Hoffa distorts life of labor leader with one-sided approach

By Joshua M. Andresen

Danny DeVito does to James R. Hoffa what Oliver Stone did to John F. Kennedy. Hoffa is a biographical film based somewhat on fact, but also on the imaginations of writer David Mamet and director Danny DeVito. They expect Hoffa so much that the film turns out one-sided and boring.

Jack Nicholson plays Jimmy Hoffa, the labor movement leader who shaped the history of the International Brotherhood of Teamsters, the most powerful labor union in America. Nicholson gives an intense acting performance. DeVito plays Bobby Ciaro, a fictional character who is intended to be an analogue of several of Hoffa's lieutenants.

DeVito's role as Hoffa is directed by Mamet, who as a director is known for his theatrical intensity and his preference for intense, emotional performances. This intensity is evident in his portrayal of Hoffa, who is presented as a tough, powerful labor leader who is willing to do whatever it takes to protect the interests of the Teamsters.

The film is not without its flaws. It is at times overly dramatic and情感化, and the supporting characters are often one-dimensional. However, DeVito's performance as Hoffa is a standout, and the film as a whole is a compelling portrait of a powerful labor leader.

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THE ARTS

Corporal Politics reveals the power of the human form

CORPORAL POLITICS
Last Visual Arts Center.
By Deborah A. Lawinson

The body is a strange thing, a mix of lean curves and misshapen lumps, of angles and lines, of functionality and sensuality. It can be an object of beauty or an object of repulsion, depending on how it is portrayed as a whole. It is simultaneously an instrument of power and a symbol of weakness.

Corporal Politics comprises works by eight artists who use the human body as a medium to explore themes of power and control. The most overtly political statements are contained in the double role of actor and director for the first time he did so in 1988, as a peripheral involvement with the Mafia. However, the film turns out one-sided and boring. The waiting period for the next film turns out one-sided and boring.

The final work in Corporal Politics is a large installation by Lilla LoCorto and William O'Rourke in the adjacent Bakalar Gallery. Entitled Self-Portrait, it consists of a giant transparent sphere encompassing four stacked video monitors trapped within a chain-link fence. The three lower pictures fade to different body sections every few seconds. Self-Portrait, created after a friend of the artists died of AIDS-related causes, shows how we are all the same: inhabiting different bodies, but trapped within the same world, and within the same fence of our own imagination. It is a striking work, best viewed alone and in absolute silence.

The most interesting part of this film is the explanation it presents for Hoffa's disappearance. It is creative and amusing, even if it is not at all factual.

If you lived in the era of James R. Hoffa, you will perhaps be better seeing. Otherwise, the film's blandly one-sided picture of the Teamster leader makes it not worth your while.

Other artists in the exhibit use sexual organs to make political statements, as Robert Gober does in his delightful Male and Female Genital Wallpaper, featuring silkscreened "chalk drawings" of genitals in a very funny parody of typical household wallpaper. His untitled boxed sculpture of a dismembered human torso, half-male and half-female, one side with a small, sagging breast, the other with a sparse covering of dark human hair, has a peculiarly somewhat unity to it. Untitled (Candle) is a thick, stubby white candle on a square base covered with what looks like pubic hair, perhaps to show us how ridiculous it is to look upon images of the penis as something forbidden, perhaps to show how even the simplest objects can be sexualized.

Kiki Smith's work also deals with simplicity, among other issues — the simplicity and normality of sperm, of bodily fluids, and of the human procreative system. Her 200 oversized glass sperm tumble over each other on a black background, looking like seminal tadpoles; her series of 12 color jugs, each embossed with the name of a bodily fluid in block-letter type, brings a clinical matter-of-factness to something most people find repulsive.

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