

Contents

3 | Theater

Staging 'The Black Album'

4 | Sports

Confessions of a TV golf addict

8 | Books

Once upon a time in East London...

Collecting: Secrets of the art sleuths

9 | Design

Onlab creates an image with narrative ▶



Domus Cover 922, February 2009

6-7 | Cover story Art

The Internet as art

In the digital age, the medium is the new message



COVER ILLUSTRATION: VUK COSIC

10 | Top Picks

Early van Gogh landscapes

Jeff Koons ▶ meets Popeye



11 | Taste

America's French Founding Father

12 | Time Off

Our arts and culture calendar

WEEKEND JOURNAL

EUROPE

Craig Winneker EDITOR
Barbara Tina Fuhr DEPUTY EDITOR
Fahire Kurt ART DIRECTOR
Elisabeth Limber ASSISTANT ART DIRECTOR
Brian M. Carney TASTE PAGE EDITOR

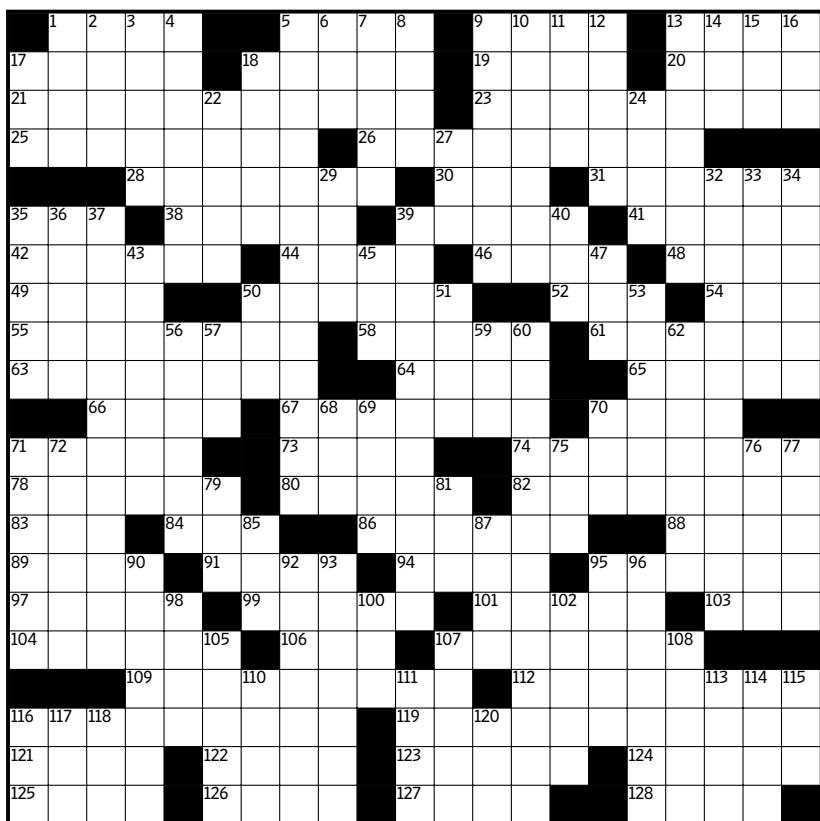
Questions or comments? Write to wsje.weekend@wsj.com. Please include your full name and address.

THE JOURNAL CROSSWORD / Edited by Mike Shenk

Across

- | | | | |
|--|-----------------------------------|--|-------------------------------|
| 1 "I Lost It at the Movies" writer Pauline | 18 It's worth 100 sawbucks | 30 Galoot | 41 Singer played by Spacey |
| 5 "Yeah, man!" | 19 Former Nationals manager Manny | 31 Offers donuts to dieters, for example | 42 Company men |
| 9 Soapy mineral | 20 Grant Wood's home | 35 It may cause a division in the board | 44 Communications prefix |
| 13 Popular first-person shooter game | 21 4, for 2 and 8, e.g. | 38 Folder's phrase | 46 Sp. miss |
| 17 French city near the Belgian border | 23 ABBA, for one | 39 Treasury secretary under Harding, Coolidge and Hoover | 48 The Luxor Bridge spans it |
| | 25 Against | | 49 Nation on the Gulf of Aden |
| | 26 Gibbon | | 50 Dodge truck |
| | 28 Lockups | | 52 Buried |

Egotism / by Randolph Ross



- | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|--------------------|----------------|--------------------------------|------------------------|---------|---------------------|-------------------|---------------|----------------------|------------------------------|--------------------|------------------------|----------------------------|----------------|--------------------------|----------------------------------|-----------------|------------------------|------------------------|---------------------|-----------|-----------------------|------------------------|---------------------------------|-----------------------|---------|-----------------------|-----------------|---|-----------------------------|-------------------------------|--------------|--------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------|----------------|----------------------------|-----------------------------|----------------------|------------------|-------------------------|---------------------|
| 54 Ancient Iranian | 55 Phone check | 58 Smart : KAOS :: Bond : ____ | 61 Germ fighter Joseph | 63 Case | 64 King of the road | 65 Playwright Zoë | 66 Unruly dos | 67 Notable newspaper | 70 On ____ (in little space) | 71 Pirate potables | 73 Formula in a cellar | 74 It's taken into account | 78 Au follower | 80 Taking the wrong way? | 82 Show with a "Waterloo" encore | 83 Good service | 84 Afternoon refresher | 86 Like the Everglades | 88 Adm.'s underling | 89 Broken | 91 Cappuccino feature | 94 Petri dish material | 95 Took advantage of, with "on" | 97 Like some feelings | 99 Dear | 101 Trio of goddesses | 103 For example | 104 He was preceded and followed by Churchill | 106 Govt. property overseer | 107 Go in separate directions | 109 Confused | 112 Facility | 116 Call from a balcony | 119 Grasshopper oponent | 121 TV explorer | 122 Unescorted | 123 Actors Bruce and Laura | 124 Typical man's shoe size | 125 Borrowing burden | 126 LAPD figures | 127 Card game for three | 128 Squat amphibian |
|--------------------|----------------|--------------------------------|------------------------|---------|---------------------|-------------------|---------------|----------------------|------------------------------|--------------------|------------------------|----------------------------|----------------|--------------------------|----------------------------------|-----------------|------------------------|------------------------|---------------------|-----------|-----------------------|------------------------|---------------------------------|-----------------------|---------|-----------------------|-----------------|---|-----------------------------|-------------------------------|--------------|--------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------|----------------|----------------------------|-----------------------------|----------------------|------------------|-------------------------|---------------------|

Down

- | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|--------------------------|-------------|--------------|-------------|----------------------------------|--------------------|-----------------------------------|---------------------------|--------------|------------------|---------------|------------|---|------------------------|---------------------|--------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------------|------------------------------------|---------------|-----------------------|-----------------|--------------------------|--------------------------------|-----------------------|-------------|-----------------------|------------------------|------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| 1 Capital on the Dnieper | 2 Burn balm | 3 Glue brand | 4 Blurt out | 5 Part of a mortgage application | 6 Observatory roof | 7 They may be used for bk. titles | 8 Gift from one's parents | 9 Anklebones | 10 Deeply desire | 11 Long dist. | 12 Charged | 13 Comedian Clay's nickname, with "the" | 14 Sound of wonderment | 15 Be in arrears to | 16 "Open a New Window" musical | 17 Alternative to JFK | 18 Closing camp, familiarly | 22 Rational and irrational numbers | 24 Tore along | 27 G, in the key of C | 29 Make a stink | 32 September awards show | 33 Popular vote winner of 1876 | 34 Contemptuous looks | 35 Art pens | 36 "The results ____" | 37 Friedan's following | 39 Offer to compromise | 40 Highest degree | 43 "Almost done!" |
|--------------------------|-------------|--------------|-------------|----------------------------------|--------------------|-----------------------------------|---------------------------|--------------|------------------|---------------|------------|---|------------------------|---------------------|--------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------------|------------------------------------|---------------|-----------------------|-----------------|--------------------------|--------------------------------|-----------------------|-------------|-----------------------|------------------------|------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|

- | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|----------------------|-----------------|----------------------------------|------------------------|----------------|-----------------------|----------------|-----------------|----------------------------|-----------------|--------------|---------------|-------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------|-----------------------|-----------------|------------|---------------------------|-----------------------|--------------------|----------------------------------|-----------------------|---------|--------------|--------------------------|------------------|---|------------|-----------------------------|-------------------|------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------|--------------|-------------------|-----------------------|------------------|---------------|-----------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| 45 Argentine article | 47 Have the flu | 50 Patton was awarded one in WWI | 51 Elvis's middle name | 53 Royal crown | 56 Makes an easy putt | 57 Print units | 59 Govt. lender | 60 Property value enhancer | 62 Slalom, e.g. | 68 Code word | 69 Knocks off | 70 Where to find your balance | 71 Word in the MGM motto | 72 Take back | 75 Congressional vote | 76 Half of a 45 | 77 Overdue | 79 Battle of Britain org. | 81 Graffiti signature | 85 Grammy category | 87 Hawaiian food fish, for short | 90 Salami or pastrami | 92 Case | 93 Screws up | 95 Examine syntactically | 96 Military unit | 98 "The Biggest Little City in the World" | 100 Rascal | 102 Has a novel experience? | 105 Court figures | 107 Poet Walcott | 108 Film composer Morricone | 110 Synthesizer surname | 111 Some TVs | 113 Vulcan's home | 114 Backyard building | 115 Brief moment | 116 Unmatched | 117 Future fish | 118 Bubble, essentially | 120 Significant stretch |
|----------------------|-----------------|----------------------------------|------------------------|----------------|-----------------------|----------------|-----------------|----------------------------|-----------------|--------------|---------------|-------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------|-----------------------|-----------------|------------|---------------------------|-----------------------|--------------------|----------------------------------|-----------------------|---------|--------------|--------------------------|------------------|---|------------|-----------------------------|-------------------|------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------|--------------|-------------------|-----------------------|------------------|---------------|-----------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|

Last Week's Solution



WSJ.com

Crossword online
 For an interactive version of The Wall Street Journal Crossword, WSJ.com subscribers can go to WSJ.com/WeekendJournal

Kureishi remixes 'The Black Album'

With the stage adaptation of his novel, the acclaimed author hopes to find contemporary meaning in a 1980s controversy

BY ELIZABETH FITZHERBERT
Special to *The Wall Street Journal*

BRITISH NOVELIST and playwright Hanif Kureishi wants the stage adaptation of his novel "The Black Album" to appear contemporary, but also "to somehow show how we got to be where we are today." Although it is a portrait of the 1980s, he says, "a lot of the arguments are still current."

