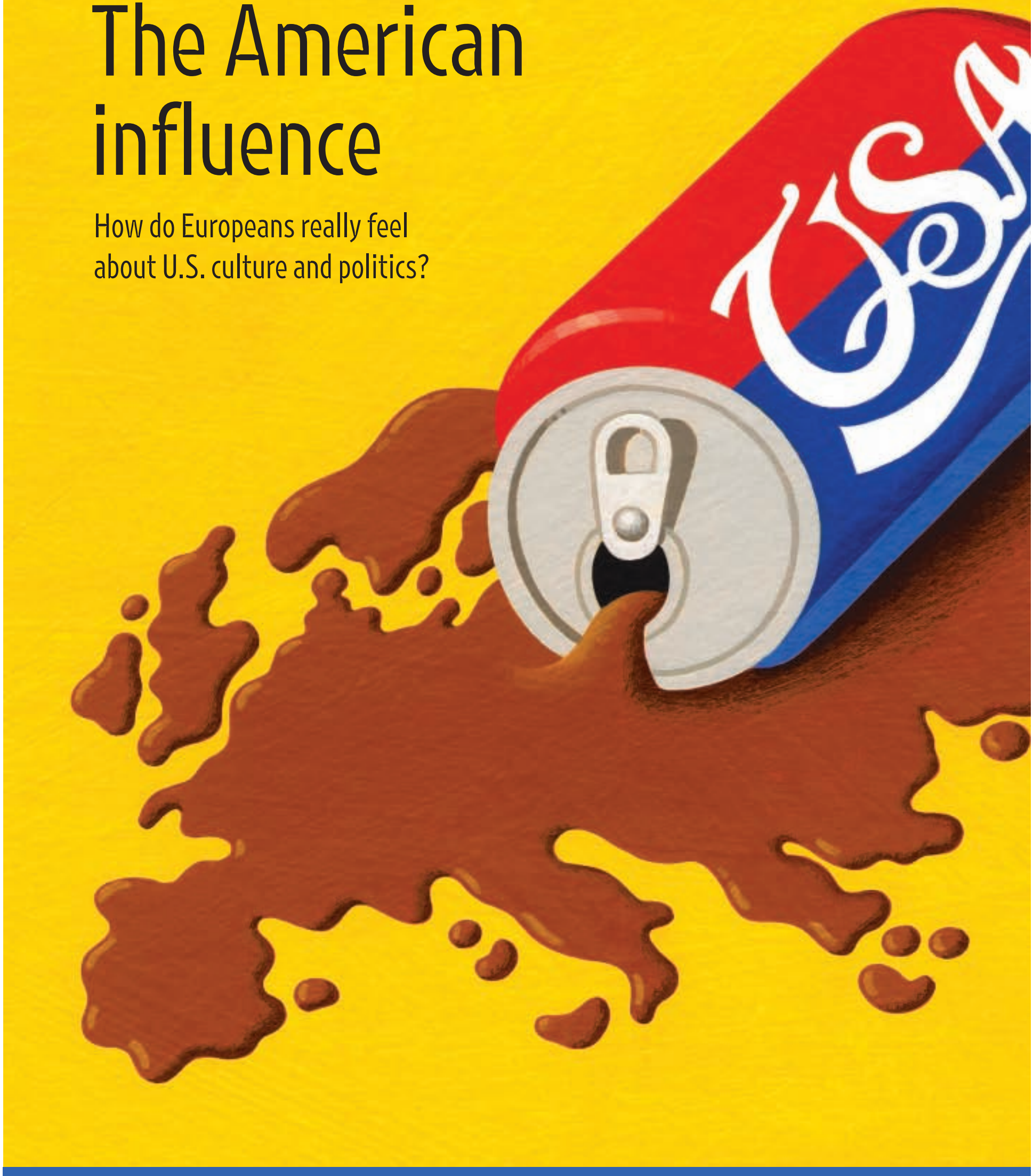
FRIDAY - SUNDAY, JUNE 19 - 21, 2009

WEEKEND JOURNAL.

EUROPE

The American influence

How do Europeans really feel about U.S. culture and politics?



Hip new fashion that fits | A song plays in Brooklyn

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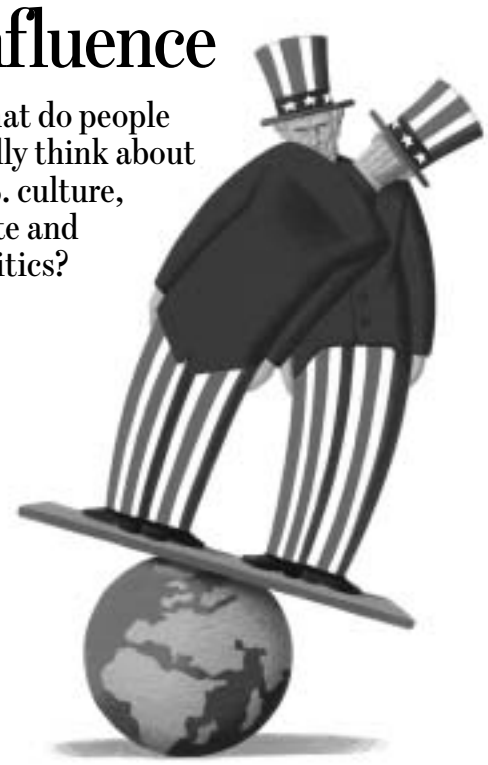

ILLUSTRATIONS: ADAM NIKLEWICZ

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WEEKEND JOURNAL
EUROPE

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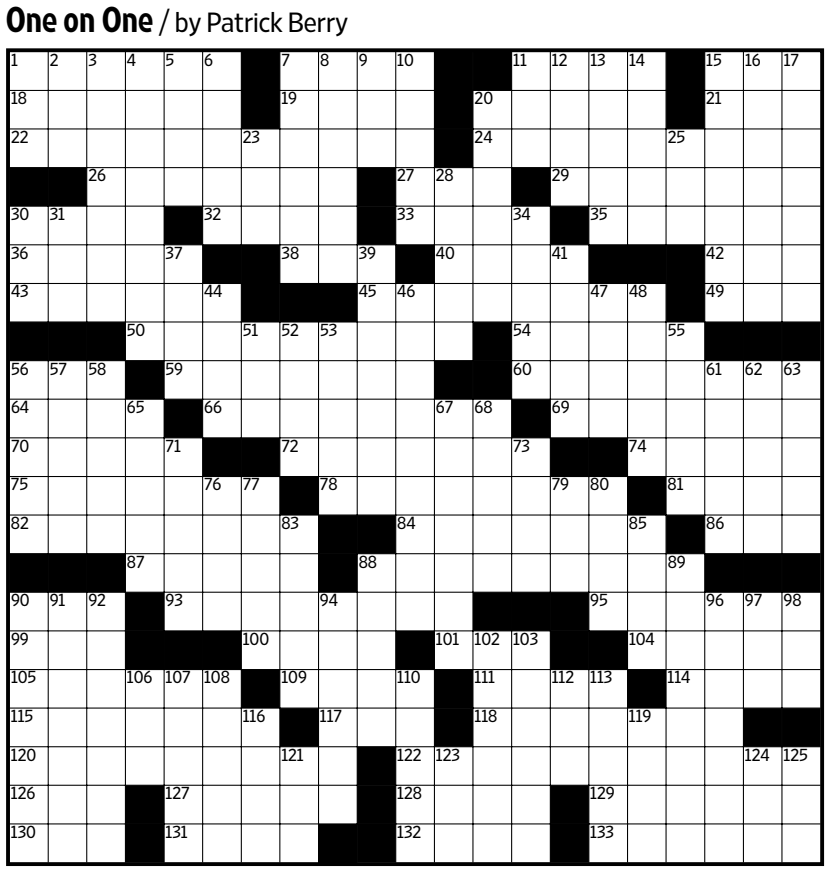

