

GAP RECIPIENTS INCLUDE PIERCE, THURSTON COUNTY ARTISTS

Posted By Rosemary Ponnekanti

Seattle-based arts resource group Artist Trust has announced the recipients of its 2010 Grants for Artist Projects (GAP) program. The annual GAP awards provide up to \$1,500 to individual artists for projects in the visual, performing and literary arts. This year a total of \$90,000 was awarded to artists around the state.

Among the 62 recipients were Olympia felt artist Janice Arnold and two Tacoma artists: painter Nicholas Nyland and ceramicist Yuki Nakamura.

This year's GAP awards fund projects ranging from novel-writing time, travel, studio repairs, safety equipment and website development. More information: www.artisttrust.org

PAINFUL LOCAL FLICKS, AWESOME SILENT MOVIE

Posted By Rosemary Ponnekanti

Today I headed downtown to catch the Tacoma Film Festival's Grit City Flicks – six Tacoma-made shorts at the Washington State History Museum.

"Valuable" (Scott Perry) tells a tiresome tale of a man who wakes up in Point Defiance shrubbery handcuffed to a briefcase and confronting a crazy militiaman. The backward-looping structure is irritating, the audio distorted and way too loud, the camerawork jerky and the plot nonexistent.



Tacoma Film Festival

Raven Bellefleur and her companions star in "Ana's Playground," showing at the Tacoma Film Festival.

"The Persistence of Beauty" (Kris Crews) would have been an excellent home movie starring Madeline Joy Crews as her spunky three-year-old-self. As an experimental drama about a sappy dad who's dealing with his wife's death, though, it's more an agonizing 18 minutes of really bad singing, sentimental piano and aimless philosophizing.

✦ "A Glitch in the System" has some funny moments following ex-con Buddy, aka 867-5309 (geddit?) finding out life is pretty different after 20 years on the inside. David Graham makes a dumbly comic Buddy (and Mick Jagger lookalike), while assistant director Joe Rosati channels John Cleese as the security guard. There are cameos by Doug Mackey, Teddy Haggarty and other Tacoma personages, plus some cute gags (and not so cute ones.)

"The Color of Fred" (Keeslar and

Singelis) is an appallingly self-absorbed blurt by artist Fred Novak on his obsessions with Bette Davis, eyebrows and campy makeup. This is what YouTube's for, folks.

"20 Seconds" (Bryan Johnson) comes from the 2009 72-Hour Film Festival, and takes a funny look at what happens when an innocent guy presses a magic button that loops his life every – you guessed – 20 seconds.

"Mr. Radio" (David Derickson) was the reward for all this film-watching agony. Full disclosure here: My colleague Craig Sailor is the star of this mock-silent movie shot on 35mm film. So this is not an official review, but I have to say Sailor did an excellent job as the giddy, gullible Archie who falls in love with radio after his wife leaves him. Lipsticked and melodramatic, Archie's the perfect silent-film hero,

and other locals such as artist Fred Matamoros and photographer Rick Semple made smooth, cigar-smoking clubmen. Patrick Neary's lighting was beautifully Gothic, and while the plot was a bit slow, the witty titles and clever local shots made up for it. A perfect spoof.

attractive women while Catholic anti-activist groups are shot detailing young kids to do the dirty work. It's also a static watch – way too many talking heads.

EXCELLENT DRAMA SHORTS TAKE FESTIVAL TO NEW HEIGHTS

Posted By Rosemary Ponnekanti

Shorts can sometimes be an embarrassment of incompetency, but today's set rocketed out of the arena, grouped around the theme of kids, innocence and violence. From her very first wide-eyed moment, Raven Bellefleur gave "Ana's Playground" a poignancy that put your heart in your mouth. Ana and her friends calmly play soccer amid shootings and scattered bullets, the terrifying ordeal Ana goes through to retrieve the lost ball is devastatingly filmed.

"Shuffle" is, remarkably, a gangster movie set in mild-mannered Seattle, and local Garrett Bennett makes it work with chiaroscuro underground lairs, a tough boss and a sensitive Seattle-type hit man who's throwing in the towel after he's seen how the violence sucks in children. Shots are tense and angled, and the ending is neat.

And "Mamánek" laughs kindly at a wonderfully gangly adolescent boy who does all the things mothers dread, with psychology so thick you could cut it and in-your-face close-ups.

There's also "Dry Rain" by North-westerner Matthew James Clark, adapted from the book by Pete Forum, about an estranged father who uses his son to get his life restarted.

DOCUMENTARIES TACKLE HOT-BUTTON POLITICAL ISSUES

Posted By Rosemary Ponnekanti

"The Fence" is a funny, Michael Moore-inspired look at the border fence between the U.S. and Mexico, and pulls no punches regarding the ineptitude of construction and the financial and human cost. Segueing neatly from fast-paced data through cross-border interviews to action shots, filmmaker Rory Kennedy makes his case compellingly. We see paranoid Minutemen patrolling the border with ammo and revenge, hard-bitten coyotes scanning the horizon and desperate Mexican men who'll try anything (rebar ladders, gas bombs, trailer-trucks) to cross the \$3 billion fence.

"The Last Campaign of Governor Booth Gardner," on the other hand, is captivating for very different reasons. Following the former Washington governor (and Tacoma resident) through his debilitating Parkinson's disease and his 2008 campaign to pass the I-1000 lethal medication act, local director Daniel Junge doesn't hide where he stands. Booth's staff are all calm and courteous while "the opposition" are shrill and inarticulate; Booth's street campaign features intelligent