

# FEATURES

## Art exhibit pays homage to Carolina women artists

by Maribeth Kiser  
Staff Reporter

The "Carolina Women Artists" exhibit, currently at the Asheville Art Museum, displays colorful landscapes and portraits of an overlooked group of artists.

"I think it is good that they are trying to bring out artists that might have been overlooked, like local women artists from this period, where mostly men artists were famous," said Kevin Schaefer, museum employee.

The exhibit features the works of 30 Southern women over a span of a 100 years, from 1850 to 1950, who overcame tremendous odds during a time of political and economic change in the South.

Oil, pastel and watercolor mediums depict familiar southern landscapes from the coast to the mountains, capturing the natural beauty over 100 years ago.

An oil painting of Charleston's Folly Beach with clean blues and greens reminds people the natural beauty before the rise of air pollution and high-rise condominiums. Another landscape of a farm that depicts the serene solitude of the country with rolling hills leading to a small house with horses grazing in the pasture.

"I really liked the rural depictions," said Julia Robinson, junior psychology major. "They give you a good idea of the rural South back in the day, especially the Carolina's. I thought they were very historically significant of what they portray."

Many portraits displayed at this exhibit captures the femininity of the time and the graveness during a challenging period; no smiling.

All of these paintings focus on the naturalness of this era and embrace femininity through elegant



PHOTO COURTESY ASHEVILLE ART MUSEUM  
Sarah Blakeslee (1912- ), Windsor, North Carolina. *Untitled, 1955, oil on canvas, 21.5 x 29.5,* collection of William W. Dodge, III.

flower paintings and self portraits. Along with the brilliantly painted landscapes and precisely defined portraits, a history of the challenges women faced in the South remains the theme throughout this exhibit.

The only downfall to the exhibit is the lack of diversity. The oil and pastel paintings of landscapes and portraits doesn't leave room for individuality or expression, compared to more abstract paintings typically on display in museums.

"They're all one kind; pretty much all oil paintings, but that's what people had to work with, they didn't have these fancy schools," said Robinson. "The important thing is that they attempted to do it. It was a step for women."

Keep in mind, women did not attain the right to vote until the 1920s. Most of the Southeast was marginalized post Civil War, posing challenges for many Southerners.

"There was very little support for artists in the South," said Frank Thomson, museum curator. "You need places to show your work, places to study, and people to buy art. Museums were not very big until the 1950s."

Women wanting to rebel against the traditional role of housewife

would go to Northern schools to study and create their artistic masterpieces, some even traveled to Europe, in order to be accepted.

The women educated in the South either studied at Converse

College in Spartanburg or College in Columbia, but there were many restrictions to their program, according to Thomson. "In the

late 19th century there were very few places where women could study art. Most schools wouldn't accept women," said Thomson.

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Julia Robinson  
junior psychology major

review

## 'Control Room' shows flipside to war in Iraq

by Apryl Blakeney  
Staff Reporter

Ever since Donald Rumsfeld described the Arab satellite television network Al-Jazeera as the "mouthpiece of Osama bin Laden," many Americans are left confused about the network's agenda. Documentarian Jehane Noujaim takes viewers behind the scenes of the Arabic-language network in the film "Control Room," now playing at the Fine Arts Theater.

Egyptian-born and Harvard-educated Noujaim recorded military activity in Iraq from the walls of Central Command (CentCom), a makeshift media village in Qatar, 700 miles from Baghdad. The media center houses reporters from across the globe including CNN, Fox News, NBC, BBC and Al-Jazeera.

In the film, through the ears of Al-Jazeera, we hear Bush's threat of invasion, and through Arabic eyes we see civilian bloodshed, the tumbling of Hussein's statue and the anarchy of a nation left without rule.

With Qatari money in hand, former employees of the BBC launched Al-Jazeera in 1996, making it the first independent news channel in the Middle East. Though disliked by many Arabic governments and even banned in Saudi Arabia, it remains the most popular Arabic news channel, reaching over 40 million viewers.

"All the Middle Eastern countries are really dictatorships," said Loubna Dardna, Moroccan native. "There is no democracy of expression or of speech, therefore, there is no democracy of the media. But there is still that need to understand the issues of the Arabic and Islamic people so Al-Jazeera came along, and they recognize the concept of media in the Arabic world. Now people are listening to other Arab people who talk with their language and address their issues. They deal deeply with our problems and not from western eyes with western democracy, because that is useless to us."

The film opens to the voice of Samir Khader, the cynically-engaging, chain-smoking Senior Producer of Al-Jazeera. He boldly states, "You can not wage a war without propaganda."

Though it remains a shockingly honest ascertain, moviegoers will most likely remember him for confessing "between us, if I were offered a job at Fox News, I would take it to exchange the Arab nightmare for the American dream."

This is the man Rumsfeld claims is a liar, tarnishing and twisting the American image. "Fox is propaganda, though I am sure they say that about Al-Jazeera too, but there is just no truth in the way that they demonize Arabs and demonize Islam," said Dardna.