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Last Week's Solution

Making fashion fit the form, for a change

Women of a certain shape take up the cause for clothes that take curves into account

On Style
CHRISTINA BINKLEY

WHEN ALEXANDRA Schulman, editor of British Vogue, last week sent a letter to designers including Karl Lagerfeld, John Galliano, Prada and Versace, asking them to make larger clothes for fashion shoots, she touched on an issue of increasing concern to many consumers.

In the letter, which caused a sensation in clubby London fashion circles, Ms. Schulman says she wants to be able to hire slightly larger models so she can stop asking photo editors to hide superskinny models' protruding bones.

Many ordinary women want the fashion world to make larger clothes, too. Stores are filled to overflowing with trendy, young fashions designed for pin-thin bodies. But women larger than size 8 or 10 (around 38 or 40 in European size) complain it's difficult to find fashionable apparel.

What's more—at a time when clothes are languishing on the racks—many larger women say they'd buy more if they could find clothing that fits well.

Christine Kelley, a Berkeley, Calif., human-resources manager, says she is looking for a "modern-looking longish blazer that won't go out of style next season and hides a few extra pounds."

Dinah Shields, a size-14 resident of Laguna Beach, Calif., says she wants fashionable clothes she can wear to her office, but it's "slim pickings."

Pat Anthony, a "young 66-year-old" in Boca Raton, Fla., says she has a hard time finding formal wear with sleeves that doesn't look like the "grandmother of the bride."

One group of entrepreneurs is trying to tap into this longing for clothes that fit with a new line of jeans. Cookie Johnson, wife of basketball legend Magic Johnson, says she has struggled for years to fit what she calls her "healthy size 8" frame into ill-fitting jeans. Initially, her solution was to cover up the pinched or protruding parts with a long tunic. "You get to the point where you think it's you—you think, I shouldn't have eaten that extra cracker," says Ms. Johnson. But then, she decided to take matters further, designing her own denim jeans for curvy women.

By curvy, I do not mean obese, unless you think Marilyn Monroe was fat. Women of a certain shape, it seems, have been forgotten. "The correct word is ignored," says Kathleen Carpenter, a 60-year-old Chicagoan who says she would spend more on apparel if so many choices didn't range from "ridiculous to nun-like."

"It's a huge issue," says Charla Krupp, a stylist and author of "How Not to Look Old." "These people have money and they have no place to spend it." Ms. Krupp is working on a second book on a topic she describes as "fashion for people who aren't perfect."

Retailers often argue that larger women don't buy as many clothes as thinner women. Ray Lingao, vice president of sales for trendy Revolve Clothing, says that half of the jeans Revolve sells are sizes 26 and 28, which translate to 6 and 8, respectively. "I think it's just not our customer," he said of curvy women.

Michal Czerwonka for The Wall Street Journal

Left, Cookie Johnson (in glasses) works with designer Joie Rucker on her new line of jeans; above, Ms. Johnson's jeans are cut to fit curvier women.

But as we chatted, Mr. Lingao concluded that the problem might be that the "premium" jeans Revolve carries aren't cut for fleshier women. During the design process, most apparel is cut on a thin "fit model," and inches are added to the pattern to get to larger sizes. This process can leave larger sizes cut too large at the torso, too tight at the bust and hips, and long enough for an amazon.

"The real case could be that for larger sizes, they're not using the right fit models," Mr. Lingao says.

Ms. Johnson is calling her new line CJ by Cookie. Her business partner in the venture is the last guy you'd expect to bother with fit models who aren't thinner than svelte: Michael Glasser, founder of Seven For All Mankind, Citizens of Humanity, and Rich & Skinny jeans.

When I asked Mr. Glasser why he and so many designers and retailers create so much clothing to fit young, thin women, he threw back his head and guffawed, "Because they're hot!"

Seven and Citizens helped jump-start a then-moribund denim market, creating a frenzy for $200-plus jeans. These days, premium-denim sales have flattened, and the market is rife with rivals. "I heard Cookie's frustration and it hit me—I can do this again," Mr. Glasser said.

"CJ will be bigger than Seven, because they have more people to sell to than Seven, and they have a bigger slice of the pie," he says. In most department stores, he says, departments that cater to bigger women are as unappetizing as denim departments were when he launched Seven.

I tried out two pairs of the CJ jeans, which are priced between $140 and $200. That's not cheap, but it's the norm for premium denim. The size 28 fit my thighs without forcing me to go up to a size that would leave the waist too big, and they were cut stylishly below the belly button, but not so low that it squeezed out an unwelcome "muffin top." I've gotten compliments on them, even from someone who designs clothes.

After Basel, dealers have high hopes for London sales

Collecting
MARGARET STUDER

A SERIES OF benchmark contemporary art auctions in London take center stage following last week's Art Basel fair: Sotheby's kicks off the sales (June 25-26), followed by Phillips de Pury (June 29) and Christie's (June 30-July 1).

Art Basel attracted 61,000 visitors to the fair's 300 galleries—the highest visitor number ever—but a total sales figure was not released, making it difficult to offer a real indication for the general market feel ahead of the coming auctions. However, many galleries seemed happy with the outcome despite working harder for sales; and fair organizers talked of "unexpectedly strong sales."

At the parallel fair Design Miami/Basel, where superbly presented pieces illustrated the link between art and design, Cologne dealer Gabrielle Ammann stressed that "this year we have had really important collectors who are interested in beautiful and timeless design, not those who want quick-money-making blue chips."

It is difficult to get a real grip on price developments at Art Basel. Generally, prices seemed as high as ever; but savvy galleries had hardly brought down their prices before collectors moved in with their demands for further discounts.

Auction houses are in a very different situation—the prices achieved at auction are public. Therefore, in the coming London sales, estimates are conservative where vendors allow.

Works by Andy Warhol will spearhead Sotheby's sale, including "Mrs. McCarthy and Mrs. Brown (Tuna Fish Disaster)" (1963). The large painting features two housewives from a Detroit suburb who tragically died after eating contaminated tins of tuna fish (estimate: £3.5 million-£4.5 million).

Sotheby's

'Mini-Me' (1999) by Maurizio Cattelan (estimate: £180,000-£250,000).

Other top works will be by Alexander Calder, Gerhard Richter, Jean Dubuffet and Andreas Gursky. For a touch of humor, there will be Maurizio Cattelan's "Mini-Me" (1999), a mixed-media piece which shows the Italian artist as a helpless, little man sitting on a shelf filled with books on Francis Bacon and Andy Warhol (estimate: £180,000-£250,000).

