

They're in doorways, on sidewalks, in shops and the airport. They're in squares, on stairs and in performing arts centers. If we are everywhere, so are they. Portland has become crazy for kows.

Individual sponsors have commissioned 100 artists to create 100 kows that are now on public display every-freakin'-where in the Portland area. Half will be auctioned off over the Internet and half at a gala in July ("Wine, Dine and Bovine"), and all the money goes to New Avenues for Youth, which helps homeless teens, and Trillium Family Services, which offers care to emotionally disturbed children and their families.

How can you argue with that?

Serena Barton and Marcus Lintner aren't arguing. They made kows, by golly, and in true gay-artist fashion, they're two of the coolest kows on the block.

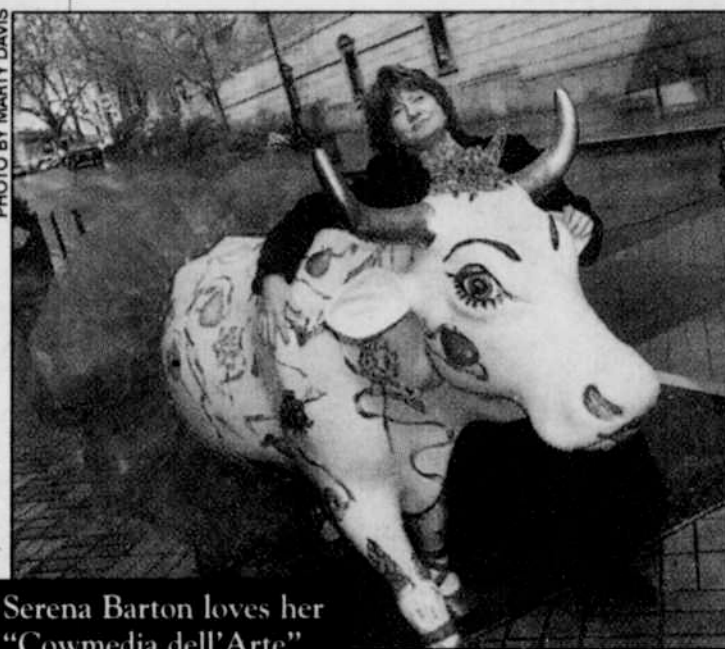
Barton's "Cowmedia dell'Arte," is outside the Portland Center for the Performing Arts. You can't miss it; it's the one in the bright blue tutu. "I decided it could be an enjoyable challenge," she quips, "to transfer my style to a fiberglass bovine."

Barton's oil painting is normally very classical, inspired by 19th century French and Italian styles. Look hard enough and you'll see this reflected in "Cowmedia." Barton claims that the design "was not a conscious process at all" but that the final result suggests influences from "Degas to the hippo dancers in *Fantasia*," with a little of her childhood ballerina fantasy thrown in.

The perfect placement of the ballet kow at the arts center is no coincidence. Sponsors chose kows based on preliminary designs from artists.

Barton exclaims she is "thrilled" to be in front of the downtown building. "Acting was

PHOTO BY MARTY DAVIS



Serena Barton loves her "Cowmedia dell'Arte"

the most important creative activity of my youth, and I know the love of the theater influences my artwork."

Also well placed is the kow that is absolutely the gayest in the herd. Lintner's intricate "Boveena, the Afrikow Queen" is safely tucked indoors at Portland International Airport outside sponsor Norm Thompson's store.

We know what you're thinking—gay guy, "Queen," very funny. But, although the Portland interior designer admits there could be something "subliminal" going on, his actual vision was inspired by a trip to a Zulu village two years ago and by another trip to an African booth at a flea

market in California. Both offered very inexpensive beadwork of all kinds, which Lintner bought up in droves. "I wasn't sure what I was going to do with this stuff, I was just sure I wanted it."

After "staring at her blank" for several weeks, Lintner finally decided to base his kow on the dress styles from the Zulu village. "They don't have queens in the villages—they have a king and he has a wife—but I thought, you know, she should be the queen."

Boveena's earrings are bracelets made and worn by the Zulu women; the figures hanging from her headdress are ceremonial dolls. Lintner did all the beading himself and, because he also creates custom-made furniture, constructed Boveena's throne. It took about \$700 more than the allotted stipend and about 400 hours.

Both artists talk about the kows as family.

"The cow lived in our dining room since early last fall," Barton says. "It never occurred to me not to make the cow a 'person'—an individual. It surprised me that she is somewhat unusual among the cows in that respect."

Marcus Lintner and "Boveena, the Afrikow Queen"

PHOTO BY CHEYNE CUMMING



Boveena flirts with the camera

PHOTO BY CHEYNE CUMMING

Lintner says he was just going to call his "The Afrikow," but after a while, "I thought, 'No, she needs a name....' The more I worked on her, the more I felt like I'd given birth to this thing. I think I have stretch marks now," he laughs.

Both are happy to have contributed to this event. "The whole cow project has been so fun to watch," Lintner says. "It's been really good for everyone in the arts community."

And, ultimately, for Oregon kids, too. ☐

To find out more about KOWS FOR KIDS, visit www.kowsforkids.com.

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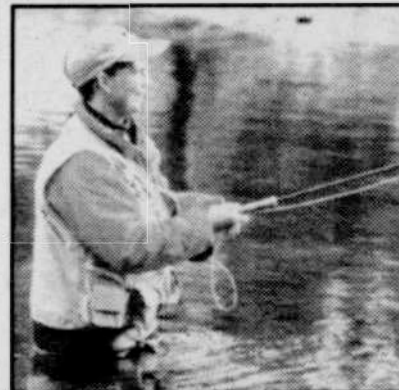


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