

THE STRANGE BEAUTY FILM FESTIVAL

FEB. 17 to 19. MANBITES DOG THEATER. DURHAM

MORE INFORMATION:
www.strangebeauty.org
 \$5 per screening block for students

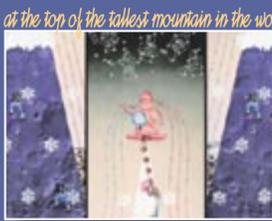
Also check out:
 After-party at Motorco Music Hall, featuring Felix Obelix, Justin Robinson, Schooner and a dance installation by Alexis Mastromichalis. Saturday, Feb. 19, 8 p.m.



ahiki



anima mundi



at the top of the tallest mountain in the world



boddy going



emmitness in my heart



for the birds



the garden



four cubic feet of space

reel diamonds
 ON SHOW IN DURHAM



old gowns



golden tigers



the great dictator



greenland shark



daphne 2.0



upgrades



what hits the moon

HERE ARE some film festivals whose accolades are like the litmus test for high art — Cannes, Venice and Sundance are just a few whose praise will guarantee the instant respect of certain critics and fans, if not instant financial success. Here at Dive, we're looking forward to the upcoming Strange Beauty Film Festival, which starts tonight at Durham's Manbites Dog Theater. Featuring short films from filmmakers whose work often doesn't fit into conventional genres, the three-day event will delve into themes that are deeper, darker and more daring than many of its big-name fellow festivals. Read on for Dive staff writer Lyle Kendrick's feature on the festival that dares to get weird and wonderful in its second year running.

Film stills from www.strangebeauty.org

MANBITES DOG THEATER

Strange Beauty film festival puts eccentric films in the spotlight

BY LYLE KENDRICK
 STAFF WRITER

Filmmaking couple Jim Haverkamp and Joyce Ventimiglia have attended many film festivals where most of the films are straightforward.

But Haverkamp says there is always one unusual movie at each festival that is lyrical and haunting, which usually resonates emotionally with him and his wife.

"We thought, 'Wouldn't it be cool if there was a film festival where every film was like that, instead of the prize in the Cracker Jack box?'" Haverkamp said.

The Strange Beauty Film Festival, which begins today at the Manbites Dog Theatre in Durham, will show

40 short films from the area and across the country. The festival lasts three nights and all of the films are under 30 minutes.

Ventimiglia, who is co-organizing the event with Haverkamp, said the festival is aimed at showing films which are "strangely beautiful" and "beautifully strange."

She said it is difficult to pinpoint when a film reaches that criteria. "It's like obscenity. I know it when I see it," she said.

Haverkamp and Ventimiglia met in Iowa 20 years ago when he was working at the public access video station where she was training. Eventually they began to help each other out with their content. The couple organized the inau-

gural Strange Beauty Film Festival last year.

Ventimiglia said the genre of the films was not a major consideration for this year's festival.

She said many of the films feature a theme of nostalgia for America.

Andrew Synowiez is the director of photography for the film "Old Gowns," which features local band Mount Moriah in an abandoned tobacco factory in Durham.

"My hope is just to get people to see what can happen when visual artists can collaborate with musicians and ways people can mesh visual landscapes with audio landscapes," Synowiez said.

Synowiez finds that the festival is appealing because he expects pieces that are chosen to be cerebral and more distinctive than the typical popcorn flick.

UNC communication studies professor Francesca Talenti, a writer

and animator for the animated film "Daphne 2.0," described her film as a post-apocalyptic piece looking at the relationship between the environment and technology.

She believes it fits the theme of nostalgia because it refers to the time before the apocalypse.

Filmmaker Scott Browning directed "South Dakota," which features archival footage of rural South Dakota during the Great Depression.

His film also fits the nostalgic theme in that it shows an era of movies in which both filmmakers and subjects were adjusting to the new medium.

Browning said the festival is unique because it allows filmmakers who are usually classified as "other" to be prominent.

"It sort of functions for a cinematic island of misfit toys," he said. In Ventimiglia's eyes, an impor-

tant part of the festival is presenting people with something they did not expect to see. The festival hopes to banish any sense of predictability.

"We kind of hate when people know what the movie's about," she said.

Haverkamp found that one of the most surprising aspects of this year's festival is the wide range of genres presented, especially animated movies.

In addition to films, the festival will also feature live music, including a performance by the appropriately experimental Triangle Soundpainting Orchestra.

But ultimately, the festival aims to live up to its title, said Haverkamp. "I think it's really just trying to find special short films that are both strange and beautiful."

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