Scottish-born artist Peter Doig features at Sotheby's with a monumental landscape reflecting the tranquillity of rural Canada, where he grew up: "Almost Grown" (2000), estimated at £1.4 million-£1.8 million. At Christie's, his large-scale "Night Playground" (1997-98) is estimated at £1.5 million-£2 million.

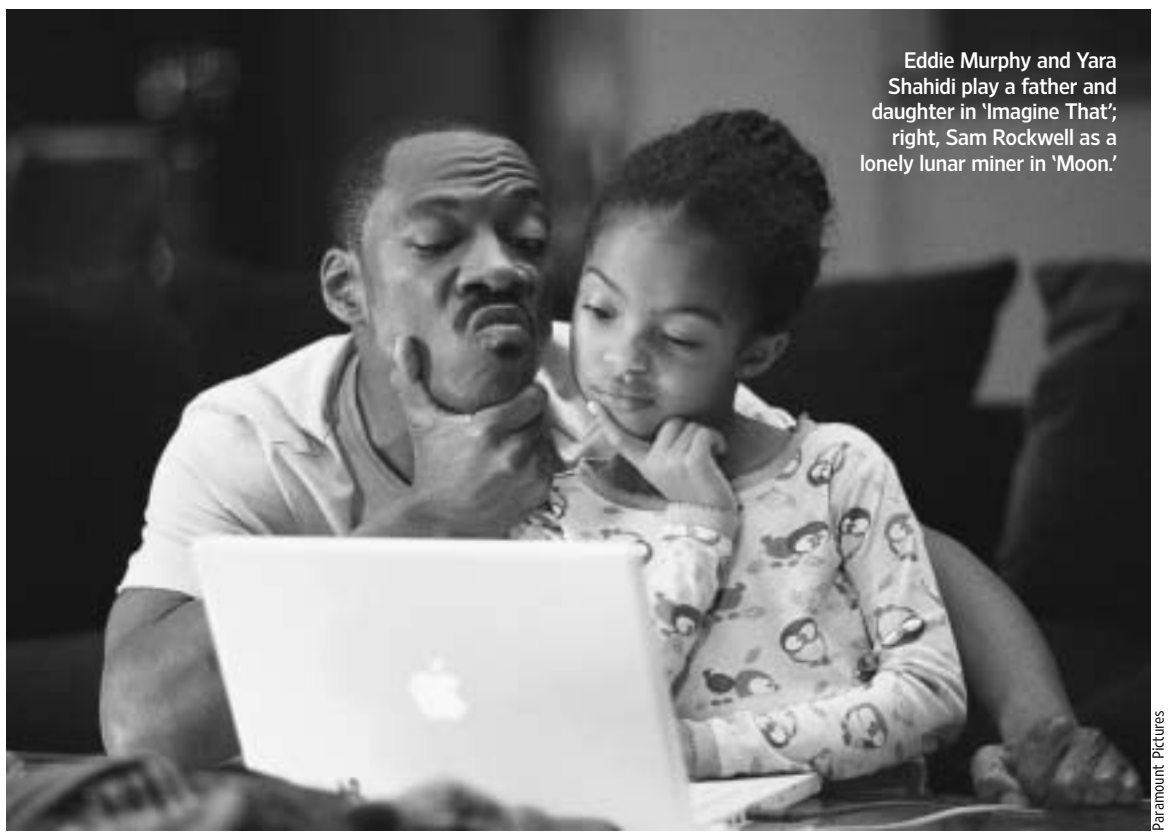
Among other major works at Christie's will be "Country Nurse" (2003) by Richard Prince (estimate: £1.5 million-£2 million).

Mr. Prince's nurse series is based on trashy romance novels and explores suggestive female stereotypes. At Sotheby's in London a year ago, one of his nurse paintings sold for £4.24 million.

Mr. Prince also features at Phillips de Pury with "Spiritual America IV" (2005), a photograph of Brooke Shields in a bikini leaning against a motorbike (estimate: £400,000-£600,000).

‘Imagine That’! Murphy gets it right

RAISE THOSE LOWERED expectations a bit before you see Eddie Murphy in “Imagine That.” Yes, his talents have recently been squandered in gimmicky movies that served him ill. Yes, this one has glaring flaws, and it depends on a gimmick too—a father’s failing career as a financial analyst is saved by his 7-year-old daughter Olivia’s magical gift for



Eddie Murphy and Yara Shahidi play a father and daughter in ‘Imagine That’; right, Sam Rockwell as a lonely lunar miner in ‘Moon.’

Paramount Pictures

Sony Pictures Classics

Film
JOE MORGENSTERN

picking stocks and corporate winners. But that child—she’s played by Yara Shahidi—leads Mr. Murphy back to his own gifts, and she complements him in one delicate comic sequence after another.

Delicacy is not a word that leaps to mind in connection with Eddie Murphy movies, and it certainly isn’t foreshadowed by the opening shot—the father, Evan Danielson, standing at the front door of a suburban house and screaming bloody murder for his Goo-Gaa. But the Goo-Gaa is, in fact, his daughter’s security blanket, and a key component of the spell that Olivia invokes every time she enters a fantasy world inhabited by three financially astute princesses and one queen. The delicacy is first apparent at the portal of that world, which we are never, mercifully, shown. Rather than plunge into banal fantasy settings, the filmmakers enlist our imagination—and redeem the flat title—by letting the father and daughter act out everything for us. (Karey Kirkpatrick directed from a script by Ed Solomon and Chris Matheson.)

With other actors, the fantasy sequences might have flopped. With these two they’re charming. The tone is set by the little girl’s sweet gravity, ethereal features and supple voice. How her performance was achieved is no small mystery. Sometimes movie moppets are no more spontaneous than movie dogs that keep watching their trainers offstage. Sometimes a director working with a child actor must use a wireless earpiece to feed lines into the kid’s ear, or construct a simulation of a performance in the editing room from fragments of usable dialogue and fleeting expressions. But none of that seems to be the case here.

Yara Shahidi’s sense of fun is so infectious, her concentration is so sustained and her line readings are so surprising that you’re willing to believe Olivia is on to something when she tells her dad that one corporation is “a crybaby who always goes running to mommy,” while another is “a big dumb showoff that’s going to fall off its bike.” And Mr. Murphy rises to every occasion, not only with the crisp wit that has long been his hallmark, but with restraint and tenderness that serve him well.

Those two samples of precocious wisdom may suggest insufferable preciousness, but most of the writing is as sharp and inventive as the performances. Olivia’s allusive language is matched by the succulent silliness of Johnny Whitefeather, a fake Native American, and Evan’s wily rival, who refers to the Internet as the “White Fire-grid” and thanks a convocation of corporate executives for “letting me contribute a bit of venison to your potlatch.” (He’s played by the splendid Thomas Haden Church.)

Still, Olivia’s spell isn’t strong enough to banish all banality. The story’s texture starts to coarsen when Johnny Whitefeather finds his own magical blanket, and things go from bad to much worse when a showdown between Evan and Johnny leads to pratfalls, a standard-brand car chase—does every studio have a designated executive who insists on car chases?—and a feel-good ending that feels as delicate as a cheek with five o’clock shadow. Too bad, though not terminally so. What’s good in “Imagine That” can’t be denied, or undone.

