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New Times Broward, Palm Beach October 19, 2000

"Media Lounge" curated by Michael Rush, Palm Beach ICA

New-Media Message

The Media Lounge

BY JOHN FERRI

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A naked woman with bright blue hair enters a long, narrow room from a doorway on the left. She crawls laboriously on her hands and knees over to what appear to be shiny red jewels scattered about on the splintered wood floor. The mystery stuff turns out to be Jell-O, which she licks and slurps right off the floor, an image both erotic and grotesque. Then she lets blobs of goo plop back onto the floor, trailing thick strings of saliva. All the while a woman's ethereal voice chants an unintelligible mantra over a minimalist electronic backbeat.

This bizarre scene plays out in sleepy downtown Lake Worth, of all places. But it's not a peep show held in some seedy backroom for lecherous voyeurs. Rather it's New York City artist Michelle Handelman's experimental video *Candyland*, one of the first pieces of new-media art on view in the Palm Beach Institute of Contemporary Art's recently opened **Media Lounge**. The spare, 12-foot-by-33-foot room is a permanent showcase for new-media works, the first of its kind in South Florida, according to institute director Michael Rush.

He explains that many of the first new-media artists came of age during the 1950s and were influenced by the advent of TV; they began producing video art in the 1960s. New-media art also encompasses digital art and photography, virtual reality experiences, performance art with video or film, and installations that react to sensors activated by viewers. By next month, even next week, who knows what else the genre will entail?

Candyland cycles through a loop on one of three video monitors mounted on the wall opposite the entrance of the modern lounge



Candyland features sensuous slurping

Details

The Media Lounge

Details: Admission prices range from \$3 to \$5. Hours are Tuesday through Sunday noon to 6 p.m. and the first and third Friday of every month to 9 p.m. Call 561-582-0006.

Where: Palm Beach Institute of Contemporary Art, 601 Lake Ave., Lake Worth

space. Two tubular-steel-framed couches with overstuffed red fabric stand out vividly in the stark, white room, directly across from the screens; six sets of headphones dangle from wiring above the couches. To the left of the monitors, an L-shape wooden counter with cubbyholes mounted above it occupies a corner. The cubbies hold art books and magazines, and by December the counter will support several computers for trolling art-related Websites.

"Media is kind of my thing," says the unassuming Rush, author of this year's *New Media in Late 20th-Century Art*. The filmmaker, critic, and arts administrator was among the first to mount exhibitions of new-media in the '80s, but that doesn't mean he's into displaying newfangled art exclusively. It's no coincidence that the Media Lounge opened in conjunction with the institute's latest show, a collection of vintage photography entitled "The Social Scene."

"It's a nice juxtaposition, a nice progression," Rush offers, "the progress of the last century from the still to the moving image."

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