

New York talent returns to roots

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utes to make someone laugh, and it might take 70 minutes to do it," he said.

Brockley's film is an offshoot of a trailer he did in the fall of 1998. It was intended to be a shop-around-the-movie-industry demo tape for a potential full-length feature called "Stuck Truck."

The plot revolved around a cynical man who builds houses illegally. Upon review, the trailer seemed well-done, quirky and resoundingly interesting.

The same goes for his new film, which trades in illegal construction for the black market cash one can make in carp farming.

Brockley said his movie will be shot on 16mm film this April or May.

The movie is based on a frustrated character that he pulled out of "Stuck Truck," he said.

"He's got financial problems and this big fear of the millennium," he said. "He's just freaking out and can't really relate to anybody."

So the still-unnamed Nebraska character goes into the carp farming business, which is illegal in this state.

“

(It) will be a kick, Babe.”

JIM KRELL
friend of Brockley

Brockley got the idea from reading about Chinese fish farmers.

Even though the script is still in development, the exotic atmosphere of Chinese agriculture, oddly enough, sounds like proper juxtaposition.

"He's a really messed-up Midwestern guy trying to work with these Chinese-speaking guys," he said. "Things will probably get stranger for him as the film goes along."

Who will play the lead role?

"I might end up taking the lead, because I can't find someone different that I'd want," he said. "But that'd mean I wouldn't direct, because it's silly when people do both."

Even though "Stuck Truck" is currently floating about the industry and could still get Brockley good production money, he doesn't believe the plot is strong enough for his attention right now.

"It just fell apart," he said. "And I'm a lot more excited about this new direction that I'm taking."

A star of the trailer, Jim Krell thought "Stuck Truck" had a lot of potential, but it doesn't surprise him that Brockley dropped the film idea for something better.

"That's just Ross, brother," Krell said. "He's always out there trying to prove his metal."

Indeed, as Brockley continues to work through his movie he is still taking side projects to keep himself busy.

Two weeks ago, Brockley was in Los Angeles shooting a new Holiday Inn advertisement. He plays a selfish character in his mid-30s who still lives at his parent's home.

Brockley's commercial career was jump-started five years ago when he moved to New York and found work as a performer-comedian. Before long, he earned a spot as a regular at the Lunar Lounge — a hot venue for up-and-coming downtown NYC comics where he met such respected comedians as Janeane Garofalo.

The decision to leave the potential prosperity of New York and the type of life he lived there, may say the most about him.

If one is to believe the accounts of Krell, Brockley is a kind of performer-adventurer in the tradition of Jim Carrey or Andy Kaufman.

Krell, 47, who is heavysset and

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ROSS BROCKLEY
writer/director

Telly Savalas-bald, plans on appearing in the HBO mob-drama series "The Sopranos" next month.

Talkative in a choice New York accent, Krell said Brockley was the "naked boy of the 1980s, because he liked to lose his clothes — you swore all he had in his wardrobe was a handkerchief."

"He was well-known around New York for that and doing things like sleeping all twisted up next to Dumpsters. He was also known for his comedy act that wasn't comedy, it was a character he invented that would just come off the street and make these interesting observations. It was provocative and people started to notice him. But then he got bored with that and now he's going to do movies."

Sounds like Brockley does have a clue after all when it comes to entertaining people.

"Ross is able to evoke lots of things in people," Krell said. "He's got this gift where (he's) able to push lots of different sets of buttons."

He promised Brockley's new yet-to-be-named film "will be a kick, Babe."

Brockley, who does stand-up on Monday nights at Duffy's Tavern, said so far he plans on finding all the money he needs for the film, which he said will cost more than \$50,000.

He said he would accept money from interested individuals or foundations, but sounded a little doubtful.

"I hope they move forward when they hear about the beauty of carp and algae," he joked.

