



## **NEWS RELEASE**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

June 21, 2006

Images available upon request.

Contact: Jill Katz  
Manager of Marketing &  
Communications  
(215) 573-9975/publicity@icaphila.org

### **Philadelphia Freedom! Join ICA For Its 4th Annual Summer Whenever Wednesday Tales from the 2-1-5: Stories, Slides and Serenades**

**July 19, 2005, 7pm, FREE with admission**

**Philadelphia, PA**—“Philadelphia Freedom” celebrates summer in the city with an outdoor evening on the terrace of art, stories, slides and serenades at the Institute of Contemporary Art. First the storytellers: featuring local raconteurs Shelley Spector, Kenneth Finkel, Nicole McEwan, Art Casciato and host Thomas Devaney will tell their own stories—stories of the underdog, the proud, the loyal, the real and gritty, as we celebrate the humor, heart, and the hard-core contradictions that make Philadelphia such a great and heartbreaking city. Learn the Mummer’s strut and enjoy a serenade from the Broad Street Mummies—costumes and all! This is followed by “Philadelphia Freedom,” a slide show by photographer Zoe Strauss which includes images of the overlooked details of life in this city. At dusk, a screening of *STRUT!* hailed as “the feel-good celebration of America we need” --- *STRUT!* spotlights the world of the Philadelphia Mummies and their annual parade. A special preview of the animated opera *The Loathly Lady* precedes the film. Join us for tales from the 2-1-5 on ICA’s outdoor terrace!

According to poet and host Thomas Devaney, “I couldn’t have had more fun searching for the storytellers. I love storytelling and as kid I loved to listen to my great Irish American father tell his fantastic stories that I never wanted to end. For this program I went around asking the people who I thought were the best storytellers to tell me the people who they thought were the best storytellers they knew, and I went from there. I was clear on one point: I wasn’t asking anyone to read something they wrote. This isn’t a poetry reading—or a reading at all—it’s simply listening to some great Philly people telling some amazing stories.” Our five storytellers will each have eight to ten minutes to tell their tales.

#### **Philadelphia Stories 1 Stories told by:**

**Shelley Spector** is an artist, gallerist, teacher and curator. She has been sculpting for nearly 20 years, carving and assembling quirky and colorful figures that evoke a joyous sense of play while exploring identity, memory, gender, and language. Her deli-man father and dance-teacher mother imparted to Spector a love of music, dance, community, and conviviality—all the pleasures of sense and sensibility. Born and raised in Northeast Philadelphia and a graduate of the city’s University of the Arts, Spector remains, at heart, a Philly homegirl—one with a view to the world and a gift for engaging universal themes with wit, warmth, and a delight in humanity. SPECTOR, the gallery she opened in 1999, showcases local and emerging artists, and has garnered local, national, and international acclaim. Spector lives in Philadelphia’s Bella Vista neighborhood—just blocks from her gallery and studio—with her family.

Institute of Contemporary Art  
University of Pennsylvania  
118 S. 36<sup>th</sup> St., Philadelphia, PA 19104-3289  
Tel 215.898.5911 Fax 215.898.5050  
www.icaphila.org

-MORE-

**Kenneth Finkel** has served as WHYY's Executive Director of Arts and Culture Service since February 2000. Previously, he worked as executive producer of seven national television productions, including the opening the Philadelphia's Kimmel Center and a documentary for the Benjamin Franklin Tercentenary. Finkel entered Philadelphia arts and culture in 1977, as curator of prints and photographs at The Library Company of Philadelphia. Major projects during that time include books, catalogues and exhibitions on 19th century photography, book illustration and the history of architecture. Finkel has contributed to a handful of books, including one on the sketchbooks of Joshua Rowley Watson and another on the photographs of William H. Rau. Between 1994 and 1999, Finkel was a Program Officer at the William Penn Foundation. He has also served on the Board of the Pennsylvania Humanities Council. He is on Temple University's adjunct faculty in American Studies.

**Nicole McEwan** gypsy'd her way through the neighborhoods of South Philly as a child. There she learned important defensive skills like how to give someone the high hat with authority. At 18, she fled to Center City where she worked in swanky restaurants and (eventually) got a degree in Film from Temple University. Her film reviews and interviews with the likes of Ang Lee, Robert Altman and David Cronenberg have appeared in *Philadelphia Weekly*, the *Ritz Filmbill*, New York's *Angelika Filmbill*, and the *San Jose Metro*. Today she lives in University City with her son Sam and rehabs houses in between scribbling notes for a book about the joys of being a landlady.

**Art Casciato** was born in 1950 on the bathroom floor of a transient hotel in what is now known as Queen Village. From there, after a stint with Catholic Social Services, he followed a typical western trajectory, from South Philadelphia (11th and Federal) to Southwest (58th and Thomas), finally ending up in Drexel Hill. Today, after two decades of wandering and exile, he is back where he belongs, living in West Philadelphia (45<sup>th</sup> and Spruce).

