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## **Warming art heats up chilly month**

*First Thursday: Hard-edged paintings, documentary film and art installations mark the monthly openings*

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Artists featured in February gallery shows appear to get shortchanged. There are fewer days than in any other month. Sales can be hampered by the hangover of recent holiday gift-giving. Then there's the weather; who's going to come if it snows?

But winter is also when we need art to warm, enliven and transport us. For some of the painters, sculptors, filmmakers and photographers with work on view this month, perhaps having the artistic cure for our February blues could wind up being lucrative after all.

Here's a tip sheet of several noteworthy shows. Galleries are open 6 to 9 p.m. Laura Russo Gallery: Roll Hardy's name sounds like an instruction, but the painter's show at Laura Russo Gallery, "Industrial Spaces and Abandoned Places," is more about inertia. Whether it's a panorama of tattered walls and scattered garbage inside an abandoned building in "Broken Bottles Empty Hearts," or the exterior of a small gas station dwarfed by clouds in "Mr. Happy," Hardy's landscapes resonate with documentary-like realism enhanced by a faintly impressionistic glow.

At the other end of the stylistic spectrum, Whitney Nye's large collages on panels are abstract, geometric patterns brought to life with color and texture. Although meticulously crafted using thousands of dots in "One-Tenth" or thin rectangular panels in "Counterpane," these pieces are the antithesis of cold abstraction. One senses the human hand here, creating an ideal balance of subtlety and sensation. (805 N.W. 21st Ave.)

PDX Contemporary Art: For most of her career, Portland film and video artist Vanessa Renwick has operated outside the gallery system. Instead, she's spent more than a decade touring small theaters and rock clubs in a beat-up van, frequently in tandem with fellow filmmaker Bill Daniel. Renwick's debut exhibit at PDX Contemporary Art centers around her film "Portrait #2: Trojan," which was arguably the best moving-image selection in last year's Oregon Biennial at the Portland Art Museum. Indie rocker Sam Coomes of Quasi provides the score to this wordless, gorgeously photographed documentation of the Trojan nuclear power plant's triggered implosion, which Renwick presents as a kind of ritualistic rite after many years of anti-nuke demonstrations. Renwick has also fashioned a limited-edition version DVD incorporated into a book of still images from "Portrait #2: Trojan." (925 N.W. Flanders St.) Elizabeth Leach Gallery: Around the corner from PDX Contemporary Art, Elizabeth Leach Gallery offers "Video Window," three months

of exhibits curated by Harrell Fletcher, an interdisciplinary artist and Portland State University professor. This month features the Jan Family, a group of former students at London's Royal College of Art collaborating in graphic design, publishing and art installation. Their videos at Leach are cheekily simple: One features seven Jan members standing in a line, all turned away from the camera and randomly scratching each others' backs. In another, the group sustain four minutes of clapping in unison to rising and falling tempos. In both cases, the repetition transforms initial silliness to something deeper and more hypnotic. (417 N.W. Ninth Ave.) Augen Gallery: Grace Weston's photographs resemble those of fellow Portlander and Augen-represented Jim Riswold, with dolls and children's toys staged to offer unexpected blends of whimsy and darkness. Sometimes Weston falls victim to cuteness: a bumblebee at a miniature drinking fountain, a baby crawling toward its bottle. But more often, her narratives are mysterious. In each case, they're vibrantly colorful and scrupulously composed. The worlds she creates are deliberately less iconic than Riswold's portraits of dictators in miniature, but often more elaborate and varied in their depictions. (817 S.W. Second Ave.) Portland Art Center: Sound artist Eric La Casa and musician Jean-Luc Gionnet, both based in Paris, have fashioned a sound installation called "Reflected Waves" that depicts Melbourne, Australia, (where they are artists in residence) using sonic waves coordinated to different map points. The press release asks, "Can sound decipher the world and objectify reality? How can sound teach us about the absent realities of a visible landscape?"

But such migraine-inducing questions quickly fade away amid the immersive power of La Casa and Guionnet's aural environment. Just remember not to talk through the whole experience with your First Thursday companions. (32 N.W. Fifth Ave.) Ogle: Like a Brazilian soccer player, she goes by one name: Weihong. Born and raised in China but now residing in Houston, Weihong is herself the center of an interactive exhibit. At Ogle gallery in Old Town, she'll be regularly greeting and serving visitors in a self-fashioned tea ceremony. Drawing from Chinese and Western traditions, Weihong has already performed this artistic beverage service at galleries in New York, Milan, China and Houston. But of course it's not the tea so much as creating a distinctive and nourishing environment for interaction and exchange. (310 N.W. Broadway) William Joseph Gallery: Had he not died in 1990, Ray Atkeson, Oregon's most celebrated photographer, would have turned 100 this year. But Ray Atkeson's work seems immortal. He spent much of his 62-year career as a stock photographer, creating images of Oregon to sell to publishers. Like a home-state Ansel Adams, though, Atkeson's patience waiting for perfect light yielded a richly evocative portfolio of Oregon, from Mount Hood to the coast, the Three Sisters to Crater Lake. (526 S.W. Yamhill St.)