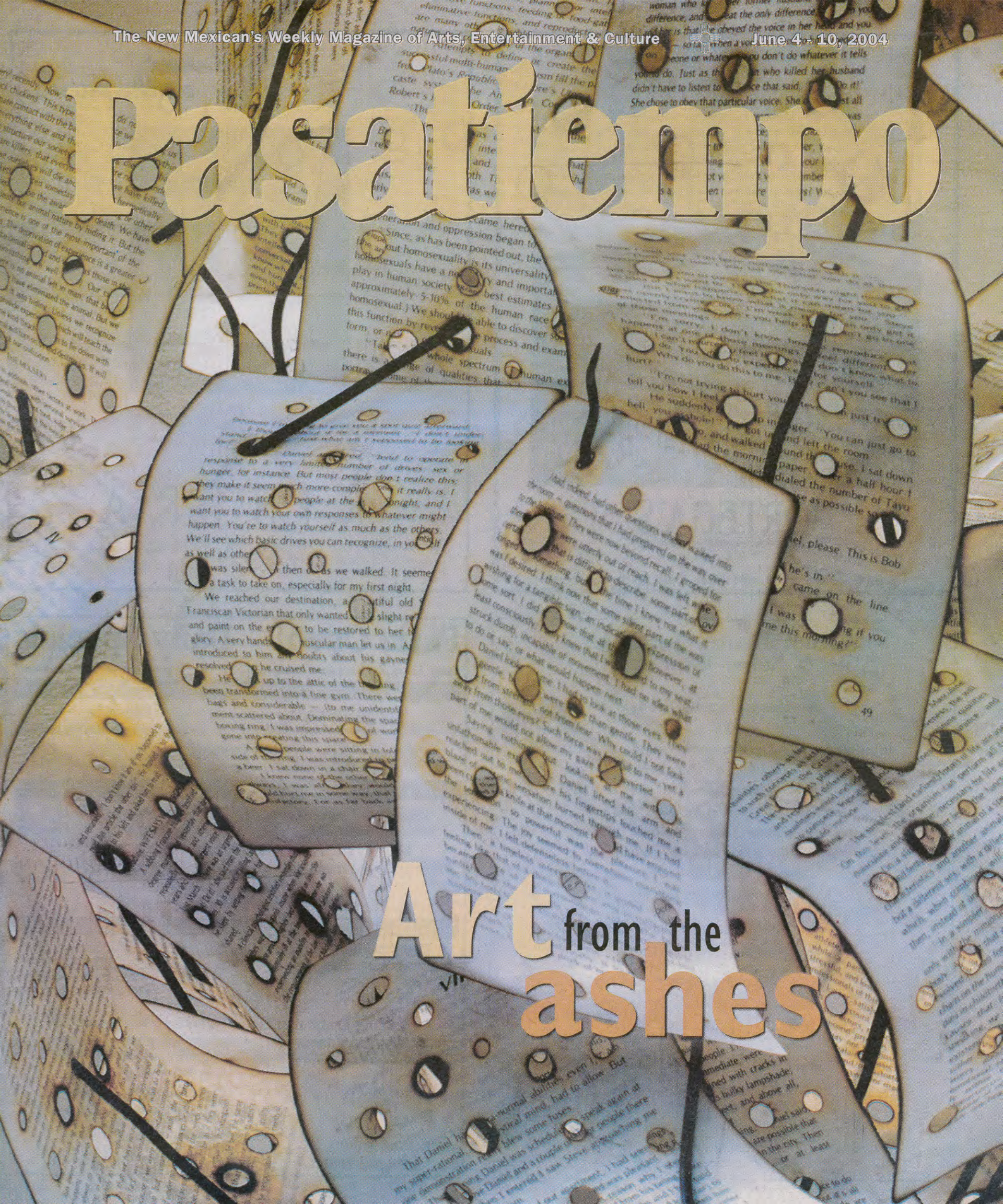


# Pasatiempo



response to a very limited number of drives, sex or hunger, for instance. But most people don't realize this; they make it seem much more complex than it really is. I want you to watch the people at the table tonight, and I want you to watch your own responses to whatever might happen. You're to watch yourself as much as the others. We'll see which basic drives you can recognize, in you as well as other.

I was silent. Then, as we walked, it seemed a task to take on, especially for my first night. We reached our destination, a beautiful old Franciscan Victorian that only wanted a slight repair and paint on the exterior to be restored to her glory. A very handsome muscular man let us in. An introduced to him and doubts about his governor resolved. He cruised me.

