



**A THOUSAND CUTS:** Chuck Samuels and Bill Parsons re-create *Psycho* shower scene on story boards

## Exhibits explore psyche, vanity, art as art

**Chuck Samuels and Bill Parsons:**  
**Psychoanalysis**  
**Le Groupe Agriculturel:**  
**A ciegas/série aveugle**  
**When:** Until June 21  
**Donna Nield: Mole Countertops**  
**When:** Until June 1  
**Where:** Gallery 101, 319 Lisgar St.

**A**t the end of Alfred Hitchcock's film *Psycho*, an affable psychiatrist gives the audience an authoritative explanation for the murderer's behavior.

Like a tool guy in a hardware store, the good doctor proffers a shiny key to Norman Bates' psyche: Norman loved his mother too well. When she took a lover, he killed them both, mummified her and enthroned her in the family manse. In her guise, he then murdered any woman who threatened this most perfect and petrified of oedipal relationships. He must make strange with women, for they were all like his mother, treacherous, lecherous and irredeemably alien. Needless to say, the prognosis for transcending the difference between men and women was not good.

Grotesque and dated as that Hitchcockian world may seem, the problem of instinctively making strange with the stranger is still with us. This is the problem Chuck Samuels and Bill Parsons examine in their work, *Psychoanalysis*, at Gallery 101 until June 21.

*Psycho*'s infamous shower scene is a montage of a thousand cuts.

Samuels re-creates the film narrative shot for shot, using black-and-white story boards and large, single-image stills.

But *Psychoanalysis* tells a more complex tale. Samuels pulls Norman Bates/Anthony Perkins and victim Janet Leigh out of the scene, and substitutes a multitude of bathers and killers. The artist takes Perkins' place at the peephole to Leigh's room. Instead of seeing her as the voyeur's object, we see a man stripping down to an armor-plated black bra. He in turn becomes an Asian woman in a bathrobe, who then becomes a black man peeling out of one. With each "cut," a different bather appears, going through Leigh's

shower routine. The voyeuristic pleasure that Hitchcock built into the original scene is short-circuited by these abrupt changes of identity.

When the knife comes down in Samuels' narrative, the strobe light transformations of both killer and victim pit black against white, woman against man, young against old. The most-moving images are of a child's weeping face, and of a black man and a white woman, each holding out a wavering hand in an identical gesture to ward off death.

When the victim slumps over the bathtub's edge, we're shown four dead profiles, including a black child, an older man and Chuck Samuels. The last photograph is a large still, in which Samuels poses as the horrified Norman Bates.

In front of this juxtaposition of the dead and living Samuels, I trod a small circle on the gallery floor. My movement triggered Parsons' interactive soundscape; his tape is a parodic layering of the *Psycho* violins screeching, with Hitchcock's pompous repetition of "It's too hot, it's too hot!" and "Small black hole ... You should see it from this side."

*Psychoanalysis* describes a world where our many differences still incite us to fight or flight. Faced with the task of overcoming differences, our empathy is sorely tried and we may well ask ourselves, will our courage be proved by sword or kiss?