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Talks Apocalypse

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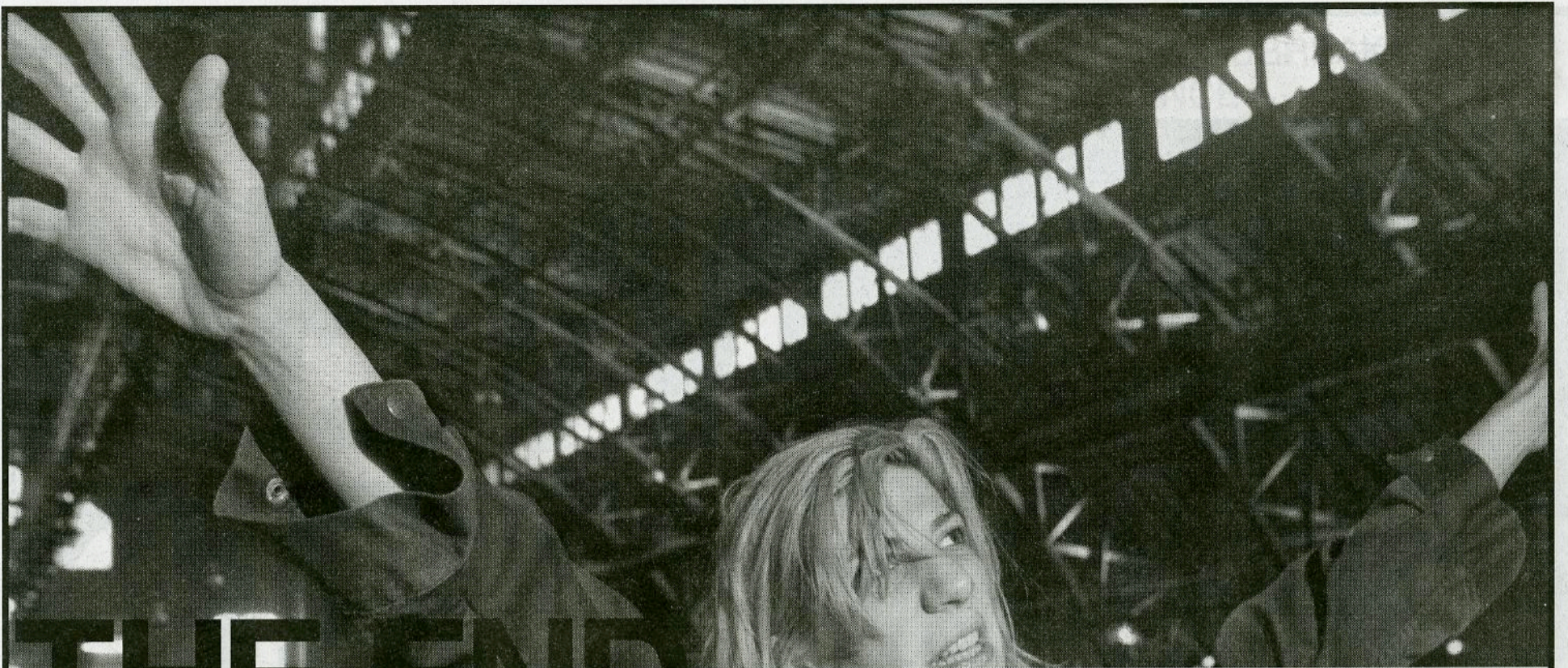
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AND...

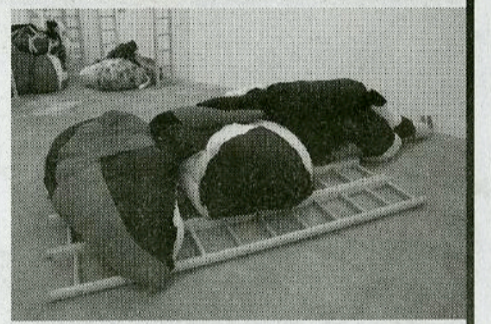
STARS LIKES FLEAS TURNS-ON
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BLAIR MASTBAUM DROPS-OUT

Clothes Encounters
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UP IN ARMORY: AGATHE PHOTOGRAPHED WHILE INSTALLING HER WHITNEY BIENNIAL OFF-SITE PROJECT AT THE SEVENTH REGIMENT ARMORY, MARCH 2008. **RIGHT:** INSTALLATION VIEW OF *MOTHERSHIP*, AT FORTESCUE AVENUE, LONDON, MARCH 2008. PHOTO: J SMITH.



