

MODERN PAINTERS

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ART & WAR FIVE YEARS ON

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AUSTIN, TX

FRITZ HAEG

ARTHOUSE

The Los Angeles-based Fritz Haeg's successful transformation of Arthouse into a lush gardening community center for his recent show, "Attack on the Front Lawn," convinced this skeptic that museums can productively present more than just art objects. Since 2001 Haeg, who trained as an architect, has campaigned to make our living spaces more sustainable and attractive through two overarching programs that transcend art and design: "Gardenlab" initiates ecological interventions, while "Sundown Salon" is an organization known for its interactive learning sessions. The Arthouse exhibition combined elements from both by showcasing Haeg's continuing "Edible Estates" project, which has converted four private front lawns into quasi-public gardens since 2005, and "Sundown Schoolhouse" (2008), a series of Austin workshops encouraging homegrown food production. The resulting show effectively presented the benefits of nourishing and beautiful gardening: past "estates" were featured through photographic and video documentation; a wall-size map located area resources; useful articles were available on bulletin boards; and a mural of the "Edible Estates" logo, which burst with climate-appropriate peppers, avocados, and cacti, anticipated the March planting of an Austin "estate." The heart of the exhibition was a geodesic tent—home to the workshops. During the opening



Fritz Haeg, installation view of Sundown Schoolhouse's Philadelphia Training Camp for Expression Skills Workshop: The Fine Art of Writing Bad Poetry With Samantha Barrow, at "Locally Localized Gravity," Institute of Contemporary Art, Philadelphia, March 2007. Photo: Jenelle Porter. Courtesy the ICA, Philadelphia.

session, Haeg offered a historical and social perspective on his work that captivated the art and gardening crowd, and demonstrated fluency with verbal and visual languages within and beyond the artworld. This facility is what allows his hybrid, interactive practice to flourish inside the white cube.

—KATE GREEN