

partmentalized compositions bursting with narrative diagrams and columns of text, yet here is a raw, early work, seemingly inspired by no other care save genuine devotion.

Religion is a delicate subject and AMUM sensibly examines the art of fundamentalists with a scholarly deferment of judgment, dry explanations of the theology and perhaps even a nod of cheery consent, typified by the charismatic gospel choir that I slinked past during the opening reception just to see the exhibition. However, doing so paints the Armageddon strain of Christianity as a quaint cultural phenomenon, easily dismissed as belonging to a benign fringe of outsider artists, snake handlers or pew hurdlers. Such a posture betrays a conspicuous incuriosity as to the depth and breadth of the ethos' promulgation in the mainstream, especially when most folks in the region visiting the museum are either true believers or unrepentant misanthropes.

NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE

By Susan Knowles

The Cheekwood Museum of Art uses former horse stables for contemporary exhibitions. One large room houses the bi-monthly solos of "Temporary Contemporary," while the actual stalls, barely large enough for one horse to turn around in, have become viewing alcoves for video art. Un-air conditioned, they are made private by curtains that do not fully shield the viewing space from light or noise. Several have no benches, so viewers are made uncomfortably aware of time. The audio, furnished through a television monitor or small external speakers, is spotty. Nevertheless, this program's twice a year rotation of video work is a boon to a Nashville arts community hungry to see new art.

NEITHER HERE NOR THERE: VIDEO ARTISTS NAVIGATE CULTURAL DISPLACEMENT (April 2—August 29, 2004) was a six-artist survey linked by the common experience of exile from one's country of origin. Beyond that, the works had little in common, and they crossed few new boundaries in video art.

Emily Jacir's straight documentation of the 1 1/2 mile walk to and from an Israeli/Palestinian checkpoint, *Crossing Surda*, was cinéma vérité. Hiding a camera inside her black robe, she filmed at

adopted country and their homeland. Some interviewees registered surprise at finding racism and intolerance in the United States. But the parade of faces, the mundane recitation of com-



Mona Hatoum, video still from *Measures of Distance*, 1988 (courtesy Video Data Bank).

steady, low, ominous drumbeat and a retinue of camera-bearing followers. An assistant carried a cage of white doves, which he gave out to people he passed. Some held the birds, others immediately let them go to flutter toward a sky filled with glass buildings.

Although the works in "Neither Here Nor There" were at times exotic, fascinating and disturbing, most relied on straightforward filmmaking, with the exception of Chowdry's editorial manipulations. Interestingly, the standout turned out to be the work of conceptual artist **Mona Hatoum**, the oldest piece in the show. London-based Hatoum's *Measures of Distance*, from 1988, is a slowly unfolding piece of visual poetry with a suspenseful undercurrent. Lines of Arabic writing across the screen look like barbed wire. A blurry image of an older woman, silhouetted against sunlight and appearing nude at times, is barely visible behind the text. An English-language voice-over reads letters that seem to be from mother to daughter. The words, difficult to ascertain, and probably hindered by the fact that the speakers were on the floor of the stall, float in and out like the images. The voice drones on about a terrible war that seems to go on forever, a nearby car bomb, and "feeling stripped naked to the soul" by having to leave the homeland. The somber parade of text and images is interrupted by a blank screen—reiterating the disjunction of distance and time between writer and receiver. *Measures of Distance* is based on interviews and photographs from 1981, in Beirut, six years after Hatoum, raised by Palestinian parents in exile, left home.

street level, capturing the sound of walking, distant voices, legs and feet of passersby, the sandbags, bunkers, field uniforms and boots of soldiers, and the fleet of yellow taxi vans waiting at this checkpoint near Birzeit University, for eight days in December 2001. The grim reality of cordoned off strips of no-man's land, where everyone is both suspicious and suspect, is etched into one's consciousness by even a few minutes of viewing. Despite its punishing two hour and ten minute length, *Crossing Surda* was included in the 2002 Whitney Biennial.

Another Clapping, from 2000, is a mother-daughter coming of age piece by **Chi-Jang Yin**. Unfolding in real-time, this film chronicles the tension between a Chinese woman both caught up in old social mores but enjoying her freedom far away from the husband who beat her, and a modern daughter struggling to prevent the erasure of her heritage. This documentary feels true—aided perhaps by its disjointed structure—providing both a candid picture of multicultural America and a compelling look at human resilience.

Venezuelan artist **Irene Sosa's** 1999 *Sexual Exiles* is a barrage of talking heads, sometimes difficult to understand, dealing with gay identity in both the

ing-out stories, and the footage of gay activist parades is dated and tedious.

The liveliest and most immediately accessible pieces were **Vinay Chowdry's** 1999 *Manhole* and **Zhang Huan's** *My New York*, which was also shown at the 2002 Whitney Biennial. The rhythmic chants and animated dance in *Manhole* are based on traditional Punjabi rituals. Chowdry has speeded up the action and transposed its focus to a cast iron manhole cover. The celebration takes place on a deserted street somewhere in the urban U.S., with the action moving backwards and forwards in a loop so that the cover is alternately stolen and returned. It becomes a quasi-humorous allegory about repatriation once we learn that such covers are made in India. By contrast, *My New York*, a film of the performance by Chinese artist Zhang Huan, now a U.S. resident, is symbol-laden and highly serious. Zhang was borne into the Whitney's courtyard on a curtained platform from which he emerged an exaggeratedly muscle-bound bodybuilder. With a white dove in his grasp, he strode barefoot into the crowd. "Dressed" in what turned out to be slabs of raw meat, Zhang walked out onto the streets of New York accompanied by a

NEW ORLEANS, LOUISIANA

By D. Eric Bookhardt

Never mind that many visual artists have also been musicians, and vice versa, art criticism has never allowed for very much common ground between them. Even so, inferential parallels and even some concrete connections gained prominence with the rise of modernism, starting with Kandinsky's