HUMAN NATURE: ARE WE ANIMALS OR ARE WE MACHINES?

10 ARTIST FELLOWS JOIN THE BERGGREUN INSTITUTE’S TRANSFORMATIONS OF THE HUMAN PROJECT

BY SHANA NYS DAMBROT
Pauley Perrette reflects on her career and new sitcom

BY LINA LECARO

BROKE

Pauley Perrette, Jaime Camil, and Natasha Leggero in Broke

For living and sharing is infectious. 'I've led a multifaceted life. As a child I moved around all the time with my family — I have roots in Alabama. Then I went to school for sociology, psychology and criminal science. Then I wanted to be a cop... I moved to New York and I was broke and became a bartender and a club kid, from that being hired to do music videos and commercials and short films... And then somebody called me out to L.A. I came out here, I started doing television and then as you know, I ran away and joined a band.'

When we met Perrette in the late '90s, she had just come off her popular stint as Drew Carey's girlfriend in The Drew Carey Show. The then-blond actress (who wore ponytails back then too) was still landing memorable roles in Almost Famous and The Ring. But rock & roll was calling and the band Lo-Ball — which she fronted — had the sound, presence and promise to become L.A.'s next great all-female rock group. We rarely missed a show. Alas, the challenges of the music industry were already proving to hold back acts with great potential such as hers, and her acting was taking off again anyway. The role of Abby on NCIS was a perfect fit. Perrette was always fascinated by science and true crime, after all. The show became the highest rated drama on television for years, but no matter how well written it is/was, her character's popularity was mostly due to Perrette, who brought her own personal style and quirky charisma to the role, balancing out the somber storylines and seriousness of her co-stars. She also provided a stereotype-busting example for young women.

"One of the main things I'm grateful for about Abby is that she was such a good role model for young girls — internationally," she reflects. "In that one fictional character, it gave young girls the idea that they could go into math and science and be, like, a scientist. It made it cool and it made it attainable."

Jackie is similarly strong-willed and interested in stuff women aren't typically shown to be on TV. "I'm a kind of a tool freak myself. I build stuff, I fix things. I really wanted to put that into a female character on primetime television," Perrette says. "Jackie is a bartender but she's also a mechanic. She can fix anything. She's incredibly proficient at pretty much everything that a boy can do. But she can do it better. She's better than them, and actually that comes up later. I feel like I'm portraying yet another really good role model for girls."

Just as there was a lot of Pauley in Abby, Jackie seems to reflect the actress' strength and heart as well. As a friend, it's fun to see her play a mom, too. When she started taking meetings, she initially was resistant to playing a parent, but she has an undeniable way with kids, and it shows (this writer's daughter gravitated toward stars of real life (and motherhood) call for more comfortable clothing. Still, us rock chicks show our sense of style even when we become mommies. In the pilot that aired, Jackie dons jeans and a Guns 'N' Roses tee for most of the episode, and she says we'll be seeing plenty of similar looks throughout the season.

"We have a deal with this company that actually owns the rights so we can use them on TV — everything. I wear, like Guns n' Roses, Rolling Stones, Janis Joplin tees, all of it. That's all my gear wears," says Perrette. Part of the storyline is that Jackie's ex is the lead singer of a Van Halen cover band and when we ask if we'll get to meet the baby daddy in later episodes, she says "you'll have to wait and see."

Of course, wait and see is what we're all doing right now due to shelter at home orders. It's rough, especially for local businesses. Perrette has always been extremely giving when it comes to charity and giving back, and she's a major advocate for organizations such as Project Angel Food and animal sheltering groups such as The Amanda Foundation. (She has several rescue dogs herself and encourages everyone to adopt a rescue pet if they can right now, as caring for and loving animals makes staying at home a bit easier to deal with.) A recent L.A. news program shared her latest actions to help the community — ordering food for her entire Hollywood neighborhood from local restaurants — but it's just one of countless ways the actress has paid her successes forward. She's not one to publicize most of them either, though she has always been outspoken about causes she believes in including LGBTQ equality, the women's movement, and civil rights in general.

Her return to TV might play in typical sitcom territory but Broke has a lot more going for it, including intriguing Mexican characters (co-star Camil is being touted as the first Latino to lead a comedy series on CBS since Desi Arnaz on I Love Lucy) and of course, strong women-driven storylines.

"We were blessed enough to finish the entire season before the world went crazy," Perrette shares as we finish up our phone call. "We finished the whole season beginning of January. We were excited for everyone to see it before, but it feels really super important now. We're going to give everybody — in this crushing time of pain, confusion and sadness — a half hour where you can sit back and you can sit with your family, and you can smile and you can breathe and you can laugh."

