

Experimental media

by Elizabeth Johnston

It's true that "the media" is synonymous with information overload—the constant barrage of current event tickers, fast action fast-food commercials, and non-stop Blair Waldorf outfit changes that leaves the mind numb. Media artists, however, push beyond the news clip—and thanks to the Washington Project for the Arts, media with an innovative purpose is alive in the Capitol.

Tonight at 8:00 p.m., the Hirshhorn Museum will host the WPA's fifth annual Experimental Media Series. The free, public screening of video and sound art culls works from over 150 international entries and represents the cutting edge of electronic media art.

"The Experimental Media Series is part of the fabric of new media venues in the D.C. area," Adam

Griffiths, WPA coordinator of the Series for the past two years, said. "Media is flourishing because multimedia is an omnipresent aspect of daily life—artists have been doing extraordinary things with video and sound and their work needs to be included within any central discussion of contemporary art."

Jonathan Monaghan, a University of Maryland student, received the WPA Experimental Media Prize for his video piece entitled *French Penguin*, a two and a half minute film juxtaposing images of Gothic architecture with the natural characteristics of the emperor penguin. "I hope by doing this, the viewer can question his or her relationship between nature and technology," Monaghan said.

With 3-D animation software, Monaghan constructs an intricate and vivid cinematic journey. "I had to create everything," Monaghan

said, "all of the details. Everything is this virtual space."

Other pieces chosen for the screening include five works of sound art and six student works.

Art in the form of sound and video media has been gaining momentum in conjunction with the popularity of outlets like YouTube.

"Only recently with the decentralization of television and radio and the proliferation of the internet do I think a critical mass of people are really beginning to seek out media that does not subscribe to the conventions of the entertainment industry," Griffiths said.

"To include the impressions of artists who have taken the tools of video and sound and turned them every which way just reflects what we have always been doing with media. And when artists set up that kind of mirror to the society as a whole, it is always special."



Courtesy WASHINGTON PROJECT FOR THE ARTS

Jessica Westbrook's *Product Placement* shows as part of the Experimental Media Series tonight at the Hirshhorn.