

# State of the arts: A cow's-eye view of 2008

**T**ry telling artist Damien Hirst that the economy is dead. Ironically, much of his highly saleable art is itself, deceased — his "works of art" feature calves, sharks and zebras submerged in formaldehyde — but his bank account is alive and well. Hirst broke records in the art world this fall when he bypassed the galleries and auctioned a



Surveyor Columnist  
**Susan Richards**

body of his work at Sotheby's for a cool \$198 million. Besides dead animals and jewel-encrusted skulls, he's also famous for his "dot paintings" which are simply canvases covered in colorful, symmetrical spots. Hirst is so brilliant and so busy he can't even be bothered with

the actual creation of the dot work — he has assistants for that, but you know, it was his original idea.

If you're an artist, an art lover, or simply endowed with common sense, Damien Hirst's story will gall you as much as it did me. I know many a local artist with more creativity, imagination and talent in their little toe

than this doofus could hope to possess. And many of the amazing artists in this area are toiling away at day jobs while honing their craft, pursuing their dream.

So we all agree that \$198 million art sales are happening on another planet, but what about Berthoud and the surrounding area? Are the arts alive and well or due to be pickled like one of Hirst's unfortunate muses? It's yet to be seen if 2008 will stay on track with last year's record art sales but with so many of the auction houses and investment collectors creating the buzz, the true health of the art market is tough to accurately peg.

Besides an undeniable natural beauty, our state draws many a visitor for cultural reasons. According to the Colorado Council on the Arts the metro Denver cultural industry generates more than \$1.4 billion. Employment in the creative fields makes up 30 percent of the workforce and that number is growing faster than the labor force as a whole. These figures belie the notion that arts and entertainment are frivolous luxuries that must be tabled until the economy is better. A quick look back at some of my "Acts of Art" stories reassures me that the arts in all forms of media are a necessary element to our financial and emotional well being.

The production of "Jekyll & Hyde" at Greeley's Union Colony Dinner Theatre, which

featured several local actors, took my breath away. That cast and the one in "Proof" at Wildfire Theater has given community theater a whole new standard. This year also saw Berthoud playwright Rick Padden pen a locally flavored play called "Beets." It was enthusiastically received a few months ago and will be presented in 2009 both in Berthoud and in Loveland.

Musically, Berthoud continues to wow audiences all over the world. Paula and Bob Latchaw took young singers to perform in Europe and Berthoud High School offered up several more to the annual All State Choir selection. Local veterans, Acoustic Eidolon, released a new CD in their tenth year together, while newcomers Filtermist are producing their anticipated first album.

Area artists continue to generate original work for sale, enjoyment and encouragement. Sculptor Diane Mason hosts visiting artists each year during the sculpture show — which by the way, did very well this August in spite of the ballyhooed recession. Recent resident and painter Ann Arensmeyer shares her gift with students and portraitist Michael Georges shares his with passers-by on Mountain Avenue when he displays a new

drawing each week in the window of Picture This... Rafe Ropek continues to dot the landscape of Colorado — most notably Berthoud's street corners — with his iconic public art designs.

There have unfortunately been some exceptions to these examples of cultural health. Jellyfish closed its doors this fall and the annual Berthoud Arts & Crafts Show didn't happen for the first time in decades. Indigo Sky, Picture This... and the Jumping Bean continue to support the arts but the painful and necessary mess that was Mountain Avenue for much of the year took its toll on those and other businesses.

There's no doubt that 2008 has been an interesting year with highs and lows, creatively and financially. While the leaders (and leaders-to-be) ponder a variety of bailouts and solutions for the messes we face in several major industries, I have to wonder where the cultural arts fall on the list of priorities. I recently learned that the Works Progress Administration (WPA) instituted by Franklin Roosevelt during the depression included the arts. Besides just construction and labor opportunities, it provided creative work for artists and performers such as folk singer Woody Guthrie.

