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SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 2, 2008 ■ SECTION F

Art sustains, educates, attacks our front lawn

Arthouse display spreads
culture of edible gardening

By **Jeanne Claire van Ryzin**

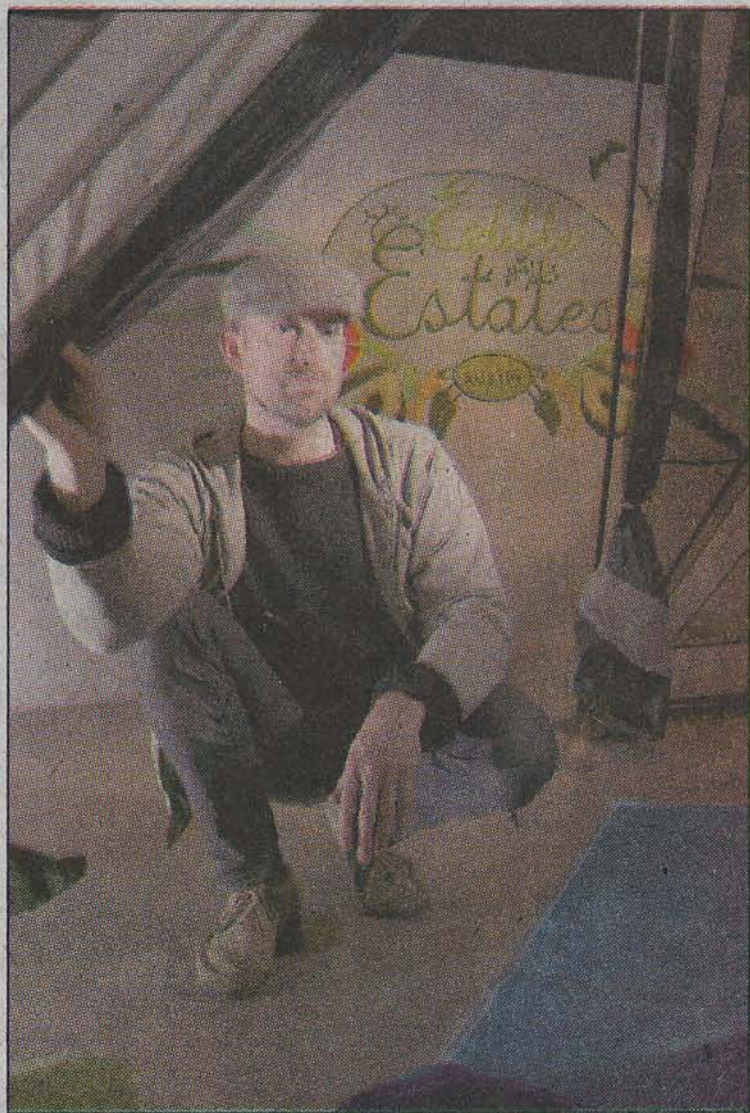
AMERICAN-STATESMAN ARTS WRITER

No, "Attack on the Front Lawn" doesn't look like an exhibit you might typically find in a contemporary arts venue such as Arthouse. But then it might be a bit of a stretch to call "Attack," which runs through March 16, an exhibit.

That's because Los Angeles-based artist and architect Fritz Haeg has set up what is essentially a community resource center on sustainable gardening, a small greenhouse and a funky gathering space.

A large-screened, geodesic-domed tent occupies Arthouse's main gallery. The tent serves as the base site for "How to Eat Austin," a weekly series of free Saturday workshops related to sustainable food production, from compost and garden design to cooking and marketing a harvest. Several of the gallery walls are covered with corkboard onto which informational materials on sustainable gar-

See **ART**, F7



Mark Matson FOR AMERICAN-STATESMAN

Fritz Haeg turned Austin's Arthouse into a greenhouse for 'Attack on the Front Lawn.'

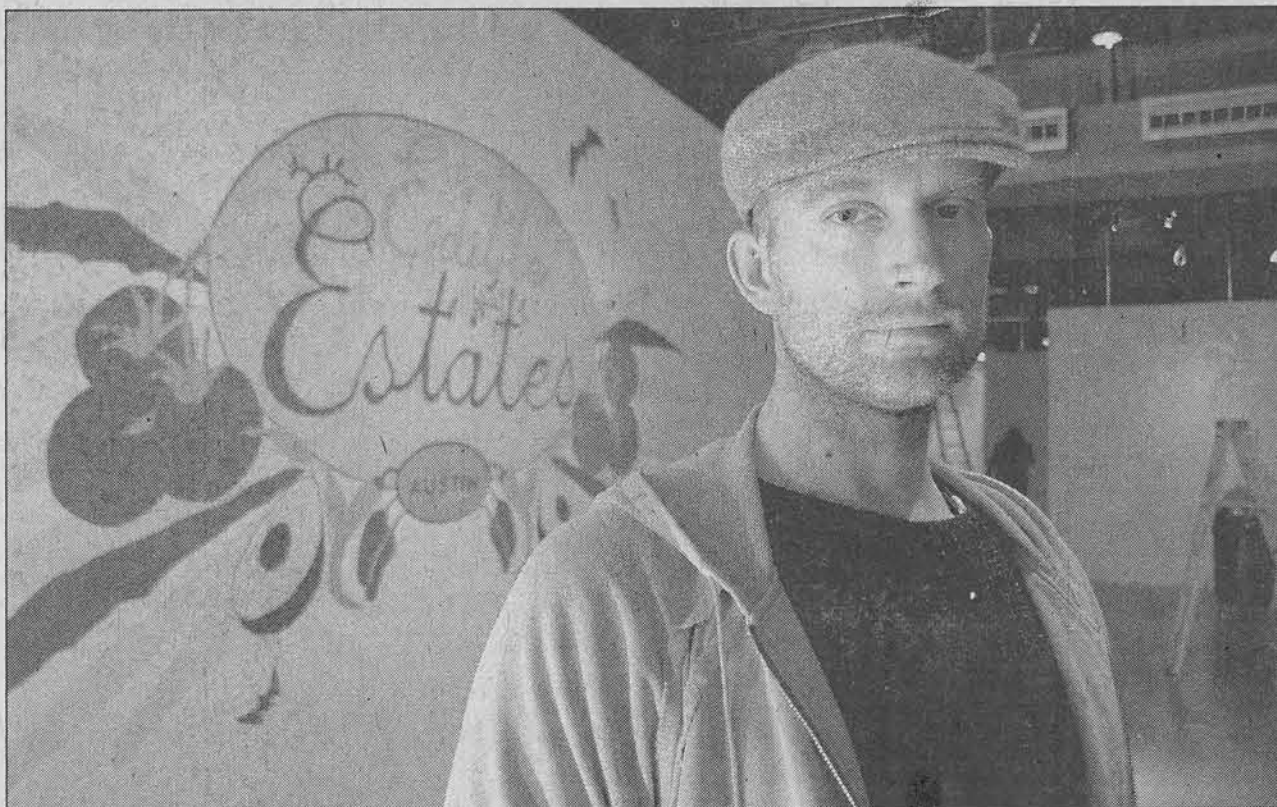
'Fritz Haeg: Attack on the Front Lawn'

