



RECAP

Temporary-art documentary *Blink Again!* re-affirms your sanity



By Jessica Steinhoff April 6, 2010

Madison's one of those places where it's easy to convince yourself that you've been hallucinating. Whether you've seen an enormous electrical outlet appear outside the downtown public library or a 10-foot-tall horse puppet parade down Atwood Avenue, by the time you dragged your friends to the scene, these things had probably vanished. While your friends chalked it up to your prankster proclivities or one too many beers, you may have considered calling a psychiatrist.

Well, you can breathe a sigh of relief now: That temporary insanity was actually temporary art, courtesy of the City of Madison's **BLINK** grants, which help local artists create experimental, ad-hoc and temporary works of art in local public spaces. And *Blink Again!*, a film by Brian Standing that premiered last Thursday at the Just Coffee warehouse (1129 E. Wilson St.), transforms these "WTF" moments into laughter and relief through interviews with the 2009 grantees and a glimpse into their creative process. *The A.V. Club* attended and presents these explanations for a few mirage-like highlights.

WTF moment: Discovering giant, mutant peapods in a community garden.

What really happened: You didn't tumble into a scene from *Jack And The Beanstalk*. You just stumbled upon a giant piece of papier-mâché, which local artist Sarah Brooks created to mess with your sense of scale—and to make you think that humongous vegetables can sprout from a plot of herbs and flowers, beckoning you to increase your vitamin intake.

WTF moment: Reading a "lost dog" flyer on Willy Street, only to discover that it's for a lost insect.

What really happened: If you came across a lost pet sign for a mayfly, mussel, flower, or rattlesnake over the past year, chances are it was a piece of art by Abbie Kurtz. If you had visited the web address listed on the tear-off tags (enart.blogspot.com), you would've discovered that these signs are to educate Madison about Wisconsin's endangered species—not send people on a wild chase for a wayward rattler.

WTF moment: Finding oil rigs, sea monsters, and Grateful Dead bears on Lake Monona.

What really happened: Tim Browning, one of the wacky UW students who constructed a replica of the Statue of Liberty on Lake Mendota in 1979, is still creating unusual sights on local waterways.

The sea monsters poking their heads out of the frozen lake were meant to highlight a bit of Madison history: Back in the 1800s, people and boats would sometimes disappear into the water, prompting locals to blame hungry lake creatures. The oil rigs are drilling the imaginary fossil fuels these creatures have

behind, and the dancing bears are some random fallout from the city's hippie heyday of the '60s. Or perhaps they're supposed to represent notorious oilman George W. Bush—and his efforts to destroy natural habitats with offshore drilling.

Even though the piece looked like a trainwreck to some, that was kind of the point, Browning says. That and to get you to notice how nice the lake looks with a bunch of crap on it.

"I can't screw this lake up any more than it already is," he commented in the film. "I just like to play with people, and I want to play with as many of them as I can."

*Copies of Blink Again! are available from **Prolefeed Studios**.*