He took me up to the attic of the building, which had been transformed into a fine gym. There were bags and considerable equipment scattered about. Dominating the space was a boxing ring. I was impressed. I had never gone into a boxing gym before.

A group of people were sitting in the side of the ring. I was introduced to a man named Daniel. I sat down in a chair. I had a beer. I sat down in a chair. I had a beer. I sat down in a chair. I had a beer.

I had indeed, but other questions were asked. I walked into the gym. They were now beyond recall. I groined for a moment. They were now beyond recall. I groined for a moment. They were now beyond recall. I groined for a moment.

Saying nothing, Daniel looked at me. I had no idea what he was thinking. I had no idea what he was thinking. I had no idea what he was thinking. I had no idea what he was thinking.

There, a moment later, I felt a sharp pain in my back. I felt a sharp pain in my back. I felt a sharp pain in my back. I felt a sharp pain in my back.

I'm not trying to hurt you, I just want to tell you how I feel. I suddenly felt a sharp pain in my back. I suddenly felt a sharp pain in my back.

and walked out the door. I sat down at the table. I sat down at the table. I sat down at the table. I sat down at the table.

he's in. He's in. He's in. He's in. He's in. He's in. He's in. He's in. He's in. He's in.

## Art from the ashes

That Daniel had a normal mind, had to allow. But my super-rational mind blew some fuses. I was a normal mind, had to allow. But my super-rational mind blew some fuses.

people I had seen. I had seen people I had seen. I had seen people I had seen. I had seen people I had seen.

Lynn Cline ■ The New Mexican

# Art from the ashes



A QUEER  
READER

Harmony Hammond: *A Queer Reader*,  
2003, digital print on archival paper,  
66 3/4 x 44 inches

“He who destroys a good book, kills reason itself.”

— John Milton, *Areopagitica*, 1643

For centuries, people have destroyed books out of fear, hatred and intolerance of other people's cultures. In 213 B.C., for instance, Qin Shi Huangdi, the first emperor of China and founder of the Qin Dynasty, had all Confucian books burned except one copy of each title, which he kept in the Chinese State Library. His goal was to create a unified empire and establish intellectual conformity. Books posed a threat to his success, offering a bridge from common knowledge to deeper thoughts.

In 1496 Girolamo Savonarola, abbot of Convento di San Marco in Florence, ordered all of the “follies” of the city to be burned in a huge “bonfire of the vanities,” during which copies of Boccaccio's *Decameron* and all the works by Ovid that could be found in Florence were destroyed, along with art, gambling tables and cosmetics.

In Germany in May 1933 Hitler's book-burning bonfires destroyed countless volumes, including works by Thomas Mann, H.G. Wells and Erich Maria Remarque. In 1992, during the Balkan wars, Serbian nationalists targeted Sarajevo's libraries, using incendiary bombs to destroy Bosnia's written heritage to shore up their claim that there was no such thing as Bosnia. More recently Christian groups in America, including one in Alamogordo, N.M., burned copies of books in the Harry Potter series, calling them satanic.

In early 2001 employees of the San Francisco Public Library began finding mutilated books hidden under shelves throughout the main library, their covers and pages slashed, carved and defaced by almond-shaped cuts. The damaged books — 612 total — had gay or lesbian themes or addressed women's health, HIV/AIDS or mixed-race parentage. Six months later an off-duty librarian caught the vandal, who turned out to be a security guard, though not one employed by the library. He was tried and convicted of felony vandalism with a hate-crime enhancement and ordered to serve 1,000 hours of community service and pay a fine. He has yet to fulfill either obligation.

Mary Bennett, a Santa Fe artist who lived in San Francisco for 30 years and raised her family there, was outraged by the vandalism. “My initial reaction was fury,” said Bennett. “My kids know that library inside and out. We could walk to it from our house. San Francisco has always believed it was a liberal place, and that's not the case. We need to have dialogues about our differences. You don't have to agree with me, but we at least have to have a dialogue about it.”

Bennett decided to transform her anger into art. She contacted library officials and asked whether they would send her some of the damaged books so she could distribute them to various Santa Fe artists who would turn them into works of art. They agreed and ultimately shipped her 44 books, which arrived in pieces in a UPS box. Bennett



**I liked the idea** that while these books were made unreadable and pulled from the shelves, they didn't die and they didn't become invisible.

