

# SEATTLE WEEKLY

ARTS VISUAL ARTS PICK

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## "Personally Public"

By Sue Peters

"Please feel free to take the mountain for a test walk" invites the sign that accompanies Vaughan Bell's mini papier-maché Mount Rainier on wheels and leash. Slightly less eccentric than poet Gerard de Nerval's pet lobster on a ribbon, Bell's *Surrogate Mount Rainier* illustrates "our need to possess and control and care for our environment." Arguably, Bell is referring to two different kinds of people—say, industrialists and environmentalists—but she addresses this duality of intent in an accessible, playful way, maintaining the tension between the two opposing impulses. And wheeling the mountain around is just plain fun. Indeed, the connecting



Martin Ballew

thread of "Personally Public," the group show of Fluxus-style concepts by 11 local artists and artistic teams, is the absurdist's glee in creating incongruities for public reaction. Ashley Thorner's *Rapid Air Color Pods* are odd bundles of plastic pouches gathered in knitted fluorescent sacs that can be inflated and deflated with straws. Thorner placed them at various popular locations in town and encouraged people to play with them. Show curator Diana Falchuk dons her grandmother's 1940s sensible coat, with blazing red pumps and matching lipstick, and sets about lovingly wrapping squat blue mailboxes with colorful legwarmers fashioned from sleeves of women's sweaters in her video, *Mailboxes Are People Too*. Obviously they aren't, but Falchuk is inviting us to reconsider the ubiquitous receptacles that we entrust with our bills, packages, and love letters. In *Public Surveys*, Sarah Kavage and Nicole Kistler demonstrate the subjectivity and snobbery that influences art appreciation by taking a photo of a framed seascape on a museum wall and Photoshopping the same image onto a frameless picture in a garage sale setting. Then they asked respondents to evaluate the worth and skill involved in each painting. Not surprisingly, people gave more value to the one in the gilded frame. **Crawl Space, 504 E. Denny Way, #1, 206-322-5752, [www.crawlspacegallery.com](http://www.crawlspacegallery.com). Noon-5 p.m. Sat.-Sun. Ends May 14.**

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