‘Moon’

The computer in “Moon,” a simpler-minded descendant of HAL in “2001: A Space Odyssey,” indicates its feelings at a given moment with a little emoticon on its display. It would be nice to be that precise—smiley face or sad face—about the movie, which was directed by Duncan Jones and written by Nathan Parker. But this one-man show with Sam Rockwell (who plays more than one man) doesn’t lend itself to precision. Its main virtue, which may also be seen as its vice, is ambiguity, since its main theme is the elusive question of human identity: Who am I, who made me what I am and where do I belong in the impassive cosmos? (Kevin Spacey is the computer’s voice, and Dominique McElligott is seen, televisionally, as Sam’s wife back on the blue planet.)

Mr. Rockwell’s astronaut, Sam Bell, is near the end of a three-year tour of solitary duty on the moon, where he’s been supervising machines that mine helium-3 for fusion power on Earth. Suddenly, however, he falls ill, then discovers, during his computer-aided recuperation, that he’s not alone. Another Sam Bell has appeared, an apparent clone who insists, altogether convincingly, that he isn’t a clone at all. I won’t pretend to understand the movie’s deep meaning—if it has one—but I can say three things for sure: Mr. Rockwell gives a brilliant performance, the physical production is impressive and “Moon” made me think. Four things: It made me smile.

‘Tetro’

In the first shot of “Tetro”—the first of many gorgeous images to come—a moth struggles toward a light bulb’s blazing filament. That’s the dynamic that drives Francis Ford Coppola’s extravagant, and eventually lurid, tale of a tortured family. Bennie, barely 17 and a waiter on a cruise ship (he’s played by a newcomer, Alden Ehrenreich), comes to Buenos Aires in search of his beloved older brother, whom he hasn’t seen in more than a decade. The young man finds an angry expat who, having cut all family ties, calls himself Tetro and tries to push Bennie away. If Tetro is the shining light to which Bennie has been drawn, the family’s patriarch, Carlo, a world-class conductor played by Klaus Maria Brandauer, is the flame that has almost consumed Tetro.

It’s tempting to see aspects of the filmmaker’s own family in this saga, but literal resemblances are few and beside the point. What drives his screenplay is the fatal lure of mythic themes—blind passion, epic rivalry, parricide and shattering tragedy. “Tetro” turns out to be not one movie but, at the very least, two—a Fellini-esque (or Coppola-esque) concatenation of drama, dance and opera (with a nod to Alphonse Daudet), and a modest, appealing coming-of-age story that involves Maribel Verdú (from “Y Tu Mamá También”) as Tetro’s girlfriend. When she speaks English she’s merely marvelous. In her native Spanish she is dazzling.

WSJ.com

Opening this week in Europe

- **Crossing Over** Denmark, Germany, Italy
- **Drag Me to Hell** Belgium
- **Flash of Genius** Germany
- **Last Chance Harvey** Austria, Norway
- **Race to Witch Mountain** Romania
- **Rudo y Cursi** U.K.
- **State of Play** France
- **Sunshine Cleaning** U.K.
- **Tetro** Spain

Source: IMDB

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In new romantic comedy, Bullock plays ‘the guy’

By Christopher John Farley

SANDRA BULLOCK, the co-star of the 1994 action blockbuster “Speed,” established herself as a force in Hollywood with such romantic comedies as “While You Were Sleeping.”

But the 44-year-old actress now says she “can’t stand” romantic comedies because most of the scripts she reads from the genre are terrible and feature underdeveloped female characters. “I always read scripts and go, ‘I want to change the role of Sam to Samantha because it’s written better,’” she says.

She considers her new movie, “The Proposal,” to be “a comedy that has elements of romance in it—just like the guys get to do.” The film is about a New York-based, Canadian-born book editor (played by Ms. Bullock) who, faced with deportation, forces her assistant (played by 32-year-old actor Ryan Reynolds) to become her fiancé.

Sandra Bullock

Retna Ltd.

“This is basically a guy’s film,” says Ms. Bullock, who was an executive producer on the movie, “except I’m the guy.”

Ms. Bullock, who is married to reality TV star Jesse James (he attempts dangerous stunts in his new show, “Jesse James Is a Dead Man”), talked about her new film, which comes out this week in the U.S. and some European countries.

Q: In “The Proposal,” you’re the boss and your romantic interest is about a dozen years younger. Were those plot points important to you?

No. I love the idea that this person wanted nothing but to keep her job and blackmails her assistant, who had been nicely abused by her through the years, into marrying her just so she can keep the thing that matters the most to her. She’s not missing anything. Everything—her love life, her family—is her job. She’s not going “Oh, I’m missing out on these things in life.” She wants to keep her job. Plain and simple.

Q: Your last movie was “Premonition,” two years ago. Why did you take off so much time between releases?

I’ve heard that I’ve taken time off. To my knowledge I’m working every day. I produced a film called “All About Steve” which was a hard film to get made, but a passion project, and you spend two years of your life when you produce it and you’re in it and you’re trying to get it made so that’s what I was doing there. I have other businesses that I run in Austin, and between the restaurants and the bakery and the architectural restoration business that I have....I was working. I just wasn’t in the public eye.

Q: What was your reaction when your husband came home and said he was starring in a TV show called “Jesse James Is a Dead Man”?

Brilliant marketing.... we know what the rules are. I don’t want to know about it until after you’re safe and I get the email at the end of the day, “I’m fine” or “It was great.” Those are the only two things I’m allowed to get.

It takes a trek to hear this track

By S. Mitra Kalita

Brooklyn, N.Y.

INDIE FOLK AND ROCK singer Sufjan Stevens has avid fans in many countries who are desperate to hear one of his latest songs. But to do that, they have to get to Alec Duffy's apartment in Brooklyn.

Mr. Duffy, a 33-year-old theater director, owns the song. He won the exclusive rights to it in a contest that the singer held in 2007.

Fans assumed Mr. Duffy would upload the song to the Web. In today's music world, uploading, downloading and file-sharing are givens. But after a year of wondering just what to do with the song, Mr. Duffy decided that putting it on the Internet wasn't special enough. He wondered: What if the only way the song could be heard was in person, in intimate gatherings?

"This is the finest way we felt we could curate this song," Mr. Duffy says. "It brings people together," he adds, rather than "being lost among 14,000 iTunes."

The experiment lures strangers to Mr. Duffy's living room about once a week, to "recapture an era when to get one's hands on a particular album or song was a real experience," as he says on an invitation posted on the Web site of his theater company.

Fans come from near and far, taking subways or timing flights to New York City to attend listening sessions. They walk through a corridor strewn with strollers to get to his corner apartment in Brooklyn's Prospect Heights. Since January, when he started the sessions, Mr. Duffy says about 60 people have come to his place to hear the tune, called "The Lonely Man of Winter." He doesn't charge them to hear it.

"I was a stranger, but we all had this love of this music," recalls Maha Kahn, a plastic surgeon from Manchester, England, who traipsed to Mr. Duffy's place on a rainy February night during a trip to New York. She has stayed in touch with him and the people she met that night through email and Facebook.