The new production is playing at London's National Theatre until Oct. 7. The novel, first published in 1995, was the now 54-year-old author's response to the fatwa imposed on his friend, Salman Rushdie, following the publication of Mr. Rushdie's fourth book, "The Satanic Verses."

Mr. Kureishi says he became fascinated by the reaction to the fatwa among people in his own community who had been born and brought up in Britain to Muslim parents—people who had grown up becoming "liberal and British" but were suddenly going the other way. "I wanted to understand why they would want to kill a writer of whom they should have been proud," he says.

Set in 1989 against a backdrop of pop videos, Prince music and pill-popping raves, "The Black Album" follows the journey of a young Asian student, Sahid Hassan, as he drifts through a second-rate London college. Falling under the influence of religious extremists who try to recruit him, Sahid is torn between his traditional Muslim upbringing and his hedonistic college lifestyle.

We spoke to Mr. Kureishi, who also teaches creative writing at Kingston University, about the challenges of adapting his novel to the stage.

Q: When and why did you decide to turn "The Black Album" into a play?

Somebody asked me to do it as a film and I automatically said no. However, I had been wanting to work with the director, Jantinda Varma, for some time, as I had known him since the 1970s, so I looked at it again in view of doing



it as a play. I was worried that it was too frivolous. When I wrote it none of the bad things that have happened, had happened. The triggers in the book are often comic, so Jantinda and I talked about how we could make it both serious and comic. We didn't want to lose the change inherent in that kind of a deal. So we just kept on working

until we found the right balance.

Q: When you were writing the book did you imagine that it would have as much relevance today?

This was my second novel after "The Buddha of Suburbia." My first book was a historical piece. I was writing about things that hap-



Clockwise from left: Hanif Kureishi at rehearsals for his stage adaptation of 'The Black Album'; Tanya Franks as Deedee Osgood; Nitin Kundra as Chad, Alexander Andreou as Riaz al Hussain and Shereen Martineau as Tahira; below, the cast during a performance.

pened ages before, whereas "The Black Album" was happening around me at the time. I think people were a bit puzzled about why I was writing about this obscure, rather marginal, group of people who were very interested in extreme religion. I was just fascinated by this extreme right-wing ideology which had just grown out of these kids that had been born and brought up in Britain.

Q: Were the characters based on anybody you knew at all?

To be honest, I can't remember. I guess to begin with they were. I did meet quite a number of them, but, in the end, you create a character. That is what I do for a living, I make up characters. If you look at my work, they are all characters and they all have their own independent life.

Q: What were the creative challenges of turning the book into a play?

First we had to strip the book down as there are lots of different scenes, in pubs and bars, in apartments, in cars. You have to take all that out. You need much longer, and more limited, scenes—otherwise you are changing scenes the whole time. We had to take out a lot of things, too, and had to script everything into dialogue and limit the number of characters. We have actors who are playing two or three roles each. They have to have time to run off and change their clothes, so that had to be taken into consideration with rewriting the dialogue.

Q: How involved were you with the casting? Where did you find the actors?

Jantinda, the director, found the actors. He has worked in the theater all his life. All the directors I have worked with that are good—and I have worked with many good directors—are all very good at casting. They are slightly better at it than me. They know how to audition actors and who to speak to. We have found a really

good group of actors. Most of them are just out of drama school. I trust them entirely.

Q: How involved were you during rehearsals?

I came in most days for a bit. We would jiggle the dialogue and talk about this and that. You are really there for the director to talk to. The director is the boss and, if the director has lots of questions and wants to discuss things, you really have to be there to answer them. I would say things like, "It's not clear what they are doing there" or, "If you change the dialogue that would be better." It continues to be creative and we are still working on it. We probably will do right up until the end of the run.

Q: Are you hoping to reach an audience that hasn't read the book?

I hope so. We are going to tour it until the end of the year but then I hope it will come back to the National, and then we might continue to tour it. This is always the question with the theater, as opposed to movies: Who goes to the theater? What sort of audiences are you reaching? Can you get outside the normal people who go to The National Theatre? One way to do that might be by touring. Now that we have it up and running hopefully we can keep on playing. It is not a heavy, boring show about fundamentalism. It is lively and funny and has a lot going on.

Q: The singer Prince has a big influence on "The Black Album." What does his music mean to you?

It doesn't mean anything much to me now, to be honest, but in those days, it was really black music passing over into white mainstream. Later on, all the white kids were listening to rap music. This was the first time that rap music was really accepted into the mainstream of the white world. Also Prince's sexual ambiguity, his weirdness and his incredible creativity were all extremely fresh.

Q: This is your first book-to-stage adaptation. Would you like to do more?

Some of my other work has already been adapted to the stage but not by me: "My Beautiful Laundrette," "Buddha of Suburbia" has been done, as well as "The Mother." I did a lot of work adapting "The Black Album." It is almost like an original piece. It is very complex. Most stage adaptations tend to simplify. They often simplify too much. I wouldn't mind doing another one, although I can't think which one I would do.

Q: You don't mind other people adapting your works to the stage?

No. I am very happy for other people to do them. If they screw it up, that's their problem. If they do it well, I am absolutely delighted. I work in film and theater which is a club and that's what it's for. I don't think you should be too precious about your work.



Talula Sheppard (6)

Confessions of a TV golf addict

The game has changed a lot since Dad watched in the den; fewer plaid trousers

LONG AFTER I WAS FORCED to abandon the youthful delusion that my natural athleticism would allow me to master a sport so inherently un-masterable, so nefariously nuanced and niggling as golf, my one revenge against the game was a vow to never watch it on TV.

If golf was to so mercilessly expose my shortcomings, then I would steadfastly refuse to expose myself to it any more than necessary.

Golf Journal

CHARLES SIEBERT

Of course, with my having come of age in the 1960s and '70s, this was not a particularly difficult stance to maintain. Golf on TV back then was a notch below even professional bowling in terms of excitement and exactly on par with it in my mind in terms of the "ennui factor"—the stultifying complacency of suburban-den Saturdays wherein sleepy, overworked fathers slouched beside beanbag ashtrays, their torpor barely disrupted by the intermittent ball swipes, muffled applause and hushed announcer voices emanating from curtained-speaker TV consoles everywhere.

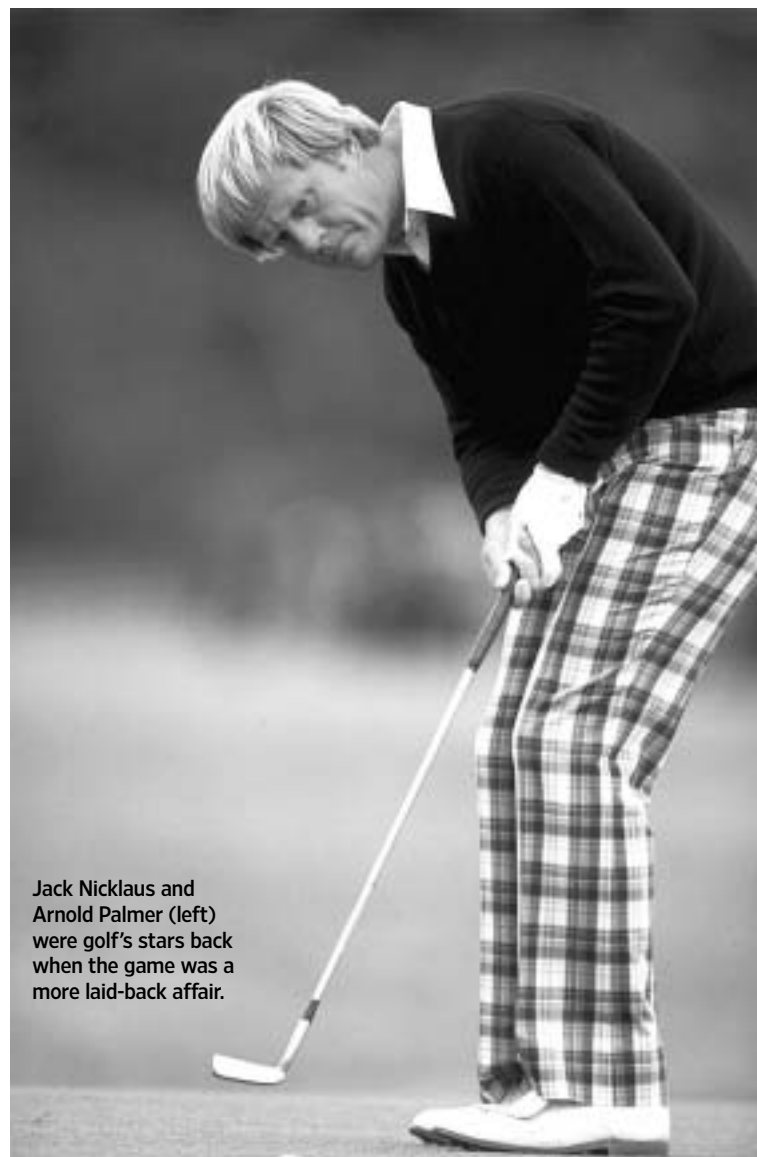
Golf on TV was for me synonymous with stasis and senescence and surrender: a world of plaid-trousered men with Banlon-bulged midriffs being watched by the very same, the only difference being that the guys on the screen moved around a bit more.

