

FAMILIAR FRONTIERS

Explorer-photographer Jason Rydquist captures what the bygone becomes

Abandoned homesteads on plains of matted golden grains. A door's once glorious enframing, now peeling like an onion, pieces of its papery skin withering at its feet. A pristine cerulean bedroom, empty save for squares of sunlight from a four-pane window. Forgotten houses collapsing under the weight of moss, mold and time. These are the images that photographer Jason Rydquist seeks in his visual exploration, from Michigan to the forsaken corners of Oregon, and they will be on display in his show *Retrospect* starting March 29 at Sam Bond's.

"Good art has conflict in it," says Rydquist. At 26, his sandy beard, canvas shirt, dark vest and sturdy felt hat bely an affinity to the golden era of the structures and vistas he photographs. "The conflicts that I seek out are life and death, darkness and light, the inherent wanderlust that we all have versus wanting to be rooted, the past and the present, nostalgia and amnesia ... things that we all think of as in conflict with one another. But I'm intrigued by them coexisting."

He did, in fact, grow up on a centennial family farm in Michigan where he worked the glaciated earth; he now tills at Camas Swale Farm and has the permanently soil-caked fingernails to prove it. "I am very much at home on familiar frontiers," he says. Rydquist came to Oregon to learn new agricultural methods to bring home, to soothe his own wanderlust and to document a time and place.

There is an elegant dichotomic tension in the time and place of Rydquist's images: what was and what could have been, why people came and why people left, nurture and neglect. It leaves



'RETURN OF THE DRIFTER,' SELF PORTRAIT AT FORT ROCK HOMESTEAD VILLAGE MUSEUM, ORE.

the viewer with a similar kind of wonder, nostalgia and malaise conjured by paintings of Andrew Wyeth, an artist Rydquist deeply admires. Even in the equipment he uses — his great grandfather's 1910 Kodak medium-format folding camera and a Nikon D80 — there is a push and pull between old and new. The same can be said of his methods: Rydquist cross-references turn-of-the-20th-century plat maps with satellite imaging to pinpoint homesteads and old Victorians.

The explorer-photographer has learned some lessons about the human condition along the way. "We always think the grass is greener somewhere else," he says. "There are things that we think are at odds with each other, like flight or fight, and I think there is a virtue in the middle called staying put." ■

Retrospect runs from Friday, March 29, to Thursday, April 25, at Sam Bond's.

JELL-O, MORE THAN A SNACK

Maude Kernes celebrates 25 years of edible art

Eating Jell-O is so passé. At Maude Kernes Art Center, it is art. In its 25th year, the Jell-O Art Show captivates audiences with its jiggling creativity. This time around, the theme for the benefit — hosted by Maude Kernes and Eugene's Radar Angels — is "iJell-O."

"The iPhone or the iPad is the iJell-O," says Michael Fisher, the exhibit coordinator at Maude Kernes. "But the artwork doesn't necessarily have to do with the theme. It can be anything."

And artists have made sure that Jell-O can be *anything*. In years past, there have been entries from life-size derrieres to the ruby slippers and yellow brick road of *The Wizard of Oz*.

Artists are invited to bring in their Jell-O masterpieces Saturday, March 30, from 3 to 4:30 pm; submissions are \$3 each and there is no submission cap. "It's really cool; we get probably 20 to 40 submissions every year," Fisher says. Of course, this includes the usage of Jell-O pudding (here's looking at you, Bill Cosby). And just because it is art doesn't mean it won't also be devoured at the event; the Tacky Food Buffet is an integral part of the night's festivities. — Nick Poust

iJell-O runs from 5 to 8 pm Saturday, March 30, at Maude Kernes Art Center; \$3 person, \$5 families.

