

UNCONVENTIONAL: EXPRESSIONS OF REALITY

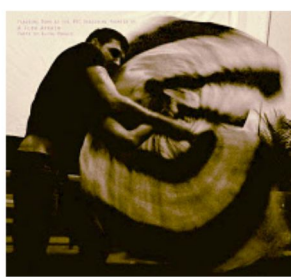
A blog about unconventional, often inconvenient and sometimes taboo topics that populate human reality and fantasy

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Saturday, November 26, 2011

Go with the Flow – Lessons Learned from A Flow Affair, a Documentary by Wolfgang Busch

Go with the Flow – Lessons Learned from *A Flow Affair* a Documentary by Wolfgang Busch



How Do I Look? No, this is not a question, but a documentary that, a few years ago, offered me a peek into the fantastic ball community and the unique opportunity to interview the equally fantastic filmmaker and LGBT activist, [Wolfgang Busch](#), who also directed and produced *How Do I Look?*.

Last month I had the chance to revisit Busch's inspiring work when invited to attend the New York City premier screening of *A Flow Affair*, at Manhattan's St. John's Lutheran Church. The event brought together well-known artists and activists united in their efforts to keep alive the diverse forms of flow arts—flagging (or flag dancing),

fanning, flouging (vouging + flagging) and poi. Among the speakers Reverend Mark E. Erson, the first openly gay pastor at St. John's, thanked Wolfgang Busch "for having a vision;" Reverend Charles Gilmore talked about flow arts and his beliefs in "our responsibility to preserve this gay art form." R&B singer [Meli'sa Morgan](#) mentioned her own commitment to support the flow arts community [her song, "All in the Name of Love," is on the documentary's soundtrack]. Also in the audience were singer/songwriter [Robert Urban](#) [his new CD is *Rock Widow*], young flaggers from New York City and San Francisco, individuals whose stories were part of the documentary, and, of course, *A Flow Affair* director and producer, Wolfgang Busch.



With *A Flow Affair*, Busch adds more layers to the complex sketch of LGBT community by focusing on yet another of its defining aspects—the history of flow arts in all its forms. It is, therefore, symbolic that *A Flow Affair* screening premiered in October. Yet, while watching the film, it's easy to realize that this symbolism goes beyond that of LGBT history month (October), tapping into LGBT communities and reaching audiences across the country and the world (latest screening was in [Brazil](#)).

A Flow Affair offers a glimpse in the rear view mirror at a past of LGBT community, using it as a vehicle through which to learn about its future. As if to emphasize this role of catalyst between past and future,

during the discussions that preceded and followed the *Flow Affair* screening, someone in the audience mentioned that sometimes you have to go back to the old way, in order to understand the new way. And that is right, but not always easy. *A Flow Affair* makes it easy, offering ways to address and bridge that "generation gap" when it comes to keeping flow arts alive.

This generation disconnect (gap) has its reasons: today's youth identifies flag dancing with older

About Me



ANO07

Alina Oswald is a writer/photographer covering unconventional, inconvenient and sometimes taboo topics that are often part of human reality and imagination. Subjects of interest include: * HIV/AIDS * LGBT * NATURE (at its best and worst) * VAMPIRES * related EVENTS/WEDDINGS * related PORTRAITS * related FASHION Alina Oswald is the author of several books, including INFINITE LIGHTS, a collection of 9/11-related photography, VAMPIRE FANTASIES, a collection of vampire-inspired photography, and JOURNEYS THROUGH DARKNESS, a biography of an award-winning, legally blind photographer. More about her books at: www.blurb.com/user/ANO07 More about Alina Oswald at: W: www.alina-arts.com B: alinaoswald.blogspot.com

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generations; there are no large stages available for flaggers; or, how some may say, it's human nature for people to change, to fall out of love with someone or something. Originated in the seventies especially in the circuit parties and peaking during the mid-eighties while identifying with the AIDS community, flagging represents not only an art form, but one of self expression, and has perpetually changed with time. Nowadays we find this art form being taught in workshops, performed in parades and parks by men and women alike. Even more, the art of flagging is being passed on from parents to children. Each generation, each individual has the opportunity to reshape this art form and, thus, to ensure the continuity of this form of flow art from one generation to another.

But flagging is not the only flow art available. *A Flow Affair* captures a full image of the history of all flow arts—including flagging, fanning (which is an ancient art form with Asian origins) and poi (which mostly identify with San Francisco flow arts community).

A young **flagger** who traveled all the way from San Francisco to attend *A Flow Affair* premier screening offers flow arts a new stage—the social networks stage. Because flagging has changed his entire life, he encourages others to give it a try. He also adds, “It’s human nature to seek God’s love and that’s what flagging offers.”

It is also symbolic that *A Flow Affair* premiered in a place of worship, intersecting the element of spiritual healing with that of physical healing—especially associated with the AIDS epidemic. Embarking its audience on a journey into the history of each of flow art forms, *A Flow Affair* offers a complex, in-depth lesson in LGBT culture and history; therefore, *A Flow Affair* doesn’t only plant a seed for the flow art form, but a flow community seed, allowing the continuity of this kind of artistic expression.

A Flow Affair is yet another testimony that, over the years, Wolfgang Busch has become not only a teacher of LGBT culture and history, but also a historian himself, his films documenting, for posterity, an important part of our history. Put them together, Busch’s films, and they help sketch out a complex, rich and forever evolving image of the LGBT community.



Author's NOTE: Flow arts enable self-expression by engaging all our senses:


TOUCH: the soft, almost fluid material of the flag wraps around the body, kisses the skin; it reveals its beauty warmed up by the sunrise light; flagging ignites the journey within, the reconnection with one's self; flag dancers get lost in the moment, while the world around them disappears, leaving room for self-expression

SIGHT: the bright colors of the fans (fans, sometimes considered extensions of one's hands and arms) wrap the body, as in angelic wings; thus they create yet another path to self-expression, allowing dancers to experience the power of living in the moment, which, in turn, facilitates the connection between one and one's self

HEARING: the flick of the fan underlines the moment of bliss while, in the same time, makes it disappear, as if to remind us that we shouldn't get stuck in a moment, even a blissful one, rather to go with the flow--with the artistic flow, that is--and continue to use flow arts (for example) to create a complex blend of artistic flow, that, in turn, would ultimately guide us on the path of self-expression and self-rediscovery.

TASTE & SMELL: are also enhanced by flow arts and through the journey within the soul they offer, one that leads to self-expression and self-discovery.

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Posted by ANO07 at 11:31 AM 

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Labels: *A Flow Affair*, AIDS epidemic, fanning, flagging, flouging, flow arts, generation gap, How Do I Look?, LGBT history, Meli'sa Morgan, poi, R and B singer, Robert Urban, Rock Window, Wolfgang Busch

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Alina,
I can not tell you enough how wonderful and important your writing about the flow arts documentary "Flow Affair" is, your experience as a journalist shines through and adds to the history in the making.

Artistically yours,
Wolfgang Busch

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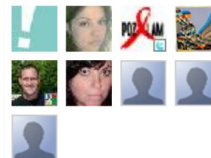
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