

Bernstein Gallery

Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs

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For Immediate Release

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Image: Comic book page from: *The Death of Black mane and the Feared Self*

The Bernstein Gallery is pleased to present “*Looking at the Sequential Dialetic*”, several pages from Michael LaRiccia's upcoming graphic novel, *The Death of Black Mane and the Feared Self*. The exhibition runs from February 25 through April 4, 2008 with a reception on February 29 from 6 to 8 p.m. to which the public is invited. Gallery hours are 9 to 5 p.m., Monday through Friday.

LaRiccia's graphic novel follows three characters who find themselves trapped in situations from which they desperately want to escape. These individuals wrestle with the reality of how much control they truly have in their lives. The graphic novel chronicles these characters while critically examining themes of masculinity and identity. These themes are explored through a mosaic graphic language that can be both humorous and somber. Original comic book pages will be exhibited as well as the book sized pages showcasing the digital enhancements and lettering.

LaRiccia's work utilizes the narrative to analyze and dissect life's challenges. Through sequential art (comic book art) he is able to give the viewer a front row seat to his observations, thoughts, and concerns using his own distinct voice. Pressing social concerns can be found throughout his work which LaRiccia states is the fundamental objective, "Contributing to social change is the reason I continue to work as an artist. It drives the content of my work and gives me a sense of purpose."

Michael LaRiccia, a native of Massachusetts currently residing in Princeton, earned a Bachelors Degree in Fine Art at the University of Massachusetts in 2001, and a Masters Degree in Fine Art at Southern Illinois University Edwardsville, 2005. His concentration for both degrees was printmaking where he studied the principals of the printing process and gained an appreciation for mass production. "Printmaking was a good fit for me as an artist because I enjoyed shifting between conceptual thinking and craft," LaRiccia states.

In his final year of graduate school, LaRiccia decided to pursue a project of which he had long dreamed: an original graphic novel incorporating himself as the main character. In December 2004 he was awarded the prestigious Xeric grant, the only comic book self-publishing grant in America, to print his first book *Black Mane*. LaRiccia says the Xeric Grant "gives you confidence, opportunities, and street credibility in the indie comics scene. People take notice

when you get it. Without it I don't know if I could have made the jump into publishing the way I did." *Black Mane* was distributed nationally and helped established a foot hold for LaRiccia in the Indie Comics scene resulting in numerous reviews, interviews, and collaborations. While currently working on his second book LaRiccia has been creating children's book illustrations (Harvey's woods: The Royal Adventures), web-comics, anthology stories, and theater posters for the Steven Allen Theater. He currently works for the **Arts Council of Princeton** as the Program and Public Relations Manager. This semester he is also teaching a class titled, **Cartoon Monster Jamboree**.

More work and information can be found at www.michaellariccia.com

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