

# Wild Card

## Home-based arts venue colors outside the lines

Roommates take their visions to the house

By LEWIS TAYLOR  
The Register-Guard

The way Jesse Garlick sees it, the budget-sized, white picket fence that surrounds his house at 1136 W. Fifth Ave. makes the perfect declaration about do-it-yourself arts venues.

"I think it makes a statement about the ability for this to happen anywhere," Garlick says. "People who come here think, 'Are we there yet?' And then they enter (through) this side entrance and this whole other world is revealed. And I think that's a kind of a beautiful contrast."

Garlick's house isn't just his house. It's My House, an alternative-performance space that recently marked its one-year anniversary with a Sunday morning "breakfast and bands" celebration.

For other indications that this arts venue operates by a different set of rules, consider this past year's schedule of events, which has included everything from scratch animation workshops to scrap film screenings.

The small basement space that seats roughly 75 people has been home to slam poetry readings, visual art shows, experimental film screenings and zine-making workshops. The venue plans to close its doors to the public this summer, after hosting one last series of underground arts events.

"Anyone could do this," says Marc Moscato, the main organizer of the venue and a resident of the house. "Anyone can put up a bunch of fliers and tell people to come over."

### Simplicity part of the charm

Moscato makes what My House does sound simple, and that's part of its charm. The place tries to tear down the kind of pretensions that many art spaces thrive on.

The good, Moscato says, is to bring people together over art and issues of common concern, and to provide an outlet for those who feel detached from mainstream productions.



Ledena Mattox (left) and Marc Moscato participate in a direct animation workshop at My House. Animators manipulate existing film scraps to create short films.

"We have a motto," Moscato says. "We're building in our back yards." It's just a metaphor. We don't even have a back yard. But I view this work as important."

The idea for My House grew out of the sense of dissatisfaction that both Moscato and Garlick felt with the local arts scene. Both University of Oregon graduate students, Garlick is in the architecture program. Moscato is concentrating on arts administration. They arrived in Eugene from other cities and felt there were not enough all-ages venues here for independent artists.

When Moscato answered Garlick's ad for a housemate, though, things started happening. Neither remembers who came up with the idea for a downstairs performance space, but Moscato recalls remembering that there was a largely empty basement collecting dust.

Moscato, Garlick, three other artists and an intern made up the collective that runs My House. Moscato, a multimedia artist from Buffalo, N.Y., has been heavily involved in planning the events.

### COMING UP AT MY HOUSE

- On Tap at My House, 1136 W. Fifth Ave. 344-4066 or www.nomyhouse.com
- ◆ April 26 — Zine-making workshop with Olivia Pepper, noon to 6 p.m., \$12
- ◆ May 2 — "Men and Animals: The Films of Jim Finn and Dean Rank," 7:30 p.m., \$3 to \$5 donation
- ◆ May 9 — New Zone Art Collective's "Money Show" opening, 7 p.m., \$3 to \$5 donation
- ◆ May 16 — Against Mel and Fifth Hour Hero, 7:30 p.m., \$3 to \$5 donation

these themes.

At one event, Bill Daniel, a multimedia artist from Portland, created a video installation in the garage using 2000-camera objects, a moon-shaped projection screen attached to the roofline of My House.

At another gathering, a zine-making workshop called "Make It Better," participants were invited to make an improvement to their surroundings and write about it. The publication that resulted featured first-person accounts of projects as large as knocking down walls and building stairs and as small as clearing away the clutter from a messy desk.

Garlick says once people get past their initial hesitancy of being in someone else's house, most visitors to My House relax and accept the venue for what it is. It's the kind of performance space where the washing machine is considered the best seat in the house.

No alcohol is poured at My House, but the Black Market room serves up zines and other alternative publications with names such as "The Carbon-Based Mistake" and "The CIA Makes Science-Fiction Unexciting." Popcorn is dispensed in plastic toilet containers. Tiny buttons with puzzling slogans also are for sale.

Despite his initial concerns that My House would become "a punk party place," Garlick says the crowds at My House have been respectful of this residence. There has only been one instance of theft, he says.

The neighbors, too, have been largely supportive, Garlick says, thanks in part to an 11 p.m. curfew for music shows. One nearby resident apparently told Garlick she was proud to have My House as a neighbor.

That was a special thing, I

hear," Garlick says. "They (the neighbors) come to a couple of shows and always are curious about what's going on."

Jesse Garlick, an artist who has shown her photographs and canvases at My House, says the venue is better than more conventional spaces because its goals are different. Instead of being concerned with profits or sustainability, the primary concern is artistic freedom.

"It's just the fact that it's a do-it-yourself place," McKillip says. "There aren't very many places like that around here."

### Exploring the underground

My House isn't our only underground performance space. The Jawbreaker Window Gallery is another Whiteaker area venue where McKillip has shown her work. Las Sours Sol is a popular punk rock club on River Road. And there are other local spaces that are well off the First Friday art walk map.

Mike McKerrrow, a land use management supervisor with the city's Building and Permit Services Department, was not aware of My House or some of the other underground art spaces, but said such clubs probably were not in violation of any city codes, which allow for "accessory use" of residential dwellings.

My House is not a fully residential art space, but it has filled a niche as a performance room and a crash pad for independent artists traveling up and down the West Coast who have, in the past, blown right by Eugene. Most of the artists are happy to come away with gas money, a meal and a place to sleep for the night.

Garlick says, visitors don't seem to mind when asked to help work the door or staff the house, but he says he would like to see a permit filed to

## House: It's art, in person

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cash drawer in the Black Market, as they often are. For a few dollars, anyone can enter the all-ages space, and even those who can't afford to pay have been known to wash dishes in exchange for admission.

Shawn Mediaclast, owner of Feinstein's Museum of Unfine Art, a record store Wilamette Street that also sells disguises and cigarettes and hangs works by local artists, says My House offers a unique mix of activism and creativity.

Mediaclast says the venue has explored some highly

charged subjects— including art shows inspired by Sept. 11 and opposition to the war in Iraq — and it's provided an outlet for under-represented art forms.

"They're really doing a lot to support experimental art and music down in that basement," Mediaclast says. "It's really like a bunch of kids putting on shows and doing what they're doing for the fun of it, and because they are trying to do something positive..."

"If they do stop doing what they're doing, and I hope they don't, it will definitely be a loss."

# Earth Day celebrat music, parade, info

The Procession of All Species will be the heart of Eugene's free downtown Earth Day Celebration, from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Saturday in and around the Broadway Plaza, Willamette Street at Broadway.

Marchers outfitted as tigers, dolphins, trailing vines, microscopic paramacia, even whole ecosystems, will make their way through the streets in honor of the big, blue marble that supports us all. The Samba Jaque troupe will provide the rhythm.

The only rule is that no actual live animals are allowed.

car show, information booths and a recycling center for old athletic shoes. LTD will run a bus to Short Mountain for a tour of an Emerald People's Utility District power plant that converts landfill gases into electricity.

The main stage entertainment schedule has Frank Merrill (welcome and American Indian blessing) at 11 a.m., Jenaguru (marimba) at 11:30 a.m., Paul Safar & Friends (songs for children and the young at heart) at 12:45 p.m., Teen Superheroes (street the-

**Leisure Inn**

**Spring Things**