Broke airs Thursday nights at 9:30 p.m. PST on CBS.
Among lofty discourses on the definitional qualities of what it means to be human, much of the philosophy has centered on figuring out what separates us from the rest of the natural world. Of course we are animals, physiologically, but our facilities of abstract thought, complex language and technology of all kinds have taken us out of the food chain and given us at least the persistent illusion of differentiation.

On the cusp of the future rushing toward us, we seek increasingly integrated physical and mental technological tools and augmentations. But by pursuing AI, the expanded mind and tele/virtual everything, we will also be increasingly looking to define our separateness from those technologies. In short, we are rediscovering our animal side as a guard against the encroaching intelligent machines that we created in order to separate from nature in the first place.

Trippy, right? Well don’t worry because this sort of conceptual Gordian knot is just what the good people of the Berggruen Institute exist to unravel. And toward that end, they founded the Transformations of the Human (TofTH) program, described as a research project examining “how developments in fields such as artificial intelligence, biotechnology and climate change are changing our understanding of what it means to be human.” And now, in addition to the resident scientists, engineers, philosophers and computer folk, they’ve drafted a cadre of transmedia visual artists to help give these ideas form.

The 10 inaugural TofTH Artist Fellows are Nancy Baker Cahill, Ian Cheng, Stephanie Dinkins, Mara Eagle, Pierre Huyghe, Kahlil Joseph, Agnieszka Kurant, Rob Reynolds, Martine Syms and Anicka Yi — an eclectic roster of artists working in VR, AI, sculpture, video, painting, installation and performance across a range of styles but always with shared ideas top of mind as to how exactly humanity will adapt to the new
To take part in this research study or for more information, visit: berggruen.org/work/the-transformations-of-the-human.
CANNABIS

13 YEARS LATE

DEA finally announce rules to expand supply of research weed

BY JIMI DEVINE

Fours years after originally saying the supply of research-grade marijuana in the United States would be expanded, the Drug Enforcement Administration is finally releasing the draft rules for the first round of public comment.

The key phrase here is “the first round.” The saga essentially started 13 years ago with the DEA originally receiving a recommendation to expand the research-grade marijuana supply in the U.S. from its own administrative law judge, Mary Ellen Bittner. Bittner believed the case of UMass professor Lyle Krakar wanting to grow marijuana for the Boston medical community was valid. In her decision, Bittner called the supply of marijuana for research inadequate and said Krakar’s registration to grow marijuana would be in the public interest.

Nine years after Bittner’s recommendation, the DEA announced they would open up the process to license new manufacturers in 2016. The DEA started looking at the wider picture of what they would have to do in regards to internal and external policy to accommodate more pot growers while attempting to stay in line with the United Nations treaties they pushed in the first place. Last August, the DEA updated where things were currently after many delays in the years prior.

“DEA is making progress in the program to register additional marijuana growers for federally authorized research, and will work with other relevant federal agencies to expedite the necessary next steps,” said DEA acting administrator Uttam Dhillon at the time. “We support additional research into marijuana and its components, and we believe registering more growers will result in researchers having access to a wider variety for study.”

On the lighter side of things, they also announced at the time you didn’t need permission to grow hemp anymore.

Last week we got out first look at what this expansion will look like. It includes growers selling their whole crop straight to the DEA no later than four months after the harvest. That leaves plenty of time for all the production processes expected to take place after farming. While the rules sound a bit overbearing, the DEA will essentially serve as a distributor. But some are concerned the DEA is not set up to be a pot distributor and the quality of the medicine will degrade in transport just like when clueless people got into the distribution game in California’s legal market.

The Multidisciplinary Association for Psychedelic Studies backed Krakar’s effort in the mid-2000s that led to the Bittner recommendation to expand the program. MAPS founder Rick Doblin told L.A. Weekly the DEA’s announcement is a good sign for the future, “but it’s more unnecessary delays since DEA could and should issue licenses now.”

NORML deputy director Paul Armentano has also been following the saga of expanding the pool of people growing research-grade marijuana in the U.S. since it’s earliest days.

“These rules are unduly onerous, expensive and impractical; they are unlikely, even if implemented, to greatly facilitate clinical cannabis research in the United States,” Armentano said of the proposed rules. “Further, the DEA has an incredibly poor track record in this arena — having for years now promised to expedite and streamline this process, but failing to deliver. Fool me once, shame on you; fool me twice, shame on me.”

California-based Biopharmaceutical Research Company is one of the companies that had been waiting on the DEA to make a move for years. The company was founded former Navy SEAL George Hodgin after he got exposed to the lack of research around medical cannabis while he was in grad school at Stanford. While in school he was helping a fellow vet with their medical care. The fellow Navy vet was sick of the opioid regime he was on and wanted to give cannabis a shot.

They started asking the doctors if there was any guidance they could provide when it came to things like strains, dosing and symptom-specific issues. “All the doctors said they were great questions and you’re probably going to be fine, but the fact is we don’t really know how to dose things. We don’t know how to dose things exactly because we don’t have a way to research it,” Hodgin told L.A. Weekly.

