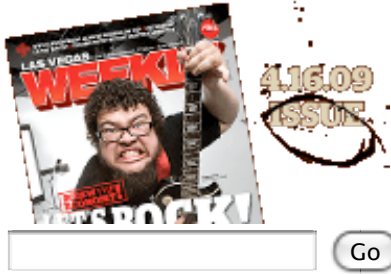


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The banner for National University features a woman in a red jacket sitting at a table with a laptop. To her right is the National University logo, which is a circular emblem with a building and the text 'NATIONAL UNIVERSITY'. Below the logo is the tagline 'The University of Values'. On the right side of the banner, the text 'National University' is displayed in a large, white, sans-serif font. Above this text is a blue button with the words 'MORE INFO' and 'GO' in white.

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[Fine art]

Vegas was built for this

Off the Strip brings performance and video art right where it belongs

[Danielle Kelly](#)

Thu, Apr 16, 2009 (midnight)



Malcolm Smith ... well, we're honestly not sure what he's doing, but it looks pretty damn cool.

Photo: Mario Alvino

It has always surprised me that there isn't more performance and video art being made in the Valley—it seems such a perfect fit. Entertainment is literally and figuratively integrated into the landscape, and operating 24 hours a day, the city is perennially “on.” Performers from A-list to D-list fill venues on the Strip and beyond. The skyline of our signature avenue is a rambling hodgepodge of displaced architecture, both real and imagined, a colliding photogenic spectacle that forms the world's largest stage. Under the watchful eye of surveillance cameras, the whole world comes right here to enact its wildest fantasies, all the while surrounded by the stark beauty of the American West in landscape and legend. The possibilities seem endless.

And yet so few local artists take the bait. Perhaps that's why the Contemporary Arts Center's performance and video festival, *Off the Strip*, was so thrilling. Over a two-week period, the CAC hosted a stunning array of artists from all over the world, attracted to the context of Las Vegas as a rich site for contemporary art. And for the most part, it was spot-on.

The Details

Off the Strip



[Contemporary Arts Center](#)

Performance and video can be daunting—to do, to see and, I must admit, to write about. Take the performance of Malcolm Smith. What do you say about a shamanic Vulcan monkey-masked DJ in a white-fur body suit with Dracula moves, a giant cardboard microphone and a Peeps teddy bear? I think it had something to do with the intimate link between man and animal, the shockingly transformative nature of the sensory and ridiculously cool beats. It also made me want to go home and make some art, which is always a good sign.

Most plugged into the myth of Sin City was San Francisco-based Justin Hoover's collection of drawings on hotel stationary, "Erotic Hotel." The beautifully spare drawings were remnants of sexual "performances" observed in hotel rooms, the most compelling of which was the "Body Fluids" suite, abstract renderings in mysterious liquids.

In a terrific exploration of the nature of public spaces and patterns of public response, the Boston-based Australian Tony Schwensen braved the wilds of Fremont Street to ask the simple question "Why are you here?" only to find himself confronted by resident transients and forcibly removed by security not once but three times.

Alongside the outstanding performance work was world-class video art. Singapore-based Lynn Lu is internationally regarded, and the gorgeously intimate "happily ever after" and "Inadequate Reality Adaptation" sourced the experiential as a site for sharing and receiving greater personal understanding. Part Buster Keaton, part Thomas Dolby, German Ger Ger offered fantastic videos from his "Sound Nomads" collaborations—humorously engaging a variety of mundane Western U.S. sites to manufacture sound and conjure the absurd.

At the intersection of performance and video were New York-based Laura Napier's "Project for a Street Corner (WTC Path)" and Las Vegas' own Nevada Institute for the Advancement of Contemporary Art. Napier organized a group of people to form a large human circle outside of the WTC subway station, gently obstructing the massive flow of people in and out of the station, suggesting the transformative power of the many united as one and the focused mindlessness of the herd mentality. Meanwhile, NIACA continued its media-based dissection of academic and cultural institutions via an Open Source Chapel at the Aruba Hotel, and a CAC installation that raised the temperature of an on-site "Opinionator" by encouraging visitors to have a mind of their own.

Kristina Wong, Amanda Alfieri, Dominic Gagnon ... there is simply not enough room to talk about the sheer diversity of artists involved and the complexity of the event. My only criticism is of the two-week structure. A concentration of events might foster a greater cross-pollination of ideas between artists and locals, and retain audience attention.

In the interest of full disclosure, I admit that I performed in the festival. But I was just a rookie along for the ride—there was some seriously discerning art here.

And you know what? We could handle it. This is what much of contemporary art is all about—explorations in performance and media. We are relatively green to the experience that is ubiquitous to most art communities. Sometimes inconsistent or challenging, it was never scary or too abstract or completely beyond comprehension. Most of all, it was just fun. This work integrates seamlessly with the character of Las Vegas. When it comes to the performative nature of the everyday, we are a pretty sophisticated audience.

So, CAC—*Off the Strip* 2010? Pretty please?

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2009-04-22

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[Stash Clothing Giveaway at Revolution Lounge](#)

- **Wednesday**

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[XZIBIT performs live at Rok Vegas](#)

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- **Thursday**

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[Las Vegas Weekly presents Party on the Patio at VooDoo Lounge](#)

- **Thursday**

2009-04-23

Keep the party going Thursday nights

[Xania's Hot Spots](#)

[Obsession Afterhours with DJ biz:e!](#)

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[DJ Hope at Christian Audigier](#)

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Dance Saturday nights at Penthouse until AFTER the sun comes up

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Keep the party going with Local Lust Tuesdays

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- [Lingerie party at VooDoo Lounge with Playmate Jesse Preston](#) (Wednesday, April 22)
- [Stash Clothing Giveaway at Revolution Lounge](#) (Wednesday, April 22)

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APRIL 16-APRIL 22

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