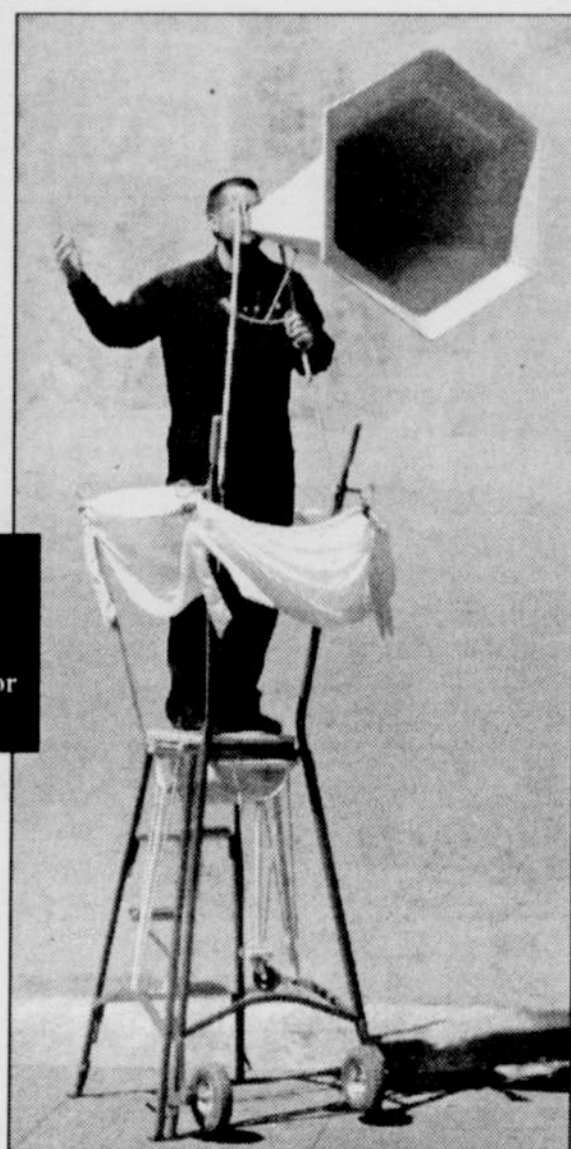




David Eckard transforms himself from laborer to orator in *Podium*



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podium will automatically make passersby bestow him with a certain credibility, simply for setting himself a bit above everyone and speaking. He hopes *Podium* will work on many different levels: as a sculpture, as a commentary on activism and as a study of gesture and speech. Also, there is the bald underlying message: "I made this thing to make myself relevant."

Eckard's new work is a good example of the trajectory many queer artists have followed in the past decade. In the early 1990s, he made a name for himself in the Chicago art scene as the gay artist who made kinky objects that resembled farm machinery. (He grew up on a farm in Iowa.) Now he refers to that time, perhaps too harshly, as one of "self-ghettoism."

In any case, he is excited to have evolved in his work and to be incorporating performance into his creations. Though *Podium* is not queer in content, other recent performances have been. Perhaps you

caught sight of Eckard in November 2003 roaming the streets of the Burnside Triangle dressed as a giant centaur, as part of 2 Gyrz Performative Arts' Interactive Language Festival. Half man, half horse, Eckard sported a wild mangy beard and head of hair. His costume consisted of a horse torso and rump, huge clapping wooden horse feet and an engorged horse penis.

The centaur was a way for Eckard to play with notions of sexiness in gay male culture. Eckard might be best described as a bear with a punk rock edge to him. He says he looks forward to bear nights at bars "where I can go and exhale," he says, rubbing his belly.

As a teacher at Pacific Northwest College of Art, Eckard says he's noticed a major shift in students' attitudes toward sexual identity. Nowadays queerness

is no big deal. When Eckard suggested starting a queer student group at the college, he says his students thought the idea was "quaint."

Eckard doesn't want to be labeled a "gay artist." But he does acknowledge that "a lot of my work comes from an outside-the-margins sensibility. Part of me is this old rebel queer who wants to stay on the outside."

Divas and Defixiones

The most recognizably "gay" act in the TBA Festival will be New York choreographer and dancer Richard Move's *Martha@*. For one night only at Machineworks, Move will hilariously and adorably impersonate legendary modern choreographer Martha Graham. Monologues complement the dances, poking fun while paying tribute to a most esteemed muse.

But even though the actor is gay and doing drag, this won't be like a typical night at Darcelle's.

"Part of me is this old rebel queer who wants to stay on the outside"

—David Eckard

Film director Stephen Daldry (*The Hours*) recently told *The New York Times*: "[Move] manages to make a piece of work that totally upsets all your preconceptions about drag. Although there's great comedy in it, he's actually doing something else: It's a serious and intellectual exercise."

Another notable performer for queer audiences is Diamanda Galás, who will perform two concerts for the festival. The virtuoso singer and musician is perhaps best known for *Plague Mass*, her wrenching, angry, otherworldly performance that confronted the AIDS epidemic at a time when too many performers and people of influence remained silent. Galás' brother, playwright Philip-Dimitri Galás, died of AIDS in 1986.

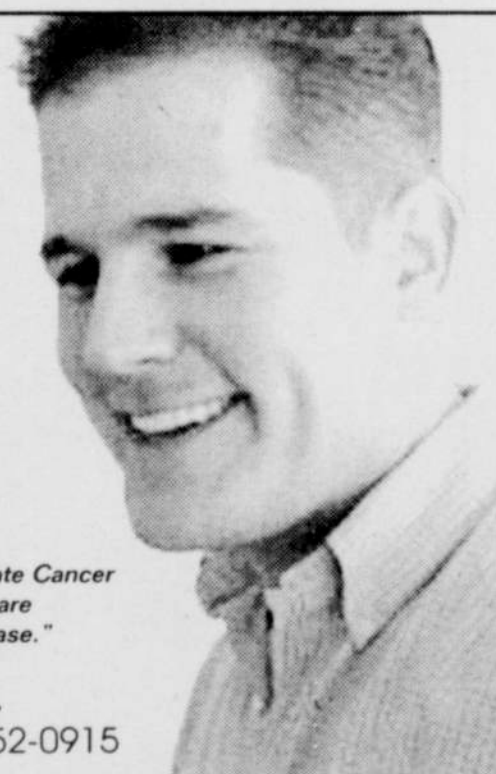
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