

INSPIRATION

*'Between every two pines is a doorway to a new world.'*

JOHN MUIR

# Good Life

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LOVE LETTERS

I don't want to beg him to continue dating me. I really hope he will come around and change his mind.

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## Getting to the heart of letters never sent

By Meredith Goldstein  
GLOBE STAFF

Sometime around 2002, I wrote a letter to an ex-person in my life.

In the long and rambling e-mail, I begged him to reconsider ending our romance. I told him that I loved him. I told him I couldn't stop thinking about him.

Then I quoted . . . the Backstreet Boys.

It made sense at the time.

Before I hit send on my long, sad missive, I ran it by a friend — a very smart friend — who told me that while it was a wonderful idea to write it, the note was best left unsent. This honest friend told me the letter was for me, to help me process the loss of the relationship. Regardless of how I felt, it was over for good.

Sometimes I think the people who write in to Love Letters are really just sending me a letter they can't quite send to someone else.

I knew my friend was right.

The e-mail now sits in the "unsent" folder in the bowels of my now-defunct Yahoo account. But it came to mind — for the first time in many years — when psychotherapist, "Where Should We Begin?" podcast host (the new season is coming soon), and all-around brilliant person Esther Perel told me she wanted to explore the idea of unsent letters. Who writes them? Why do people keep these notes to themselves?

Esther's idea thrilled me. Sometimes I think the people who write in to my advice column, Love Letters, are really just sending me a letter they can't quite send to someone else.

Esther and I started by doing a call-out for unsent letters in my column. I hoped maybe 10 or so people would send one in. (After all, these letters are private. Intimate. Probably unsent for a reason.) But people responded — 75, to be exact. Some people's unsent letters were written in the form of a poem. Others were more formal.

Sometimes there was a lot of anger. There was also love.

The unsent letters were about all sorts of things, from the pain

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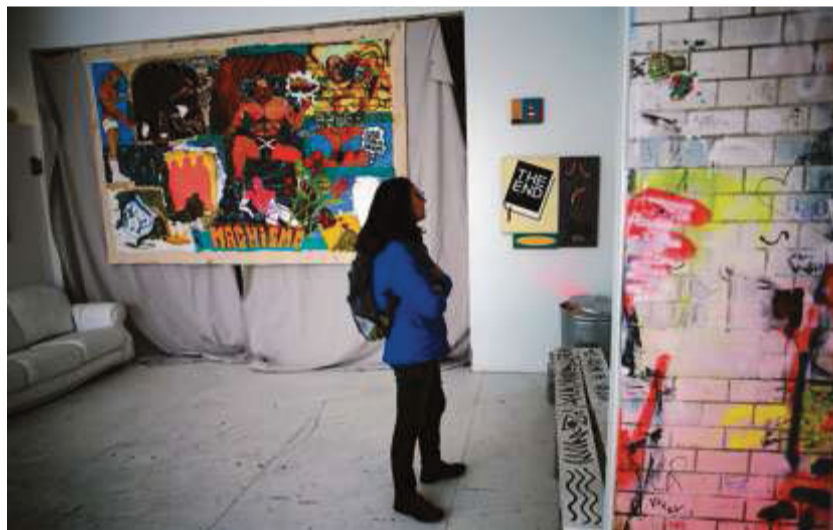
## His EXIT plan

Sam Fish tapped his passion for skateboarding, illustration, and street art to turn an empty Downtown Crossing storefront into the hottest pop-up gallery in the city

By Chris Triunfo  
GLOBE CORRESPONDENT

As Sam Fish took his first step into the abandoned storefront that would soon house his art gallery this summer, his heart started racing. The place was in shambles, and Fish had only a few weeks before his public opening. Valued at over \$4.1 million and positioned perfectly in the heart of Downtown Crossing, the apocalyptic remains of what once was a Liberty Travel agency covered three floors and 10,000 square feet.

"I was trying to play it cool, but on the inside I was flipping out," said Fish, sitting on a tattered couch in the middle of the finished gallery. "I was with some friends, and we just immediately got to work ripping up the carpeting, getting rid of the sad looking cubicles, and peeling off the weird décor



Leanne d'Entremont at EXIT Galleries, a pop-up art space in what once was a Liberty Travel agency in Downtown Crossing.

*'I just wish this could be a permanent spot. A communal space that people can come in and out of, with art all over the walls. But I won't let that little dream slow me down.'*

SAM FISH (top), founder and curator of EXIT Galleries

from the walls."

