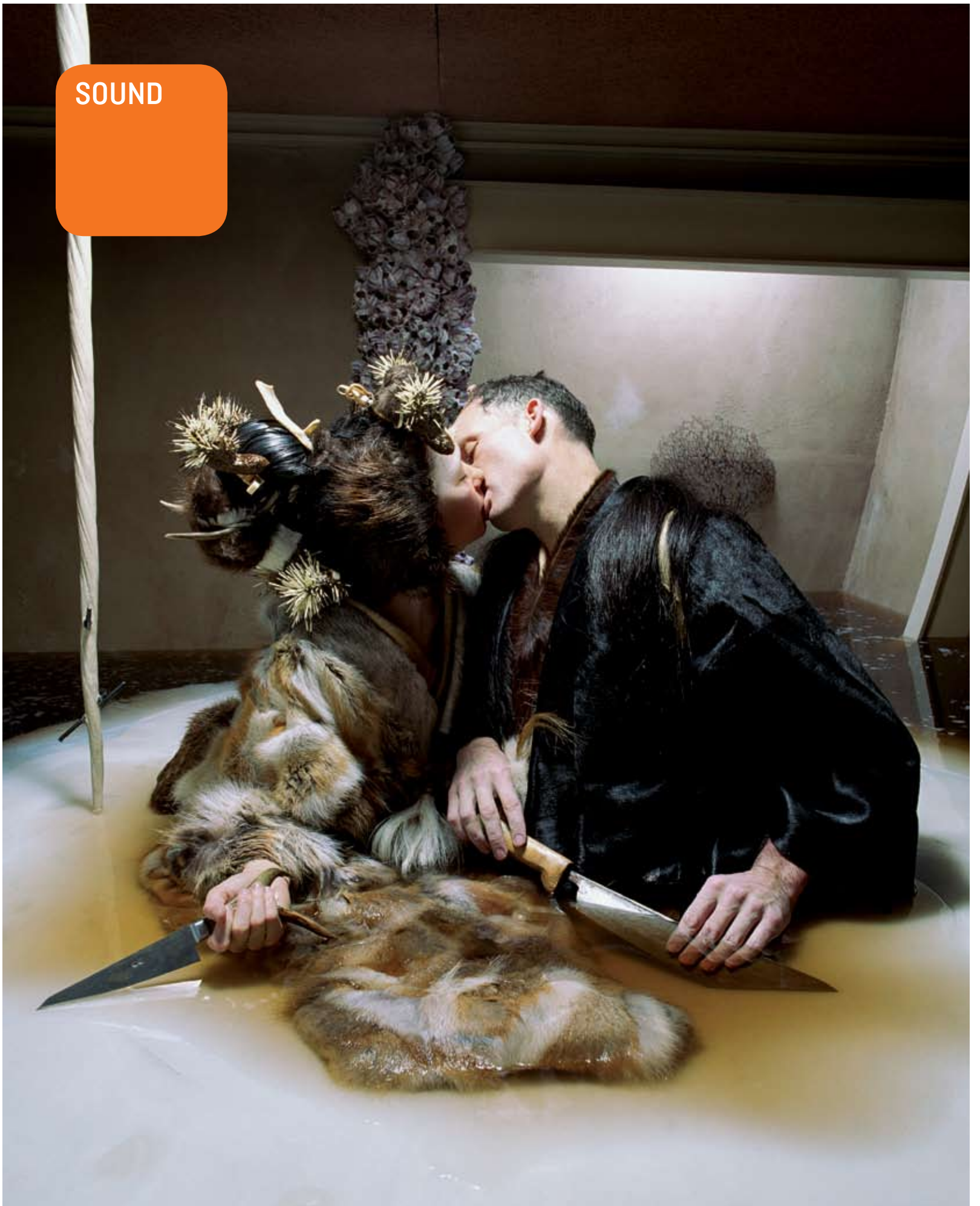


SOUND



COME TOGETHER

Musicians and artists have always played in the same sandbox, but new projects are bringing both to a creative frenzy. Deirdre Corley offers up a glimpse at the season's most **inspired collaborations**.