All of which makes the forthcoming confession quite difficult: I have, in recent years, taken to watching golf on television. I don't mean the occasional late-Sunday-afternoon peek at the final round of a major. I'm watching things like the Dubai Classic, the European Tour and match-play competitions between Big Ten colleges. Why not, I tell myself, witness the evolution of the next Tiger Woods? Or Annika Sörenstam?

I've also found myself checking into early-round coverage on Thursday and Friday afternoons, one of the luxuries of working at home as I do and the only way, I've discovered, to get a feel for the entire narrative arc of a given tournament. A sense for which golfers are confidently shaping their shots and which are just struggling to make them. I've learned to discern such things. I pay careful attention to the analysts' banter, and the intricately contoured, computer-simulated course descriptions, and the slow-motion—"stop it right there!"—swing breakdowns. I can spot now when a left shoulder is flying out or when someone's weight is too far forward and his or her arm is getting blocked.

Of course, being married to another work-at-home writer, one who, like myself, rarely watches TV of any kind, I've had no way of concealing this new addiction of mine.

"Have you lost your mind?" I remember my wife, Bex, asking the first time she caught me sitting in the living room on a Friday afternoon, transfixed before that undulant canvas of iridescent green, dabbed here and there with huge, amoeba-like splotches of pearly white sand.



Jack Nicklaus and Arnold Palmer (left) were golf's stars back when the game was a more laid-back affair.

Getty Images (2)

"Yes," I said, sheepishly. "I think I have."

Clearly my own advancing age had something to do with this. The golf-watching impulse began to emerge some six or seven years ago, in my late 40s, when one comes to appreciate nuances previously obscured by youthful frenzy. But there was more to this than the onset of the very stasis I so rebelled against in my younger years.

At first, I blamed it all on you know who. It wasn't, I protested, golf per se that I'd become interested in so much as it was "Tiger." Excellence and dominance like that, in any endeavor, is just intriguing, as the exponential increase in golf's fan base since Mr. Woods's emergence would attest.

I remember one Sunday afternoon some years ago when I was

forced by two whining dogs with full bladders away from the coverage of yet another major that Mr. Woods was well on his way to claiming. I dashed to the park across from my apartment building and was met there by a young attorney named Catherine with whom I often leisurely chat while our dogs dash madly around us. On this day, however, we both noted each other's unusually testy, tight-lipped demeanor. Catherine kept checking her watch and then, just as I was about to call my dogs, she abruptly called in hers and started away.

"Tiger," she said, turning back with a mischievous grin. "He's already on the back nine."

Reams have been written by now about the genius of Tiger Woods. For me, however, the feature of his play that first drew me to it and now

to the many subtleties of golf in general is the suppleness and sensuality of his ball striking, so apparent that it suddenly informed and animated for me that formerly dead space between a televised golf swing and its result. Clearly the great golfers of yore possessed a similar touch and mental toughness. But somehow with today's enhanced, close-up, multi-angled, microphoned and replayed coverage (to say nothing of the improvements in equipment and course design) golfers have come to resemble fly fishermen casting underhanded, the ball going out from their clubs on a flowing line to a desired spot, a dynamic which we can now observe and, in some ways, appreciate better on TV than if we were standing there on the tee.

Whether Mr. Woods's play induced the coverage to rise up to meet it, or the two occurred coincidentally, no sport has been better served by the current technological advances in television than golf.

Somehow the deadening disconnect between the golfer's swing and its distant result, all the wispy-thin club swipes and ball plops of yesteryear, the soundless treading, muffled winds and hand claps that used to double me over with depression, has now given way to something far more textured, and dynamic, and, well, dare I say this, sexy.

Golf may never be the stuff of rock 'n' roll, but neither must it remain exclusively mired in the mausoleum-like solemnity of the Masters. I read not long ago a popular TV critic getting all in a huff about how commercial and rowdy golf coverage is becoming, slamming the

networks for marginalizing the actual competition in their "stop-at-nothing quest to attract younger viewers." It's a claim which, while preposterous in my mind, does help to further offset my fears about premature senescence. I happen to like the fist pumping, high-fiving, and mindless exhortations that one now witnesses at tournaments, right down to the cheering hordes of beer swillers around the par-three 16th green at the FBR Open (formerly the Phoenix Open). Somehow, my tuning into golf has made me a member of that very target audience to which no middle-aged man minds belonging. Watching golf, it seems, has made me downright hip.

Well, that may be going a bit too far. This is golf, after all, muted, manicured and mind-wrenchingly staid, like trying to dance soulfully with your feet nailed down, all the dynamism flowing from a preternatural stillness and balance, both psychological and physical. Golfers are, by definition, withheld, which is why they and their sport have been so resistant to being overly spiced up.

Indeed, one of my favorite aspects of golf on TV is the way in which it unfolds very much at the pace of my own writing day. Somehow, the prospect of ostensibly relaxed but inwardly struggling golfers plying seemingly idyllic but peril-pocked landscapes is an extremely apt metaphor for writing. It reminds me that even in my apparent torpor I am still, in my own way, hard at work.

Charles Siebert is the author most recently of "The Wauchual Woods Accord: Toward a New Understanding of Animals."

Arbitrage

The price of an Aeron office chair

City	Local currency	€
Hong Kong	HK\$8,345	€757
New York	\$1,157	€813
Tokyo	¥133,053	€987
Frankfurt	€1,237	€1,237
Brussels	€1,329	€1,329
Rome	€1,431	€1,431
London	£1,245	€1,442
Paris	€1,713	€1,713



Note: Basic model Lumbar, with graphite wheel base, size B; prices, including taxes, as provided by retailers in each city, averaged and converted into euros.

THE SOLHEIM CUP®

RICH HARVEST FARMS
SUGAR GROVE, ILLINOIS, USA
AUGUST 17TH TO 23RD, 2009



How much does the support of a nation weigh on the minds of some of the world's best players? On the very first tee, those competing in the Solheim Cup will find the answer. One of the premier events on the LPGA and LET Tours, the best of Europe compete against the best of the United States. Winning is now every player's job and team captains must assess every player, every pairing and every condition. Strategy is paramount and psychology ever present. It's not just women's golf at its finest; it's competitive spirit at its best.

ROLEX. A CROWN FOR EVERY ACHIEVEMENT.



OYSTER PERPETUAL DATEJUST


ROLEX
ROLEX.COM

The internet as art

NEXT TIME AN error message pops up on your computer screen or if your machine succumbs to a software virus, it may be more than just an annoying glitch. It may be a work of art.

Just as video and computer technology attracted pioneering artists in the 1960s and 1970s, the Internet today is inspiring artists to tinker with the possibilities and boundaries of the World Wide Web. What started as a playful and often tongue-in-cheek experimental venture by a few code-savvy artists in the early 1990s has grown into a global art movement that is attracting attention from museums and private collectors. Karlsruhe-based media museum Zentrum fuer Kunst und Medientechnologie, or ZKM, has been running a series of net.art exhibitions. Berlin's Digital Art Museum recently showed the video performance "Hammering the Void," by Gazira Babeli, the pseudonym for an artist who exists only in Second Life, an online virtual reality game.

Among the artists who first saw the potential for creative uses of the information superhighway were Belgrade-born Vuk Cosic and Amsterdam-based artist duo Joan Heemskerk and Dirk Paesmans, who perform under the pseudonym jodi on the Web. Their early digital works, much like the art being made today by Italian duo Eva and Franco Mattes—who call themselves 0100101110101101.ORG—often imitated or at least paid ironic homage to the clandestine machinations of computer hackers.

Jodi's Web site, 404.jodi.org, for example, shows a blank screen, which through individual clicks switches from yellow, red to blue, with the figure 404 that is standardly reserved to denote an Internet error message, meaning that a Web site has failed to upload. The duo Mattes even created a software virus in 2001, called *biennale.py*, that spread around the world and had to be eliminated by U.S. antivirus software maker Symantec. Besides reproducing itself endlessly on computers, the virus was intended to multiply itself by "using the human mind and the media hysteria as its reproductive machinery," Mattes said. Their aim: to show that a computer virus isn't just a destructive program but that its existence and its circulation depends on humans.

