

# Flash Art

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## MARGARET WELSH PROJECT ROOM

Walking into Margaret Welsh's installation three things quickly grab attention: the words "pure mood" in neon in the front window, a large photograph of the artist dressed as Spock from *Star Trek*, and a soapy, herbal scent in the air. Registering moments later is a video of psychedelic swirls blending into footage of Bruce Lee. Two bubble-making machines are filling the back room with hundreds of thick aromatic bubbles, making the air so dense as to be difficult to breath. Outside of the room is a list denoting the bubbles as a "aroma therapy" mixture and its positive effects, including a calming influence and release of tension.

The immediate thought is of some sort of spaced-out new-agedness. And while this partly holds through a more thought out analysis, it doesn't fit quite right. First, the image of Welsh as Spock, the pinnacle of logic from the future, raises a doubting eyebrow on the whole new age business. Also, the presence of Bruce Lee, an emblem of controlled violence and action is at odds with the hippie atmosphere.

Welsh's project embraces the whiz-bang effect of immediate attraction. Everything in the space is an encounter. It all has a pull to it; the gaze of the Spock photo, the dynamics of Bruce Lee's martial artistry and the cloying scent of the bubbles. It is difficult to make all of the elements fit together, but harder still to resist trying. In the end, the work speaks of the desire to unify everything, as attempted by many new age theories. Delightfully, there is a lack of resolution, one is pulled in separate directions by the attractive forces of each element, leaving the desire, rather than a stark finished definition.

**Karl Erickson**



MARGARET WELSH, Self Portrait as a Higher Life Form, 1997. Nova Jet Print, 32 x 46".