

# The search for culture in

by Yvonne I

Q: Where did the Aggie go to find culture?

A: The yogurt aisle at Skaggs-Alpha Beta.

Just a few years ago, that might have been the truth. But things have changed at Texas A&M recently.

Today the answer is more likely to be an art exhibit, a symphony or a performance by a local theater troupe.

Bryan-College Station has been accused of being a "cultural black hole" by a regular writer for this publication whose initials are K.P., but most students seem a little more optimistic about the local scene.

(Some physics majors argue that black holes are a bit crowded. "Cultural void" would be a more appropriate insult, they say.)

Students seem to understand that because of its small size, Bryan-College Station can't begin to compete with the fun-at-every-turn atmosphere of Texas' larger cities. They say they appreciate the cultural attractions the University brings.

Claudio Carrasco, a microbiology major from Chile, says local culture exists, but it's hard to find.

"You have to look for it," he says. "It's not like it's going to come looking for you."

Carrasco says the area provides "the basic cultural needs," but he doesn't think any trends are going to be set here.

Basic cultural needs are hard to pin down. Unlike the four basic food groups and the U.S. Recommended Daily Allowances, each person's cultural needs are different.

In fact, culture, like Snickers bars, can be sliced a lot of ways. But — dare I say it — in Bryan-College Station it doesn't always come up peanuts.

Locally, you can find culture, counter-culture and even over-the-counter culture. Or slice it another way to find painting, sculpture, music, theater, food, movies and museums. If you rotate your knife 90 degrees, you'll find planned cultural events and accidental culture.

Different slices of culture interest different students. This is part of what makes culture interesting.

Bruce Hartweg, a geophysics major, says he's tolerant of different kinds of culture.

"To the right society, roller derby is culture," he says. "But to some people it's crass, not culture."

If roller derby isn't your set of wheels, maybe one of these culture slices will please you.

## Going Through a Stage

Attendance figures at dramatic performances in Bryan-College Station indicate that the efforts of a community theater group and two campus groups are appreciated.

The number of season subscriptions to The Aggie Players' productions has increased from 100 to 500 in five years, Theater Arts Manager Mike Miller says.

The Aggie Players, a part of Texas A&M's speech communication and theater arts department, is currently working on a production of the Greek tragedy, "Medea." The play will open Feb. 18. Later this semester, the group will present "Picnic."

The Aggie Players will also sponsor a Spring Semester of Shakespeare for the second time. In addition to several performances by members of the Royal Shakespeare Company, the series will include a lecture or a film on each Wednesday evening.

MSC Town Hall Broadway is another student-run theater group. It brings road shows of plays and musicals to A&M. The big advantage here is that the price is much lower than you would pay in New York City.

Appropriately, "Romeo and Juliet" will be performed on Valentine's Day this semester. "Can Can" and "Windom Plays Thurber" are the other events the group has scheduled this semester.

The community theater group in the area is StageCenter. Although the group currently has no permanent performance space, it produces five or six plays each year.

The classic tale of Sherlock Holmes, "The Hound of the Baskervilles" is in rehearsal for its Feb. 26 debut at the Aggieland Hotel. "Auntie Mame" and "A Streetcar Named Desire" are scheduled for later this year.

Some of the world's great art exists on celluloid. Students may attend the movies shown in Dr. Larry Hickman's Philosophy of Visual Media class by paying \$15 per semester. The Thursday night line-up this semester includes films by acclaimed directors Sergi Eisenstein and Ingmar Bergman.

MSC Aggie Cinema also has a Tuesday evening international film series.

## Framed and Hung

The sculptures by Texan artists on display in the center of campus this semester are not the only example of fine arts to be found in the area.

Students who spend most of their time on campus can find plenty of art within walking distance. "Five Centuries of Italian Painting: 1300-1800" is on display in Rudder Exhibit

Hall. Woven hangings can be found in the Horticulture Forestry Sciences Building. Other buildings that house exhibits regularly are the Langford Architecture Center and the Medical Sciences Building.

Nearby, an art gallery inside the Brazos Landing restaurant at Northgate is unexpected but appreciated. A mural along one wall was painted by local artists Ken and Gary Manthei. Paintings by Ken Manthei and photographs by Mike Parker adorn the walls of the seafood restaurant and bar.

Co-owner Hugh Sterns says he wants to provide a different atmosphere for student gatherings at Northgate. With live jazz and blues on weekends, it's hard to decide whether to file Brazos Landing under classy food, live music or fine arts.

Farther from campus is the Brazos Center. Largely unknown to A&M students, the center houses the Brazos Valley Museum and several showcases.

## Eat to the Beat

A broad range of musical tastes can be fed in Bryan-College Station, but sometimes students with eclectic tastes find tantalizing morsels, but no real nourishment.

In this area, especially, it is obvious that Bryan-College Station is no booming metropolis.

Otto Cordray, a senior environmental design major who has a weekly shift as a disc jockey for cable radio station KANM, says he wishes he could find some of the trappings of Austin here.

"What this town needs is a real record store," he says.

Classical music needs are usually met by the Opera and

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