Mr. Cosic's "history of art for airports, volume I," which can be seen at www.ljudmila.org/~vuk/history and which will be exhib-



In the digital age,
the medium is the new message

BY GORAN MIJUK

ited at the Treshold Artspace in Perth, Scotland, from Aug. 1 to Nov. 1, shows a series of iconic artworks and cultural references rendered as alienated airport pictograms. One such icon, called King Kong, depicts a white hand holding a small woman in its palm, a reference to the Hollywood classic in which a giant gorilla caresses the heroine.

But Internet art, which is often called net.art, is more than just a dadist-inspired attempt to create online mischief or challenge the popular understanding of the World Wide Web as a useful and low-cost medium for business transactions or information-gathering or time-wasting.

For artists like Mr. Cosic, the Internet's attraction is its promise of artistic independence. "The so-called disruptive potential of net.art was identified in disempowering the middleman," he says. "Our first generation aggressively played with shortcuts to the end user, thus avoiding curators, critics, theorists and all other art bureaucracy." One of these more serious works, "tv

screen, night one," shows how the Internet has changed over the past decade (ljudmila.org/%7Ewoelle/lajka/war). It shows a series of TV pictures taken from various European channels on the night in 1999 that Yugoslavia was bombed by NATO forces. In addition to pictures of U.S. President Bill Clinton and Serbian strongman Slobodan Milosevic, the TV stills show fighter jets taking off and missile blasts seen through a night vision camera—as well as other images being broadcast, such as soft porn movies and old war films.

"It was a piece about the relation between TV and the Web," Mr. Cosic says. "At the time I was insisting on the fact that when it comes to global coverage, TV was still in advantage in terms of reach and credibility over the Internet."

But obviously this has all changed with the ubiquity of the Internet. The technology is advancing quickly, creating new network forms that challenge and change traditional media—forcing, for example, TV stations, newspapers and magazines to use the Inter-

net as a major distribution channel to attract readers. People trust the Internet more and the old-fashioned, "mainstream media" less.

But net.art artists aren't stopping here to question and challenge, criticize and eventually redefine the Internet. They are embracing the Internet's ability to connect people to share ideas and become active both in the digital and the real world. They're also exhibiting their works in unusual public spaces, generating more attention than they would in a museum.

South African artist Nathaniel Stern, together with American artist Scott Kildall, for example, have created a mock-Wikipedia art page, wikipediaart.org, where other artists and art lovers can create and edit their own art and discuss aspects of art such as censorship and copyright. The work was originally intended to be part of the actual Wikipedia site, but the online encyclopedia blocked the artists' initial attempt because the editing process on the their Web site did not conform to Wikipedia's standards.

Swiss artists Christoph Wachter and Mathias Jud have created a Web network called www.picidae.net, which allows surfers in China, Iran, Africa and other regions to upload Web pages that are otherwise blocked by official censorship. To shortcut potential watchdogs, Messrs. Wachter and Jud are "taking pictures" of HTML encoded Web pages, making it impossible for officials to censor them because they have been structured with the help of pixels rather than machine-readable codes. Besides helping to get information past censorship, the work challenges the traditional assumption that the artist is the sole creator of art and that an art lover is simply consuming art.

"The only thing that counts is one's personal view, irrespective of whether one creates art or if one observes it," the artists say. "We have been able to establish ties with our projects to people around the world. For picidae, for example, people painted posters, recorded audio files and painted pictures (to raise awareness of the site). That's all in the best sense of art that creates new views, new experiences and new courses of action."

Other artists such as Spain's Antoni Abad have also tapped into the network idea. His Web site www.zexe.net is a project to help, for example, handicapped people in Geneva and Barcelona inform each other how to best travel through these cities.



© reac Table, photo: Xavier Sivecas

Equipped with cameras, the handicapped people involved in the project have taken pictures of road obstacles and have loaded these on the Internet, creating a virtual city map to allow people in wheelchairs an unencumbered journey through the rugged asphalt jungle. Although the site may look like a self-help group at first glance, Mr. Abad's work is similar to the efforts of 19th-century French novelist Victor Hugo, who with his epic "Les Miserables" brought to light the misery and plight of Paris's poor and shunned underclass, thereby raising the public's awareness and prompting social action.

Ken Goldberg, a U.S. artist who started out as a sculptor, is increasingly focused on Internet and digital art. His work includes short films and software programs. He argues that one of the Internet's key attractions is its permanent accessibility. "This concept stands in contrast to the cult value of a piece of art, which derives its strength and aura from the fact that the work of art is singular," says Mr. Goldberg, who also works as a professor of robotics at the University of California at Berkeley. "While art is usually restricted to museums, galleries and private collectors, Internet art can be looked at all the time by anyone."

But the easy accessibility of Internet Art has also proved problematic for its market value. "In the 1990s, when Internet Art started to evolve, interest from the public was solid," says Wolf Lieser, founder of the Digital Art Museum and gallery in Berlin. "But from a financial perspective, this art form was a failure." Mr. Lieser owned a digital art gallery in London in the late 1990s but had to close it because most of the works were not sold.

This has changed in recent years as private collectors and established art institutes are growing an appetite to collect and buy works, many of which are still comparatively cheap and may range from around \$2,000 to \$50,000.

"Today things are changing because collectors are more acquainted with the subject matter," Mr. Lieser said. "Rather than acquiring an artifact, they are growing aware that they are buying into the conceptual and cultural aspect of art when they are buying Internet art."

Still, Mr. Lieser says many collectors want some form of unique item, even if the artifact, a memory disk or a CD-ROM, is only of symbolic value.

Private collector Theo Armour has re-



Photo: ZKM



© Vuk Cosic (3)

cently started buying net.art, he says, because he senses the chance to participate in a new artistic development, similar to the invention of important art forms such as cubist art.

"I always loved art and wanted to collect it," says Mr. Armour, a 62-year-old architect-turned-computer design consultant, who until recently was also a member of the advisory board of the Peggy Guggenheim Foundation in Venice. "As a technology geek, I decided that it has to be Internet art."

The first piece in his growing Internet art collection is a work by Mr. Goldberg called "memento mori," Latin for "remember you shall die," at mementomori-0.net. It shows a live, digital, constantly changing

representation of the seismic movements of the Hayward Fault, a tectonic crevice that runs along the east side of San Francisco Bay. "I wanted the entire transaction to be effected digitally," says Mr. Armour, who declines to reveal the price he paid for the work. "But the artist and gallerist Catherine Clark, who brought us together, decided to go for a physical specimen too." While Mr. Goldberg's work can be viewed by anyone on the Internet, Mr. Armour has his own, original work of art stored on a silver-encased flash drive.

Museums, meanwhile, are also active in the fledgling genre. The San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, or SFMOMA, which commissioned Web-based works at the end

Above, 'Reactable' (2005), an interactive installation by Sergi Jordà, Martín Kaltenbrunner, Günter Geiger and Marcos Alonso; left, 'T-Visionarium' (2003-08), by Neil Brown, Dennis Del Favero, Jeffrey Shaw and Peter Weibel; below left, 'tv screen, night one' (1999) by Vuk Cosic; facing page 'pieta' (left) and 'cezanne' from Mr. Cosic's 2009 work, 'history of art for airports, volume I.'

of the 1990s, has recently bought two works from Hollywood, Calif.-born artist Julia Scher and Lynn Hershman Leeson from Cleveland, Ohio. Ms. Scher's work, "Predictive Engineering #2" from 1998, is a video installation that makes use of early Internet-based programming codes. Ms. Hershman Leeson's work, "Agent Ruby," which is dated 1999-2002, is a playful, interactive Internet program through which users can talk to the artificial person "Agent Ruby." Viewers of the program can ask questions, which Ruby will answer. Depending on the question and answer, Ruby will change her facial complexion.

"We feel that it is high time to make the next logical step and show our continued leadership among the museums by studying the needs of a museum to take charge of technologically demanding work," says Rudolf Frieeling, SFOMA's curator of media arts.

Karlsruhe, Germany-based Zentrum fuer Kunst und Medientechnologie, or ZKM, is also focusing on net.art. One recent exhibition, "banquet_notes and networks," focused on net culture in Spain. Its current show, "YOU_ser 2.0: Celebration of the Consumer," which runs until Aug. 30, includes such net.art works as mikrogalleri.es, created by Korea-born artist Mehi Yang and Axel Roch of Germany. Visitors can upload their own pictures on a computer. The pictures are then published at the ZKM in Karlsruhe or in other galleries that can be opened by anyone who has a projector and Internet access. For Messrs. Yang and Roch, mikrogalleri.es takes the Internet one step ahead of community Web sites such as Facebook or Flickr. Mikrogalleri.es is an open platform that should entice public institutions, private studios or cafés to get in touch with others, they say, suggesting that this new Internet generation could become "The Internet of Things" as the digital world becomes "concrete" in other spaces.

❖ Books

Once upon a time, in East London...

...an interior designer started hosting bedtime story nights; they all read happily ever after in pajamas

BY PAUL SONNE

ON A RECENT NIGHT in East London, interior designer David Carter answered the door at his townhouse dressed a bit like Lord Byron on his way to bed.

"Welcome," Mr. Carter said in a vintage paisley night gown, looking particularly severe in the foyer's darkness. He ushered us into the hallway, where a life-size antique Jesus dangled from a hook on the wall. Then he requested we change into pajamas.