The doctors told Hodgin even if they were to jump through the hoops. The pot coming out of the National Institute on Drug Abuse farm at the University of Mississippi was garbage in general, nevermind being as a tool to grade the medical value of cannabis in a clinical setting.

The first guidance that came out from the DEA on the new program was August 12, 2016, “about a month after I really started to dig into it and formed my company to do this, to grow for research purposes,” Hodgin said, “so we’ve been at it three and a half years waiting for something like this.”

BRC ended up being among the first applicant pool that filed in early 2017 for approval and is still waiting to this day.

“We’ve already been sort of considered as refiled. When they released this new guidance they did two things. First, they said here are the rules more or less on how we will evaluate people and how the system will work. Then If you don’t like that we will refund you your money. Or if the Farm Bill made you legal we’ll refund your money,” Hodgin said.

But that fee is only about $3,000, which is essentially pennies when you consider how much it costs to run a fully DEA compliant facility. So far BRC has raised and spent almost $4 million. The reason they had to spend so much is that unlike a state in the legal marketplace where you might file a plan on paper for approval, the DEA requires your full buildout to be constructed at the time of potential licensing.

“The DEA works the opposite [from the legal market],” Hodgin said. “The DEA says to build your facility, put in your application, install your security cameras, hire your team, do your standard operating procedures, and at the end of that we’ll come out and check it out. If we like it you pass and if not, so sorry.”

Hodgin called the process a nightmare. He’s had his team and facility ready to go for over three years. About $100,000 a year goes into things like strains, dosing and symptom-specific issues. “All the doctors said they were great questions and you’re probably going to be fine, but the fact is we don’t really know how to dose things. We don’t know how to dose things exactly because we don’t have a way to research it,” Hodgin told L.A. Weekly.

BRC could take part in California’s booming, and now essential, cannabis industry. But the Feds have warned in both writing and in conversation that nobody will be dipping their toes into both sides of the pool. “You have to pick one or the other. You can’t say I’m a state operator trying to go for the federal game or the other way around.”

Hodgin could fire up his lights tomorrow, “but we know that would jeopardize all the DEA is doing.”

Hodgin says this all hurts because they’re losing out on a couple of thousand bucks a day as a company, but assured the real tragedy is what is happening in the delays for research around things like epilepsy.
Mark Lanegan and Wesley Eisold offer timely *Plague Poems*

**BY BRETT CALLWOOD**

The story is already one that has been told countless times over the past two weeks, but the intensity, the impact, only increases with the volume. For Cold Cave frontman Wesley Eisold and Screaming Trees man Mark Lanegan, the devastating effects of the coronavirus spelled the end for any hopes of touring and, generally, earning money for the immediate future.

Like a huge percentage of the population, they had to figure things out. Look after their families, try to ensure that the bills can be paid — all the stuff that so many of us (this writer included) have been dealing with since our lives changed. But they also wanted to use their time constructively and create some art. And that’s how *Plague Poems* was born. Both artists contributed 23 poems to the collection, written in February and March of this year.

“I know we’re all living inside of this shut-in now, but I think if I can speak for Mark and myself, we were both aware that we were going to have tours canceled a little further in advance when things started getting a little messy,” says Eisold. “So we decided we wanted to, since we found ourselves with time, write a book. It wasn’t all done in February. It was started in February, and Mark just handed in his last two poems a couple of days ago.”

Eisold says that, for him, the poems weren’t necessarily written explicitly about the pandemic, but rather attuned to the current time and what’s going on in his life.

“Some of the poems are about instances I had in the first week of this pandemic — sort of mundane everyday occurrences of going to the grocery store or something like that, and the differences in climate in doing something so basic really,” he says. “The conversations people have with you now, the fear they wear all over their faces, stuff like this. The absurdity in everyday life is something I’ve always been fascinated with and written about anyway, and it’s just magnified right now because of the current climate.”

While the writer and musician says that some of the poems might be therapeutic for readers, he doesn’t really think of the writing process as a form of therapy — he doesn’t feel any catharsis once the writing is done and the words are out of him.

“However, a lot of the poems I did write are about a good friend of mine that’s just passed, Genesis P-Orridge,” he says. “I just woke up one night, the day after it happened, at 2 a.m. after going to bed at 11 a.m., and just wrote 15 poems through the night that just flowed out magically. This is someone I had just visited in February 15 of this year, and had emailed back and forth with them up to March 3, so that kind of happened suddenly to me even though it was expected that it would happen one day. It happened sooner than I had thought. I think when I’m able to plug into everything I learned from that person being a part of my life, I’m able to access a part of myself that words are just able to flow out of.”

