

CAM-ing to a venue near you

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Tuesday night, the interim Contemporary Art Month (CAM) board met in the big room at Blue Star Center for a CAM 2011 Planning Session. In attendance were CAM board members **Michele Monseau** (owner/curator of Three Walls Gallery), arts writer (y más) **Ben Judson**, **Andy Benavides**, SMART Fair empresario/curator of last year's *Invading Spaces* exhibition, head of UTSA New Media program/Potter-Belmar Labs artist **Leslie Raymond**, and PBL's (and Raymond's) partner, multimedia artist **Jason Jay Stevens**. This same group brought about a very strong Contemporary Art Month last March, remarkable for following so closely on the heels of CAM 2009 the previous July.



Chuck's CAM tractor driver

PREV 1 of 2 NEXT

Stevens, the CAM Board's interim Executive Director, made a funny, intriguing, and candid PowerPoint presentation of the history of Contemporary Arts Month, what's up (or, what's known of what's up) with the plans and changes of Contemporary Art Month 2011 — which is only weeks away, now, folks — and, impressively, a thoughtful projected plan for CAM 2012. Between 30 and 40 people listened and asked questions. The audience included artists Kevin Rayhons, Kimberly Aubuchon, and *PDA*-contributor Jeremiah Teutsch, freelance, former *Current* writer Callie Enlow, event organizers such as Sam's Video Jam co-founder Michael Stoltz, several venue managers, and nonprofit heads including San Anto Cultural Arts' Interim Director Nina Hassele.

(Nobody from the City, interestingly — or nobody I recognized).

The CAM Board, Stevens explains, hopes to function as "connective tissue," joining artists with venues, providing a printed calendar of events in *The Current* — the deadline for which is Wednesday, February 2 — and an online calendar with a rolling deadline, meaning you can post your event right up until the very end of Contemporary Art Month.

Significant changes this year:

1. The **CAM board is bringing outside jurors** to view CAM events, exhibitions, and artists, and who will then determine cash awards given to six CAMMY award winners (scroll down to the middle of the CAM page for more info). The other two CAMMYs will be decided by popular vote and vote by artists.

Here are the categories:

People's Choice Award

a popular vote aggregated by CAM's website, contemporaryartmonth.com

Artists' Choice Award

a popular vote by the artists who have events registered on contemporaryartmonth.com

Alchemic Reactions Award for Collaborating Artists

to the most successful collaboration between artists who haven't worked together before

The R. Mutt Award for Novel Mediums

for turning something that isn't art into art

Art is Life and Life is Art Award: The Unexpected Venue

for making art happen where it usually doesn't

The Big Boal Award for Participatory Art

for the artwork that most successfully involves its audience

The Through the Looking Glass Award for Bending Perceptions

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I Am Not Spock Award for Doing the Unexpected

for an artist or artists who are pushing their own boundaries, creating new work in a medium or format for which they are not known

Psst: If you're an artist looking for an appropriate CAM project, **that list ought to give you some ideas.**

ALSO!!

2. There's new incentive this year: in addition to kudos and adulation, **CAMMY winners will receive \$500.** This is the first time award money will be distributed. Stevens allowed that he hopes that "in future [Contemporary Arts Months], it'll be at least four times that." But you gotta start somewhere, and to have orchestrated \$500(x8) and the bringing in of jurors is quite a feat.

Another feat: making sure that the jurors see as much of, and the best of, CAM work as possible. All efforts will be made to bring them in during the more event-packed periods during the month, to give the out-of-towners exposure to as much work as they can take in. HOWEVER: if you're an artist planning an event or exhibition, **be sure to document your work faithfully, and to get it to the CAM board in case your event doesn't occur when the jurors are in town.** For more info about this, too, visit the [CAM website](#) and get in touch to ask your questions there.

3. **The Libby Tilley Factor.** Tilley, PR maven and handler of such high-profile events as the first two Luminarias, has been brought back to handle Contemporary Arts Month PR, Marketing, press releases, etc. Tilley's a powerhouse; organized, knowledgeable, press-savvy, and art-centric, a good bet to bring on as a paid and concerted resource.

As such, Libby Tilley will be hosting a **Contemporary Arts Month Cocktail Fundraiser in her home on January 29.** If you'd like to help support the considerable costs of CAM (Stevens estimates that a bare-bones budget for the month-long event is \$30,000; they hope to raise \$27,000 at Tilley's party), throw your hat into the ring as a potential future boardmember or sponsor, or otherwise care to get an insidery view of this promising grassroots festival, this event will be a don't miss. I will post more information as it becomes available, and [keep your eyes on Facebook](#).

4. The open-studios portion of CAM (the only event, interestingly, for which it's forbidden to charge admission) will be condensed to one jam-packed **"Neo-Automatic Open Studio Tour March 19, 10 am to 4pm."**

5. **2011 will mark the last year of the Contemporary Arts Month board as it now stands.** After March 2011, the CAM Board will dissolve; Jason Jay Stevens will relinquish his post as Interim Executive Director, and Monseu, Judson, Benavides, and Raymond will stand down from the board as well. This came as a surprise to much of the audience and, reportedly, a couple of the Board members, too, although they've always called themselves, and considered themselves, "interim." The challenge will be to get a new Board in place by the end of March.

The current CAM board don't mean to leave next March in the lurch, by any means.

The CAM Board suggests the following, for 2012, and means to help it come to fruition:

a. That for 2012, we will no longer have an interim, largely unpaid and largely unpaying, board of directors. **Going forward, Stevens said, CAM needs an Executive Committee and an Artists Advisory Board.** The Executive Director will be a part-time, paid position. the Artists' Board will require some financial contribution by its members (i.e. dues, which Stevens estimates will be in the "dozens of dollars" range), and membership on the Executive Board will require greater financial contribution ("the hundreds-of-dollars range," per Stevens). The current board, all visual artists, hope the new board will have representatives from all the arts. One of the drawbacks, possibly, of CAM being so visual-arts-centric is that neither Attic Rep nor the Symphony intend to participate this year.

b. Dues collected from board members will be stored in an account for future CAM use.

c. In addition to an Artist Advisory and an Executive Board, the current board hopes to see **CAM as an independent nonprofit** with a dedicated PR person, an archivist, a web designer, and a graphic designer. A sad/interesting note: last year's CAM graphic designer was the late Chuck Ramirez, who conceptualized the logo of the person on the tractor with the orange top hat. For 2011, CAM's official graphic designer is artist, Witte Museum lead designer (and friend of Chuck's) Beto Gonzales, who tweaked his 2010 man-on-a-tractor CAM logo for 2011, changing the person's headgear to a bicycle helmet; be on the lookout for a spectacular new Gonzales-designed CAM poster, stickers and other collateral.

e. Coming soon: **different sponsorship levels by local companies and private contributors**, details possibly to be revealed at the fundraiser on the 29th. ...AND, as an editorial note, why not funds from the Office of Cultural Affairs or Public Art San Antonio; **where is the City in all this?** COSA: You want SATX to be an arts destination, why not aid in funding a

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month-long series of exhibitions, performances, and happenings? Is Luminaria the official, and CAM the unofficial flipside of SA arts events?

So many questions.

CAM will need daily volunteers beginning in March. Until then, watch Facebook for more info about the fundraiser on the 29th.

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