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## “BRAINS, BRILLIANCY, BOHEMIA” EXHIBITION EXAMINES FORGOTTEN ERA OF CHICAGO COUNTERCULTURE, OPENS APRIL 4 AT MESS HALL

*Brains, Brilliancy, Bohemia: Art & Politics in Jazz-Age Chicago*  
Mess Hall, 6932 North Glenwood Ave., Chicago, IL 60626  
April 4 – April 15 | Tues-Friday 1PM-5PM | Sat-Sun 12-6

Chicago, IL (March 1, 2009) – The first exhibition focusing on hobo culture, *Brains, Brilliancy, Bohemia: Art & Politics in Jazz-Age Chicago* presents photocopies from Chicago’s ill-forgotten radical nightclub, The Dill Pickle Club, hobo gatherings, a documentary on “Clap Doctor” Ben Reitman and 1910s-20s ephemera, providing a timely look at the origin of American counterculture and working class art leading up to the Great Depression.

Material from the exhibition draws heavily from the archives of the Newberry Library, whose collections chronicle Chicago’s legendary Dill Pickle Club. The Dill Pickle provided a forum for free speech and the meeting place for many of the city’s most famous authors, intellectuals and radicals, including Carl Sandburg, Sherwood Anderson, Floyd Dell, Clarence Darrow, Lucy Parsons, Ralph Chaplin, Ben Hecht, Harriet Monroe and Vachel Lindsay. Included in the exhibition are photocopy reproductions of letterpress and woodcut handbills, fliers and posters announcing and advertising numerous lectures, readings, parties, plays and other regular activities.

In a video installation will be Marc Moscato’s *The More Things Stay the Same*, a short documentary examining the life and world of Dr. Ben Reitman (1879-1942), known in his day as “the Clap Doctor”, “King of the Hoboes” and “the most vulgar man in America.” Often best remembered as press agent and lover to anarchist Emma Goldman, Reitman’s work as caretaker for hoboes, prostitutes and the underclass continues to resonate with social and political relevance.

Also included in the exhibition are photocopies from 1910s pulp novels by A-No. 1 Tramp (Leon Ray Livingston), illustrations by Ernie Bushmiller, Franklin McMahon and Herman Rosse, and photos and ephemera from the Ben Reitman and Hull House collections at the University of Illinois. An audio interview with Studs Terkel and biographer Roger Bruns on Dr. Ben Reitman will also be available.

The exhibition will have an accompanying 76-page catalog/ pamphlet that includes an essay by the curator, an unpublished piece by Dr. Ben Reitman and reprints of Dill Pickle Club materials. The catalog features a letterpress cover. For a copy, or a preview PDF, contact Marc Moscato (contact info listed at top of page).

# BRAINS, BRILLIANCY, BOHEMIA: ART & POLITICS IN JAZZ-AGE CHICAGO

## RELATED PROGRAMMING

ALL EVENTS AT MESS HALL | 6932 North Glenwood Ave. | Chicago, IL 60626

**Saturday, April 4, 7PM**

### **Exhibition Opening**

Join us for the opening, a screening of *The More Things Stay the Same*, an old-time hootenanny with Damien Fosse with special surprise musical guests and, finally, a rousing sing-a-long of I.W.W. and hobo songs. BYO sterno.

**Friday, April 10, 8PM**

### **Who is Bozo Texino? Screening w/ Ha Ha Ha America**

A chronicle of the search for the source of a ubiquitous and mythic rail graffiti – a simple sketch of a character with an infinity-shaped hat and the scrawled moniker, “Bozo Texino” – a drawing seen on railcars for over 80 years. Taking inspiration from the beats, the film functions as both sub-cultural documentary and stylized fable on wanderlust and outsider identity. Screens w/ *Ha Ha Ha America*, an audaciously provocative skewering of assumptions about China vs. US global supremacy and pride.

**Saturday, April 11, 8PM**

### **Dil Pickle Club**

Step high, stoop low and leave your dignity outside for a night of poetry, stories, music, art, pornography and conversation. Featuring artist, teacher and performer Theaster Gates; Paul Durica (founder of *Pocket Guide to Hell Tours*) on Charles Fort, the Fortean Society, and *The Book of the Damned*; and Searah Deysach (owner of the Early2Bed sex shop) offers sex tips and screens independent lesbian pornography, with commentary, for the benefit of sexual well-being. Co-sponsored by *Stop Smiling Magazine*.

## ABOUT THE CURATOR

Marc Moscato ([www.marcmoscato.com](http://www.marcmoscato.com)) is an artist, curator and activist living in Portland, OR. His short films and videos have screened at film festivals, theaters and non-traditional spaces across the country, including the New York Underground Film Festival, Chicago Underground Film Festival, Video Mundi Festival and many more. He has more than 10 years experience in marketing and communications, and has worked for Museum of Contemporary Craft, City Club of Portland, Microcosm Publishing, Peripheral Produce and Squeaky Wheel, in addition to directing DIY arts center My House in Eugene, OR, 2001-2003.