THE END OF THE WORLD AS WE KNOW IT

ARTIST AGATHE SNOW IS FEELING LUCKY

words: Joshua Seidner **photography:** Josh Rothstein
artwork: Courtesy of Agathe Snow and James Fuentes LLC
www.jamesfuentes.com www.fortescueavenue.com

I've only gotten to know Agathe Snow in dissolute spaces. We first met at a birthday party off Central Park West in a dark room filled with gigantic art and a decaying indoor tree. Our sole mission that night was to sneak Merce Cunningham away from conversation and have him show us how his new wheelchair worked. I remember her next in the basement of a makeshift gallery on Mercer, bundled in black fabric, right after she performed in a mock séance for Lily Ludlow. Both of those instances were defined by her discreet charm, her secret smile, and a kooky, cosmic energy. And even though we'd only be able to do this interview while she was installing *Stamina*, her dance disaster contribution to this year's Whitney Biennial at the Seventh Regiment Armory, I expected nothing less than that same strange fortune as before.

Once in the Armory, we started our talk in one of the building's dilapidated libraries. We continued it in one of the wide hallways (lit with neon halogens in anticipation of the upcoming event), and ended up, finally, in a small den, surrounded by cast-iron armor. The mini-tour merely added to my impression of Agathe as being most comfortable in interesting quarters and confines. Each of the rooms we'd been in would be part of her Biennial installation, an expansive, interactive

project that explores more than a few of the same themes as this issue of USELESS.

We've been talking dystopian disasters, crashing asteroids, technology run amok...

So this issue was made for me.

Exactly. One of your shows last year was entitled *No Need to Worry, the Apocalypse has Already Happened*, which envisioned a flooded Manhattan.

I do think apocalyptic stuff has already all happened. My work would have to be about the communication of that, more than anything else. With *Mothership*, it's about voice. The Mother is, like, nature. Even though humans actually try to communicate- even war is fucking communication- there is no communication with nature.

So now in this post-apocalyptic zone, what happened that brought on the communication breakdown with nature?

It's just that nature doesn't live with us. We're part of it, and I don't think we've done anything more or less. But we just can't stop ourselves. We just keep going and going, and the problem is all the fears we have as human beings. We would've been so much smarter if we weren't stuck on religion, or redemption, or punishment. It stops people from actually being. I think we're all naturally good, and I think the future's pretty good, actually. If we realize that all the things we

were the most afraid of already happened, then only good things can happen.

Some of the synthetic materials you use seem to suggest space travel.

I can't wait to go there! I guess it's just a matter of space, more than anything. But the material, like in *The Whale* and *Mothership*, is all given and found. All the fabrics I used are remains of Christophe de Menil's collections from the 80s. I'm always picking up things, keeping them for the right time. Everything is meant for a particular moment.

And *Stamina* is meant for this moment?

Stamina! The kids who work with me decided to call me Agathe Stamina... so that's my new name. I think it's kind of fun.

The event draws from a film in which the characters continually dance in competition until only one is left standing.

They Shoot Horses, Don't They? It's such a good movie. The funny thing about that movie is that they're doing it to die, actually. It's not a hope thing. Their dance is a metaphor for the life we live. They become mechanical in it to keep on going. When your whole movement becomes mechanical, then you can think about things, you know? You don't have to think about where you're going, and stuff like that. The last dance piece, in 2005, was really going back to this moment after 9/11 where we were totally lost, no idea what to

do. It was, like, "Ok, we're all together, we might as well party." But it was super-uncomfortable. I had so much hope that once things blew up, all these things would change. But then New York became America, the super hell. But at least we were all together. That was the first one. But this one is about finally getting New York back. One minute at a time. If everyone decided to do things a minute at a time, you could change the world. Instead of a day at a time, a minute at a time. It's like the new rehab. Just be super conscious of what's happening that minute.

Is it easier for you to switch your mind off when your body is moving mechanically?

