe and Claude S. Brinegar, left office without ruling on the Overton Park expressway dispute.

Volpe ruled by suggesting alternatives to the park routing, though he did not choose an alternative.

Brinegar then inherited the case, and, like Volpe, said he did not approve of an open, depressed highway through the park. He, too, left office by recommending alternatives without choosing a specific route.

Unfortunately the "correction" is just as misleading as the original statements. On January 19, 1973, Volpe did not rule by suggesting alternatives. He wrote, "I find that and Interstate Highway as proposed by the State through Overton Park cannot be approved." That was the ruling; he then suggested six alternatives which the State could consider in its next application for Federal approval:

1. I-240 combined with street improvements,
2. L & N railroad corridor,

Paper Waste

The community paper recycling program that flourished last spring with the cooperation of the City Beautiful agency, is dormant now.

City Beautiful earlier last year placed the recycle bins on gas station lots in various points of the city. They removed the bins from the Exxon stations this summer, at the request of an Exxon official. The problem, according to several station managers, was that the program worked, but the maintenance promised by City Beautiful didn't.

"We had that paper flying all over the place here," one Exxon manager

Two Dudes From Como

William Shakespeare was one of the early song-and-dance men, as he often stopped the plot for a lyrical interlude.

A lively version of a Shakespeare comedy is the current attraction at Playhouse on the Square, where a rowdy, racy and thoroughly cheerful musical adaptation of *Two Gentlemen of Verona* is the company's third production of the present season.

No attempt has been made to get all of the original play transformed into a manageable evening. What has been done is a marvel of telescoping the Bard's heavy plot of young love turned fickle, damsels in disguise and the tying of various romantic knots. John Guare and Mel Shapiro have adapted and condensed the play, as well as adding contemporary modes of expression, making Verona and Milan as accessible as Memphis and Millington. Guare's lyrics alternate between touching and raucous. Galt McDermot's score has a strong strain of soft rock, in addition to hitting the bases of sentimental love songs, soul sounds and the Latin American idiom.

Director-choreographer Christopher

Cox has staged the work as an antic romp, keeping the action highly fluid. His fortunate choice of principals is reflected in the exciting performances he has gotten from Craig Graeler and LeRoi Henderson in the title roles, Angee Cockroft as Julia, Dianne Collins as Silvia, Darryl Smith as Lucetta and Harold Gentry as the Duke.

Giving strong support are Ken Miller as Launce and a wonderful scene-stealing dog named Crab, with whom Miller has several scenes. It is to his credit that Miller holds his own with Crab, but the odds could shift, since the dog is obviously a born star.

The production has two genuine show-stoppers in Miss Collins' and Henderson's "Night Letter" and "Chica Boom," a rowdy parody of the Carmen Miranda school of garbled linguistics.

Two Gentlemen of Verona is a sassy, downtown-in-the-city kind of show, one that makes lightheaded fun its closest and most enjoyable companion. It runs through December 19.

— Howell Pearre

Neighborhoods

IT'S TIME FOR COALITION

Know what we need? We need a coalition of all the various non-profit community groups functioning within the center city of Memphis.

What if this coalition could incorporate as the Center City Council, a citizens' counterpart to the proposed Center City Commission? Membership would be drawn from a defined geographical area, and some reasonable membership fee would probably be required to start an operating capital fund. Then each organization would send its delegate to regularly scheduled meetings to discuss common problems and initiate group projects.

Why create such an animal? For one reason, the center city communities need some form of inter-organizational communications and cooperation. The advantages of such a coalition should persuade reluctant: broad area-wide programs could be implemented, possibly with greater state and federal assistance; a trade-off of ideas and techniques to meet common objectives would be facilitated; and a powerful voice for our communities would be established which could not be denied prompt attention.

Neighbors are interdependent: one cannot logically be sacrificed for the benefit of the other. Failure to join

forces for fear of losing the integrity or autonomy of one's district or organization could eventually retard the objectives of every center city community.

If you represent a center city community-oriented organization and think the time has come for a mature center city alliance, please write to Front Street Arts at P. O. Box 3570, 38103. We'll try to set up a meeting of all interested parties and send you notification of all related activities.

— Gerald Murley, Jr.

GOT A MESSAGE: an ad 1" x 2.5" will set you back only \$4.50 per issue. *Center City* must average one page of advertisements for every three pages of articles, calendar listings, etc. to break even.

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December 14 — "Born Yesterday"
December 21 — "The Third Man"
December 28 — "Holiday"
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— Peabody Library auditorium*
December 17 — "Magic of Walt
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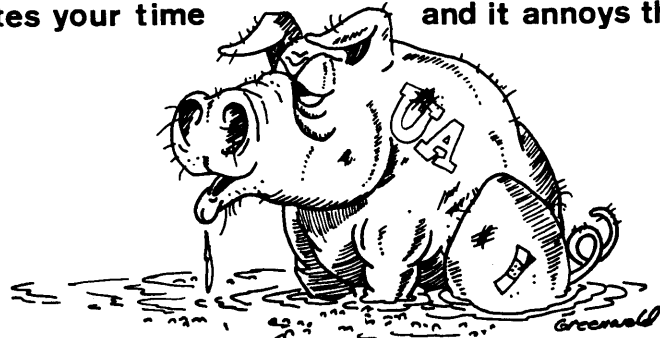
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We're going to take a brief holiday; we'll
be back January 20. Copy for that issue
(a 4-pager) must be in by January 10.



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