

Arts Beat

Knit One,
Swirls Too

Two New Series Are Providing
An Outlet for Local Performance Artists

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It was standing room only Saturday night at Transformer for the debut of the gallery's "Touch & Go" performance art series. Then again, with about 25 people inside the tiny P Street storefront, there was little choice but to stand if dancer Ginger Wagg was to have any space at all for "Spill"—which combined two hours of her improvised movement with other artists' lighting design, sound installation, live clarinet and a rather substantial piece of crocheted balloon sculpture.

Yes, crocheted balloon sculpture. You can't see that every day. And you don't see concentrated and coordinated performance art series in Washington all that often, either.

"[Performance art] is an exciting discipline," says Victoria Reis, co-director of Transformer, which focuses on emerging artists. "We're always trying to be diverse in what we present."

There were 1,300 skinny white balloons, cascading from skylight to wall to front window in a tubular, kind of intestinal shape. Agata Olek, the New York artist who created the sculpture for "Spill," explained that crochet is a natural technique for her because she's Polish and "everyone crochets in Poland." And while she's never used balloons before, she was inspired to try them for this installation because she's been picking up clown gigs for kids' birthday parties.

"It's fun," said Brent Baumgartner, 31, taking in the scene—as many chose to do—from the sidewalk. "It's different than hanging pictures on a wall. It's more interactive."

Saturday's event launched two series: "Touch & Go" at Trans-

former as well as "In Site," a three-part experimental performance series at other venues in Washington.

Visual elements of "Spill," including video of Wagg's performance, can be viewed through Feb. 19. Baltimore's Cindy Rehm will continue the "Touch & Go" series on Feb. 25 with "Echo," which features documentation of performance art reenactments—including notable works by Yoko Ono, Ana Mendieta and Takehisa Kosugi—that Rehm completed last year. On the 25th, Rehm also will perform a new, original work, "Mirror," addressing female body image issues. The "Echo" exhibition will remain through March 5.

"Touch & Go" concludes March 12-19 with "Sacred Chores," a residency by Marcus Kuiland-Nazario of Los Angeles featuring community workshops where he will develop a new performance piece. Kuiland-Nazario will introduce himself on March 12 with "Sacred Chore #1 (Grandma Judy)," involving two hours of ironing clothes and talking about his grandmother.

"We definitely give artists a wide berth," Reis says.

"In Site," led by Wagg and Jane Jerardi, another local dancer, returns next month with "Listen" at Revolution Records on March 19. The band Aquarium will perform, while film screenings and dance performances are held in the shop's listening booths. Small artworks will be shown in the display racks, and a "performance typist"



PHOTOS BY LAUREN VICTORIA BURDE FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

Performance artist Ginger Wagg draws a crowd at Transformer last Saturday, part of the gallery's "Touch & Go" series that also featured Agata Olek's crocheted balloon sculpture, below.



motivated by a desire to explore alternative performance venues and to encourage increased artistic collaboration across disciplines. Enlivening Washington's cultural scene has also been a driving force, adds Jerardi.

"Maybe [this series] is not that radical in another context," she says, "but it feels very different than what's going on here."

Touch & Go at Transformer, 1404 P St. NW, through March 19. Free. For information on exhibition hours, performances and artist talks, call 202-483-1102 or visit www.transformergallery.org. **In Site** continues with "Listen" at Revolution Records, 4215 Connecticut Ave. NW, March 19 at 8:30 p.m. Pay-what-you-can. Followed by "Crave" at Warehouse Next Door, 1017 Seventh St. NW, April 30 and May 1 at 8 p.m. \$10. Contact orchidelirium@hotmail.com.

will create poetry for attendees.

"In Site's" final installment, "Crave," will be held April 30 and May 1 at Warehouse Next Door. Wagg and Jerardi promise a "high art" variety show format with a mix of music, theater and dance.

Wagg says "In Site" has been