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Local News: Thursday, July 06, 2006

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All aboard for artist's performance

By DOUG ESSER
The Associated Press

Seattle's city culture invaded the suburbs when a performance artist took up residence on an old wooden boat in a duck pond at a Bothell shopping area as part of a countywide arts program.

Amy-Ellen Trefsgger, 30, who legally adopted her performance name of "Flatchestedmama" in 2004, is living in one of the attractions of the landscaped shopping area of Country Village, a cluster of specialty shops where chickens and rabbits roam.

Wearing a sailor's cap and nautical outfits, the Seattle performance artist is interacting with shoppers and visitors. She finds food at several restaurants and entertainment by browsing the gift shops and galleries; she sleeps on a small cot on the boat.

"It's just an examination of life. I won't really be doing much. I'm not going to be painting or doing anything that people see as art," she said before she moved in. "I'm just going to be living."

"Destination: Country Village" is a "site-specific art happening" that continues through Sunday; it's presented by 4Culture, King County's cultural-services agency.

4Culture spokeswoman Lara Holman Garritano said it's a continuation of a program that began eight years ago to provide contemporary performances for suburban audiences. Last year, 4Culture sponsored other artists' performances in the furniture showrooms at the Ikea store in Renton.

Bothell is the first stop for the Site-Specific/2006 King County Performance Network, a partnership of the county agency and 15 suburban art



enlarge KEVIN P. CASEY / AP

Amy-Ellen Trefsgger, who legally adopted her performance name of "Flatchestedmama" in 2004, is living until Sunday on an old boat on a pond at Country Village in Bothell.

Information online

- www.4culture.org
- www.flatchestedmama.com

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commissions, Garritano said. It's financed by the county's hotel-motel tax and a \$30,000 grant from the National Endowment for the Arts.

www.countryvillagebothell.com

Trefsgger receives \$500 for the development and project costs associated with the Country Village piece, Garritano said.

She also is scheduled to perform in September and October, traveling to other sites throughout King County in performances meant to relive her childhood beach vacations.

Trefsgger has experience as an artist in residence. She spent 40 days living at the Center on Contemporary Art in 2004 in a piece called, "Domicile: A Sense of Place." She won praise from Seattle Post-Intelligencer critic Regina Hackett for a "deadpan kind of literalism" and "being the art of her own making."

That may be fine for the Seattle scenesters, but how will it play in Bothell?

Trefsgger discovered Country Village two years ago and said the drive to Bothell reminds her of growing up in rural Pennsylvania.

When she saw the red-and-white boat, she decided she wanted to live on it in a public way, although there's barely enough room to set up the cot in the cabin.

Trefsgger said her upcoming work at Country Village is a continuation of performance art that began two years ago when she legally adopted her stage name.

"I did that because I made a public declaration of commitment to my creative self," she said. "So in 2004 I married my art. And in a sense I made it so that everything in my life from that point is art."

Alison Dempsey-Hall, Bothell Chamber of Commerce spokeswoman, said **Trefsgger** should draw interest.

"It'll probably be more of a curiosity," she said. "I don't know if they've done something like that before."

Some sounded skeptical.

"Sitting out on the boat ... just waving?" asked Beth Huennekens, 16, of Bothell, sitting next to the duck pond a week before it turned into a performance destination. "I suppose it could be considered art."

But Country Village advertising manager Rebecca Loveless said, "I think it fits in great. Quirky are us."

Trefsgger's next-door neighbor to the duck pond is the Sea Faeries magical gift shop, "the only dedicated fairy fantasy store in the Puget Sound area," said owner Fran Davis, who sells figurines and books about fairies, trolls, dragons and gnomes.

"Hopefully, she'll do more than just sit on the boat," Davis said.

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