Mr. Carter was hosting bedtime story night, and in a matter of minutes, about 30 visitors would file into the house, put on nighties and pajama trousers, and assemble in the "opium-den chic" drawing room to hear short stories read aloud by candlelight.

The twice-monthly event began in June, when Mr. Carter inaugurated the readings in conjunction with Spoken Ink, an online retailer of audio short stories. As word spread about the literary pajama party, a few brave souls ventured out in their nightwear to Mr. Carter's designer abode.

"Our friends said, come on, this all sounds a bit weird, a bit pervy," said Gemma Campbell, a children's book writer from Bristol, whose friend found the listing online. "You're being asked to go around in your nightie and listen to bedtime stories in a house where some guy you don't know is going to give you alcohol. We weren't really sure if we'd leave alive."

But by the end of the night, after some storytelling and a bit of wine, Ms. Campbell was won over, despite initially suspecting hidden cameras in the dressing rooms. "Something like this really is a lovely snippet, better than going to the theater," she said.

On each story night, actors from Spoken Ink perform two readings, and guests retire to the kitchen between performances for drinks and appetizers. The themes have included "stories to make you smile," "stories to make you dream," and in the case of the most recent night, "love and longing." A live musical performance finishes off the night, all for £20 per head.

In organizing the readings, Mr. Carter was looking to offer busy Londoners not only a "digestible bit" of literature, but also an alternative night out—a way for creative types to rectify Lord Byron's observation from "Don Juan," that "society is one polished horde, formed of two mighty tribes, the Bores and the Bored." The story nights, he said, are a respite in an "overbranded" world of conformity and a chance to rekindle the childhood spirit of imagination.

"It's dark, mysterious, and everyone is listening. People are being transported, carried off into the world of someone else's imagination," he said. "It reminds you that we have choices in life—that you don't have to do that banking job if you don't want to."

The story nights are more theatrical than they are literary. At the most recent reading, actress Helen Bradbury donned hiking boots and an outback cap to perform Shannon Cain's "The Necessity of Certain Behaviors," while actor Michael Malarkey sported slicked-back hair and a



Morgan O'Donovan for The Wall Street Journal (3)



Clockwise from top: Actor Michael Malarkey reads from Anais Nin's 'The Veiled Woman'; interior designer David Carter poses in his East London townhouse, 40 Winks; pajama-clad guests gather in the dark.



three-piece suit to read Anais Nin's "The Veiled Woman."

Though the theme of the evening was "love and longing," the stories—the first about a hiking trip turned flight of fancy, the second about a lovemaking proposition too good to be true—were more about escape and its limits. It was a fitting, if sobering, message for a group that huddled along the floorboards of a dark townhouse in pajamas to indulge the literary imagination.

Mr. Carter's restored 1717 townhouse, known as 40 Winks, has long provided a backdrop for London fashion photographers and film crews, counting Helen Mirren and Orlando Bloom among its visitors. Antique French mannequin hands, early Italian opera masks, antlered ceramic mirrors, and all matter of styled accoutrements render the house a theatrical character of its own.

In March, Mr. Carter opened the two small bedrooms to the public in what he calls "the smallest boutique

hotel in the world" (www.40winks.org).

More accurately, however, 40 Winks is East London's closest approximation to the rabbit hole from Alice in Wonderland. After stumbling past greasy-food shops and local grocers in one of the city's grittier areas, guests suddenly fall into another world, which at first seems to belong to the Addams Family, but turns out to be that of an imaginative Mad Hatter.

Mr. Carter indeed collects hats (a replica Napoleonic cap and a revolutionary wig-and-hat combo rest on his dresser), and throughout the most recent bedtime story night, he mingled around the house in an outlandish cream *shapka*. "It's from one of those countries that ends in stan, I think—like dead sheep or something," he said.

Mr. Carter is an interior designer whose work and house both amount to skillful performances, and the bedtime story nights fit with that timbre.

The idea, Mr. Carter said, is to emphasize storytelling as something that is natural and innate for all of us, a combination of performance and experience.

"It goes right back to when people were sitting around in their caves, talking about buffalo hunts, or coming home and saying they ran into their pterodactyl that day," Mr. Carter said. Storytelling somehow taps into our ancestral roots, he said, by evoking a sense of reassurance, safety and community that we all crave.

It is partly for that reason that guests decide to partake—not only to dress up and hear a story, but also to share and exchange stories of their own.

"Everyone you talk to has an interesting job, an interesting story or something to say," said Jonathan Björkman, a fashion student from Sweden, who described the house as a place to escape. "I don't know if the house attracts that kind of audience or if it's the other way around."

Secrets of the art experts

SEVERAL NEW BOOKS provide collectors with some good summer reading.

In "Sleuth" (HarperCollins, 2009), London art dealer Philip Mould recounts his adventures in tracking "lame ducks"—paintings by old masters that have been wrongly attributed.

"The world is heaving with paintings that are either unattributed or incorrectly labeled," says Mr. Mould. The main reason being condi-

Collecting

MARGARET STUDER

tion: Canvases are vulnerable to a "hundred different types of on-slaught and disfigurement."

Mr. Mould describes how he discovered a lost portrait of a young man by England's 18th-century master Thomas Gainsborough on eBay. The body had been painted over, giving the portrait



Courtesy of Philip Mould

Cover of 'Sleuth' by Philip Mould shows 'Portrait of a Lady' by Lavinia Fontana (circa 1590s).

the overall appearance of a pub sign. But, he recounts, "Looking further at the way the paint was applied to the mouth and eyes, I could see it had all the hallmarks of an early Gainsborough." Mr. Mould paid less than \$200; restoration

proved him right and the portrait was ultimately worth between £15,000 and £20,000.

Sotheby's senior director of impressionist and modern art, Philip Hook, offers a wonderfully ironic and often humorous behind-the-scenes view of dealers, auctioneers and collectors by telling the story of impressionist painting in "The Ultimate Trophy" (Prestel, 2009). It's full of fascinating anecdotes.

Mr. Hook tells of sitting in the marbled splendor of an Eastern potentate's palace trying to sell a \$7 million painting by Claude Monet. Perplexed, the client couldn't work out why he should buy an artist who in his view "does not know how to paint...the strokes of the brush are too broad." Realizing that he was not getting anywhere with aesthetic arguments, Mr. Hook stuck to the financial certainty of investing in an object so highly prized by the market—and won. Mr. Hook relates his visit to another collector who so loved his art that he had installed a sound system that was activated automatically as one stepped before each canvas. A painting of water lilies by Monet, for example, triggered Gershwin's "Rhapsody in Blue."

"Looking Back at Art Basel" (Schwabe Verlag, 2009) by Swiss photographer Kurt Wyss captures 40 years of the contemporary art scene as played out annually at the world's leading 20th-21st-century art fair. "One leafs through this album and thinks, yes, that was what it was like once, the halls, the booths, the hairstyles, the clothes, the faces," writes art historian and journalist Hans-Joachim Müller in his introduction to the 243-page volume.

Creating an image with narrative

Berlin studio Onlab specializes in graphic design with a compelling story to tell

BY ANDREW LOSOWSKY

Special to The Wall Street Journal
MAGAZINE AS A musical score. A book about the relationship between visual complexity and simplicity. One hundred ideas to “update Germany.”

Onlab is not an ordinary design studio. Based in Berlin, it both works with clients and creates its own books, and operates around a single philosophy: that design is a narrative that can change how people approach the world.

Run by Nicolas Bourquin, originally from Switzerland, and Sven Ehmann, who is also creative director of cult German art book publisher Gestalten, onlab’s highest-profile work to date has been their original redesign of 81-year-old Italian architecture magazine Domus. The design is based on a series of 13 different column widths, allowing the structure and size of each article to vary widely. The designers describe it as a jazz-like rhythm and flow. They still design a section in each Domus issue, in addition to working for other clients.

We spoke to Messrs. Ehmann and Bourquin by telephone, from their design studio in Berlin.

Q: How did you start working together?

Mr. Ehmann: Nick and I met at a conference many years ago, when he was just about to move to Berlin. He was looking for a studio space, and the place my desk was in had a space available. He moved in, and then during coffee breaks and late nights working, we started to talk. It soon became clear that we had a very similar approach to content and the kind of work we wanted to do.

Mr. Bourquin: Before I met Sven, I had always worked alone, but I was constantly searching for somebody who thought about things on the same level as me, who focused on story and content as well as visual quality. We come from two very different worlds but completely share the same opinions and values.

Mr. Ehmann: Yes, I come from a photography and journalism background, and Nick comes from an architecture and design background. But at onlab, we don’t have defined roles. We work together to define how a particular commission will function. We both organize content, build the story, create an attraction.

Q: Tell us about your working



Editoriale Domus (2)



Above, Domus cover 915, June 2008; right, designers Sven Ehmann (left) and Nicolas Bourquin; bottom, Domus Intersections 923 issue, March 2009.



methods.

Mr. Ehmann: We get together at the very beginning of any project, to define the main idea and rules we will work within, the approach we’ll take and the target we’re aiming for. That is then visualized in terms of structure, mood boards, whatever. Then the real work starts—mostly that means Nick producing designs, and every once in a while I will respond to that.

Design is about a lot more than making it pretty. It’s a strategic element in running a company. We’re trying to redefine design in a content-focused way. We challenge our clients with the idea that the designer is an author, someone who has a say and a story to tell, who makes an active contribution to the information they are trying to convey.