When: 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. Tuesdays-Fridays
(Thursdays until 9 p.m.), 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.
Saturdays, 1 to 5 p.m. Sundays through
March 16

Where: Arthouse at the Jones Center, 700
Congress Ave.

Cost: Free

Information: 453-5312, www.arthouse.texas.org



Mark Matson FOR AMERICAN-STATESMAN

Fritz Haeg calls his gardens 'Edible Estates.' He will leave behind a community garden in an affordable housing complex in Austin. He's started gardens across the U.S. and in London.

ART: Exhibit offers workshops and brochures, leaves behind gardens

Continued from F1

dening and food production are tacked. Inside the tent are mats and pillows, beckoning you to crawl in and lounge and read.

Metal shelves line the floor-to-ceiling gallery windows that face busy, traffic-filled Congress Avenue and are filled with trays of seedling pots. Once the seedlings — all vegetables and herbs — get established, they'll be transferred to Sierra Ridge, a South Austin affordable-living apartment complex managed by the non-profit organization Foundation Communities, where in mid-March Haeg will transform a patch of public lawn into a community garden.

The South Austin garden will be the fifth in Haeg's "Edible Estates" project, where he has replaced domestic front lawns — the chemical-fed, water-hungry, climate-defying green patches that have come to symbolize, as Haeg sees it, conformity and excess — with edible landscapes appropriate to local culture and climate. The first "edible estate" was planted in the front yard of a house in Salina, Kan., the geographic center of the United States. Since then, Haeg has planted gardens in Southern California, New Jersey and in a public park in London. Large color photographs of the first four edible estates — all of which are still functioning gardens — fill the walls of one gallery at Arthouse.

"I knew I wanted to do a project ... that could be equally important to everyone no matter what their experience," Haeg said, taking a break from planting seeds last week before the exhibit opened. "Usually a contemporary art institution is pretty isolated from anything outside itself. I don't want to

be a part of that. I think the goal of the artist is to communicate to everyone."

Attention to food and the land it is grown on is what Haeg is hoping to communicate through his exhibit, workshops and projects. Collaboration is everything. Unlike most solo exhibitions that occupy contemporary arts venues, Haeg's is not a creative experiment that focuses solely on himself or his point of view or his monumental art objects. Haeg's work is about actions, not stuff.

"I hadn't been to Austin before I started working on this project," he said. "So I have to rely on those who know this place and this climate and growing patterns better than I do." The Sustainable Food Center, Travis County Master Gardeners and Geo Growers are just a few of the local organizations with which Haeg and

Arthouse have collaborated on developing workshops. A free brochure outlining how to make your own edible garden — printed on recycled paper, of course — is available for exhibit visitors. Anyone who would like to add a picture of their own garden of edibles to a giant map of Austin that's been painted on an Arthouse gallery wall is invited to do so.

And after Haeg plants the South Austin vegetable garden from March 14-16, it will belong solely to the Sierra Ridge residents for them to care for and harvest for food.

"I want to be using my skills as an architect to do things that are more about life than objects or buildings," Haeg said. "Really, anyone can (plant an edible garden) and have a monumental impact."

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'How to Eat Austin' workshops

When: 3 p.m. Saturdays through March 8

Tickets: Free

Today: 'Your Dirt,' compost workshop with George Altgelt, Geo Growers

Feb. 9: 'Your Plants,' planting and growing food in Austin and Central Texas with Patty Leander, Travis County Master Gardeners

Feb. 16: 'Your Labor,' workshop on caring for an edible garden with Sustainable Food Center Community and Youth Gardening program

Feb. 23: 'Your Children,' workshop on making gardens for children, schools and students with Martha Cason, Garza Independence High School

March 1: 'Your Food,' cooking with homegrown produce with Sustainable Food Center's The Happy Kitchen/La Cocina Alegre program

March 8: 'Your Market,' marketing opportunities for backyard gardeners with Andrew Smiley, Sustainable Food Center