

# UNDER THE WIND OF THE WIND GROUND

## ARTIST-MUSICIAN LIZZI BOUGATSOS PLAYS LIKE FIRE

You can figure out what's cool in the world by milking the verdicts of the monthly In and Out lists. Or, if you're lucky and you live your life believing in people in the long term, in their causes and effects, you can simply look to those who are doing—for lack of a better word—cool things all the time. Lizzi Bougatsos came to New York in 1996, but it's already impossible to think of a downtown New York without her—and not because she always seems to be showing up at the places you're glad to be. More than a few people remember the kinetic art pieces she made with Jess Holzworth under the tag team Boug & Worth, and the loud and lovely art band Actress, which she formed with artists Holzworth, Spencer Sweeney, Hillary Small, and Amy Gartrell. Today is no different. With a fleet of new projects, Bougatsos is still very much in the game—a game that, as one wise New Yorker once put it, changes as you play it.

Bougatsos currently belongs to two bands. Angelblood, started four years ago, is a phantasmagoria of performance, voice, and sound that slides from carefully constructed rhythms to total anarchy and halfway back again. Holzworth (who now lives in L.A.) and artist Rita Ackermann are also in the group, which recently toured Europe with the voodoo sideshow quality these women have been known to induce. Duchampian sets and props are a big part of it, ranging from Haitian-style shrines, kitchen knives, and chandeliers to razors, fruit, and a pig's head. In one

performance Bougatsos appeared chained to an overturned motorcycle and Ackermann's dress accidentally caught fire. The music? An anxious squeal of distorted metal, layered punk, and chants moving in all directions. "Angelblood is about fucking with sound," Bougatsos explains, "but to show the erraticism in the psyche."

Her other band, Gang Gang Dance (which originally formed as a Pat Hearn cover band—yes, we mean Pat Hearn the gallerist), possesses a similar sense of euphoric disturbance. Formed with, among other musicians, her boyfriend, painter Brian Degraw, and Tim Dewitt of Cranium, the band has an admitted feeling in the music "that we're completely going to lose it and go off the edge." That's the moment, of course, when Gang Gang Dance sounds most like heaven and hell.

Music is not Bougatsos's only field of activity. Much of her personal work, as well as her project with Angelblood, involves collage, painting, and radical montage wall murals. Fresh out of college in West Virginia, Bougatsos started working at the aggressively young New York gallery American Fine Arts, fronted by gallerist Colin de Land, and it was there that Boug & Worth produced their wild art attacks. Most memorable was a series of conversations inspired by *Creations*, the performance book by '70s artist Allan Kaprow. Instead of performing the work as they initially intended, the two scribbled their text in black paint across AFA's

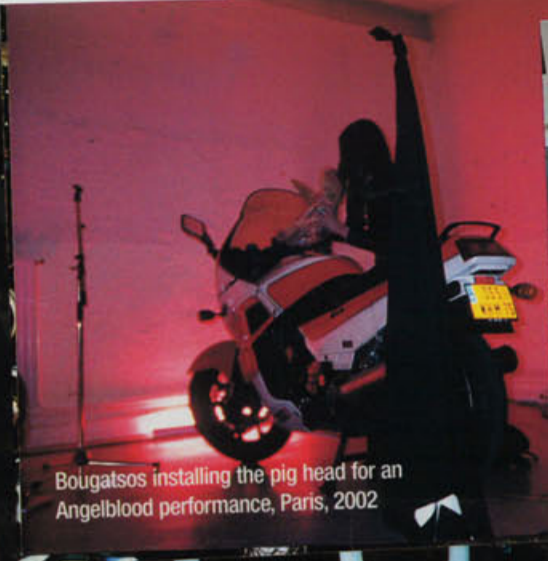
wall. More recently, Bougatsos's paper collages—made from lifted magazine spreads and her own photo album—serve as posters and artwork for Angelblood shows.

All of Bougatsos's productions involve a tightrope walk between life and death. Collage is by nature a violent visual form, and Angelblood's taste for sharp edges lends a macabre to the magic. It is a line Bougatsos knows all too well. Three years ago Actress band mate Hillary Small died unexpectedly. Last year Gang Gang Dance member Nathan Maddox was killed when struck by lightning on a Soho rooftop. In early 2003 gallerist Colin de Land died of cancer, leaving Bougatsos and the other AFA staff with the mission of keeping the gallery, now in Chelsea, open. Bougatsos herself had a close call in early 2001. At a reunion show for Actress she doused herself in alcohol and lit herself on fire Alice Cooper style, suffering severe burns and landing in the hospital. Sometimes Bougatsos walks on slippery wires. All great artists do to get their work where they need it to go. I once saw a wall collage Bougatsos did at AFA of a dangling rose surrounded by a messy scrawl that read NO MORE SUICIDES, I KILLED EVERYONE. Yesterday is razors, furious gods, and fire. Today is life. **Christopher Bollen**

Artwork Lizzi Bougatsos, 2003



Rita Ackermann, Angelblood performance, Hinthouse, Harlem, 2002



Bougatsos installing the pig head for an Angelblood performance, Paris, 2002



Gang Gang Dance recording, Kentucky, 2002



Angelblood performance, "Anti-Pure" opening, Germany, 2003



Angelblood performance, "Anti-Pure" opening, Germany, 2003



Chloë Sevigny, leaving Italian *Vogue* shoot, 2003



Angelblood tour, Paris, 2002



Gang Gang Dance performance, Spa nightclub, NYC, 2001



Angelblood performance, "Anti-Pure" opening, Germany, 2003

Angelblood performance, "Anti-Pure" opening, Germany, 2003



Rita Ackermann, Lizzi Bougatsos, Jess Holzworth, Angelblood performance, Hinthouse, Harlem, 2001



Gang Gang Dance performance, Imitation of Christ show, NY



Angelblood performance, Purple Institute, Paris, 2002



Angelblood performance, "Anti-Pure" opening, Germany, 2003



Angelblood installation, Zurich, Switzerland, 2002



Angelblood performance, "Anti-Pure" opening, Germany, 2003



Early collage Actress installation, 1



Angelblood performance, Purple Institute, Paris, 2002



Udo Kier, Sweden, 2



Mod collage for Bougatsos's solo album, Try to Remember