This pop-up space is the latest home to EXIT Galleries, a project Fish founded in 2018 as the product of his complicated history with the city he calls home. It's an idea that "crystallized from rejecting the feelings of leaving Boston as necessary to grow as an artist, to move to a more established and current creative economy," said Fish, 27. "Why leave when you can make it happen where you are?"

Born and raised in the Fenway area, Fish started skateboarding at the age of 7. He recalled the rush of gliding down a steep hill and immediately falling on his face. It made him feel alive, he said. As a freshman at Brookline High, he picked up a passion for all forms of contemporary street art: graffiti, portraits, photography, illustration, tattoos, you name it. Later, while studying marketing at Emer-

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By Michael Andor Brodeur  
GLOBE CORRESPONDENT

Well hello again, Weekenders! I see you're back for more. Of which I happen to have plenty.

So much going on this weekend! The big-screen debut of "Downton Abbey," a premiere of "The Crucible" (which has secret witches everywhere sweating), and there's some Lifetime movie about the NXIVM cult (which members of the Lifetime Movie Cult are required to watch).

For my part, I'll be spending my weekend cruising around town on those swanky new Orange Line cars, enjoying a White Claw in the dining car. I'm being told they have neither White Claw nor a dining car.

Well all right then; looks like I'm free after all! Let's do this thing.

**THE ARISTOCRATS:** In his 3½-star review, Globe film correspondent Tom Russo calls the long-awaited silver screen debut of Julian Fellowes's "Downton Abbey" a "thoroughly satisfying follow-up that arrives in theaters not quite four years after the series finale aired." And if the very idea of leaving your own stately manor/trusty sofa to experience "Downton" seems like a heinous breach of grand tradition, let Tom talk you down: "The biggest narrative justification for 'Downton' getting feature treatment might be the

THE WEEKENDER

## The Crawleys return, 'The Crucible' churns, and 'Between Two Ferns'



JAAP BUITENDIJK

Jim Carter in "Downton Abbey," which received 3½ stars from Globe film correspondent Tom Russo.

sweeping quality to all the character developments and showcase moments being juggled here. The intricacy is managed without ever playing like *Felloses* took a couple of routine post-script episodes and simply stitched them together." Is Mary shady to Edith the whole time? This is literally all I need to know. **Now screening.**

**WHICH IS WITCH:** If post-Edwardian England doesn't seem nearly regressive enough for your weekend kicks, you might consider *Bedlam* and *Nora* Theatre Company's production of "The Crucible" at Central Square Theatre — armed with the caveat that Globe theater critic Don Aucoin found it less than bewitching. While Arthur Miller's classic enjoys fresh resonance as "an allegory of the deadly consequences that can occur when collective irrationality and mendacity (of both the intellectual and moral sort) hold sway," the production itself, much like the play's witch-detection technology, still has some kinks to work out. (Fun fact: I won Best Actor for my searing portrayal of John Proctor in Fitchburg High School's 1993 production of this — which is probably why I look so familiar.) It's up at Central Square Theater **through Oct. 20.**

**BIT PLAYERS:** Elsewhere in harrowingly relatable drama is the Hunting-

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## Inside

### THEATER EXCAVATING THE TRUTH

In 'The Stone,' a house tells a story of guilt and duplicity in Germany across six decades  
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### STYLE SO SWEET

Celebrate the harvest (and the Jewish New Year) with items in an apples-and-honey theme  
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# The art of the pop-up deal

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son College, Fish found a community of friends and artists who shared these interests.

Once he graduated in 2015, though, people dispersed and things started to change.

“College, high school, that all gives you a social life,” Fish said. “But once you’re out of there, it’s up to you to find your new circle. And if the city you’re in doesn’t foster the kind of community you’re looking for, then it makes things really hard.”

Fish viewed Boston as a quieter, more conservative city when it came to the creation and distribution of art. All of the city’s art galleries and institutions, he said, refused to entertain the kind of art he and his peers made — colorful, in your face, bold, raw, direct reflections of what was on their minds. “New York, Los Angeles, San Francisco, on the other hand — those cities have an extensive history with streetwear, art, and skateboarding,” Fish said. “It’s their cultural backbone.”

Faced with the possibility of leaving home after college, Fish decided to take time to travel. He hitchhiked across Central America, lived with a farmer on a French island, and spent time working in LA. But throughout his journeys, Fish found himself drawn back to Boston.

When he returned from Central America, he picked up a job as the marketing director for Janji, an up-and-coming running apparel company based in Somerville. Much time was spent opening pop-up shops and planning events, skills Fish now puts to use in his role as a curator.