WITH THE DEVELOPMENT OF ANDY WARHOL'S "Superstar," the line between the art star and the rock star was eternally blurred. Though visual art and music have always looked to each other for influence (opera, anyone?), the days of the Factory couldn't quite break down all the boundaries between the two, no matter how much stardust they inhaled. So what happens when the artists and musicians put down the glitter pen and get serious about collaboration? Several recent multimedia projects are testament to the two fields' synergies, proving, once again, that a good movie is nothing without a good soundtrack.

The product of two brilliant, bizarre minds, *Drawing Restraint 9*, the epic art film collaboration between Matthew Barney and Björk, symbolically explores the relationship between self-imposed resistance and creativity through the transformation of a massive Vaseline sculpture known only as "The Field." The film hits theaters in limited release this spring with writer and director Barney and wife Björk starring as two guests on board a Japanese whaling ship who undergo seriously fantastical transformations of their own as "The Field" forms and reforms on deck. To compose the haunting soundtrack, Björk studied and employed traditional Japanese musical styles and instruments, augmenting them with her trademark electronic touches to create a score that is transformative in its own way.

Far from the complexly decadent, yet compact message of the Barney/Björk super-duo, the Lansing-Dreiden art collective approaches their work with more of a holistic hive mentality. The output produced by the self-described "company" (the members are anonymous) is diverse, to say the least. With work ranging from video art installations to product design, photography, a literary newspaper called *Death Notice*, and even flag making, the group has been showing their work at galleries like New York's Rivington Arms for the past six years. Outside of the art world they are perhaps best known for their forays into rock 'n' roll, most recently with their album *The Dividing Island*, which hits stores May 9. The album reflects the diversity of their work, blending bits of psychedelic rock, metal, and new wave into their own brand of concept pop. Their music, which is often included in their other work, is tied in with the same narrative thread so that all the pieces tell one very long story. When asked if they find that one medium conveys their message more effectively than

another, one nameless member replied, "We always stick by our motto of 'No sense, no hierarchy.' It may seem oddly appropriate, since some would quantify our work as nonsensical, but what that really means is that we don't like to cater to just one sense above all. We seek to please the eye as much as the ear."

For poet and Sonic Youth guitarist Lee Ranaldo and visual artist Leah Singer, intermedia work is less about a specific social statement or amusement, than it is about an immersive stream-of-consciousness experience. Culminating in *Drift*, released recently on DVD by Plexifilm, the 15-year sound/vision collaboration began as a live improvisational multimedia piece onstage. Singer creates a sometimes-jarring world of juxtaposed images on screen. City scenes, neon signs, flowering trees, and monuments flutter by through the use of dual projectors, which she manipulates the way a DJ scratches a record, in response to the droning soundscapes and poetry being created on stage by Ranaldo. The project, which has been performed at art galleries and rock clubs alike, is an exercise in the reciprocal relationship between sight and sound.

In another collaboration, Ranaldo performed in multimedia artist Tony Oursler's "Sound Digressions in Seven Colors," which showed this spring at New York's NyeHaus Gallery. Ranaldo, fellow Sonic Youth member Kim Gordon, and five other musicians were recorded by Oursler in separate settings, each playing songs they had written specifically for the work. Oursler edited this footage and projected it onto seven screens simultaneously, allowing the sounds of the performers to combine and recombine at random to create a new and ever-changing song born from other songs.

Fascinated with the intersection of the worlds of art and music, Oursler creates unique sensory experiences by projecting images onto everything from sculptures to smoke, and fills the airwaves with a barrage of experimental sound. His works place him in the composer's role in some rather unusual ways, and he has employed everything from live rock bands to experimental soundtracks made from actual NASA space recordings to play over his otherworldly projections. He has even released soundtrack albums to accompany his installations. Says Oursler of his boundary-defying ways: "I'm in love with the point of transition between the two worlds; at what point does one become the other?"