'City of Angels' wins Tony; loses Ryan, Cage

BY DIANE BRODERICK
Staff writer

"City of Angels" is a musical, but it doesn't feature any Alanis Morissette chart-toppers.

Years before an angelic Nicolas Cage wooed Meg Ryan in the 1998 film, "City of Angels" was a popular Broadway show that won six Tony awards. But don't be mistaken. The movie, which won absolutely nothing, is not based on the hit musical.

Now, the Lincoln Community Playhouse is presenting its own version of "City of Angels," a '40s-style musical comedy.

It opened with a sneak preview performance Thursday and continues through March 21 at the Lincoln Community Playhouse.

The musical contains a story within a story, said Monte Michelsen, associate director of the playhouse.

It functions on two levels — it is about a novelist, Stine, who is adapting his detective novel into a screenplay.

The screenplay deals with Stone, a detective who faces trouble in love and danger in work. He is put on the case of a kidnapping, but it is anything but straightforward. Twists end up turning the tables on the fictionalized character, and he finds himself framed.

Things don't work out so well for Stine in the real world, either. He's having trouble with his screenplay, which goes through constant revisions. He faces hardships in his marriage, and he takes comfort by having an affair.

The production delves into both of those worlds, constantly flipping back and forth. Several of the actors perform two roles: one in the real world, and

Gallery Preview

The Facts

What: "Beauty At My Feet"
Where: Haydon Gallery, 335 N. Eighth St.
When: 7 to 9 p.m. Friday
Cost: Free
The Skinny: Painter uses nature to point out abundance of overlooked beauty

another in Stine's fictionalized screenplay.

Because "City of Angels" is set in the '40s, the movie scenes are performed completely in black-and-white sets and clothes.

"We use shades of grays and blacks and white in the costumes so there's no color whatsoever in the costumes," Michelsen said.

Even actors' hair is kept monochromatic, with either very dark or platinum blonde colors.

When the production moves into the non-movie portion, costume colors are brighter than usual to exaggerate the difference.

There are 24 people in the show, but "City of Angels" doesn't feature big production numbers, Michelsen said.

"It's not that kind of musical," Michelsen said. "It highlights the soloists."

In addition, a Manhattan Transfer-style quartet is woven throughout the production and serves as a Greek chorus of sorts, which comments on the unwinding plot line.

It is yet another literary dimension to a story that flows freely between fiction and nonfiction.



ART COURTESY OF HAYDON GALLERY
"WINTER GRASSES," part of the "Beauty at my Feet" exhibition, was painted with gouache and pastel on paper.

Spring 'Beauty' opens this week at Haydon Gallery

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the essence of a flower at a specific moment — during the solitude of winter, the first moment of spring and the last moment of autumn.

Rustad uses color arbitrarily, Pagel said. She's not interested in capturing the exact scientific shade of the flower.

"She uses greens to communicate freshness, dampness or heat," Pagel said.

Rustad paints with gouache, an opaque water color that creates a flat dense look. With the gouache, she uses pastels to accentuate areas of the painting.

These media communicate the wonders of nature's best, she said. In her paintings, Rustad tries to reveal the miracles of nature, which she believes are the "revelation of God."

Her love of nature goes further than the boundaries of her canvas.

Rustad, an avid gardener, is an active member of the Wachiska

Audobon Society, which promotes conservation. She also takes a nature hike at least once a week to see different flowers break into bloom.

Rustad wasn't always a painter of wildflowers. In the past, her work was intended as social commentary. When her mother was put in a care home, Rustad painted a series on nursing home conditions. Later, she did a series on the prevalence of commercialism in society.

"I do what I'm about," Rustad said. "I haven't changed in style as much as in what I'm trying to say."

In this exhibit, Rustad said she's trying to convince people to focus on the present.

"We should appreciate the things that are right at our feet, the things we can actually touch and experience," Rustad said.

If people look around, Rustad said, they're bound to find something of beauty.

"Even in a ditch, there can be beauty. Look at cattails," she said.

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