Do we need a helping hand from the government to keep the arts alive? What about a big check so we can stock the studio, buy new props for the theater or book studio time for a new CD? Nah... the arts will thrive in 2009 and



Illustration by Susan Richards with apologies to Henri Rousseau.

3009. It may look a little different each year and people's tastes will change accordingly. That's what makes culture so exciting, always shifting and recreating itself. It defines our history and will shape our future. Individually, the best thing to do is keep that amount in your budget for an occasional theater ticket, school play, original painting or even a handmade greeting card.

However if I find out you bid on a certain calf in formaldehyde, your art lover card is officially revoked. Have a prosperous and creative new year!

## Where have all the good writers gone?

**T**his has not been a great year for movies. Case in point, three of the lowest grossing movie openings occurred this year, including the number one lowest grossing movie of all time, "Delgo," a computer-animated fantasy costing \$40,000,000 to make. "Delgo" grossed \$511,920 in the first weekend it opened on 2,160 screens nationwide. This breaks down to \$237 per screen. Since then the movie has gone on to make a measly \$694,782.

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However, not every bad movie has done badly at the box office. "The Day the Earth Stood Still," received scathing reviews from most critics, including me. It received a C- at Yahoo Movies and a 20 percent on Rotten-Tomatoes.com. I gave a one out of five, and my pure and undiluted disgust. And yet, the movie has, to date, grossed over \$48,000,000.

Bad movies were released in droves this year. The comedy "Zack and Mira make a Porno," starring Seth Rogan, didn't even merit a review on www.HeidiTown.com. A comedy relying on shock value instead of funny jokes, "Zack and Mira," along with "Forgetting Sarah Marshall" are miserable tributes to a particular Hollywood element that continues to push the line of impropriety until the films they produce become just another smutty sophomoric attempt at humor.

"Pineapple Express," another Seth Rogan flick, falls into the category of "not as bad as I thought it was going to be," which merited the movie a rating of three on my blog. "Eagle Eye" starred two second-rate actors trying to clamor their way through a convoluted plot. There were many of these kinds of movies this year; mediocrity reigned supreme.

The list of disappointing movies of the past year is devastatingly long. "Quantum of Solace" was the highly unsatisfactory James Bond flick. As a confusing follow-up to 2004's "Casino Royale," this Bond movie starring David Craig failed to capture the mood or atmosphere of a true Bond film. "Indiana Jones and the Kingdom of the Crystal Skull" was also a tremendous let down from a director, Steven Spielberg, who lately seems to disappoint more than delight.

"Traitor" tackled the issue of terrorism and in today's world this could have been a poignant film, but the writers were unsuccessful in communicating a concise message and the main character appeared weak. "Pride & Glory" has a stellar cast, including an actor I consider one of the best of our generation, Edward Norton. But the storyline of the movie has been done and done again and ultimately

"Pride & Glory" was just another forgettable cop flick.

This was the year of the superhero movie release. The Hulk, Batman, Hellboy and Iron Man all made appearances, and though the masses and critics went crazy over "The Dark Knight," I preferred "Iron Man." I rated both movies a four, but the length of "Dark Knight" (almost three hours) and the darkness of the material left me a bit melancholy. Whereas, my low expectations for "Iron Man" and the pleasant surprise I felt after viewing the movie makes it my pick for best superhero movie of 2008.

There were a few nice surprises this year. "Brideshead Revisited" was one of my highest rated movies of the year. It is a well-made, well-acted, thought-provoking movie sure to do well at this year's Oscars. If cowboy movies are more your style, "Appaloosa" is the kind of western not seen in years. I had low expectations for novel-turned-movie, "The Secret Life of Bees," and the movie turned out to be enjoyable, albeit forgettable.

"Mamma Mia!" rated poorly with most critics, but I thoroughly enjoyed this Broadway musical-turned-film. The politically incorrect, "Tropic Thunder," makes my number one pick for best comedy of the year, followed closely by the hilarious "Role Models."

