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March 16, 2006

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SCREENING ROOM

Venice fest takes outsider approach

The Other Venice Film Festival embodies its own local culture with an offbeat film program

By Kevin Crust, Times Staff Writer

The Other Venice Film Festival, differentiating itself from the one in Italy, calls itself a community event and strives to personify the eclectic beach town in which it takes place.

Of the films available for preview, the film most evocative of Venice's spirit is Bill Macdonald's documentary "Forbidden Photographs: The Life and Work of Charles Gatewood."

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Clearly interested in the personalities behind the ink and metal, Gatewood persuades his subjects to open themselves up to his camera

A second documentary exploring the world of outsider art is "Purvis of Overtown" by Shaun Conrad and David Raccuglia.

1960s and educated himself via the Miami-Dade Public Library system.

Young's dynamic, vibrant work has been exhibited nationally and internationally and graces public spaces around Miami.

Arriving from Britain as part of the festival's partnership with Nottingham's Bang! Film Festival, Chris Cooke's "One for the Road" is a funny, well-observed take on some of



Folk Artist

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humanity's darker qualities. Three men — a deluded lad with big business aspirations (Gregory Chisholm), a salesman (Rupert Procter) struggling to hold onto his family, and a cabby (Mark Devenport) who's lost his license — plan to hustle a retired real estate mogul (Hywel Bennett) they meet in a court-enforced alcohol rehab course.

Like characters from a Patrick Marber play, they lie to themselves every bit as much as they lie to one another during their sessions with a patronizing group leader (Jonny Phillips) and at their lunch breaks at a local pub. Writer-director Cooke has a fine ear for humorous dialogue, and the actors play it with the utmost sincerity.

A nice calling card for local director Jeremy Pollack and writer-producer Scott Yamano, **"Chandler Hall"** is an earnest drama that follows a group of college buddies whose drug dealing as a sideline spirals out of control. A good, young cast, led by Jesse Luke Dunne and Shanna Collins, and solid production values elevate a somewhat routine story.

### Disturbing imagery

At FilmForum, **"Follow Me to Certain Death: An Evening With Vanessa Renwick"** presents the very personal work of the Portland, Ore.-based agitator and filmmaker along with three experimental films by others, selected by Renwick.

Travis Wilkerson's "National Archive V. 1" transforms U.S. military footage of Vietnam-era bombing runs into surreal video game images that quickly become disturbingly real. Even more upsetting is "Selective Service System" by Warren Haack, a demonstration of an extreme method of avoiding the draft. Dani Leventhal's "Draft 9" connects humans and animals in a layered expression of emotions.

Renwick's film "Britton, South Dakota" features footage of the town's children taken in 1930 by a local theater owner, and the small faces recall all the desolation and hope of the Depression set to the low-fi buzz of an organ. In "9 Is a Secret," Renwick depicts a time when she changed her name, was beset by birds and helped a terminally ill friend die. The evening closes with the three-screen projection piece "Hope and Prey," a ferocious account of nature's eat-or-be-eaten cycle.

### Radical wheelies

Two more Slamdance films play the American Cinematheque's Alternative Screen. Jacob Septimus and Anthony Howard's **"B.I.K.E."** is a fascinating exploration of the counterculture of radical, anti-consumerist groups whose members bond over the power of the pedal. However, it's also an amazingly self-indulgent account of co-director Howard's deterioration as he attempts to become a member of the New York chapter of the Black Label Bicycle Club.

Also screening is **"Dragon,"** Troy Morgan's animated short that tells the story of an exploited orphan girl whose drawings take on a life of their own.

Screenings

The Other Venice Film Festival

#### "Forbidden Photographs":

1 p.m. Sunday

**"Purvis of Overtown":** 4 p.m. Saturday

**"One for the Road":** 3:30 p.m. Sunday

**"Chandler Hall":** 10 a.m. Saturday

**Where:** Switch Studios, 316 S. Venice Blvd., Venice

**Info:** [www.veniceofilmfest.com](http://www.veniceofilmfest.com), (877) 725-8849

FilmForum

**"Follow Me to Certain Death: An Evening With Vanessa Renwick":** 7 p.m. Sunday

**Where:** Spielberg Theatre at the Egyptian, 6712 Hollywood Blvd., Hollywood

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