Q: How did the Domus commission come about?

Mr. Bourquin: In 2007, a new editor-in-chief called Flavio Albanese was appointed at Domus. He is a self-taught architect, and has a very subjective approach to the topic of architecture. He wants to publish new voices, to provoke the audience and to work with young designers.

He researched different studios, and invited us to Milan to talk about what Domus could be like in the future. I went there for this meeting, and had one hour with him. We talked about everything—holidays, the beaches in Italy, photography, football, cooking, wine. Everything except de-

sign. The hour ended, he said, “Thank you for the conversation, we’ll let you know.” And he walked out. I sat there thinking “Oh no! I didn’t speak about the magazine!” And yet we got the job.

Mr. Ehmann: The project started with the two of us going to Flavio’s studio for a week. What Nick has just described continued—that week was more about understanding him as a person, rather than what he wanted from Domus. It was only in the last two days that we started talking about the magazine. There were a couple of things that we learned about during the week, which made perfect sense later on in the project—ideas about music, and food. We learned about his personality, rather than receiving a clear briefing.

Sometimes you get jobs where you have to analyze the brand, and focus group its audience—but that usually happens when there is no single person in charge of making a decision. If you work with corporations, small or large, with a strong personality at the top, there is no need for market research. It’s a matter of them making the best decision they can, and then selling it to the market. They can’t get feedback from customers about the kind of change that you want to put in place, because it’s not there yet. They just need trust in the right kind of people to create something that’s new.

Q: What next?

Mr. Bourquin: We are doing the art direction and coaching for a project in Beirut, to create a city guide together with local artists and architects. It is a city with a very specific history, and that has a big impact on how the story is told. We’re also working for a big brand in Milan to create an art book series, and we’ve just made the artwork for a German pop band—absolutely not our normal kind of work, but they invited us to work with them, and it was a new industry for us to explore.

DISTINCTIVE PROPERTIES & ESTATES



480' Prime Oneida Lake Waterfront 7000' estate on 17 acres w/ indoor pool, sauna, & 12 car garage offered at \$1.6mil
Gloria Barbano Weyl
Call 315-671-3571
gloria@realtor.com



Furnished Luxury Suites

in 5 star mansion. Resort and Spa amenities. Includes maid, butler, driver, limousine, mercedes, pool, spa, concierge, sailing, tennis, golf, business, & fitness center. Washington DC area. \$395,000.
SoltaniMansion.com
202-559-7200

CHEAP AMERICAN LAND

Call 912-729-5544

or visit

www.VacantLandAmerica.com

Prime Manhattan NYC Location
81st/Bet Madison & Park Aves.
New renovd multi-Family 20' TH.
PW mint cond; (1)-2BR, dplx w/ so. grdn; (3)-1BR flr thru apts; 8 fplcs; Full base. Built 20x59 on lot 20'x102'. Grt value reduced to \$9.875M. Web#969969
Susan Greenfield 917-414-0533
sgreenfield@bhsusa.com
BROWN HARRIS STEVENS.COM

Live 
Larger

for more information call,

44-20-7842-9600 or 49-69-971-4280

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.
EUROPE

❖ Top Picks

'Arcadia' proves you can still count on Tom Stoppard

LONDON: "Arcadia" is Tom Stoppard's best single play, and this revival at the Duke of York's Theatre shows why. He toys brilliantly with the dramatic unities, keeping the place constant while the time changes.

Though it flips back and forth from the early 19th century of Lord Byron to the present day, all the action takes place in a single beautiful room in an aristocratic English country house in Derbyshire belonging to the Coverly family.

With dialogue of Wildean wit, Sir Tom sets up a series of collisions between science and imaginative art, between Classicism and Romanticism (relating the Gothic movement in architecture, poetry and fiction to the picturesque landscape), between Newton and Einstein, determinism and indeterminacy, and various views of mathematical truth from Euclidean geometry and linear algebra to chaos theory.

Far from being hideously overintellectual, the play's triumph is to make these topics into full-blooded drama by inventing characters to whom they are genuinely and vitally important.

The 19th-century personae are concerned about whether the future is deterministically predictable (by extending Newton's equations), while the present-day characters are trying to solve some mysteries about the past—did Byron fight a duel there? Did a precocious girl discover the rudiments of chaos theory?

The 19th-century Lady Thomsina Coverly is a child-genius who reflects on the metaphysical implications of Newtonian mechanics, while trying to prove Fermat's Last Theorem—set as homework by her tutor, Septimus Hodge (Dan Stevens, who makes him the most attractive character in the play).

The contemporary characters, all descendants or guests of the Coverlys, are equally beautifully scripted. Samantha Brown winningly plays an historical novelist, Hannah Jarvis, who is working in the Coverly archives. Bernard Nightingale, an overambitious academic studying Byron (a splendid comic turn by Neil Pearson) puts two and two together and gets five; while the playwright's son, Ed Stoppard, plays the droll but severe mathematician heir, Valentine Coverly.

—Paul Levy

Until Sept. 12

www.arcadiatheplay.com



Nancy Carroll as Lady Croom in 'Arcadia.'



'Caterpillar Ladder' (2003), by Jeff Koons; right, 'Self Portrait with a Japanese Print' (1887), by Vincent van Gogh.

The bearable lightness of being Jeff Koons

LONDON: The Serpentine Gallery really comes into its own in the summer, with its annual architectural extravaganza, a temporary pavilion. This year's floating aluminum roof curves its beautiful way through the trees and shrubs on the site, looking like a meandering stream or a trail of smoke. Designed by Kazuyo Sejima and Ryue Nishizawa of the Japanese architecture practice Sanaa, it appears to have no walls, and its poured concrete floor is studded with uplighters that make the reflective ceiling shimmer.

Inside the gallery, the summer exhibition is Jeff Koons's "Popeye Series," a group of about two dozen very large paintings and sculptures. The catalog is prefaced by a short story by Frederic Tuten, "L'Odyssee," comparing Popeye and Olive Oyl to Odysseus returning to his Penelope. The sexiness of the tale, and of the paintings, some of which include fragments of pneumatic female nudes à la Vargas or Playboy centerfolds, can be seen behind the figure of the oddly muscled sailor sucking out the contents of an opened can of spinach. I'm not sure whether the curators are aware of this, but Popeye and Olive Oyl (and even Wimpy) were the subjects of the small pornographic comic strips clandestinely passed around by American schoolboys of my generation. These figures are freighted with the underground sexual associations that are apparent in Mr. Koons's highly polished, faux-innocent paintings.

But the real heroes of this show are the sculptures of oversized inflatable swimming pool toys. These lobsters, rabbits and dolphins are so convincingly painted in the garish colors of the plastic inflatables that you simply cannot believe that they are made of cast aluminum. They look so light that it is incredible that they are too heavy for one person to lift. At first you dismiss these as intellectually lightweight, but then the desire to touch one to confirm its mass becomes nearly irresistible. That's why the Serpentine Gallery is full of guards keeping you from doing just that to these (not obviously) fragile objects. They warn you off with a sympathetic smile, forcing you to suspend disbelief solely on the basis of what you can see.

Mr. Koons wants us to examine our feelings rather than the objects he's made. He even points out that an inflated pool toy is an emblem of life, because a deflated one is a symbol of death. Well, yes. But the sight of three inflated monkeys standing on each others' shoulders, the bottom one standing precariously on the rung of a ladder-back chair suspended about the floor so that they have no visible means of support, and the fact that you know they are very heavy indeed, makes you chuckle because they are apparently impossible objects, and not because they make you contemplate mortality or the terrors of the abyss.

—Paul Levy

Until Sept. 13

www.serpentinegallery.org



'Bodypainting' (1969), by Stefan Moses.

© Stefan Moses Archiv im Münchner Stadtmuseum



Kunstmuseum Basel

Seeds of genius in early landscapes by van Gogh

BASEL: "Between Earth and Heaven: The Landscapes," at the Kunstmuseum, doesn't just bank on Vincent van Gogh's indefatigable popularity with the art-loving masses. Rather, the exhibition focuses on van Gogh's lesser-known landscape paintings and meticulously tracks the stylistic development of the artist, who during his early phase imitated his Dutch predecessors and experimented with modernist styles like pointillism before finding his own idiosyncratic expression.

A painting from 1883, "Flower Beds In Holland," showing several farmhouses against a large, clouded sky, is almost a typical example of traditional Dutch landscape painting. But the white, rose, yellow and green flower beds in front of the somber buildings reveal van Gogh's already existing penchant for stark, primary colors, which he would use more frequently a few years later.

In "Entrance of Voyer d'Argenson Park at Asnières" from 1887, van Gogh's hallmark style of forcefully applied, colorful lines takes shape. Rather than making use of the pointillist method, such as in "Vincent's Room in the Rue Le Pic" from the same year, van Gogh draws long lines of light colors.

From this moment on, van Gogh seems to become bolder. The lines get thicker and the colors seem to fluoresce. In "Factories in Asnières" from 1887, the grass field in front of an industrial complex with smoking chimneys is full of life.

What follows are the well-known and popular wheat field paintings, which culminate in "The Wheat Field Behind Saint Paul's Hospital with a Reaper" from 1889. The wheat field glows in strong red-golden colors, seemingly outshining the sun in the sickly green sky.