Several movies received very little attention, but deserved more. "The Bank Job," a highly entertaining movie based on a real life 1970s London bank heist, featured a witty script and a groovy ambience. "Miss Pettigrew Lives for a Day," starring the incomparable Frances McDormand and the adorable Amy Adams, is a refreshing escape from reality complete with a bow-tied ending, but it isn't so sugary as to give you cavities.

This year's Academy Awards airs Sunday, Feb. 24. Right now, I feel the best movie I've seen is "Slumdog Millionaire," and it just may snag the Best Foreign Film Category. However, many of the potential 2008 Oscar movies are in limited release until after the New Year, and I have not gotten a chance to see them yet.

In conclusion, 2008 was not a banner year for the film industry. Even with films like "The Dark Knight" becoming the fourth largest grossing movie in history, bringing in more than \$900 million, most plots have been thin with uninspired scripts. I haven't seen every movie this year, not by a long shot, but I've been rather disappointed with the majority of the big screen offerings of 2008.

Let's hope 2009 will provide better fare.

# BERTHOUD beat

## Talking to the millennials

**D**eloris Valdez Jarvis believes in serendipity. The businesswoman, broadcaster, speaker and author came up with the subject for her new book almost by accident. She was at an entrepreneurial convention. On a break in the action she saw more than 100 teens entering the conference hotel for prom night. As Deloris remembers it, not one of the conference attendees, who were trying to decide what type of business to start, paid any attention to the throng of young people.

### Book Review



Surveyor Columnist  
**Bob McDonnell**

Not Deloris — she saw the opportunity as a "gift." She approached many of the teens and began talking to them. The theme that struck her most while she listened was that most of their comments were negative. She said their statements were "true and accurate," but were filtered in a negative manner.

She only found one young man in the crowd who had good things to say about his life and his parents. He was college-bound and his parents were allowing him to make decisions because he would be doing that soon as a freshman. He felt empowered.

Valdez Jarvis saw the prom-goers and all millennials as a resource for a new publishing company. (Millennials are defined as those born between 1980 and 2001.)

She knew she wanted to record what they had to say. She wants to create the next generation of how-to for this generation of consumers.

Her first book related on this topic is called "GitNit Right with Millennials: An Intimate Look at What Matters Most to the Biggest Generation in History." She and her husband Harrison envision a series of books in the next couple of years relating to millennials. (The term "gitnitright" comes from the world of texting; one of the main ways younger people communicate.)

This book is a result of hundreds of interviews. It's an easy read, and one that readers will pick up again and again to re-read some of the information and quotes it contains. There are numerous quotes under the headings which include "I always hear you so please listen to me," "Let me learn from my mistakes," "Always be there for me" and "Focus only on what matters."

The back of the book contains lined blank pages to be filled in. If it's given as a gift, the giver can fill in the portion titled "What you have done right

in my life." There is also space for "Quotes and notes." Deloris feels if this part is filled out, it can be a "treasure" for the recipient of the book.

Deloris is not content to take her cause to the printed media only. She plans to do a television show as well. She would like it to be an Internet video on YouTube, Yahoo video, etc. instead of the conventional airwaves. This is where teens and younger adults go to seek out news, music and entertainment. She will also tap into the social media such as Facebook and Twitter, which are also gaining in popularity among all age groups. In addition to short three-to-five minute segments, she wants to feature and introduce hands that millennials would enjoy.

Since there will be more teenagers in 2010 than there were at the height of the Baby Boom, we all will be interacting with millennials at home, at work, and probably in every other aspect of our lives. Start reading up on them now.

"GitNitRight with Millennials: An Intimate Look at What Matters Most to the Biggest Gen-

eration in History" is available at the Amazon.com Web site. Locally, it can be purchased at Loveland Coffee, Anthology Books, and Crossroads Church.



Photo by Bob McDonnell  
Author Deloris Valdez Jarvis has a series of books planned.

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