

BELLY

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# COVER



REINCARNATING  
THE DRAGON

JASON  
SCOTT  
LEE

INTERVIEWED BY  
GERARD HAGGERTY

## ART

Nam June Paik  
Michelle Sedaka  
Don Perlis

## MUSIC

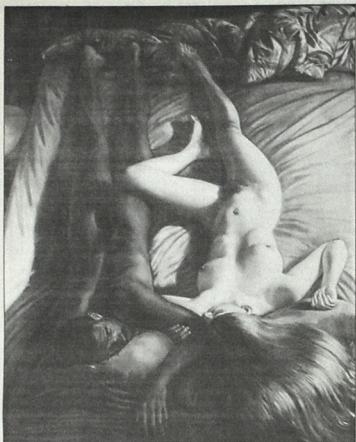
Henry Rollins  
D'Influence  
Radio Free NY

## FILM

Kate Beckinsale  
Geoffrey Wright

## POETRY

Allen Ginsberg



Don Perlis Sleepers 78x68"

## MODERN MYTHS

The truism that history is news that stays news implies an editorial: sometimes today's news engenders tomorrow's mythology. After all, once there was a Trojan War, and prototypical vampires existed in life before they became the stuff of legend. Because Don Perlis understands that a myth is history writ large, he chose a 16 1/2-foot-long triptych to chronicle the saga of Bernard Goetz.

Prior to being reinvented in *Falling Down*, there was a real Bernard Goetz. Of course Goetz is a special case, an entirely unglamorous man who was ill-suited to any heroic role, performing acts that seem less than brave, and more like the darkest fulfilled wishes of Walter Mitty. In lieu of epic adventures, Goetz' tale bespeaks misadventures of epic proportions. Perhaps this is why his story serves as an especially telling paradigm for our times.

Perlis' version of Goetz' misbegotten tale begins with a scene that sadly typifies today's city life. A *Beggar* who gives the triptych's left panel its title pauses as one subway rider drops a coin into his styrofoam cup. Other passengers practice that look of deliberate disregard that is known in both conveniences and prisons as "the privacy of eyes." Perlis recognizes that the triptych is a time-honored symmetrical form that was designed to contain extreme passions. In the far right panel, a group of *Spectators* roused from their urban torpor stare and point at the drama that unfolds on center stage.

The central panel records the *Incident* of carnage that sparked the spectators' attention and ignited months of incendiary headlines. An anonymous figure who would later identify himself as the mild-mannered subway vigilante named

Bernard Goetz flees out the tilted train's rear door. Over the killer's hunched right shoulder we see a "Crime Stopper" poster sporting a photo of the Lone Ranger. Beneath this image of the familiar Masked Man, a bespectacled gray passenger who resembles the wounded nurse in Eisenstein's film *Potemkin* screams at what she beholds. Left in Goetz' bloody wake are a trio of victims who sought to be his victimizers.

The city also has its exuberant moments, even in the subways. Witness Perlis' 6'x8" *Leaper*. This oil on linen depicts an airborne black youth vaulting over a turnstile, to the delight of a half-dozen passengers who watch the event from the subway car that is his goal. The suspended moment simultaneously evokes the ballistic spirit of Nijinsky and the athletic prowess of the Ninja; it seems as old as the fleet-footed god Mercury and as fresh as the graffiti on the A train.

Like the event it represents, the painting's composition is risky. The jumper's long limbs extend out to the four corners of Perlis' big canvas. To counterpoint the figure's flight leftward, the perspectival vanishing point races off the canvas to the right. The dramatic action takes place "in the immediate foreground," as aesthetes are wont to proclaim in critical discourse. Because the frame serves as an equivalent for our visual field, the action also takes place "in your face," as folks say on the streets of New York. *Leaper* embodies an occasion where artistic form and real-life experience enrich each other. Like the amazed onlookers in the waiting train, gallery-goers who look at *Leaper* are enticed to smile in appreciation of the artist's daring moves.

Gerard Haggerty

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MELISSA GWEN MILLER  
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## VINCENT LONGO

PAINTINGS

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## THEIR ARTISTIC RELATIONSHIPS

C o u p l e s   I n   A r t

SHOW DATES: APRIL 20 - MAY 22, 1993

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