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ARTS AGENDA . Arts Agenda Picks

Daytripper

Scrawl

by **Tami Fertig**

Published: Sep 3, 2008



Opening reception Thu., Sept. 4, 6-8 p.m., exhibit runs through Oct. 11, Apexart, 291 Church St., New York, N.Y., 212-431-5270, apexart.org

Harley Spiller keeps about 80 collections. Yellow pencils. Candy wrappers. Pictures of unusual hairstyles. By his estimation, he owns more Chinese takeout menus than anyone else in the world, and, even more impressive, he crams them all into his teensy Manhattan apartment. Can you blame the guy for wanting to stick his stuff elsewhere, if only for a little while?



For *Scrawl*, an exhibit opening tonight at NYC's Apexart, Spiller shares a collection he started in 1985, when he spotted some JFK conspiracy mumbo-jumbo stuck to a lamp post in Times Square. Over the years, he's picked up roughly 200 other, equally confusing notes meant for everyone and no one — scrawled on paper or cardboard and Scotch-taped to bus shelters, subway platforms, sign posts and mailboxes. He's drawn to them not just for their cryptic messages, but for their ability to rekindle his own memories of finding them. "They all form diaries and help me keep track of life as it rushes by," he says. "You get a snapshot of my travels. You can trace where I've been."

The pieces themselves offer little in the way of explanation: Who is this author? Why did he fill a page with little symbols and numbers? What does he mean when he writes "Show everybody the dick DiMaggio, Miller, Sinatra, J.F.K., Crawford, etc. had in their mouth. Cyanide?"

For Spiller, half the fun is chewing on questions that his treasures inevitably raise. "Some seem impenetrable, but that doesn't mean I might not stumble upon the answer. Making a show of them is trying to figure them out."

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