—Goran Mijuk

Until Sept. 27

www.kunstmuseumbasel.ch

Nude photography! (To be appreciated as serious art)

MUNICH: "Nude Visions" draws on the vast collection of the Stadtmuseum, with 250 photographs documenting nude photography from the 19th century to the present and giving us a pretty good idea of how our perception of nudity has changed in the past 150 years.

Photography was in its infancy when the first nudes appeared, serving as academic studies for artists like Delacroix and Corbet. They show plump women imitating classical Greek statues and men in the act of throwing spears, wrestling or aping the Parthenon friezes. Hermann Heid and Louis Igout produced a whole series of such prints between 1875 and 1880.

The models are self-conscious and coy, knowing their bodies are meant to be hidden away under layers of Victorian propriety. Some of the works exude quaint eroticism. The stereo daguerreotypes of Auguste Belloc, made in 1855, show a large-breasted female nude rising out of a cardboard sea or bathing in a studio pool.

By the early 20th century nude photography had begun to call itself art. The focus softens, the poses become romantic. In "Nude Back" (1915), Elfriede Reichelt imitates art by placing her model against a painted background in which the landscape becomes almost abstract. The nudes of the 1920s and '30s reflect the avant-garde and surrealist art of the period. The compositions are more complex and techniques more varied, employing multiple exposures and collage.

The nudist movement, which flourished in Germany, reveals itself in Gerhard Riebicke's prints from the 1930s. They show young adults with perfect bodies cavorting in the open air.

Herbert Litz eschews models altogether in "Plaster Casts in the Academy" (1946), placing damaged plaster bodies among the bombed-out ruins of Munich after World War II. By the late 1960s the nude had assumed political significance as multitudes dropped their knickers to protest bourgeois values. Stefan Moses shows us architect Friedenreich Hundertwasser and friends in "Great Architecture Speech" (1967).

No show of nude photography can avoid a bit of glamour. Bert Stern gives us Marilyn Monroe from his famous series "Last Sitting" (1962). Helmut Newton, master of the voluptuous, puts his model in front of a car, combining two male fantasies in "Beetle VII" (1999).

—Mariana Schroeder

Until Sept. 13

www.stadtmuseum-online.de

Predestined to Hell or Democracy?

‘Jean Cauvin, nous sommes ici!’—John Calvin, we are here—a preacher proclaimed at the Calvin 500 festival that brought dozens of pastors and scholars to Geneva earlier this month. Geneva itself seemed less enthusiastic. The city’s own celebration of the 500th anniversary of Calvin’s birth on July 10, 1509, featured an outdoor play that concluded with the Calvin character lifting a shroud from statues of Calvin and three other Protestant reformers, then turning to the stone Calvin and berating him for his repressive rule. What “stood out,” according to one American pastor who emailed me, was “Geneva’s antipathy to Calvin—not ambivalence, antipathy.” Another concluded: “A prophet is not without honor save in his own country.”

Thus it has always been for the complicated religious leader who fled from his native France in 1536; he had planned to spend only a night in Geneva, but his fellow reformer William Farel begged him to stay and help with his efforts there. Calvin’s early tenure in Geneva was shaky; the city council banished him in 1538, only allowing him to return in 1541. As he solidified his power, Calvin maintained the separation between the

church and the city council, but the church’s ruling body, the Consistory, wielded formidable social influence through its discipline of wayward parishioners.

To his defenders, Calvin recovered essential, long-buried Christian principles, such as the sovereignty of God and the authority of Scripture, by holding the doctrines of the Catholic Church up to the light of biblical teaching. His insistence on freedom of individual believers, and recognition that magistrates are sinful like everyone else, contributed to representative democracy and the separation of church and state.

To detractors, he was a dour autocrat who was obsessed with sin, taught that many men and women were predestined to hell, and saddled Geneva with a welter of moral rules and prohibitions.

The speakers and hundreds of Calvin enthusiasts who flocked to Geneva for Calvin 500 earlier this month were Reformed theology stalwarts, most hailing from the theologically conservative Presbyterian denominations that identify themselves with Calvin. The

Geneva event was remarkably similar to the leading festivities of the last major Calvin anniversary, which were held in Savannah, Ga., a century ago. In 1909, renowned Princeton scholar B.B. Warfield worried about Americans’ discomfort with Calvin’s emphasis on predestination and human sinfulness, and defended Calvinism as “the casting of the soul

wholly on the free grace of God alone, to whom alone belongs salvation.” In 2009, Covenant Seminary President Bryan Chapell preached on the comforts of these difficult doctrines. Philadelphia pastor Philip Ryken’s sermon argued that Calvin’s emphasis on God’s sovereignty should inspire evangelism rather than complacency. And legal scholar John Witte’s address on Calvin’s influence on Western law and politics, among others, also echoed the earlier celebration.

Although the debates are perennial, Calvin 500 reflected the present moment in two important respects. First, the event had an international flavor that would have been unlikely even

two decades ago, much less in 1909. A sermon by Ugandan Archbishop Henry Orombi and papers such as “Calvinism in Asia” by Jae Sung Kim (who has written a biography of Calvin in Korean) reflected the southward and eastward shift of Christianity. Second, there was a willingness to acknowledge Calvin’s limitations—the de facto merging of church and state in Geneva, his role in the execution of the heretic Michael Servetus—and, as Mr. Chapell put it, “to deal with Calvin in more nuanced ways.”

If the Calvin of Calvin 500 was nuanced, international and traditional, the other major celebration in the month of Calvin’s birth offered an American Calvin for the masses. Held in the Park Plaza Hotel in Boston, the Reformation 500 Celebration featured more than 40 re-enactors who portrayed Calvin and other Reformation leaders, as well as such American colonial figures as George Washington, Samuel Adams and Anne Bradstreet. Lest any of the 1,000 attendees miss Calvin’s influence on American democracy, one of the lectures was titled “John Calvin: America’s First Founding Father,” and the conference “culminated on July 4,” as a Christian Newswire ac-

count put it, “with the tolling of an exact replica of America’s Liberty Bell.”

Aimed at families who homeschool their children or send them to Christian schools, Reformation 500 also featured a Children’s Parade through the Boston’s Public Garden, three different lectures on “The Reformers’ Doctrine of the Family,” and a debate between re-enactors of Calvin and Charles Darwin that emphasized the implications of their respective world views—Calvin’s an influence “for great good and the glory of God,” according to Doug Phillips, the conference organizer, and Darwin’s “for unimaginable evil.”

The actor who portrayed Calvin in Geneva and the re-enactor in Boston probably would find one another ludicrously misinformed. Yet both capture and caricature attributes of the brilliant theological thinker who has never gone out of date, and who was so concerned not to draw attention to himself that he insisted on being buried in an unmarked grave.

Mr. Skeel is a law professor at the University of Pennsylvania and co-convenor of the blog “Less than the Least.”

Even 500 years after Calvin’s birth, the theologian’s legacy remains disputed.

Tales of Persia’s Wondrous Past

Before the Islamic Revolution dimmed the Iranian literary imagination in 1979, and before an expanding Islam swept Iran into its Arab empire in the seventh century, there existed the rich and colorful Iran recounted in Ferdowsi’s “Shahnameh,” or the Book of Kings. Nearly four centuries after the Arab conquest, the “Shahnameh” tells the story of pre-Islamic Iran—when Persian civilization was at its zenith.

The epic proceeds through the reign of many monarchs, chronicling the at times legendary, at times mythological, and at times quasi-historical stories of each reign. Then, with the Arab conquest, the chronicle comes to an end. This might seem to mark the end of Persian civilization, too. But Ferdowsi’s masterpiece, composed about A.D. 1000, both went on to inspire the greatest Persian miniature paintings and retrieved Iran’s lost identity—along with its language, which still survives.

The epic is not only a remembrance of a wondrous past but a mourning of the passing of that history and all that falls prey to “the absolute of all tyrants, time,” says Azar Nafisi. She relates her love of the work in her 2009 memoir, “Things I’ve Been Silent About.”

In the “Shahnameh,” the mortality of all creation insists that the world’s meaning can be derived only from man’s moral choices. What it means to be a good man is one of Ferdowsi’s

chief concerns. Personal, national and spiritual integrity are defended against a chaotic world trying to destroy it. That the “Shahnameh” reminds readers today of what integrity and heroism mean—two words nearly left out of our cultural lexicon—is enough to make it a masterpiece. But there is so much more than this to recommend it to our time.

The great hero of the epic is Rostam, a warrior who defends the homeland from invaders, but his heroism goes beyond just that. The worst characters of the “Shahnameh” are beset by pride and hubris, while the most noble and interesting characters humbly understand their place in the great moral order. Rostam can be wise and compassionate, understanding that his strength and glory are limited by God. Yet the moment that he forgets this truth, calamity follows.

In one of the epic’s most tragic tales, Rostam meets his son, Sohrab, in combat. Early in the story, Rostam, searching for his Pegasus-like horse, Rakhsh, came to the kingdom of Turan, or Turkey, where a king offered to host Rostam in his palace. There, in Rostam’s night chamber, entered the beautiful Tahmineh, whose “mind and body were pure, and she seemed not to partake of earthly existence at all,” according to Dick Davis’s majestic translation of the work.