Eventually, he felt ready to turn a new page. He left his job in 2017 and picked up traveling again. But he never forgot his dream of establishing a creative space in Boston. So when he wasn’t surfing or helping a farmer make homemade jam on the French island of Oléron, he spent time reaching out to all the Boston-area property owners and managers he could find.

One of those people was Zachary Baum, who was just getting started with a new project in Somerville’s Union Square. After some convincing, Fish landed a 300-square-foot temporary gallery space in Baum’s Bow Market and founded the first EXIT Gallery in November 2018.

“I definitely nagged him quite a bit,” Fish said with a



PHOTOS BY LANE TURNER/GLOBE STAFF

smile, remembering his international pleas to Baum. “I was young and hungry to get started and I’m sure he picked up on that.”

Things got harder once Fish left Bow Market in January. He set up shop in the basement of his friends’ Cambridge tattoo shop, but it didn’t generate enough buzz. He came close to finalizing a deal on an abandoned 7-Eleven in Lower Allston, but that fell through once the real estate company got a better offer. So he spent the next several months pitching the City of Boston, which put him in contact with the Downtown Boston Business Improvement District (BID). After hours of phone calls and what seemed like an endless flow of e-mails, Fish landed access to his current space in Downtown Crossing in July.

Because he doesn’t pay rent, Fish knew EXIT Gallery was a placeholder until the owners found a permanent tenant. But he still treated the place like home. And soon enough, it was full of energy and life. Its featured artists are all young, all entrenched in the sparse New England street art scene. Somerville-based Katie Lane contributed her colorful mixed media to flank the stark white walls. New Hampshire’s Mikey Gallant provided a series of collages, grouped to form one



Top: Founder and curator Sam Fish (left) spoke to Tarik Welch at EXIT Galleries. Above: The pop-up art space looks out onto Washington Street in Downtown Crossing.

massive work of art. Allston’s Chris Sageman has a massive Basquiat-like portrait hanging front and center.

Rosemarie Sansone, who previously served as a city councilor and is currently the BID’s president and CEO, said Fish’s project fit perfectly with what

she and her colleagues hope to achieve in neighborhoods like Downtown Crossing. “We all loved Sam’s vision and wanted to do something unusual with the space that spoke to the downtown setting,” Sansone said by phone. “The public was fascinated with his gallery from

the moment he started constructing it. People were so curious to see what was inside even before it was ready.”

Another fan of EXIT Gallery’s work is Gazit Horizons, the real estate company that owns EXIT’s current building. “[It’s] such a highly visible, va-

cant storefront,” said Chief Investment Officer Alison Lies. “Our goal was to contribute to a very vibrant pedestrian experience, and EXIT accomplishes just that.”

Fish remembers how dark and empty the space looked before moving in. It seemed unsellable. But with a gallery like EXIT, the property was given new life, helping Gazit attract possible buyers.

Fish’s original contract for the Downtown Crossing space ended in August, but his stay was extended into September. Now it’s time to pack up and go. With Boston real estate prices on a steep incline, Fish doesn’t see EXIT landing a permanent space anytime soon.

As he walked up the stairs to show off EXIT’s sprawling gallery, Fish stopped to admire the gray walls surrounding him. “I just wish this could be a permanent spot. A communal space that people can come in and out of, with art all over the walls,” he said. “But I won’t let that little dream slow me down. Once this is done, it’s just off to the next one.”

EXIT Gallery’s closing reception will be held Sept. 28 at 6 p.m., 467 Washington St., Boston. [exitgalleries.com](http://exitgalleries.com)

Chris Triunfo can be reached at [christian.triunfo@globe.com](mailto:christian.triunfo@globe.com)

# ‘Concert for One,’ Emmys for many, and more to see and do

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ton Theatre’s new production of Tom Stoppard’s “Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead,” in which everyone’s favorite forgotten characters from “Hamlet” find themselves “trapped in a world in which they have no control and don’t really have any idea what they are supposed to be doing.” (I know the feeling.) A mix of Shakespeare, slapstick, and a generous sprinkle of Sartre make this enduring oddball of a play “terrifyingly funny” according to Huntington’s artistic director Peter DuBois. (Which come to think of it was the same note I got about my “Crucible” performance.) It runs at Huntington Avenue Theatre through Oct. 20.

