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TOP TEN

## Amy Yao



Amy Yao is an artist based in New York and Phoenix and a former member of the '90s teen punk band Emilys Sassy Lime (ESL). Included in MOMA PS1's "Greater New York" 2010, she staged a solo show in December at New Jersey in Basel and is currently working on projects for JF+Sons and New York's Audio Visual Arts that will take place this spring.



Flyer for July 25 Ding-a-Ling party, Los Angeles, designed by John Webster Johns, 2009. Detail from a 19th-century Japanese scroll depicting the use of *fūryūgasa*. Photo by Maeda Iikutoku Kai Foundation.



### 1 CLUB SCREWBALL (AKA CLUB DING-A-LING OR CLUB WOW!), LOS ANGELES

The underground music scene in Los Angeles has always been a glamour-gone-awry kind of affair, where subjective experience is worn as fashion; where attendees roll up wheelchair-bound dressed as pirates or maybe a Russian doll. Twisted, bizarre, and radical, one of the best parties is Club Screwball, hosted by Prickle, DJ Jimi Hey, and MC Kitten Sparkles (Don Bolles of the Germs). Here indie rockers, cross-dressers, and gangsters mingle to the sounds of who-knows-what—children's music that should probably be illegal?—occasionally accompanied by a live act.

### 2 HAROLD & KUMAR MOVIES

To speak of Harold and Kumar is to speak of myself (WTF?): It's just that their combo of slacker, smart, funny, nerdy, and cool gets the Asian-American experience so right, at least compared with the sad "peanut butter pie" Asian Americans of *The Joy Luck Club*. Rather than become doctors, in the face of racial profiling, stereotypes, and parental pressure, H & K opt to be fun-loving stoners. In these movies, immigrants are not just the exotic other—the subject of something other people vote on—they are like me (JK!).

### 3 FŪRYŪGASA

An art of medieval Japan, *fūryūgasa* is a decorative form in which umbrellas are embellished with exquisitely rendered landscapes, scenes from famous narratives, floral arrangements said to inspire the writing of poems (*suhama*), and objects inspired by them. While the current incarnations of *fūryūgasa* are plain, featuring ubiquitous artificial flowers, in older versions the ornament was sculptural and always elaborate, richly demonstrating the reception and transmission of poetry and literature.

### 4 PUBLIC BROADCASTING SERVICE (PBS)

Like an educational treasure trove, PBS is rich with information and ideas. Some of my favorite shows include *Charlie Rose*, *Nova*, *Scientific American Frontiers*, *Nature*, and the episode of *Antiques Roadshow* that featured a belle époque rug made from the fur of several exotic cats. This is the station that raised us; as Grover says, "What is in your hand? Back at me. I have it. It is a clam with two tickets to the thing you love . . . on my nose!"

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**5 THE BARONESS ELSA VON FREYTAG-LORINGHOVEN (1874–1927)** Feared and admired, the Baroness launched the bravest critiques of modernist masters with simple poems, and her sculpture was as elegant as it was defiant and witty—one work, titled *God*, ca. 1917, was made from a miter box and drainpipe; another, a portrait of Duchamp, little more than a wineglass and a feather.

**6 LIL B, RAIN IN ENGLAND (WEIRD FOREST, 2010)** Although Lil B hails from the Bay Area—a region often overlooked by mainstream rap (even as it's given us such OGs as Too Short, Rappin' 4-Tay, and E-40)—it was my Swiss friend Jan Vorisek who introduced me to him. B's latest record is groundbreaking. It has a new agey sound that reminds me of Simon Fisher Turner, it pays respect to women, and it considers the state of the planet. Favorite quote? "Doesn't mean you're depressed, you're just different . . . Earth."

**7 HUMBOLDT SQUID AND BROADCLUB CUTTLEFISH** Massive yet incredibly fast, the predatory Humboldt squid (dubbed *diablo rojo*) "speaks" by rapidly changing the tone of its red skin. But with three hearts and razor-sharp teeth, the species is as terrifying as it is fascinating. So when one enthusiast recently plunged into infested waters with a night-vision system resembling a set of glorified Christmas lights, local fishermen thought he was out of his mind. Equally remarkable, the broadclub cuttlefish emits light to mesmerize its prey with a flicker show, seconds before shooting out an inner tentacle at lightning speed and grabbing its crustacean du jour for dinner.

**8 THE TRONICS/LES ZARJAZ** In the late 1970s, at the age of sixteen, Zarjaz began writing sensitively simple, intimate, and unique pop songs with his group the Tronics (e.g., "TV On in Bed"). In the years since, as a lifelong conduit for the supernatural, he has produced some of the finest, most eccentric, and most beautiful music I've ever heard. He speaks of bizarre personal experiences: being chronically haunted by a woman's singing voice, working as a miner somewhere in Eastern Europe, and, as a child in the hospital, being surrounded by Hells Angels teaching him to swear. Zarjaz is a wizard. He also invented the term *baroquabilly* and made Creation Records' worst-selling release.

**9 RICK SCHMIDT, EMERALD CITIES (1983) AND 1988: THE REMAKE (1977)** Ted Falconi (guitarist for Flipper) in a convertible with Santa Claus eating psychedelic mushrooms and baloney sandwiches?! Rick Schmidt's film *Emerald Cities* is a lost classic that combines fiction and documentary to produce the ultimate absurdist mix of Bay Area best-ofs. In another favorite, *1988: The Remake*, Schmidt held an open-call audition for his restaging of the musical *Show Boat*, resulting in something like a crackpot San Francisco talent show. Sued by MGM for titling his film after theirs and required to remove all mentions of the name, Schmidt replaced every utterance of *showboat* with the sound of a foghorn, which of course only made the movie funnier.

**10 KAIKIK WONG (1950–1990)** This Chinese-American fashion pioneer dressed the likes of the Cockettes and soul singer Betty Davis. He made *artwear*, and it celebrated the multiculti through decadence, opulence, myth, and fantasy. In my opinion, his best pieces are the ones that make you look like a cuttlefish. □



Above: Humboldt squid and diver, Gulf of California, Mexico. Photo: Brian Skerry/National Geographic Society. Left: Merle Bulato wearing a look by Kaisik Wong, 1974. Photo: Kaisik Wong. Below: Ed Nylund (Santa) and Dick Richardson (wearing Billy Hiebert's *Martian Mask*, 1979) on the set of Rick Schmidt's *Emerald Cities*, 1982, Point Richmond, CA.

