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**OCTOBER 11-15, 2011** San Francisco LGBT Community Center  
 1800 Market Street at Octavia

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# Season to taste: art, altars & activism

Out There

by Roberto Friedman

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"Openings," a sculpture by Doyle Johnson, part of SF Open Studios. (Photo: Courtesy of the artist)

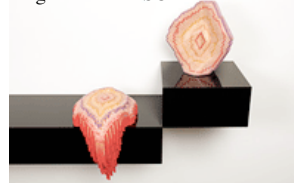
The arts season has started in earnest, fellow culture consumers! Since putting the paper to bed last week, Out There has attended premieres both musical (**Thomas Ades' Polaris**, with the **San Francisco Symphony**), theatrical (*Once in a Lifetime* at ACT) and art-world. The sculpture pictured here, "Openings," is a work by queer activist artist **Doyle Johnson**, who is based in the Castro and participating in SF Open Studios (citywide, through the month) this year.

In *The World of the Surface* at Frey Norris Contemporary & Modern in downtown SF, Australian artist **Lionel Bawden** shows works that "explore flux, transformation and repetition." Bawden's art practice uses hexagonal colored Staedtler pencils as a sculptural material, reconfigured and carved into amorphous shapes, making the pencils' rich qualities of color work in new ways. The opening reception last Saturday night was well-attended and abuzz (161 Jessie St., SF), and the sculptures made of pencils really pop.

Over at the SOMArts Cultural Center, its 12th annual Day of the Dead exhibit, *Illuminations: Dia de los Muertos 2011*, opens tomorrow evening, Fri., Oct. 7. Drawing on the Mexican tradition of creating Day of the Dead altars, the show, like so much else in the Bay Area, is truly a multicultural affair. More than 80 Bay Area artists contribute, including some out gay artists. Through Nov. 5 (934 Brannan St., SF), bring it on.

It's a little bit later on, but we're looking forward to SOMArts' next exhibit, *Man as Object*:

*Reversing the Gaze*, described as "women artists opening new possibilities for the gaze through an examination of gender, society and the politics of exposure," coming up Nov. 4-30. The release says it's "a traveling survey of 117 artworks which place the male form in a position of objecthood, and reverse conventional hierarchies in the culture of display. The exhibition includes an extensive collection of male adoration, male impersonation and male appendages, as well as works which probe contemporary expressions of feminism." Accompanying events include an opening reception with performance, a peep-show drawing circle, a screening of historic feminist film *Fuses* by **Carolee Schneemann**, and a featured-artists panel with feminist-art pioneers and transdisciplinary artists Schneemann and **Annie Sprinkle**. *Wowsa*.



"The World of the Surface," a sculpture by Lionel Bawden, now showing at Frey Norris Contemporary & Modern. (Photo: Craig Bender)

Gay Christian author **Keith Sharpe** challenges ignorance and prejudice

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about LGBT people in his new book, *The Gay Gospels*, in which he stands against the "clobber texts" which condemn gay people, and argues that gay lives are in fact validated in the Bible. Sharpe gives a book signing and talk tonight, Thurs., Oct. 6, 7 p.m. at St. Mark's Lutheran Church in SF ([www.stmarks-sf.org](http://www.stmarks-sf.org)). Tomorrow, Fri., Oct. 7, he signs books, beginning at 12:30 p.m., at Alexander Book Co. in SF ([www.alexanderbook.com](http://www.alexanderbook.com)). Then Sharpe offers a talk on "The Biblical Evidence that Jesus Was Gay" at the San Francisco LGBT Community Center ([www.sfcenter.org](http://www.sfcenter.org)) on Sat., Oct. 8, at 11 a.m. Rise and shine!

OT's day covering the cultural beat does not end at sundown. Last Monday night found us chilling with the worthies of the northern CA chapter of the National Lesbian & Gay Journalists Assn. (NLGJA) at their Fall Honors, at Orson. The laurels were bestowed upon KQED *Forum* host Michael Krasny and the online Bay Citizen. Tuesday night we mingled with vips from the Napa Valley Wine Train and Flora Springs Winery at the Hyatt Regency as the glam hotel launched their Hyatt Culture Club. Culture culture that we are, we fit right in.

### 'Half' hearted

Why gay humorist David Rakoff (*Fraud, Don't Get Too Comfortable*) falls somewhere on the spectrum between wry gay humorist David Sedaris and wry, gay? humorist Fran Lebowitz. Notwithstanding that he was born Canadian, Rakoff is a Manhattanite by choice and nature, and in the essays of *Half Empty* (in paperback newly out from Anchor Books), he brings his gelid eye and acerbic wit to bear on the NYC media world and many others.

Here's Rakoff on taking a meeting with some self-appointed barons of the new media: "What makes a story really good and *Webby*," said one, "is, say, we post an item on David Geffen on a Monday, and then one of Geffen's people calls us to correct it, we can have a whole new version up by Tuesday." This was typical Dawn of the New Millennium denigration of print, which always seemed to lead to the faulty logic that it was not just the delivery system that was outmoded but such underlying practices as authoritative voice and credibility, fact-checking, editing, and impartiality that needed throwing out, too."

Visiting San Lake City, Rakoff is privy to the hearsay that "there is a higher-than-average incidence of homosexuality among Mormon men. (This tidbit was always accompanied by a hyperlink to a calendar of shirtless missionaries and, like many theories in the 'Who's gay?' phylum, almost invariably followed up with the super-scientific assessment that 'Mormon boys are the hottest!')

Covering NYC's first Exotic Erotic Ball and Expo, he is shocked and appalled to discover that there is only one gay exhibitor at the porn-industry trade show, and it is "Lucas Entertainment, the porn studio owned and operated by Russian impresario Michael Lucas. Lucas is the Sergei Diaghilev of gay erotica, known for his high production values and array of impossibly perfect men." Richard, the studio's national distribution manager, "has been a lone presence and a figure of derision since his arrival, when the guys working security called him a faggot. 'This is New York City. It's not Utah, for God's sake. I almost jumped over the table to kick somebody's ass,' he says."

Rakoff contributes to NPR's *This American Life*, has fleeting appearances in the movies *Capote* and *Strangers with Candy*, and adapted and starred in Joachim Beck's film *The New Tenants*, which won the 2010 Oscar for Best Live Action Short. It's tribute to his fearlessness as a writer that the final essay in the collection, "Another Shoe," does not riff on Mormons or adult-industry capitalists, but takes us through his confrontation with life-threatening illness, not once but twice, and looks mortality squarely in the eye. Yet there's nothing morbid or sentimental in his reflections, and in fact they are funny – not slapstick funny, but ironic funny, rueful funny, ain't-that-how-life-is funny. More power and many more years to David Rakoff.

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