

3...2...1...Canaries blast off into space

'Amohoro' at Pelican sends birds out of this world; plus, stress-free fun at Front Room

The canaries were calling me from the street, so I entered the gallery. Inside Jack the Pelican, I saw the birds were locked behind bars. Two live yellow canaries, they were on their way to outer space in their very own "canary spaceship" made of several birdcages that were attached and hanging from the ceiling. Happy I'd heard them from afar, I felt lucky to witness the blast off, assisted by their creator, Belgian artist Tom Bogaert. The show, "Amohoro," was the perfect setting for their fantastical departure.

"If canaries one day decide to leave earth they would use birdcages to build a spaceship," said Bogaert of his elaborate canary cage sculpture. "Their promised destination is the constellation Apus," he continued.

Bogaert, a former lawyer for Amnesty International and the UN High Commissioner for Refugees who spent his career documenting genocide and human rights abuses in Africa and Asia, resigned from his job five years ago to become an artist. His opening on January 11 was proof that, though he left his career, it never really left him.

"All of the works are about the search for a better life," commented Bogaert, who focused a lot on Rwanda. In fact, the show's name, "Amohoro," is the Rwandan word for peace.

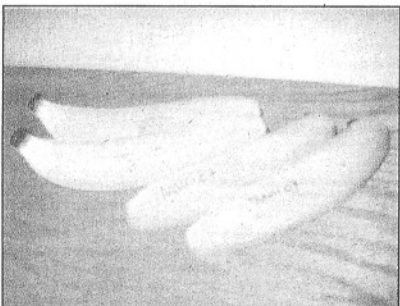
Before I arrived at the gallery, located at 487 Driggs Avenue, I knew that the opening would have a political theme, but what I didn't realize was how well politics could be spun into something surreal. Bogaert's work did more than bridge the gap between art and the political. It made them one and the same; it made them *life*. And it also made them *fantasy*.

Take, for instance, his authentic Rwandese machete mounted on a Star Wars light saber handle. This sculpture was hard to grasp, its two elements coming from polar opposite worlds, and I can't imagine how he came up with it. But, like the canary spaceship, it didn't matter how far-fetched it was. It worked.

"I hope these things don't die," I overheard someone say about the birds. "I hope someone's



Photos by Rebecca White
Artist Josh Lord in front of his painting of "Eurydice."



Support the Troops Banana Stress Balls by Travis Lindquist



Burg 'n' Point

Rebecca White

taking care of them."

"They are happy. They are singing. That is good," said Bogaert afterward, who made sure to tell me that he takes very good care of the birds.

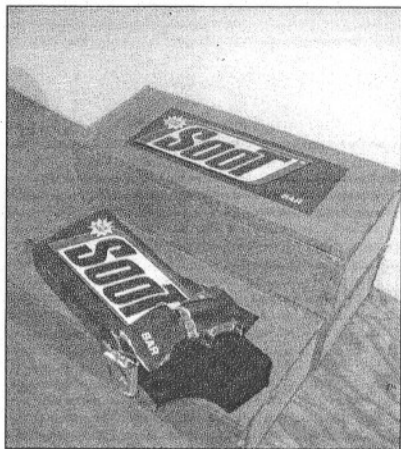
In a different time-space continuum, or at least on a different street, a group of mostly tattoo artists were commenting on the mythical world. At McCaig-Welles Gallery (129 Roebling Street), the group show "Myth: Bedtime Stories and Bullshit"

detailed each artist's relationship with the myths in their lives. The artists featured were Patrick Conlon, Keith Lang, Wes Lang, Sweetie, Lance Turnbow, the curator, and Josh Lord. I spoke briefly with Lord about his featured painting, "Eurydice."

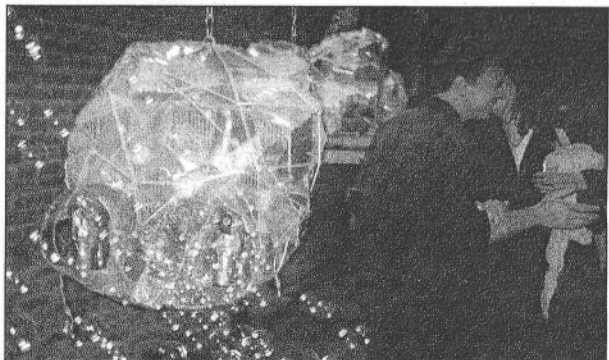
"It's basically the last view of Eurydice before death comes to her," he said.

"Do you always paint myths?" I asked.

"Pretty much subconsciously I'll paint them," he



Gregory Curry's 'Soot Bar,' currently on view at Front Room.



Tom Bogaert next to his Canary Spaceship at Jack the Pelican.

said.

Leaving the gallery, I asked one of the gallery employees, "I see the myths. What's the bulls—t?"

"All of it." He answered. Touché.

Less visible was the installation shown by artist Christine Sciulli at her opening at Ch'i (293 Grand Street). Actually, her work was visible — it's everyone in the gallery that was hard to see. You see (pun intended), her show "Fugue State" was a light show which required a dark interior. Aside from the streaming thin strobe lights that moved slowly around the room, you couldn't make out a darn thing. In fact, I almost stepped on a few children's fingers while trying to take their picture.

"Do you always work with light?" I asked Sciulli. "I always work with projection and sculpture as a means to catch the light," she said.

Having seen very few works like hers, I was curious about how well a piece like this would sell.

"If one were to buy this, what would they receive?" I asked.

"Well, what I would do is install it in their homes, recreate it." The installation, called "Coplanar," was a combination of moving lights and strings that looked like spider webs that covered the walls and the corners of the space.

Later, I asked about the meaning of fugue in the show's title. She said that it only incidentally referenced the musical meaning of the word "fugue."

Instead, she meant to infer a condition of Dissociative Fugue, a dissociative disorder characterized by amnesia and a loss of personal identity.

At Front Room located 147 Roebling Street, the group show "Multiples and editions, vol. 2" opened on January 11. There were a lot of works and so many artists that it was overwhelming. Two pieces that didn't get lost in the crowd were Travis Lindquist's 'Support the Troops Banana Stress Balls' and Gregory Curry's 'Soot Bar.' They shouldn't have made me hungry, but they did. Too bad this show didn't provide the customary cheese squares.

Send comments and tips to burgnpoint@courierlife.net.