**Thomas Devaney** is poet, critic, and Penn Senior Writing Fellow in the English department at the University of Pennsylvania. In high school he played lead tenor sax in the awarding-winning Philadelphia All-City Jazz Band. During college he worked churning out cheese steaks and hoagies at Joe's Deli in North East Philadelphia and made extra money playing music for several fancy brigades in the Mummer's parades. Devaney received a B.A. from Temple University in the early '90s where he first met many of the Philly Sound poets. Devaney moved to New York City for five years where he received his M.F.A. in Creative Writing at Brooklyn College and was a student of the poet Allen Ginsberg. In 2001 he returned to Philadelphia to join the Kelly Writers House for four years as program coordinator and producer of the monthly radio program "Live at the Writers House," on WXPB.

## Philadelphia Freedom

Philadelphia photographer **Zoe Strauss** (b. 1970, Philadelphia) whose images are currently on view in ICA's Ramp in her first solo museum exhibition, presents her slideshow "Philadelphia Freedom." Strauss, a self-taught photographer, has been described as the chronicler of Philadelphia's mean streets and the town's own Robert Frank. Armed with her Nikon d70, she captures the irony, honesty and joy in corner stores, signs, billboards, the industrial landscape, people living in her South Philadelphia neighborhood and, most recently, the devastation left in Katrina's wake in Biloxi, Mississippi. She is the first member of her working-class family to graduate high school and although always interested in photography, it was not until she received a camera for her 30th birthday did her career begin.

For the past five years Strauss has been committed to a 10-year project she calls the Philadelphia Public Art Project (PAP), a photo archive that will document the people and neighborhoods of her native city creating photographs that find beauty in the forgotten and overlooked. Strauss's photographs are in the collection of the Philadelphia Museum of Art and most recently she was invited to participate in the 2006 Whitney Biennial, the only artist from Philadelphia.

## ***The Loathly Lady***

Wendy Steiner will present her pilot film of *The Loathly Lady*, the first animated opera, with score by Paul Richards, visuals by ICA-featured artist John Kindness, animation development by University of Pennsylvania's Joshua Mosley, and performances by early-music virtuosos.

Dr. Wendy Steiner is the Richard L. Fisher Professor of English and Founding Director of the Penn Humanities Forum at the University of Pennsylvania. A graduate of McGill University who took her M.A. and Ph.D. from Yale, Dr. Steiner is a world-class scholar whose work is also well known to the general public. Her book "The Scandal of Pleasure: Art in an Age of Fundamentalism" was on the New York Times list of "100 Best Books of 1996." She is widely published in the scholarly and general press, with over 150 articles and reviews on books, painting, architecture, and general culture.

## ***STRUT!***

From the folks who brought you the Declaration of Independence -- hailed as "the feel-good celebration of America we need" --- *STRUT!* (runtime: 68 minutes) spotlights the world of the Philadelphia Mummers and their annual parade. For fourteen hours each New Year's Day, electricians, longshoremen, plumbers, cops, and other working class wizards transform the city of brotherly love into the world capital of surrealism.

The human counterpart to the Liberty Bell? Heroic, iconic, and just a teeny bit cracked -- the Mummers are quintessentially American in their boundless celebration of life, liberty, and the pursuit of joy. Those meeting them for the first time will recognize of our collective national character and the principles we hold so dear.

From the parade's pre-colonial historic roots and evolutionary contributions of European and African Cultures, to the Vaudeville slapstick routines and 4-minute, fully choreographed Broadway shows, to the extraordinary inclusiveness and tolerance of everyone except the competition -- the Mummers capture the pride, passion, and pure soul of the country. Broader themes resonate. The power of multi-generational family bonds and resolute fraternity-- the lessons of the immigrant experience and blurred social boundaries -- the liberating abandon and shameless extravagance of self-expression.

Shot with no script and a point of view that shifts easily from moment to moment, the colorful, ebullient tale is told through revealing interviews, new and vintage newsreel footage, dazzling still photos, and glorious music. The result is a documentary that is at once personal and epic, unique and universal, touching and funny. For more information go to [www.strutthemovie.com/synopsis](http://www.strutthemovie.com/synopsis).

ICA is grateful for support provided by The Horace W. Goldsmith Foundation, the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania Council on the Arts, The Dietrich Foundation Inc., the Overseers Board for the Institute of Contemporary Art, friends and members of ICA, and the University of Pennsylvania. (Information complete as of 6/12/06.)

**Program subject to change. Please visit the ICA website, [www.icaphila.org](http://www.icaphila.org), for more information on programs and current exhibitions.**

ICA is located at 118 South 36<sup>th</sup> Street at the University of Pennsylvania. ICA is open to the public, except during installation, from 12:00pm to 8:00pm on Wednesday through Friday and from 11:00am to 5:00pm on Saturday and Sunday. Admission is \$6 for adults; \$3 for students over 12, artists, and senior citizens; and free to ICA members, children 12 and under, PENN card holders, and on Sundays from 11:00am to 1:00pm. For more information, call 215-898-7108/5911, or visit [www.icaphila.org](http://www.icaphila.org).

### Institute of Contemporary Art

Founded in 1963, the Institute of Contemporary Art at the University of Pennsylvania is a leader in the presentation and documentation of contemporary art. Through exhibitions, commissions, educational programs, and publications, ICA invites the public to share in the experience, interpretation and understanding of the work of established and emerging artists.