Mr. Duffy and his friend and musical composer, Dave Malloy, run these evenings like an efficient piece of performance art. On a recent Wednesday, Mr. Malloy arrived early to bake chocolate-chip cookies and brew tea. Mr. Duffy straightened up the two-bedroom apartment he shares with his wife, a set designer. Guests are asked not to show up earlier than 8 p.m.

The first guest, actress Liz Davito, heard about the night on a radio station. The second, Nikaury Rodriguez, acted in some of Mr. Duffy's plays. Two others were no-shows. The evening began with visitors discussing Mr. Stevens and his work.

"I love what you guys are doing," said Ms. Davito, who says her favorite is the "Illinoise" album. Mr. Stevens had promised to make an album for each of the 50 states; so far, he has finished only two—Michigan and Illinois. And while he has released outtakes, covers and some new work at concerts, "The Lonely Man of Winter" is one of his most recent, fully original songs.

From a goldenrod wingback chair, Mr. Duffy passed around the package sent with his prize. A personal letter from Mr. Stevens describes "hibernating bears trapped in our imagination" and the "muffled insulation of snow banks on either side of you" as inspiration for the song. There's also a Christmas card from Mr. Stevens—which arrived in January.

Newscom

To prevent recordings—and, ultimately, dissemination—of the song, listeners don headphones hooked up to Mr. Duffy's iPod or laptop. He allowed himself to copy the song from a CD onto a hard drive to share during these sessions.

For the playing of the three-minute song, the climax of the evening, Mr. Malloy exaggerated a tiptoe out of the room. Mr. Duffy joined him, to give the visitors privacy with the music. He asked a photographer to stop clicking, wanting listeners to preserve the first moment only in memory.

"The Lonely Man of Winter" is a soulful number, at once jazzy and melancholy. Lyrics describe various states of being alone.

The listeners heard the song a second time—the photographer was allowed to capture that—then discussed their reactions. A debate ensued over whether the song's mention of a "carpenter's kiss" is a religious reference. After the discussion ended and parting bags of cookies offered, Ms. Davito and Ms. Rodriguez took the subway back to Manhattan.

"I can't believe I just heard a song I will never hear again in my life," said Ms. Davito.

Ms. Rodriguez laughed, "I'm already forgetting the melody."

Demanding that anyone who wants to hear the song come in person has earned Mr. Duffy the wrath of some fans online. They call him everything from a Brooklyn elitist to arrogant to things that can't be printed in this newspaper. "Given the economic woes and geopolitical instabilities of the day, is now really the time to hold effete little tea parties" to hear the song, asked one blogger.

Matthew Craig for The Wall Street Journal

Left, singer-songwriter Sufjan Stevens, whose recent track 'The Lonely Man of Winter' can only be heard in the apartment of Alec Duffy (above).

The criticism has unnerved Mr. Duffy. "I'm a person who likes to make friends and make everyone happy," he says. "Suddenly being an evil presence on the Web felt very new."

Mr. Duffy won the rights to Mr. Stevens's song in a 2007 contest called the "Great Sufjan Song Xmas Xchange." Mr. Duffy submitted a song that he wrote—called "Every Day is Christmas"—that Mr. Stevens judged the best. In exchange, Mr. Duffy won the rights to Mr. Stevens's "The Lonely Man of Winter."

In describing the prize, Mr. Stevens's Web site said: "Sufjan's new song becomes your song. You can hoard it for yourself, sell it to a major soft drink corporation, use it in your daughter's first Christmas video, or share it for free on your Web site. No one except Sufjan and you will hear his song, unless you decide otherwise."

Sufjan (pronounced SOOF-yaan) Stevens was born and raised in Michigan. His Arabic name was given by the founder of a spiritual group to which his family belonged. His music broadly spans genres from folk to electronica, with lyrics that dissect everything from childhood to the Brooklyn-Queens Expressway. Fans have written reams on the Internet exploring the meaning of his words and allusions.

Mr. Stevens, 33, hasn't weighed in on the controversy over Mr. Duffy's use of the song. A spokeswoman for Mr. Stevens's record label, Asthmatic Kitty, said he is busy working on another project and declined to comment. Mr. Duffy says he hasn't heard from the singer.

"He's like the wizard behind the curtain," Mr. Duffy says. "If he said he didn't like it, we'd be so sorry."

This month, the song finally left Mr. Duffy's living room. He took it to Baltimore and played it for a few fans. Now in Europe for a theater festival, Mr. Duffy plans to hold a listening session in Finland, in response to pleas from music enthusiasts. Juho Niemelä will play host in Finland to the song, which he heard about through a fan Web site.

"All the fans are really having a hard time waiting for the next album," says Mr. Niemelä, a 28-year-old multimedia journalist. "I am very excited about hearing the mythical song soon."

Lovelorn

Songwriter Pete Yorn on love, loss—and trailer parks

For his fourth album, "Back and Fourth," singer Pete Yorn left his Los Angeles home base and went to Omaha, Neb., where he spent two months working with producer Mike Mogis, known for making rootsy indie rock with acts like Bright Eyes. Mr. Yorn, who begins a tour July 9, spoke about three tracks.

—John Jurgensen

Listen to a song from 'Back and Fourth' at **WSJ.com/Lifestyle.**

FilmMagic/Getty Images

'Don't Wanna Cry'

This song about avoiding, then succumbing to, the pain of loss was shaped by Mr. Yorn's grief over the passing of a romance and also someone close to him: "It's probably the most cathartic song I've ever written."

'Paradise Cove'

After spending a day in the titular trailer park in Malibu, Mr. Yorn wrote this song about people's shifting definition of happiness. Whether it's a better job or relationship, he says, there's always "a carrot dangling."

'Shotgun'

This song is driven by a guttural guitar riff and the voice of someone in a no-man's-land of love. "The character can't go back to the relationship they'd left," he says, "but not going back means inevitable loss and pain."

HOW EUROPE SEES AMERICA

BY ADAM COHEN

Our survey on attitudes about U.S. cultural and political influence

ILLUSTRATION: ADAM NIKLEWICZ

Ask people what they think of America's cultural and political influence in the wider world and you're sure to get a mixed response, even from Americans.

One thing is clear: Most Europeans think America's political influence in the world was negative over the past five years, but say it has taken a sharply positive turn since Barack Obama's election as U.S. president.

When it comes to culture, Europeans' view of America's contributions is more complex. Some aspects are loathed, others are loved. Large numbers of Europeans say they detest American food, but cite films and television shows as the country's best exports.

To study this issue and broader questions about what the world thinks of America and what Americans think of themselves, The Wall Street Journal asked market-research firm GfK to poll more than 18,000 people in 18 countries—16 European nations, plus the U.S. and Russia. GfK polled respondents about the facets of American culture they admire and those they dislike and asked them whether they viewed U.S. political influence in a positive or negative light.

Some of the results fit well-established stereotypes. For example, French respondents didn't like the Bush years and voiced a stronger distaste for American cuisine than any other country surveyed. But other features of the poll proved surprising, particularly when Americans were asked how they view their own country's role in the world and its contribution to global culture.