MOVIES BY RICK LEVIN

THE KIDS ARE NOT ALRIGHT

Harmony Korine takes another unblinking, beautiful and grotesque look at America's youth in *Spring Breakers*

SPRING BREAKERS: Written and directed by Harmony Korine. Cinematography, Benoit Debie. Music by Cliff Martinez, Skrillex and Gucci Mane. Starring James Franco, Vanessa Hudgens, Ashley Benson, Selena Gomez, Rachel Korine, Gucci Mane. A24, Annapurna Pictures, 2013. R. 93 minutes. ★ ★ ★ ★ ☆

Yes, yes, yes: *Spring Breakers*, the latest film by aging wunderkind Harmony Korine, is a veritable fiesta of tits and ass. And we're not talking about your daddy's Mousketeer variety of bikini-and-tramp-crack-clad tits and ass, a'la Annette Funicello, but the sort of gone-wild nekkid tits and ass that shake and undulate in drunken slow motion, so that even on the most toned collegiate body you can see ripples of cellulose motoring around under the burnt umber of tanned skin. Shot with a kind of repulsed affection by cinematographer Benoit Debie (*Enter the Void*), the film opens with hordes of swinging dicks and boobs, then quickly turns sour as we see indistinguishable boys and girls pouring gallons of booze into each other, and then flipping endless birds at the screen.

If this is vacation, it's a vacation to hell, American-style.

Korine is best known as the 22-year-old screenwriter of Larry Clarke's 1995 *Kids*, an uncorked grenade of a movie that was lobbed like a first strike into the nihilistic heart of the empty generation. It went off like fear itself. That film, which introduced a teenaged Chloe Sevigny to the world as the naive huntress searching for the little fucker that gave her HIV, was completely un-fun and riveting, like watching someone snort glass. Korine's new film, which he both wrote and directed, is equally disconcerting and tempting,

though it lacks *Kids*' meandering propulsion. *Spring Breakers* is either the most fascinating boring movie of the year, or the most boring movie you need to see. It's a sticky experience, like crawling across the floor of a porn theater.

The story of four college girls — Ashley Benson, Rachel Korine (the director's wife) and former Disney stars Selena Gomez and Vanessa Hudgens — who absolutely must get to St. Petersburg, albeit late, to join their fellow alums for spring break. Short on cash, three of the girls, minus the good-hearted Faith (Gomez), rob the local Chicken Shack with ski masks, rubber mallets and a water pistol full of alcohol. At first, their arrival in the land of revelers seems edenic — all scooter rides and soft drunks. Then they get popped and skidded for narcotics, led into the local jail in bikinis and cuffs. They can pay their way out with the money they don't have, or they can sit in hoosgow another two days.

Enter Alien (James Franco), a gold-capped, corn-rowed gangsta who bails them out, apparently with no strings attached. Yeah, right: In very little time, this grinning pusher, with his bent charm and Scarface dreams, adopts the girls (minus Faith, who wisely bolts for home) as his own personal harem, running guns and doing crimes. Shit goes south, of course, though not before we're treated to surreal passages of modern drug-and-gun life.

Spring Breakers is beautiful to look at, in the same way the art of Cindy Sherman or Hieronymus Bosch is beautiful; Korine's vision is highly stylized and oddly energized; it is also intensely moral, in the angry mode of Jonathan Swift or



Terry Southern. In large part, the medium is the message here, and Korine is swift and agile about offering documentary evidence of the apocalyptic tendencies he flays (real spring breakers surround the small cast). Problems occur, however, at the level of narrative: To tell his story, Korine allows time to overlap and circle back, so what we get are not so much flashbacks as repetitions and reiterations. This slows the film down, making it seem long when it most certainly is not (it runs 93 minutes). And this isn't something editing can fix. It's a hitch at the level of storytelling.

Still, Korine is a talented filmmaker, and *Spring Breakers* contains a multitude of indelible images that haunt you long after you leave (flee, rather) the theater: bare-chested frat boys pouring booze down other dudes' throats from bottles wagged at dick level; the addled fear in the eyes of a young woman gacked on meth; the wicked, materialistic lust that twists Franco's lips as he talks about "all the shit" he has — meaning guns, cars and cash. In fact, Franco is the best reason to see this film. His portrayal of Alien, a delusional sociopath "with a heart of gold," is completely unsettling in its subtlety and intelligence; as fucked as the dude is, he's almost impossible to resist. ■