

The Washington Post Style



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WEDNESDAY, MARCH 24, 2010



MUSIC REVIEW
Spoon, lean and compelling
The band, led by frontman Britt Daniel, offered tightly scripted songs that seemed like controlled masterstrokes at the 9:30 club. **C2**

CAROLYN HAX
Facing it alone Sometimes, a reader writes, going through a crisis means being solitary. **C6**

THE RELIABLE SOURCE
The pen game
President Obama used 22 pens to sign the health-care bill — not so easy. **C2**

GOING OUT GUIDE
Best of the bands
The gurus pick the week's top offerings, including one that's part of the Walk for Epilepsy. **C3**

LIVE TODAY @ washingtonpost.com/style The Reliable Source's Amy Argetsinger and Roxanne Roberts Noon • The Web Hostess with Monica Hesse 1 p.m. • The "Lost" hour 2 p.m.

Alexa Meade's growing body of work is work of the body



PHOTOS BY LINDA DAVIDSON/THE WASHINGTON POST

CUTTING OUT THE CANVAS: Alexa Meade, in her studio, is riding a wave of Web buzz about her artistic medium — acrylic on skin.

flesh PERSPECTIVE

BY DAN ZAK

Slender, freckled, auburn-haired Alexa Meade is in her parents' basement in Chevy Chase. It's 7:30 a.m. Tuesday. She resists the temptation to Google herself. Instead, she sets an empty Grand Marnier jug between a mirror and an inclined plate of glass, traces the bottle and its reflection on the glass with black paint, then traces the reflection of the paint itself. Next, she sprinkles her expired thyroid medication into a can of Betty Crocker frosting, stirs it and scoops the mix into the pill bottle.

She doesn't quite call it art. It's an experiment, she says, to limber her brain, which has been consumed recently by her shotgun art career. The media inquiries, the hundreds of sales requests, the invitations from random galleries — it's a bit much for a 23-year-old who only six months ago decided to be a full-time professional artist. This moment is playtime.



BRUSHING UP: Meade is making a "very interesting contribution" to portraiture, says one gallerist.

on washingtonpost.com

View more of Alexa Meade's work in an audio slideshow narrated by Meade at washingtonpost.com/style.

"I'm not out to make a masterpiece right now," she says as her iPod shuffles through indie rock. "I feel like anything you do gets you moving, inspires you in some way. It's also kind of satisfying playing with frosting."

Footsteps on the stairs. Her father, Phil, pokes his head in. "Off to work," he says.

"Bye, Pops," she says. Two weeks ago she was a political science grad living at home, painting her way through her first year after college. She is still that. Except now she has a deal to exhibit at the Saatchi Gallery in London, an offer to collaborate on a music video for a major record label, and hundreds of curious e-mails from people who want the story on Alexa Meade and how she turns people into paintings.

Her current medium is acrylic on flesh. She paints on people's skin and clothes until they look like they belong in a frame. And *voilà*: The masses are captivated, opportunity comes

MEADE CONTINUED ON C10

THE TV COLUMN

Lisa de Moraes

Awaiting Discovery: Sarah Palin's Alaska

After trying, apparently unsuccessfully, to sell a travelogue TV series about Alaska that . . .

ZZZZZZZZZZ . . .

Oh sorry, where was I? Oh yes: After trying unsuccessfully to sell to the broadcast networks a travelogue series about Alaska that would feature none other than SARAH PALIN, reality-TV king Mark Burnett appears to be in negotiations with Discovery Communications about placing the Palin "reality series" there.

Discovery is expected to announce soon that it's getting into bed with the former Alaska governor for this limited-one series.

Evidently, Palin will serve as sort of modern-day Sacagawea. She'll guide viewers around Alaska to meet the "characters, tradition and attractions in the 49th state," trade paper Variety reported Tuesday — almost as if it had its hands on the news release.

Earlier this month, Burnett, best known for executive-producing CBS's "Survivor" and NBC's "Celebrity Apprentice," shopped the show around in Los Angeles, with Palin, to the broadcast networks for a reported price of about \$1 million an episode, which is a lot of lettuce for a salmon-fishing and moose-skinning travelogue.

The broadcast networks appear to have passed because the show is not called "The Palins," and it is not about

THE TV COLUMN CONTINUED ON C7



MELINA MARA/THE WASHINGTON POST

SHOPPED AROUND: A travelogue starring Sarah Palin nears reality.

TV PREVIEW

'Fly Girls': The friendly skies are superficial

BY HANK STUEVER

They didn't call it "Air Heads" because . . . that would be demeaning?

Instead, it's called "Fly Girls," CW's new reality-esque series filmed in deceptive, "Hills"-style fake-o-vision, about a quintet of Virgin Atlantic Airways flight attendants who are based out of LAX and are forced (by producers?) to share a condo, which they call the Crash Pad.

The Fly Girls are: Tasha (black; single mom), Louise (Asian; parents wanted her to be a nurse), Farrah (blonde; biological clock suddenly ticking loudly), Mandalay (the pert one; the hero), and finally, Nikole, the mean one nobody likes, pulling up to the Crash Pad with her two Chihuahuas in a white Hummer — she drove all the way from 2003!

Would you believe they sent the preview DVD of this show in a cute little airsickness bag? I'll keep it handy for you — especially if you're entertaining any notion that feminism has survived. The women of "Fly Girls" would probably have me jettisoned for suggesting that they are anything but fiercely independent, but their lives (as depicted here) come across as frenetic, sad and, since we're on the subject, unsexy.

TV PREVIEW CONTINUED ON C7

BOOK WORLD

An anxious wanderer in a world brimming with terror

BY RON CHARLES

With his weird and wicked academic satires — "Publish and Perish," "The Lecturer's Tale" — James Hynes captured the fetid anxiety of university life, but now he's graduated to the pervasive fear that defines our age. In the very first sentence of this new novel, Kevin Quinn works himself into a panic by imagining a Stinger missile hitting his plane as he lands in Austin. "Am

I the only one who worries about stuff like this?" Kevin wonders. "Or does everybody, these days?" That missile doesn't strike, of course — it's just nerves — but what follows is the most original and poignant story I've read about living under the shadow of random acts of terror.

"Next" shouldn't work at all, let alone succeed as it does. It's a plotless, desultory novel about a commitment-phobic man walking along the hot streets of Austin as he waits for a job interview.

Only two months have passed since the publication of another novel about a wandering man: Joshua Ferris's dreary, though elegantly written "Unnamed," but "Next" is a more cathartic journey. Hynes knows exactly where he's going with this story, and his compulsive patter is witty and alluring enough to keep us running alongside Kevin. Soon enough, it's obvious that what looks like a lonely guy just marking time is really a

BOOK WORLD CONTINUED ON C4



NEXT
By James Hynes
Reagan Arthur/
Little, Brown
308 pp. \$23.99