**PRIVATE PRACTICE:** If you’ve got neither the time for a full concert nor the patience to deal with other attendees — well, first of all, it sounds like you might need more of a full-fledged vacation than just a weekend. But secondly, you’re in luck because Celebrity Series presents former New England Conservatory student Rayna Yun Chou’s innovative “Concert for One” program (through Sept. 29), which is just what it

sounds like. Visitors to one of the custom-fitted shipping container “venues” on Harvard University’s Science Center Plaza and in Chin Park on the Rose Kennedy Greenway will experience a single, mellifluous minute of music as solo artists (nearly 60 of them, including pianists, vocalists, cellists, and others) go one-on-one with solo audiences. Please note: You will never find a less appropriate time to demand “Free Bird.” Find location and performance info at [www.celebrityseries.org/live-performances/public-performance-projects/](http://www.celebrityseries.org/live-performances/public-performance-projects/).

**BACH IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD:** There’s more to hear in Dorchester than the squeal of the Red Line (though that can actually be weirdly pleasant at certain places). Take Ashmont Hill Chamber Music, the farmore-pleasant chamber music group led by artistic director Mary Beth Alger, whose primary goal is to bring local and touring musicians together for homegrown recitals. Sunday’s season kickoff at Dorchester’s Parish of All Saints is part of an ongoing Bach Project, a collaboration between Alger and All Saints music director and organist Andrew Sheranian, who will be joined for the evening’s



CRAIG F. WALKER/GLOBE STAFF

Members of Ashmont Boy Choir (seen at rehearsal) will be in Ashmont Hill Chamber Music’s season-opening concert.

program by bass-baritone Dashon Burton, baroque violinist Julia McKenzie, and the Ashmont Boy Choir.

**MEAN GIRL:** If you watch “Romy & Michele’s High School Reunion” purely for the Heather Mooney parts, first of all, I’d like to welcome you to my family, and secondly, you still owe Janeane Garofalo a thank you for that performance. Lucky for you, she’ll be at WBUR’s City-Space on Saturday for a rare-in-these-parts stand-up set (she cut her teeth around here, you

know). Dana Cairns opens, and a late show was just added after the first one sold out. (And hey, um, you can’t smoke in here.)

**READY TO RHUMBA:** If you’ve fully recovered from the trauma of experiencing a lime-chiffoned Sean Spicer on “Dancing with the Stars” (which, if I may be forgiven, I did not explicitly warn you to avoid), you may be game for the all-day New England Open Ballroom Dancing Championships, taking place Saturday at James

Powers Hall at Needham Town Hall. And the floor-stomping competition is just the beguining (sorry): Attendees can also step up and participate in workshops, social dancing, and games.

**ART HERSTORY:** And lastly from the outside world this weekend is the MFA’s expansive new exhibition “Women Take the Floor,” a “takeover” of Level 3 of the Art of the Americas Wing devoted entirely to female artists, and as Globe art critic Murray Whyte calls it, a “kick-off exhibition of what’s shaping up to be a sesquicentennial year of self-recriminating atonement” that “as an apology, is holistic, voluminous, endlessly informative, and now and then kind of fun.” Artists on view include Georgia O’Keeffe, Ruth Reeves, Lenore Tawney, Sheila Hicks, Frida Kahlo, Alice Neel, Helen Frankenthaler, Elaine de Kooning, Maud Morgan, and more. It’s up through May 3.

**OR STAY IN:** Because those new Orange Line cars aren’t going anywhere (oftentimes literally). On Netflix, you can catch the weird meta-movie adaptation of Zach Galifianakis’s deeply weird web series “Between Two Ferns,” as it morphs into a star-studded action-adventure/

use of Netflix cash.

On Saturday, you can join me on the couch for “Escaping the NXIVM Cult: A Mother’s Fight to Save Her Daughter,” if only to give Lifetime some props for the quick turnaround. (Seriously though, how?) That’s at 8 p.m.

And on Sunday, it’s the Emmys of course! The self-driving awards show airs at 8 p.m. on Fox, and Globe TV critic Matthew Gilbert has been glaring into his crystal ball for weeks. We’re all actually getting a little worried. Check Sunday’s paper to see his picks for all the big winners (and, technically, way more losers).

And that, good Weekenders, is all I’ve got coming down the tracks this weekend. However you spend it, please wait for passengers to exit the train before entering, and make it one you’ll miss come Monday.

See you next time!  
Want the Globe’s top picks for what to see and do each weekend e-mailed to you? Sign up for the Weekender newsletter at [bostonglobe.com/weekender](http://bostonglobe.com/weekender).

Michael Andor Brodeur can be reached at [mbrodeur@globe.com](mailto:mbrodeur@globe.com). Follow him on Twitter @MBrodeur.