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Around the Columns

Event offers 20-20 vision

As one of the masterminds behind True/False Film Fest and Columbia's Ragtag Cinema, Paul Sturtz appreciates turning a traditional media presentation on its ear. It helps if you can get a beer and a sandwich, too.

Now he has teamed with the Mizzou Advantage initiative to present 20-20 Night, a series that showcases art, literature, philanthropy

and academia. Presenters from various walks of local life show 20 slides each and speak for 20 seconds per slide. Ragtag has hosted the event on the first Tuesday of every other month since October 2011, but a growing audience could prompt a move to a larger venue.

"It's like hors d'oeuvres," says Sturtz, who first experienced the snappy format in 2007 while traveling in Europe. "The six minutes and 40 seconds is an introduction, and the 'meat' of the evening commences later in the bar area where you can approach your favorite presenter or discuss with your friends different issues that were raised during 20-20 Night."

The presentations can be serious, comedic, poetic and even theatrical. At the Dec. 6, 2011, event, Keith Eggener, MU associate professor of art and architecture, narrated an unusual



Emma Marris gives a 20/20 talk about the difference between nature and wilderness. Photo by Rob Hill

perspective of architectural demolition as “building death.” The audience was transfixed throughout explosive images of the Dunes Hotel in Las Vegas, the Kingdome in Seattle and Pruitt-Igoe in St. Louis.

“All things living die, and we, the not-yet-dead, devotees of car crashes and slasher films, like to watch,” Eggener says. “We do this because it’s sometimes exciting, sometimes beautiful, often horrible, always interesting.”

Ibtisam Barakat, MA ’00, bilingual poet, educator and author of *Tasting the Sky: A Palestinian Childhood* (FSG, 2007), recited her poem “Revolution” paired with illustrations from her books.

“Freedom runs in my blood, an Arabian horse galloping,” shouts Barakat, speaking to the revolutionary spring in the Middle East. “Run until we reach summer. No! This cannot be summed. Run until we reach autumn, for we ought to be free.”

Live music, such as singer-songwriter Shannon Diaz, adds yet another facet to an already eclectic enterprise.

“This particular format is very forgiving,” says Sturtz. “You can have an academic trying to cram a 30-minute lecture into six minutes and 40 seconds, but it also works well with people from the community who are not polished speakers and who just want to talk about their lives.”

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