

television



At 88, Emile Norman is still working with the same passion that inspired him through seven decades of a changing art scene and turbulent times for a gay man in the United States.

The Creative Touch

Emile Norman, a gay sculptor and visual artist whose work famously adorns the exterior of the Masonic Temple on San Francisco's Nob Hill, has led an extraordinary, inspirational life distinguished for its artistic accomplishment and heart-warming for his 30-year love affair with Brook Clements, who died in 1973. That life is inquisitively yet respectfully documented in *Emile Norman: By His Own Design*.

Featuring bountiful interviews with and commentary by the present-day Norman (blissfully content in his 80s) as he continues his work, the film also recounts his childhood in a ranching family suspicious of his "sissy" creative bent. But he used the materials at hand and transformed the mundaneness of his world into art; you wouldn't believe the amazingly tactile aesthetic properties of pieces of shattered beer bottles (for one example) until you've seen them incorporated into one of his formalist, symmetrical, yet vibrant pieces.

Norman was equally inventive when it came to a personal life that had no accessible precedents or models and had to be kept invisible. In the deeply closeted post-war '40s, as the

demand for his creative touch rose in the film and fashion industries in addition to the art world, he met Clements, a hi-fi repairman who came to fix his set. Clements quickly became Norman's de facto manager, dealer and accountant; Norman would later very sweetly add Clements' name below his own signature on his work, so highly did he esteem the collaborative nature of their relationship. The couple bought a property in California's Big Sur, and their home (in which Norman continues to live and work) became a mecca and haven for their artist and gay friends.

Airing 11 p.m. June 25 on OPB, *Emile Norman: By His Own Design* might almost feel like a puff piece without its ample footage of Norman at work, but the struggle to manifest his vision out of such recalcitrant materials as wood and stone becomes a transfixing metaphor for the long-standing affinity between queerness and creativity. To make something where there seemed to be nothing but immovable opposition is what Norman had to do in his work and in his life, and Will Parrinello's film evinces his success on both fronts.

—Christopher McQuain



Roller derby teams The Bombers and The Demons square off in an attempt to revive the classic sport in Jam!

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the roller derby crowd is more *Jerry Springer* (or *Reno 911!*) than WNBA. It is not composed of the best or brightest people, but they're captivating for their evidently total lack of self-consciousness in pursuing their dubious goal. They're also hilarious, and one doesn't feel bad for laughing at them; there's a need for attention underlying the film's subjects and their quasi-athletic pursuit that long ago left behind any qualms about exploitation. We learn that the world of roller derby is very, very similar to the world of professional wrestling (albeit with a fraction of the audience). The game is almost irrelevant, completely secondary to its trashy spectacle of personalities, drama and physical mayhem.

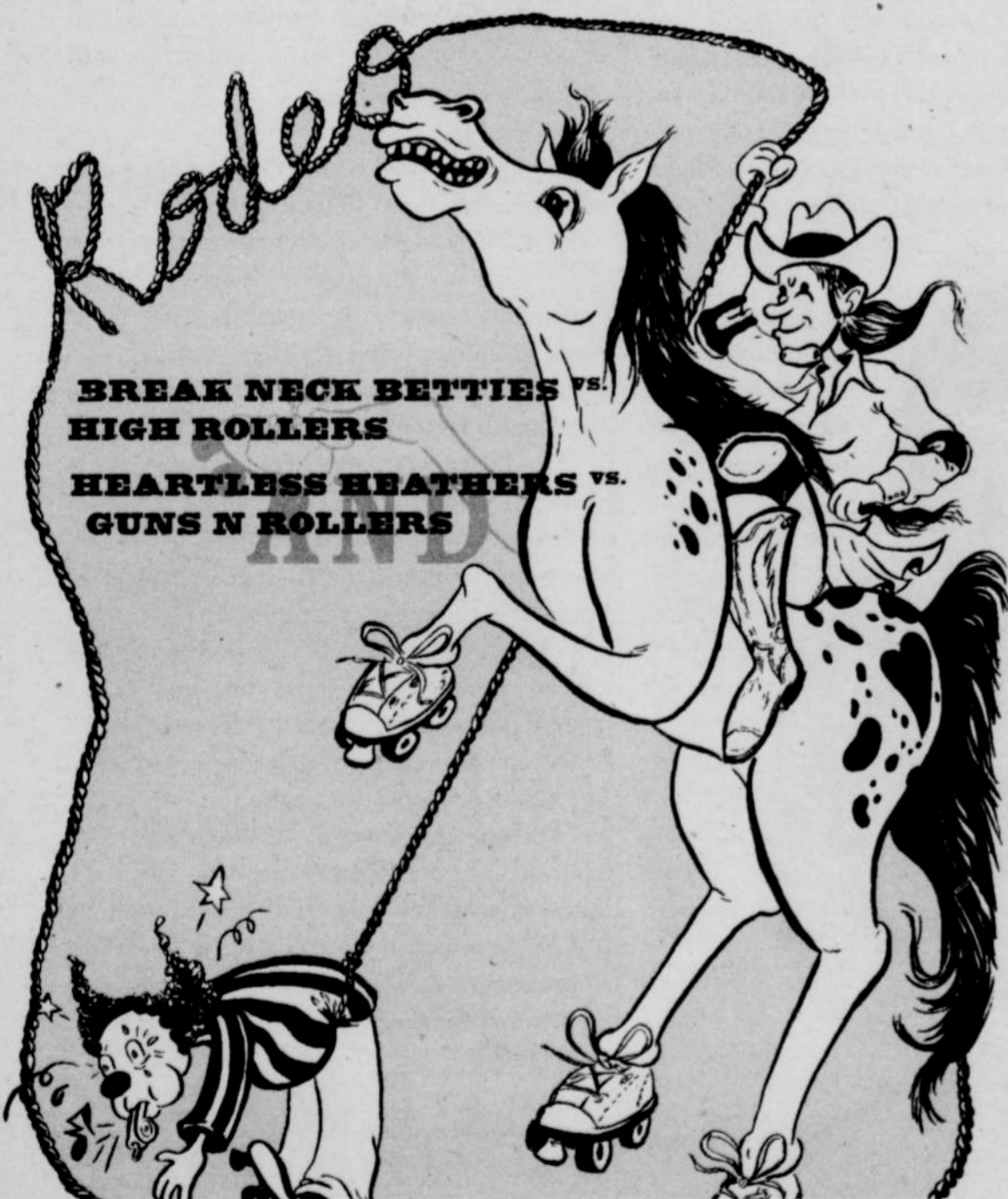
If you, like the vast majority of people, don't care about roller derby, *Jam!* is not going to change that. But the film does humanize its subjects, and you may find yourself caring about them. If they seem like outcasts and undesirables, their persistence in simply trying to hack out a niche for themselves makes them all the more oddly endearing and occasionally even inspiring. 10

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