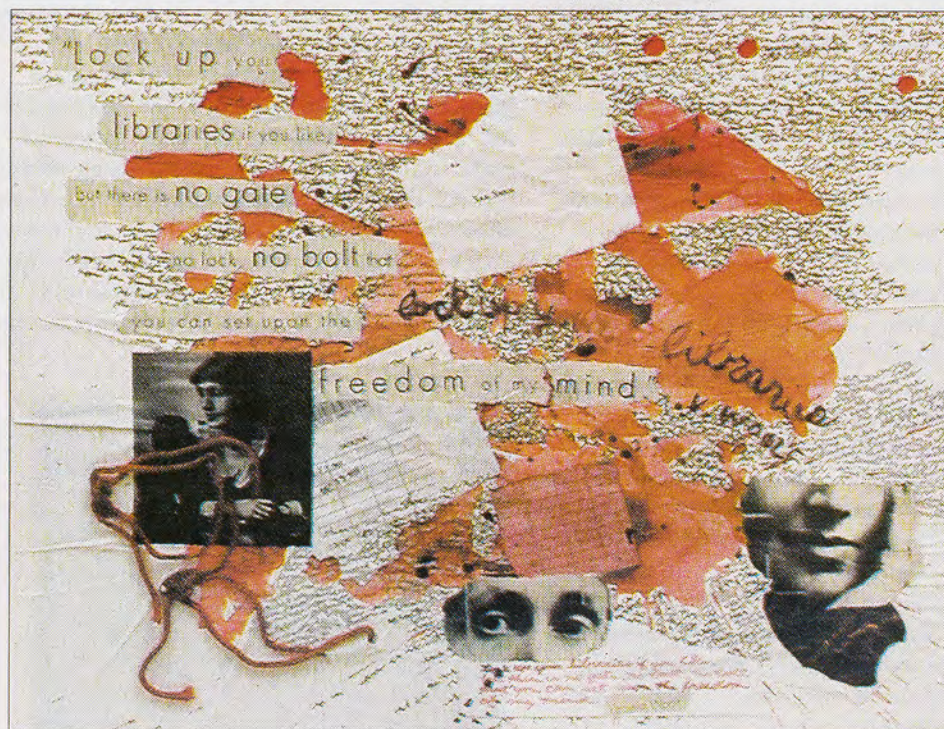
— artist Tom Joyce



Above, Jody Dufresne: *Terrible Beauty Tribal Ritual Garments*, 2004, fiber, mixed media, 66 x 26 x 14 inches

Right, May Stevens, *Kill Books*, 2004, mixed media/collage, 55 1/4 x 32 inches

Top, image from Cynthia Buzzard's documentary *Damaged Books*



put together a list of artists who wanted to work with the books and secured an exhibit venue at the Center for Contemporary Arts. The Santa Fe Community Foundation's Gay and Lesbian Funding Partnership Committee stepped in with seed money.

*Insight Out* — an exhibit of 44 damaged books that have been revitalized — opens today, June 4, with a public reception from 6 to 8 p.m. at CCA's Warehouse. A companion catalog, *Insight Out: Reversing Vandalism*, designed by Tom Morin, features color images of each piece in the show as well as comments from the artists working with these books.

CCA also hosts "Repression of the Other: Challenges to Freedom of Expression," a panel discussion at 5 p.m. Saturday, June 5, in the exhibit space. Moderated by arts journalist Hollis Walker — who has a piece in the exhibit — the event features former state Rep. Max Coll (D-Santa Fe); Bennett Hammer, a board member of the American Civil Liberties Union's New Mexico chapter and Susie Sonflieth, acting director of the Santa Fe Public Library.

In addition, *Damaged Books*, a film by Santa Fe documentary filmmaker Cynthia Buzzard, features interviews with artists about their work for the *Insight Out* exhibit. The 55-minute film screens at WayOUTWest: Santa Fe's Queer Film Festival at CCA this weekend. A 15-minute loop excerpted from the documentary airs in CCA's upstairs lobby, where some of the damaged books are displayed unaltered along with police files documenting the vandalism.

The scope of the work in *Insight Out* is impressive, reminding viewers about the long history of the creation of art in response to tragedy.

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# From the ashes

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Some of the pieces are angry, such as May Stevens's mixed-media collage in three pieces, *Kill Books*, made from the remnants of *Sex Seen* (University of California Press, 1997) by Sharon Ullman. The piece expresses outrage, with red paint spilling like blood over the words and images, and a powerful quote from Virginia Woolf: "Lock up your libraries if you like, but there is no gate, no bolt that you can set upon the freedom of the mind."

