

WE'RE GIVING AWAY PRIZES EVERY SINGLE WEEK THIS SUMMER!



THIS WEEK'S FEATURED PRIZES:

DINNER FOR 2 AT:



The Elephant and Castle

Sal's on 12th



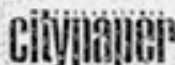
LOOK FOR PRIZES FROM THE FOLLOWING PARTICIPANTS:

- 12TH AIR COMMAND
- BISHOP'S COLLAR
- BORDERS
- BRASIL'S
- CLUB TRU
- CONWELL INN
- DEILAH'S
- EAST END SALON
- ERDENHEIM BICYCLE & FITNESS CENTER
- ETTORÉ EUROPEAN SALON & SPA
- KATMANDU
- L.I. FAVORSKY
- LIBERTY MUSIC GROUP
- LUNA SALON & SPA
- MAKO'S
- MCGILLIN'S

- MODA
- O'NEALS
- RUSTICA
- SAL'S ON 12TH
- SHIVNANDA
- SMITH BROS.
- SOPHISTICATED SECONDS
- SUBMISSION / VERY BAD HORSE
- SWANKY BUBBLES
- THE BARDS
- THE ELEPHANT & CASTLE
- THE GRAND OPERA HOUSE
- TIN ANGEL
- TODARO'S MUSIC
- TROPICO RESTAURANT
- WEST CHESTER MUSIC
- WIRELESS CENTRAL

LOG ON TO

FOR AN ENTRY FORM, COMPLETE RULES AND A LIST



ART REVIEW

The Ugly Truth

In published materials on "Unbecoming," at the Art Alliance, the nature of the Art Alliance building, a private dwelling transformed with minimal alteration into a public home for the arts, is likened to a common strategy of the work in the show. These videos and photographs explore the contemporary meaning of privacy by depicting people and, in one case, rooms at what should be private moments. They reveal "unbecoming" intimacies to the world.

Unlike the subjects of work in "Unbecoming," the Art Alliance remains a place intended to be appreciated as graceful and beautiful. The art in "Unbecoming" challenges the worth of beauty in art.

To the accompaniment of a well-chosen musical soundtrack, Kara Crombie's multichannel video *Kara Crombie* presents the videographer as three personas: herself as a video junkie, a blond-braided Hausfrau-type in apron and red Mary Janes and a hyperactive blue-haired cheerleader. Crombie's videos are entertaining feminist pedagogy.

A series of self-portraits by Sarah Lucas blends the role-playing self-portraiture of Cindy Sherman with sexy, moody Robert Mapplethorpe and a soupçon of Calvin Klein advertising (which reflexively combined many photographic sources). In contrast, Joseph Maida hired a model to enact his personal self-portrait fantasies. He kept it real by using a young man who is emphatically no beauty.

One channel of the soundtrack of Connie Walsh's video installation records a woman holding her breath, then gasping for air with an avidity that seems both sexual and painful. It has an apt relationship to Walsh's related videos viewable from three specially designed chairs. All show an attractive seated woman in a long blue satin dress. She dons a pair of white evening gloves before inserting pearl-headed pins into her legs or shoulders. She removes the increasingly grubby gloves only to repeat the procedure adding more pins. She never buttons the gaping, vulnerable (vulvalike?) wrist section. Perhaps the pins are intended to "replace" the unused buttons. The artifices of social convention are emphasized by a second

soundtrack with instructions for dance steps.

Elizabeth Campbell's twin photographs look identical. They depict two different rooms that she constructed so that they look identical. Wow, appearances can be misleading. Especially with photography.

While Campbell's work must be questioned as a supremely decadent waste of money — the kind of thing that prompts people to say that soup kitchens or trees are of more value to society than making art — most of the work in this show should not be casually dismissed.

More interesting, though, is the way the entire exhibition underlines a growing rift within the phenomenon of what was once Western — now increasingly global — culture, in other words, that thing we call "art." Some art, no matter what its meaning or "message," is beautiful and makes life experientially more pleasant (set aside for a moment the fact that different people find beauty in different things). Other art proposes to educate us by exposing artifice, hypocrisy, prejudice, stereotypes and our secret psyches as ugly, ugly, ugly.

A traditional crucifix — even including Serrano's famous

UNBECOMING: THE PRIVATE AS PUBLIC SPECTACLE

Through Sept. 1,
Philadelphia Art Alliance, 251 S. 18th St., 215-545-4302, www.philaralliance.org



Joseph Maida, #7 Ben, Tall (2001), 40 inches by 30 inches, c-print.

Piss Christ — depicts Christ on the cross as beautiful in spite of painful subject matter. Much of today's didactic art revels in visual repulsiveness. Which is the "real" art: the beautiful or the ugly? It is increasingly difficult to try to keep both kinds of work in the same semantic box.

—Robin Rice

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