"The views of American political influence show a very, very positive change with the election of Obama," said Mark Hofmans, a managing director in GfK's Brussels office, who analyzed the survey results. "Attitudes toward American cultural influence are far more nuanced."

GfK asked respondents to rate, in broad terms, America's cultural influence in the world. It then identified several categories—movies and television, fashion, food, sports, music, architecture and literature—and asked respondents to identify the best and worst aspects of U.S. cultural influence in the world. Respondents were also given the option to say "other" or "nothing."

In total, more respondents (39%) said America's cultural influence in the world was negative than those who said it was positive (22%). Among European respondents, 32% said U.S. cultural influence was negative, compared to 26% who gave a positive response. Americans were slightly more downbeat than average, with 46% of those surveyed saying their country has a negative cultural influence in the world, compared with 33% who describe it as positive.

Several countries surveyed had more positive than negative votes. In Italy, 39% of respondents had a positive impression of U.S. cultural influence, compared with 25% who gave a negative answer. The U.K. (38% to 31%), Poland (32% to 24%), Bulgaria (29% to 25%) and Romania (29% to 26%) also logged more positive than negative responses.

Luigi Mattirolo, an Italian civil servant in Rome, said it isn't specifically books or movies that he likes most about American culture, but the country's ethic of initiative and free enterprise.

The American "way of thinking makes it possible for the people who really believe in something to achieve their goals. At least [in the U.S.] it happens more frequently than in Europe," Mr. Mattirolo said.

The most negative impressions of U.S. cultural influence were found in Greece, where 58% criticized America's cultural influence. Americans were the second-most critical group, followed by Russia (45%) and Hungary (40%).

In the breakdown of what people like best about American culture, a total of 30% of those surveyed cited movies and television shows, making this by far the most popular category. Among Europeans, the number was even higher: 40% said movies and TV were the best American cultural export. Sports (12%) and music (11%) were the only other categories that received high marks (each was the choice of 13% of Europeans). American fashion, literature and food each were given positive marks by only 4% of all respondents, while 21% of those surveyed said "nothing" or "I don't know" when asked about the best American contribution to world culture.

Greeks, who gave American political and cultural influence some of the most negative reviews in the survey, were the most enthusiastic admirers of American movies and television, with 52% citing these as America's best exports. Hungarian

Please turn to page W8

America's best contribution to world culture is...

Europe
40% Movies/TV
13% Sports
13% Music
4% Fashion
4% Literature

France
41% Movies/TV
18% Sports
15% Music
5% Literature
3% Fashion
1% Food

Germany
42% Movies/TV
16% Music
15% Sports
4% Literature
3% Fashion
1% Food

U.K.
45% Movies/TV
15% Music
9% Sports
5% Art/Architecture
4% Fashion
4% Food

U.S.
28% Other
18% Movies/TV
11% Food
10% Sports
9% Music
7% Literature

Age 14-29
39% Movies/TV
15% Music
11% Sports
7% Fashion
3% Literature
3% Food

Age 30-49
33% Movies/TV
12% Music
10% Sports
5% Art/Architecture
4% Fashion
4% Food

Age 50+
23% Movies/TV
14% Sports
7% Music
5% Art/Architecture
5% Literature
5% Food

America's cultural influence in the world is...

Negative
32% Europe
58% Greece
45% Russia
38% France
36% Germany
31% U.K.
23% Romania
46% U.S.

Positive
26% Europe
39% Italy
38% U.K.
32% Poland
29% Romania
18% France
10% Russia
33% U.S.

Photos: AFP, Newcom

America's worst contribution to world culture is...

Europe
43% Food
10% Movies/TV
6% Fashion
5% Art/Architecture
4% Literature
3% Sports

France
65% Food
12% Movies/TV
3% Art/Architecture
3% Fashion
2% Literature
1% Sports

Hungary
20% Literature
19% Food
14% Art/Architecture
5% Movies/TV
4% Fashion
3% Music

U.K.
29% Food
22% Other
9% Movies/TV
7% Fashion
7% Sports
7% Literature

U.S.
32% Movies/TV
23% Other
11% Fashion
9% Food
5% Music
4% Sports

Age 14-29
40% Food
12% Movies/TV
5% Fashion
4% Literature
4% Art/Architecture
3% Sports

Age 30-49
34% Food
19% Movies/TV
7% Fashion
3% Art/Architecture
3% Literature
3% Sports

Age 50+
26% Food
24% Movies/TV
6% Fashion
3% Art/Architecture
3% Sports
2% Literature

"I have been to the U.S. as a tourist"

11% Europe
35% Switzerland
28% U.K.
27% Sweden
24% Netherlands
13% Belgium

"I have never been to the U.S."

83% Europe
99% Russia
93% Spain
88% France
83% Germany
48% U.K.

America's political influence in the world over the last five years has been...

Negative
62% Europe
88% Greece
80% Switzerland
78% Belgium
74% France
59% U.K.
69% U.S.

Positive
13% Europe
22% Poland
19% Romania
19% U.K.
16% Bulgaria
15% Czech Republic
15% Italy
18% U.S.

After the election of President Obama, America's political influence will be...

Better
70% Europe
84% Belgium
82% Italy
82% Germany
45% Poland
27% Russia
61% U.S.

Worse
5% Europe
11% France
8% Poland
7% Russia
6% Romania
2% Germany
19% U.S.

❖ Survey Special

How Europe sees America

Continued from page W6

(51%) and Dutch (50%) respondents, who also gave U.S. political and cultural influence negative scores, also professed admiration for Hollywood.

Surprisingly, when asked to identify America's worst contribution to world culture, 32% of Americans pointed to film and television, a far higher proportion than in any other country and the single most popular response among U.S. respondents. It turns out Americans see their films and TV shows, which broadly are admired around the world, as having a negative cultural influence.

Still, 18% of American respondents cited films and television shows as the country's best contribution to world culture, followed closely by food (11%) and sports (10%). The most popular response, however, was "other," showing that Americans likely have a far more nuanced view of their country's cultural worth than others around the globe.

Other countries all singled out American food as the country's worst contribution to global culture. Sixty-five percent of French respondents gave this answer, the highest in the group. Swiss (56%) and German (52%) respondents were close behind.

The French numbers are interesting, considering that McDonald's is virtually ubiquitous in the country and another U.S. edible export, Starbucks, has been spreading around Paris over the past few years.

"I think that in France we are not influenced by American food," said Amaury de Saint-Ours, a business consultant in Paris. "We don't have a good opinion of it. We think of McDonald's hamburgers." He explained that people go to McDonald's in France because it is cheap and quick, not because the food is good. "We are lucky in France. We have great cheese, great meats and great wine."

When it comes to politics, almost two-thirds of those surveyed said the U.S. was a negative influence in the world over the past five years. The most downbeat country was Greece, where 88% of respondents said U.S. political influence was either "negative" or "very negative." Other countries, including the Netherlands (80%), Switzerland (80%) and Belgium (78%) also had predominantly negative views of American political influence.

Maybe this result isn't surprising, given that over the past five years the U.S. presence in Iraq—never popular in Europe—has continued, with regular reports of violence. But some of the sharply negative views are colored by other factors, including history.