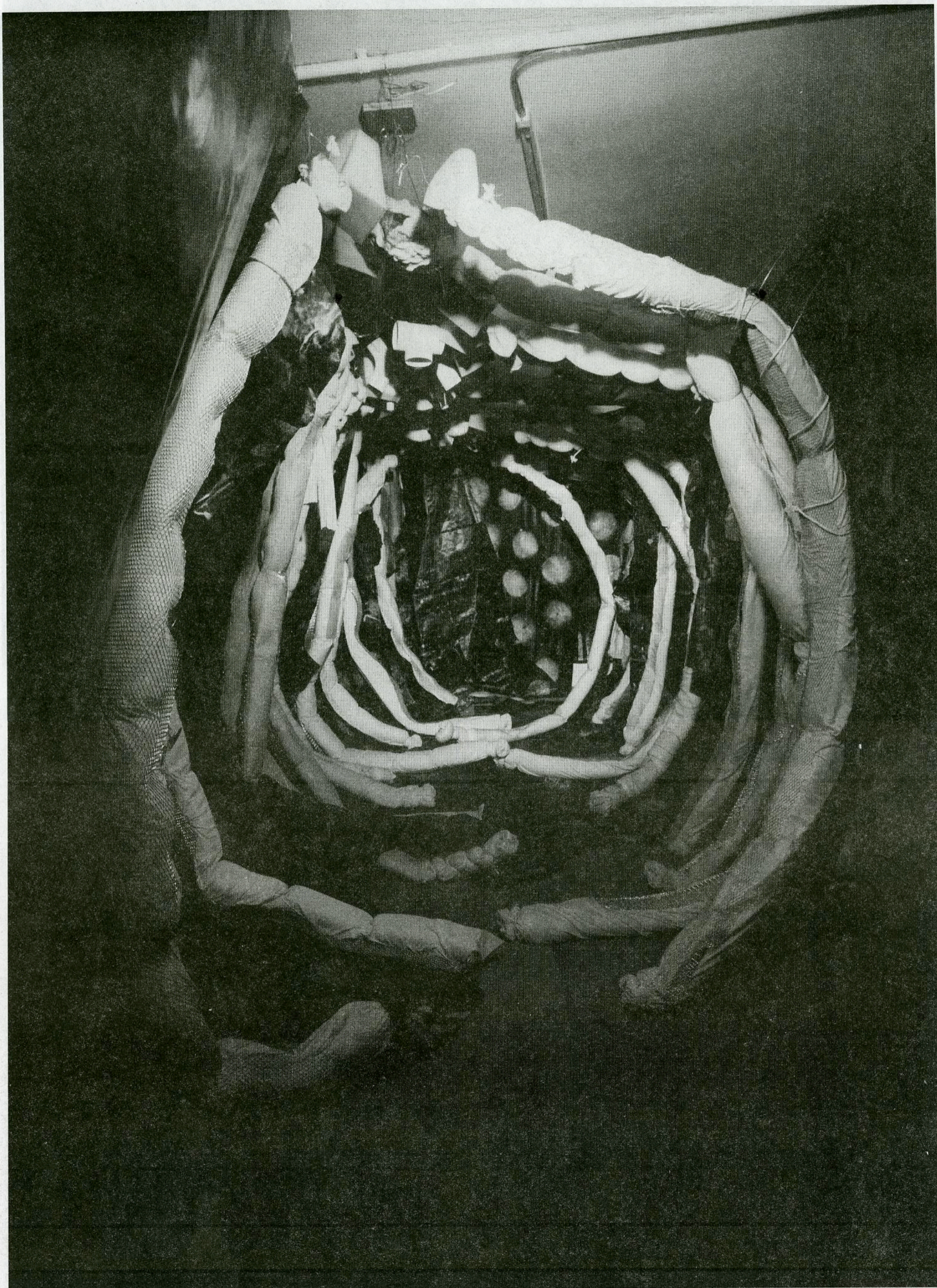
I do all my thinking when I walk or ride my bike or swim. I have problems focusing. I get lost in computers, in information, even though I love chance. I love the computer, and I love Google for that.

The 'I'm Feeling Lucky' button?

So fun! I know that everything I do, there's a purpose for it. But I'm into chance. I've been thinking so much about ideas of perfection. Chance is the most perfect thing because so many things touch it; so many people are involved. Letting people in, letting them move things around, getting angry at them [laughs].

Is there such a thing as perfect, or utopia?

No matter how much I move this shoe, and this shoe, it wouldn't be as good as if I just dropped the show and you walked by and kicked it. I see so much beauty in everything. I'm so amazed by everything all the time. People feel like there's comfort in shit, talking about going back to the gutter all the time. Even in the gutter, I'm like, "This is wonderful!" And I don't feel like I'm working; because I can't believe this is what I do for a living. It's a privilege. But I don't think you can be a perfect artist or you can make perfect art. Who would even be the judge of it?



THE WHALE, 2007, INDUSTRIAL TARP, SAND, ACRYLIC AND OIL, FOAM, COTTON, ROPE, WIRE MESH, WIRE, GAUZE AND PLASTIC, DIMENSIONS VARIABLE, 2007.