

FLANEUR PRODUCTIONS

Everything But Theatre

by Jaime Kleiman

The **flaneurs** of the 19th century walked turtles down the streets of Paris. The image of the romantic idler, defined by Webster as "one who strolls about aimlessly; a loafer; a silent observer," has inspired an ambitious interdisciplinary collective of artists in the Twin Cities.

Flaneur is the brainchild of former **Walker Art Center** employees Jim Bovino, a playwright and performance artist who moved to Minnesota after studying at the International School for Theatre Anthropology in Copenhagen, and Rich Barlow, a visual artist and musician. The company's first show, *Wildlife*, performed by collaborator John O'Donahue, debuted at the **Minnesota Fringe Festival** in 2000. It was a mostly silent piece that took place inside the mind of an unnamed madman, detailing his relationship to a world plagued by terror, confusion and uncertainty.



"I was obsessed with life after the end—this idea of a post-apocalyptic dream state," says Bovino, noting that all Flaneur's plays to date have dealt explicitly with death, disillusionment and decline—leavened, he adds, by the search for ultimate truth and the "solidity of everyday experience." The shows combine original music, recondite, mercurial texts, and the occasional jarred jellyfish.

Punctuated by Barlow's atmospheric, mostly minimalist compositions—a recording of the sound of a fluorescent light bulb in an empty warehouse, for example—Flaneur's shows are usually performed in unexpected places: art galleries, benefit halls and, on one occasion, a tent of cardboard boxes.

"The project begins in the space," Bovino explains, adding that Flaneur's process-oriented work comes about, in part, from having no money and no permanent home. "Our budget is zero," he admits candidly.

There is no other group quite like Flaneur in the Twin Cities, and its core audience—mostly visual artists, dancers and musicians—attests to that fact. "We have a broader mission than just doing theatre," Bovino elaborates. "We want to support other artists and integrate other mediums. You could say we're informed by everything *but* theatre."

While they can no longer claim to be outside observers in a city dominated by larger, more established companies (they are in the midst of applying for nonprofit status), the men-about-town of Flaneur may well be progressing toward their goal of bringing the arts community together in a new way. Barlow, when asked what's next, declares, "We want to have an impact." And he adds, ruminatively, "It'd also be nice to pay the actors."

Minneapolis-based Jaime Kleiman is a 2004–05 American Theatre Affiliated Writer, with support from a Jerome Hill Centennial grant from the Jerome Foundation.

MAD DOG

The Poetry of Moving Bodies

by Randy Gener

New York City's experimental scene is overrun by spin doctors of text—cynical manipulators looting language for easy irony or manic effects, empty visual formalists pulling the wool over our eyes. Brooklyn-based **mad dog** can run sensual circles around this cabal of deconstructivists. In its 1999 bare-bones staging of Peter Handke's word score *The Hour We Knew Nothing of Each Other*, 10 barefoot actors executed inventive entrances and exits in an open playing area