The patient and empathetic CentCom Press Officer suggests a different outlook when comparing American media to Eastern media,

an analysis that takes place in various forms throughout the film.

"It benefits Al-Jazeera to play to Arab nationalism because that is their audience, just like Fox plays to American patriotism for the exact same reason," said Lieutenant Josh Rushing in the film.

However, the documentary seems to contain an underlying tone that sadly suggests that being an Arabic nationalist or American patriot means railing against the opposing nation. The film implies that Fox reiterates this misconception by marketing patriotic sentiment, but selling anti-Arabic mentality.

"It would be ridiculous to think that Al-Jazeera would take issues of Texas or Nebraska, but that is how I see Fox," said Dardna. "They think they are an expert on Middle Eastern issues and Islamic and Ara-



PHOTO COURTESY OF MAGNOLIA PICTURES  
Lt. Josh Rushing, U.S. Military press officer in "Control Room," a Magnolia Pictures release. (c) Magnolia Pictures.

bic ideas. That is like Al-Jazeera talking about how Nebraska should be invaded because 'really Nebraska isn't doing very well' and we should re-liberate them and offer only news about Nebraska 24/7.

But unlike Fox, Al-Jazeera doesn't do that. They deal with the problems and issues of their own country."

At the heart of the film is the ethical question of media accuracy, honesty and objectivity in reporting.

It sheds light upon news manipulation at the lens of American journalists attempting to sway our political ideals related to the War in Iraq but it also exposes unfairness within Al-Jazeera.

When an American reporter questioned

an Al-Jazeera spokeswoman about the biases in Arabic news, the spokeswoman calmly answered with a rhetorical question "And what about the biases in American media?"

The spokeswoman continued to say "objectivity is a mirage," when dealing with something as passionate as war.

Noujaim admits growing up with contradictory news sources inspired her to examine Al-Jazeera.

As an example of these concerns, Noujaim explored Al-Jazeera's coverage during the fall of Hussein's statue and analyzed the liberated Iraqi people who came out to celebrate.

Only to find that, in contrast to American news, the square was not full with grateful Iraqi's ready to embrace their new found freedom. Instead, only 15 boys circled around the fallen Hussein.

With this film, it's the realization of unknown realities, misguided truth and feelings of puppetry that cause viewers to leave feeling a little betrayed, a little appalled and a lot inspired.

## 'Sky Captain' flies with first class eye candy

by Chris Beck  
Staff Reporter

"Sky Captain and the World of Tomorrow," reminiscent of the "Casablanca" and "Lost in Space" days, brings modern electronics and digital effects together with a nostalgic 1940s look.

"Science-fiction relies heavily on special effects and when that happens, sometimes the story suffers," said Jason Tobin of Asheville.

The movie offers a pastiche of ideas from 1930s and 1940s comic books, radio serials and big-screen romantic comedies. Set in an animated New York City, movie theater marquees advertise "Wuthering Heights" and "The Wizard of Oz," placing the year at 1939 and forecasting a bizarre development in which director Kerry Conran will resuscitate a long-dead person through computer-generated magic.

Reporter Polly Perkins (Gwyneth Paltrow) takes us on a journey through an obviously predictable story dealing with disappearing scientists in the New York area.

The plot seems cribbed from the old adventure serials, only decorated for a demanding modern audience. In 1939 New York, the city gets attacked by a monolithic swarm of mega-robots.

As an ace reporter, Perkins takes the case and promptly enlists the aid of her strong-jawed former lover Sky Captain Joe Sullivan (Judith Law). Once the hero saves the day he flies off to base where we meet the brains behind the equipment, Dex Dearborn (Giovanni Ribisi).

After chancing upon a few choice clues, Joe and Polly eventually head off to a wild array of exotic locales, stopping along the way to rescue various sidekicks and battle an ever-eclectic collection of supremely cool looking robots.

Up to this point the audience has seen a multitude of digital effects like fades, cross dissolves, overlapping and 3D modeled backdrops. It would appear that the post-production team took a beating on this one considering the whole film was shot against a blue screen with everything computer generated except for the actors.

Conran shot each extra and actor individually so they could be manipulated easily without having to shoot the scenes again. Although effective at bringing this to life, the characters appeared washed out and static, compared to their background.

"It's not a seamless integration of animation and film," said Bryan Taubert of Asheville.

Conran tries to cover seams between humans and animation with a forgiving gray-brown palette and haloed lighting. This approach works sometimes, but at others the actors seem too defined in the foreground and call attention to the picture's competing elements. In a few scenes, Paltrow and Law occupy the same frame but do not appear to play off each other.

"It just looks cheesy," said Taubert. "It doesn't look as smooth as I've seen animation before."

Although the integration may not have succeeded in raising the bar for quality, it did leave a good impression for Tobin.

"I liked the visual concept," said Tobin. "It's like 'Star Wars' meets 'Indiana Jones.' It's a nice movie to see just for fun, and I would go see it again."

The plot line is simple: to find

SEE SKY ON PAGE 3