Nine months later, long after

Rostam returned to Iran, Tahmineh gave birth to Sohrab, who would spend his youth in Turan. As he came of age, growing to be as strong and brave as his father, he asked his mother about his lineage. After his mother told him that the famous hero Rostam was his father, Sohrab vowed to “drive Kavus,” Iran’s king, “from the throne . . . and give the royal mace and crown to Rostam, I’ll

when neither father nor son could prevail over the other, Sohrab in his heart realizes that Rostam is indeed his opponent. The next time they meet, he says: “Throw your mace and sword down, put aside / These thoughts of war, this truculence and pride.” But Rostam’s “wits were dimmed by an evil nature.” So he fights his son until he plunges a dagger into the “lionhearted hero’s chest.”



place him on Kavus’ throne.” With good intentions then, the young Sohrab led an army against Iran. Despairing, the sometimes cowardly Kavus called on Rostam to defend Iran against Sohrab’s invading army.

As Rostam and Sohrab meet in combat, man to man, Sohrab has a suspicion that the hero he fights is Rostam. But Rostam denies his identity. After the first combat,

Among the most heart-wrenching lines of the epic are Sohrab’s dying words to Rostam. Sohrab asks Rostam to tell his father, “I sought him always, far and wide, / And that, at last, in seeking him, I died.”

At that moment, Rostam recognizes a clasp on Sohrab’s upper arm, which Rostam gave to Tahmineh. As Sohrab lies dying, Rostam realizes that the boy “whose

mouth still smelled of mother’s milk” is his son. Realizing the evil thing he did, Rostam “roared in an agony of anguish.”

Rostam, before his encounter with Sohrab, says that “war is the way to glory.” But with the story’s completion, the reader is to understand that glory in war has its limits. Sohrab, who seeks war to glorify his father, is ultimately undone in the very war he started. The moral complexities of this story are especially tragic. Rostam is brave, proud, then penitent; Sohrab is loyal, rash, then compassionate. Behaving morally means overcoming one’s inner demons—and the price for letting them overcome you is a heavy and unwelcome reminder of man’s mortality.

In the “Shahnameh,” after we are reminded that “We are all death’s prey,” we learn that “this tale is full of tears.”

Iranians felt this pathos in 1979, with the Islamic Revolution: Another phase of Iran’s history had passed. With the revolution, the Iranian regime thought Ferdowsi’s pre-Islamic masterpiece had no place in the Islamic Republic. According to Ms. Nafisi, it even wanted to tear down Ferdowsi Square in Tehran. But it couldn’t. Later, she says, the regime “had to join the people in celebrating him.” The “Shahnameh” was too integral to Iranian culture, its universal themes impossible for anyone—Iranian or not—to overlook. Governments, including those run by mullahs, will come and go, but this story endures.

Ms. Smith is a Robert L. Bartley fellow at The Wall Street Journal.

time off

Amsterdam art festival

"De Parade 2009" offers 17 days of art and performance events in various colorful tents presenting dance, theater, magic, art, animation and music. Martin Luther King Park
Until Aug. 16
☎ 31-33-4654-555
www.deparade.nl

Antwerp photography

"Theatres of the Real—Contemporary British Photography" presents recent work by eight photographers. Photomuseum
Until Sept. 13
☎ 32-3-2429-300
www.fotomuseum.be

Berlin art

"As Time Goes By" shows 80 works confronting the theme of time in paintings, photography, architectural models and video art by Wilhelm Lehmbruck (1881-1919), George Rickey (1907-2002), Tacita Dean (born 1965) and others.

Berlinische Galerie
Until Aug. 31
☎ 49-30-7890-2600
www.berlinischegalerie.de

art

"Bauhaus: A Conceptual Model" presents over 900 objects from the Bauhaus school, including early works by masters such as Lyonel Feininger (1871-1956), Paul Klee (1879-1940) and Wassily Kandinsky (1866-1944). Martin-Gropius-Bau
Until Oct. 4
☎ 49-0340-6508-200
www.modell-bauhaus.de

Bern art

"Director's Choice: 'Drink, oh Eyes...'" illustrates landscapes and life in 19th-century Switzerland through works by Swiss artists from Albert Anker (1831-1910) to Robert Zünd (1827-1909). Kunstmuseum
Until Oct. 4
☎ 41-31-3280-944
www.kunstmuseumbern.ch

Düsseldorf fashion

"Catwalks: Most Spectacular Fashion Shows" showcases 12 key fashion shows of the past 30 years, including work by Galliano, Alexander McQueen and Dries van Noten.



NRW—Forum Kultur und Wirtschaft
Until Nov. 1
☎ 49-211-8926-690
www.nrw-forum.de

Edinburgh art festival

"Edinburgh Art Festival 2009" displays visual art from 50 galleries representing leading British and international artists. Edinburgh Art Festival
Aug. 5-Sept. 5
☎ 44-782-533-6782
www.edinburghartfestival.org

Glasgow art

"A Painter of Poems: Matthijs Maris" displays charcoal drawings, etchings, watercolors and pastels by Dutch artist Matthijs Maris (1839-1917). Burrell Collection
Until Sept. 27
☎ 44-141-2872-550
www.glasgowmuseums.com

Hannover art

"Photography Meets Painting—The Wilde Collection at the Sprengel Museum Hannover" includes works by Fernand Léger (1881-1955) and Germaine Krull (1897-1985), Max Ernst (1891-1976) and Man Ray (1890-1976), and Umberto Boccioni (1882-1916) and Albert Renger-Patzsch (1897-1966). Sprengel Museum
Until Aug. 30
☎ 49-511-1684-3875



Above, 'Pterocera aurantiaca L., Ostafrika,' circa 1938-39, by Alfred Ehrhardt, on show in Hannover; below, 'Durchreiselandchaft (Sommer),' 1976, by Peter Berndt, in Berlin.

www.sprengel-museum.de

Leipzig art

"Enlightenment of the World: Saxony and the Rise of Modern Sciences" presents about 700 objects illustrating the sciences and the intellectual life at the University of Leipzig during the late 17th and 18th century. Stadtgeschichtliches Museum Leipzig
Until Dec. 6
☎ 49-341-9730-170
www.erleuchtung-der-welt.de

London theater

"The Trial of Marie Antoinette" is a new play written and directed by Peter Langdon, starring Julie Tallis, Stuart Sessions and Michael Bagwell. The Courtyard Theatre
Aug. 8-30
☎ 44-870-1630-717
www.trialofmarieantoinette.co.uk

art

"Classified: Contemporary Art at Tate Britain" shows works from the Tate collection, including Damien Hirst's room installation "Pharmacy" (1992) and Tacita Dean's film portrait, "Michael Hamburger" (2007). Tate Britain
Until Aug. 23
☎ 44-20-7887-8888
www.tate.org.uk

Lyon art

"Dereux/Dubuffet" exhibits 40 collages of butterfly wings and plants by French artists Philippe Dereux (born 1918) and Jean Dubuffet (1901-85). Musée des Beaux-Arts de Lyon
Until Sept. 21
☎ 33-472-1017-40
www.mba-lyon.fr

Maastricht tapestries

"Queen and Huntress Chaste and Fair: The Rijksmuseum's Diana Tapestries" presents restored tapestries designed in the 1590s by Karel van Mander. Bonnefantemuseum
Until Sept. 13
☎ 31-43-3290-190
www.bonnefanten.nl

Madrid photography

"Graciela Iturbide" is a retrospective of the black-and-white work of Mexican photographer Graciela Iturbide (born 1942). Fundacion Mapfre
Until Sept. 6
☎ 34-91-5811-628
www.exposicionesmapfrearte.com

Oslo art

"From Abildgaard to Eckersberg: Danish Drawings from the Collections" shows a selection of drawings by Danish artists from the late 18th and early 19th centuries. The National Gallery
Until Aug. 23
☎ 47-21-9820-00
www.nationalmuseum.no

Paris art

"Henri Gaudier-Brzeska—Collections of the Centre Pompidou" displays 20 sculptures and 40 drawings by the



Above, a corset (circa 1880-85) and, below, summer boots (circa 1870), on show in Vienna.



French sculptor Henri Gaudier-Brzeska (1891-1915). Centre Pompidou
Until Sept. 14
☎ 33-1-4478-1233
www.centrepompidou.fr

Prades music festival

"Festival Pablo Casals de Prades 2009" features performances by the Abbaye Saint Michel de Cuxa, Eglise de Codalet, Eglise Saint Pierre de Prades and the Eglise de Mosset. Festival Pablo Casals de Prades
Until Aug. 13
☎ 33-4689-6330-7
www.prades-festival-casals.com

Rotterdam art

"Cul Glacé/Frozen Bottom—Romanian Surrealism 1928-1947" showcases over 100 drawings, texts, books, paintings and objects by Romanian Surrealist artists. Kunsthal
Until Sept. 13
☎ 31-10-4400-301
www.kunsthal.nl

Vienna design

"Modernism as a Ruin: An Archaeology of the Present" displays contemporary art confronting 20th-century utopian visions. Generali Foundation
Until Sept. 20
☎ 43-1-5049-880
foundation.generali.at

fashion

"Grand Entrance: Fashion in the Ringstrassen Era" presents 300 objects, including dresses, fans, umbrellas, hats and walking sticks from 1870s Belle Epoque Germany. Wien Museum Karlsplatz
Until Nov. 1
☎ 43-1-5058-7470
www.wienmuseum.at

Source: ArtBase Global Arts News Service, WSJE research.

Christin Losta, © Wien Museum (2)