Eisold told us that he had 80 shows canceled, multiple tours, in the immediate aftermath of the coronavirus becoming public knowledge, though he knows he’s not alone and he’s certainly not looking for sympathy.

“I think when you are a musician, you are living with a constant gamble that there is going to be a future in what you do,” he says. “It’s just a bit of a reality check for everyone when that stream is dammed. On the other side of my life, my wife Amy [Lee] owns a bookstore in Hollywood and that obviously closed also. There’s a logistical aspect to that, where all the things ordered for someone’s store don’t stop coming so you have to figure that all out. Stuff like that. Helping the employees navigate their way through everything.”

Eisold met Lanegan a couple of years ago — both were fans of the other’s music. They each sing on a song on the other’s unreleased, forthcoming album. *Plague Poems*, though, will be their first collaborative piece of work made public.

“Mark is such a great lyricist and writer that I probed him to see, ‘Do you have poems? Have you written poems?’” Eisold says. “His initial answer was ‘Not really’ and then he showed me a couple that were fantastic. I was like, ‘Great, let me see some more. Now we have this time, are you interested in this idea?’ and he said yes. It came together pretty quickly. Obviously writing lyrics and poems are two different things but they’re not so dissimilar that you can’t try your hand at one if you’re successful at another. Sometimes it works and sometimes it doesn’t. In his case, it worked.”

With the book done, it’s tough to plan anything else this year due to the uncertainty surrounding how long this crisis will stretch. Eisold is hanging tight for now.

“Some people are gambling a little harder than others in terms of planning their lives around tours that may not happen,” he says. “We want to play live, but we don’t want to go through these cancellations again so we’re probably gonna wait it out a little bit and see what happens. I fear that there will be a second problem for people as opposed to the one we’re living under now, that various forms of insecurities be it financial or sociological, even wanting to go outside — I don’t know how people are going to react. I don’t know if the doors open tomorrow, if people will want to go to a show or not. We’re taking it day by day.”

*Plague Poems* is out via Heartworm Press on June 1. Order it at theheartworm.com.
FALL OFF THE BONE

Jar’s Suzanne Tracht shares her Passover lamb shanks recipe with L.A. Weekly

BY MICHELE STUEVEN

Passover, Easter and spring are upon us during one of the most difficult times in history. Still, we can isolate and celebrate. Suzanne Tracht shared with L.A. Weekly her recipe for braised lamb shanks, which you can easily make at home and are also available for curbside pickup at her award-winning restaurant, The Jar. The shanks used in Tracht’s demonstration are from the famous Huntington Meats in the Original Farmers Market, which also delivers. Spices can be ordered online and vegetables pre-ordered for pickup at your local farmers market. Or just let Suzanne do the heavy lifting.

Braised Lamb Shanks
Lamb shanks are slowly braised with aromatics, port wine and a hint of spicy Thai chili. Great served with polenta, mashed potatoes or my family’s favorite root vegetables to soak up the wonderful sauce. A fantastic dish for company and Passover, as all the prep work is done at the beginning, and then you just have to wait; the oven does all the work for you! You’ll have the most tender, fall-off-the-bone lamb. Serves 6 to 8.

- ½ CUP RUBY PORT WINE
- 1 QUARTS CHICKEN OR VEAL STOCK
- 1 DRIED THAI RED CHILI PEPPER
- 3 WHOLE STAR ANISE CLOVES
- 2 WHOLE BAY LEAVES, PREFERABLY FRESH
- 8 WHOLE CLOVES

In a small bowl, combine the ground coriander, fennel and black pepper. Reserve half of the seasoning mixture for the stock; to the other half add the olive oil to make a paste. Lay the lamb shanks in a single layer on a sheet pan and rub all sides of the meat with the spice paste to cover. Set the meat aside at room temperature for 1 hour to absorb the flavor. In the meantime make the stock.

Cut the carrots, celery, leeks, and onion into 1½ to 2-inch chunks and place in bowl. Cut the garlic bulb in half and add to vegetables. Heat a large pot or Dutch oven over medium-high heat and coat with the canola oil. When the oil is hot, add the prepared vegetables and reserved seasoning mixture, along with a generous pinch or two of salt. Cook and stir until the vegetables begin to soften, about 8 to 10 minutes. Carefully pour in the port and reduce for about 15 to 20 minutes, stirring as needed. Add the stock and bring to a boil, removing from heat as liquid begins to thicken.

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees. Preheat an outdoor grill or indoor grill pan over high heat and rub with oil.

Place shanks on hot grill, turning occasionally with tongs until well seared on both sides, then remove. Place the lamb shanks side by side in a large roasting pan. Carefully pour the vegetables and reduced stock over the shanks and season with salt and pepper. Add the Thai chili, star anise, bay leaves and cloves. Cover tightly with aluminum foil. Place in the preheated oven for two hours until very tender.

Serve the lamb shanks with the sauce spooned over the meat.