

# Wonderland audio project lets residents soar

BY ED BOWERS

**T**HE office of the Luggage Store Annex, at 509 Ellis St. off Leavenworth, doesn't look glamorous. It has bare white walls and there is an old-fashioned lawn mower, an aluminum step-ladder, and a computer capable of recording the spoken word. The few artifacts in this room combine the '50s with the 21st century.

From an archetypal Jungian perspective, the lawn mower and the step-ladder are perfect in this context. Ranu Mukherjee and Mike Maurillo, the two individuals in charge of this operation, are not letting any grass grow under their feet.

They want this project to provide the citizens of the Tenderloin, an endangered metropolitan species, a chance to climb an aluminum stairway to the stars by expressing themselves through art, poetry and music so they can soar past their clichéd images like magnificent prehistoric pterodactyls into the Western sky.

I was invited there on Sept. 23 to read one hour of my hateful, demented, sad and quite frankly weird poetry to be used on a radio show sponsored by Wonderland, an art exhibition focusing on artists, writers and musicians in the Tenderloin.

Wonderland consists of 13 groups of artists who mostly live or work in the Tenderloin and was organized by international curator Lance Fung.

Mukherjee and Maurillo are recording poetry written by Tenderloin denizens to be read on an underground radio station that I was asked not to name because it is in conflict with the wonderful Federal Communications



**Mike Maurillo and Ranu Mukherjee, working on the Tender Transmissions project for Wonderland, with their aluminum stairway to stardom.**

Commission. It seems like everything I do is turning illegal.

Besides poetry, this ambitious audio project, called Tender Transmissions, also includes 33 children from the Glide Foundation Chorus, 10 seniors and young people interviewed on the subject of love, half a dozen people investigating fear by being blindfolded and led down the streets while recording ambient sounds and conversations, a screenplay derived from interviews with anonymous erotic dancers, and more.

Mukherjee and Maurillo are sincere and dedicated and smart enough to know that liv-

ing art is created by little people who are alive and invisible and who big people step on. All life comes from invisible microbes. Without bacteria there would be no oxygen. The lotus grows out of mud. I hate stating the obvious.

I asked Mukherjee and Maurillo if Wonderland would be ongoing, and they said they hoped it would be repeated in the future.

Please give them all the support possible. There will be a Wonderland symposium on Oct. 17 from noon to 6 p.m. at the Warfield theater.

I want this to be a success.

The unique souls who are attempting to survive in San Francisco and have nowhere else to live but the Tenderloin are living under a sword of Damocles.

A lot of people with vested interests want these individuals to die and be gone. Many here have been sliced in half by a sword of Damocles, sometimes called by the name of progress, and now they're sleeping on the streets.

They could be dead instead of sleeping and nobody would care. The average citizen suffering from anomie would step over them on his way to a high-paying job.

Bring some light to this area while respecting its citizens. Support Wonderland. Support the Tenderloin's citizens, too. Prevent them from dying on the streets and encourage them to express themselves. You might not like what they express, but that's good. Real art forces you to see what you do not want to see. It enlightens you.

Mukherjee and Maurillo can be contacted at 509 Ellis, 279-2314 or 6.blogspot.com.

Help this project and change the Tenderloin into Wonderland. ■

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