"I love books," Stevens said. "I have made my life out of books. I value freedom and knowledge. You need knowledge, and you need to not be afraid to use it."

Other work fuses politics and religion, as in Jody Dufresne's haunting piece, *Terrible Beauty Tribal Ritual Garments*, made of fiber, mixed media and pages from Richard L. Smith's book *AIDS, Gays and the American Catholic Church* (The Pilgrim Press, 1994). Dufresne took a black-and-red party dress and sewed pages from the book around the hem as well as on the back of the bodice, where the pages open like wings. She placed pink crosses with protruding nails inside the dress's bodice and inside a pair of matching shoes and woman's underpants. The dress hangs in full form from the ceiling, as if inhabited by a ghost.

The piece explores the notion of how people must sacrifice their individuality in order to belong to a tribe. "Some tribes, like the Catholic Church, exact a deep price for membership," Dufresne said. "They want you to think a certain way and act a certain way, and it doesn't matter how you feel about it, personally. Sometimes we wear our beliefs as we wear a garment. When I was thinking about that, it made me think of a ritual garment and about a young woman going to her prom. But if you were to put this dress on, it would pierce your heart. You would wear it, perhaps proudly, or in pain or sorrow. The idea of terrible beauty comes from the sacrifices people make."

Artist and feminist theorist Harmony Hammond took the cover of *A Queer Reader: 2500 Years of Male Homosexuality* (The New Press, 1993), edited by Patrick Higgins, and altered it digitally to address

issues of homophobia and censorship. Her vibrant movie-poster-size piece, *A Queer Reader*, depicts a rosy-cheeked, smooth-skinned French sailor — created by collaborative French photographers Pierre and Gilles — whose eyes were cut out by the library vandal.

"There are many layers here," Hammond said. "The book's cover of an idealized sailor was created by other artists; then the vandal comes along and cuts out the eyes, creating a mythological Cyclops by blinding the queer reader so he cannot see or read. Then I come along and take that cover, delete some of the text so that the word *reader* refers to the sailor or the viewer or the one who reads. I've taken that act of vandalism and turned it around."

Blacksmith Tom Joyce, recipient of a 2003 MacArthur Foundation Fellowship, was fascinated by the notion that books, like seeds, germinate under different exposures. Some seeds germinate through fire scarification in a forest, an act of creation from destruction, he said. Joyce selected *God Is Gay* by Ezekiel Wright and Daniel Inesse (Tayu Press, 1979) to create "... *the bush was burning, yet it was not consumed*," a forged-iron and paper sculp-

ture that explores the "germination of unimagined proportions" that sprang up from an act of destruction. Using a bundle of iron telegraph cable that once ran east to west through New Mexico, Joyce pierced the book's pages with the cable so that the pages hang like leaves from a tree.

"The clustering of the book's pages, lightly touching each other within this branching structure, felt similar somehow to the collective experience of each of the artists in this exhibit — simply hanging out there, addressing pertinent issues, concerns and questions," Joyce said. "I liked the idea that while these books were made unreadable and pulled from the shelves, they didn't die and they didn't become invisible. Instead of being pushed forever underneath the stacks, they were pulled out and allowed to be scrutinized by perhaps countless eyes. The two-dimensionality of words on a page has now blossomed into a tactile and physical interpretation that expands and hopefully carries further the original message of the book like a fragrance in the wind."

The artists' interpretations of the damaged books in *Insight Out* ensure that each title most likely will receive more attention than it might have had it remained on a library shelf. As Stevens says in Buzzard's documentary, the vandal's attempt has been "magnificently foiled in that he tried to destroy books to get rid of their messages, and we're making sure that those messages go much further than he could ever have dreamed they would." ◀



Zane Fischer: *Department of Cultural Security*, 2004, mixed media, 7 3/4 x 5 3/4 x 1 1/4 inches

## DETAILS

- ▼ *Insight Out*, group art exhibit  
Opening reception 6-8 p.m. today, June 4; exhibit through July 5, no charge
- ▼ "Repression of the Other: Challenges to Freedom of Expression," panel discussion  
5 p.m. Saturday, June 5, no charge
- ▼ *Damaged Books*, documentary  
2 p.m. Saturday, June 5; 3:20 p.m. Sunday, June 6; \$8
- ▼ Center for Contemporary Arts, 1050 Old Pecos Trail, 982-1338