## ABOUT MESS HALL

Mess Hall is an experimental cultural center located in Rogers Park. It is a place where visual art, radical politics, creative urban planning, applied ecological design and other things intersect and inform each other. We host exhibitions, discussions, film screenings, brunchlucks (brunch + potluck), workshops, concerts, campaigns, meetings (both closed and open) and more. For more information, visit [www.messhall.org](http://www.messhall.org).

# BRAINS, BRILLIANCY, BOHEMIA: ART & POLITICS IN JAZZ-AGE CHICAGO

## HIGH RESOLUTION IMAGES FOR PRINT

The following images are available at high-resolution at:  
<http://dillpickleclub.wordpress.com/>



Anti-War Dance poster  
Artist Unknown, Undated  
Dill Pickle Club Records  
Newberry Library



"Fear of the Black Bottle"  
from *The Milk & Honey  
Route: A Handbook for  
Hoboes*  
Ernie Bushmiller, 1930  
Courtesy Daniel Leen



Photo of Dill Pickle door  
Photographer Unknown,  
Undated  
Dill Pickle Club Records  
Newberry Library



"The Abyss of Chicago"  
Illustration from *Coast to  
Coast with Jack London*  
By A No. 1 Tramp (Leon  
Ray Livingston)  
Artist Unknown, 1917



Chicago flophouse Illustration  
from *Vittles and Vice* by  
Patricia Bronté  
Franklin McMahan, 1952



Dr. Ben Reitman in Chicago,  
1908, Courtesy Richard J. Daley  
Library, University of Illinois,  
from *The More Things Stay the  
Same* by Marc Moscato  
[2008, video, 12 min]

## ABOUT THE SOURCES OF MATERIALS IN THIS EXHIBITION

**The Newberry Library** houses an extensive collection relating to the Dill Pickle Club and its leading founder, John (Jack) Jones. The bulk of the collection, most of which was removed from two scrapbooks, consists of handbills, fliers, programs and posters announcing and advertising numerous lectures, readings, parties, plays and other regular activities.

**The Ben Reitman Papers at the Richard J. Daley Library, University of Illinois at Chicago** houses an extensive collection of Reitman's correspondence with Emma Goldman, in addition to a number of his essays, articles, and books, both published and unpublished. Other materials are of an organizational nature, consisting of reports and documents from the several institutions that Reitman was a member of, such as the Hobo College, Society for the Prevention of Venereal Disease and Brotherhood Welfare Association.

**The Hull House Collection at the Richard J. Daley Library, University of Illinois at Chicago** documents Jane Addams and Ellen Gates Starr's Hull House, the first social settlement in Chicago. UIC's collection includes documents, financial records and a remarkable collection of photographs of working class life in Chicago during the 1910s-20s.

***The More Things Stay the Same*** (directed by Marc Moscato, 2009) examines the life and world of Dr. Ben Reitman (1879-1942), known in his day as "the Clap Doctor", "King of the Hoboes" and "the most vulgar man in America." Often best remembered as press agent and lover to anarchist Emma Goldman, Reitman's work as caretaker for hoboes, prostitutes and the underclass continues to resonate with social and political relevance.

**The Celebrate People's History Poster Series** was started by the Just Seeds Collective to create posters which bring light to radical individuals and events that are otherwise ignored by the oft-taught version of history. They generously printed the Dil Pickle Club poster, designed by Dean DeMatteis.

**Roger Bruns** contributed his interview on The Studs Terkel Program, broadcast March 30, 1987, on WFMT radio. Bruns is author of *Knights of the Road: A Hobo History* and *The Damnedest Radical: The Life and World of Ben Reitman, Chicago's Celebrated Social Reformer, Hobo King, and Whorehouse Physician*.

**John Drury** (1898-1972) was a Chicago newspaper columnist, poet, and author of several books on Chicago and the Midwest, including the guidebook *Chicago in Seven Days*.

**Herman Rosse** (1887-1965) was an American art director who won an Academy Award for Best Art Direction for the film *King of Jazz*. He illustrated Ben Hecht's *1001 Afternoons in Chicago*.

**Franklin McMahon** (1921-) is an artist-reporter, possibly best known for his illustrations documenting the Chicago 7 trial that took place on the occasion of the 1968 Democratic National Convention. He illustrated Patricia Bronte's *Vittles and Vice: An Extraordinary Guide to What's Cooking on Chicago's Near North Side*.

**Leon Ray Livingston** (1872-1944) travelled under the name "A No.1" and wrote numerous pulp fiction and non-fiction books on travelling the hobo way. Joseph Earl Shrock illustrated many of Livingston's books, although some are not cited and the illustrator is unknown.

**Ernest Paul "Ernie" Bushmiller, Jr.** (1905 - 1982) was an American cartoonist, best known for creating the long-running daily comic strip *Nancy*. Bushmiller made a series of drawings for *The Milk and Honey Route: A Handbook for Hoboes*, written by Chicago sociologist Nels Anderson.

**The Charles H Kerr Company** was established in Chicago, Illinois in 1886 and is the oldest socialist publisher in the United States., currently run by Franklin & Penelope Rosemont. They have published numerous books on the I.W.W. and hobo culture.