In Greece, for example, the U.S. backed a military junta between 1967 and 1974 that curbed civil liberties and used harsh tactics against dissenters. U.S. President Bill Clinton later expressed regret for U.S. involvement in this era of Greek history, but suspicion and anger still linger.

"There is a very strong and common belief in Greece, especially among young people, that the USA, being the leading capitalistic country, has a detrimental impact on every affair or situation it tries to solve or influence," said Yannis Loizos, a lawyer in Athens.

None of the countries included in

Our survey on U.S. influences, from fashion and food to politics and pop culture

the survey gave U.S. political influence more positive than negative marks for the past five years. But some countries were less negative than others. Thirty-two percent of Romanian respondents said U.S. political influence was negative, the lowest level in the survey. Bulgaria (40%) and Poland (41%) were close behind.

The largest share of positive votes in this category was in Poland where a total of 22% of respondents gave the U.S. "positive" or "very positive" marks. Romania (19%) and the U.K. (19%) trailed in the category, but still were more complimentary than the Americans polled. Only 18% of U.S. respondents praised their country's political influence in the world over the past five years.

Countries in Central and Eastern Europe have tended to be more pro-American than other parts of the globe in recent years. Many cite the U.S. as a positive force against a resurgent Russia, which shrouded the region under Communist rule only a generation ago.

"During the cultural gulag and oppression [of the Soviet years], America was a beacon of hope and light to Romanians. America symbolized the land of the free," said Eugen Babau, a Romanian who until recently worked for an energy company. Many Romanians, he said, "still aspire to America as the promised land."

Even though the U.S. war in Iraq continues and President Obama has promised to send more U.S. troops to Afghanistan, the survey respondents were clear: The Obama era marks an about-face for U.S. political influence in the world.

Europeans are even more optimistic about Mr. Obama's presidency than Americans. In Belgium and Sweden, 84% of respondents believe America's political influence in the world will change in a "positive" or "very positive" way as a result of Mr. Obama's election. In Germany, Italy and the Netherlands, 82% of respondents gave the same answer. In the U.S., 61% of those surveyed gave a "positive" or "very positive" reply.

Elsewhere in Western Europe, Greece (59%), Spain (63%) and France (68%) gave the same reply about U.S. political influence since Mr. Obama's election, showing that while most of the world sees the new U.S. president in a positive light, countries aren't uniformly elated.

Many of the countries that had a less negative view of U.S. political influence over the past five years were among the least enthused about Mr. Obama's presidency. In Poland, 45% of those surveyed said Mr. Obama's election marked a "positive" or "very positive" change in U.S. political influence. Romania (47%) and Bulgaria (48%) were close behind.

Russia led this category, with only 27% saying Mr. Obama's election marked a "positive" or "very positive" change. This result could be skewed, however, since 32% of Russians surveyed gave no answer to the question, by far the highest level among the countries polled.

"In Central and Eastern European countries, the response to Obama has been a little less positive, but on the whole, the 'Obama effect' is very noticeable," Gfk's Mr. Hofmans said. "I hadn't expected such overwhelmingly positive figures."

How the survey was conducted

In the survey, conducted on behalf of The Wall Street Journal by GfK Custom Research Worldwide, 18,295 people in 18 countries were interviewed in February and March. Respondents were randomly selected for a nationally representative sample. The minimum age varied by country, from 14 to 18. The interviews were conducted face-to-face in Bulgaria, Czech Republic, France, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Russia, Spain and Sweden; by telephone in Belgium, Greece, Switzerland, the U.K. and the U.S.; and online in the Netherlands.

Population surveyed: Western Europe, 10,095 (Belgium, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, U.K.); Central and Eastern Europe, 5,000 (Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Romania); Russia, 2,200; U.S., 1,000. Regional result numbers were weighted to reflect relative populations.

Margin of error is +/- 1 percentage point for the full survey; +/-1.2 pts for Western Europe; +/-1.4 pts for Central and Eastern Europe; +/-2.2 pts for Russia; +/-4.4 pts for Sweden and Switzerland; +/-3.1 pts for all other countries.

The survey consisted of six questions.

Q1. If you think of the cultural influence of the U.S. in the world, how would you rate it in general? **1.** very negative; **2.** rather negative; **3.** neither positive nor negative; **4.** somewhat positive; **5.** very positive

Q2. What do you consider to be the best contribution of the U.S. to world culture? **1.** movies/TV; **2.** fashion; **3.** food; **4.** sports; **5.** music; **6.** art; **7.** literature; **8.** other; **9.** nothing/don't know

Q3. What do you consider to be the worst contribution of the U.S. to world culture? **1.** movies/TV; **2.** fashion; **3.** food; **4.** sports; **5.** music; **6.** art; **7.** literature; **8.** other; **9.** nothing/don't know

Q4. Do you think that the political influence of the U.S. in the world in the last five years has been positive or negative? **1.** very negative; **2.** rather negative; **3.** neither positive nor negative; **4.** somewhat positive; **5.** very positive

Q5. And now, after the election of President Obama, how in your opinion will the political influence of the U.S. in the world change? **1.** much worse; **2.** somewhat worse; **3.** the same; **4.** somewhat better; **5.** much better

Q6. Have you ever visited the U.S. as a tourist or for business? Please pick one. **1.** as a tourist; **2.** for business; **3.** both; **4.** to visit family/friends; **5.** none of the above

See more survey results at WSJ.com/Europe

The terror of the 10-foot putt

More golf events—especially U.S. Opens—come down to the lightest stroke; less than a joule

By Matthew Futterman

THE U.S. OPEN is professional golf's most unpredictable championship. The four-day grind rewards calm and steady play and punishes gamblers with lonely searches for balls in expanses of knee-high fescue.

More than likely, the winner will be decided Sunday by a knee-knocking, medium-range putt, say, 10-feet or so, with just enough slope to make the proper line to the hole a mystery.

"That's what it always comes down to, doesn't it?" said Rocco Mediate, last year's U.S. Open runner-up, who twice saw his chances for glory dashed, when Tiger Woods sank clutch putts on the 72nd and 90th holes. "There's always the nerves, so it just becomes a matter of how you handle them."

Anyone who plays a $5 Nassau with a regular group of Sunday hackers knows exactly what Mr. Mediate is talking about. The six-foot putt appears so simple, the exertion so minimal, the undulations of the green so manageable. But in a typical year, tour pros sink just half of them.

The putting stroke is one of the finest and simplest motions in golf, if not all of sports. It takes just 0.1 joule of energy, about 1/200th of the energy it takes to throw a baseball. And yet that's not how it will feel to whoever finds himself a shot away from the championship Sunday on the 18th green at the Black Course in New York's Bethpage State Park.

Getty Images

Robert Karlsson, left, and Tiger Woods line up their putts on the 14th hole during the U.S. Open last year.

It's hard enough to park your ball on this patch of turf with its nasty right-to-left and back-to-front slopes. If your approach shot lands in the back right with the flag up front, you're forced to putt down two hills and are basically dead.

Tournament supervisors placed the flag toward the front of the 18th green for the final round in 2002, when the Open was last held at the Black, a few feet from the flattest terrain in the front left corner.

But two feet off that corner the rough falls off like a cliff into a vast, 15-foot bunker. Safety isn't really safe. Only shooting for the middle of the green is, which will likely leave golfers with, what else—a scary 10-15 foot putt with the sort of slight downhill slope that is already playing with the minds of some of the tournament's participants.

"Sometimes it's the little, itty-bitty breaks that you can't see that get you," said Chad Campbell, who lost in a playoff at this year's Masters.

"Every putt's got some turn on it," added Boo Weekley, who toiled in professional golf's minor leagues for years before solidifying his spot on the PGA tour in 2007 at age 33: "You've got to just keep taking those deep breaths as you take those practice strokes."

On Bethpage's Black course, putting may not be the stiffest challenge. At more than 7,400 yards, the long and winding par-70 Black will likely pose more problems for the pros from tee-to-green than the greens will, especially compared with other recent U.S. Open layouts, such as Oakmont, Winged Foot and Pinehurst.

Also, steady rain the past month has made the greens slower and more receptive to approach shots. The upshot: Players will be firing at the pins from the fairway. Once they are on the green, the best players "knock down the putts for par when they have to," said Ron Whitten, architecture editor for Golf Digest.

More than any other tournament, the U.S. Open takes shots out of the bags of even the top golfers. The alley-like fairways the United States Golf Association prefers are lined with a thin first cut and then the highest, thickest rough the players have seen all year. That forces the bombers to play safer and often makes scramblers hack out sideways.

To make matters worse, next year USGA rules altering the design of grooves on golf clubs will make it even harder for players to spin their approach shots onto the greens from the rough. The rule is designed to make players think twice about bombing off the tee. Pretty soon, putting may be the only skill left.

The short putt has been and always will be more a matter of the physics of nature and the human physique than technique of the stroke. With so many variables, such as the moisture in the ground, the type of grass, the imprecision of human arms, even the unique balance of each ball, a grand unified theory of putting has always eluded scientists.

"I was never very good at it," Robert Adair, a Yale University physicist who has studied the physics of sports, said of putting. "Certainly the worst way to play better golf is to study physics."

Perhaps that's why so much of the advice about putting is so unscientific.

"Unhinge the jaw, because if you're tense that's going to change your grip pressure," says Jim Fannin, the performance guru who has worked with several tour players. "You also have to see what you want rather than what you don't want. If your first thought is 'I don't want to putt off the green,' you've downloaded that vision."

Raymond Penner, a physicist at Vancouver Island University, who has studied the science behind a putt, said the crux of the problem is the physical contradiction the skill presents. Putting is the lightest motion in traditional stick-and-ball sports. It's really a fine motor skill, more like sewing or writing, but people have to use some of their strongest, gross motor muscles in their arms and shoulders to do it.

The ideal putting stroke, Mr. Penner says, would be a pendulum-like swing where only gravity acts on the club, but people can't replicate that.

"Our muscles are still dominating," he says. "At best, we can get to about twice the force of a natural pendulum, which really isn't in the ballpark."

On a downhill slope, misjudgments about how hard to hit the ball are magnified exponentially. On an average-speed green with a 2-degree slope and the ball rolling by at 3 feet-per-second, a putt that misses going uphill by two feet will roll six feet past the hole going downhill. The only consolation is that a downhill miss will usually correct toward the hole, while an uphill miss will correct away from it.

According to Tiger Woods, speaking after his practice round Tuesday, the greens on the Black are fairly tame by U.S. Open standards. Not surprisingly, Mr. Woods said the hardest hole on the course was not the monstrous 605-yard Par 5 13th, but No. 15, a 458-yard uphill par 4 with a green that, from a distance, looks only slightly larger than a dinner plate cut into the side of a hill. The green slopes a full six feet from the back-left to the front-right, with the hill leading toward thick rough and sloping bunkers. Still, Mr. Woods says he likes his chances on the Black's greens, provided he can hit them.

"You put the ball on these greens you're going to have a lot of chances at birdies, because the greens are relatively flat," Mr. Woods said during his news conference Tuesday.

Some of Mr. Woods's competitors, those who have won substantially fewer than his 14 major championships, don't necessarily see it that way.

"They're not that flat," said Nick Taylor, a Canadian amateur who qualified for his second consecutive Open this year. A senior at the University of Washington, Mr. Taylor plays in scruffy white shoes with a purple "W" on the side, a baseball hat with his native "Canada" stitched above the brim, off-the-rack khakis and a shirt from a country club where he once played. Last year at Torrey Pines his legs nearly gave out on his first putt, a sloping 10-footer he sank for par on the first hole. He ended up missing the cut by three strokes.

His plan this week is to stick to his routine—three practice strokes, a deep breath, and then a tap. "At an Open, the ball doesn't break as much because the greens are usually so fast," he says. "So you pick the right line, trust it, and then just barely hit the ball."

If only it were that simple.

Arbitrage

The price of a manicure

City	Local currency	€
Rome	€10	€10
Hong Kong	HK$160	€15
New York	$21	€15
London	£15	€18
Brussels	€24	€24
Frankfurt	€25	€25
Paris	€29	€29
Tokyo	¥5,272	€40

Note: At a local day spa; prices, including taxes, as provided by spas in each city, averaged and converted into euros.

❖ Top Picks

A remodeled 'Doll's House'

LONDON: At the Donmar Warehouse Theatre Zinnie Harris updates Henrik Ibsen's "A Doll's House" from late 19th-century Norway to London in 1909. She transposes to the Edwardian political classes Ibsen's shocking story of a wife and mother who has exposed herself to blackmail by borrowing money to support her self-important husband when he's had a breakdown, then realizes that their marriage is based on falsehood and leaves her husband and children.

This has some pluses. The heroine Nora's husband, now called Thomas Vaughan (and played with just the right combination of languor and nerves by Toby Shephens) becomes a new cabinet minister, with much to lose when blackmailed by the Krogstad character, who is in this version his disgraced predecessor, a jagged Northerner, Neil Kelman (a polished rough-diamond performance by Christopher Eccleston).

But it has its minuses, too, in that it's hard to see why Nora's confidante (here called Christine Lyle, winsomely and winningly played by Tara Fitzgerald), should have had any difficulty finding the love of her life, Neil, as he's supposed to have been a prominent politician. And there's something a little odd about the loyal Dr. Rank's terminal disease. Anton Lesser is wryly touching as the man whose innocent, chaste love for Nora is, in any case, hopeless because he is dying. Even if, as most authorities say, Ibsen's original "tuberculosis of the spine" is a euphemism for tertiary syphilis, where are the symptoms of the cancer to which it's altered here? Director Kfir Yefet, whose pace is splendid, should probably have done something about this.

However, all that really matters is whether Ms. Harris has done any damage to the role of Nora, and the answer is emphatically not. "X-Files" veteran Gillian Anderson is a great Nora, vulnerable but not brittle, yielding but not spineless—a loving wife, mother and friend who herself suffers most from the boundaries she feels she has to impose on her husband, children and friends. She is beautiful, her upper-class Edwardian accent almost perfect, her tears genuine (I could see the mascara run from my seat in the Circle), and her departure heart-rending.

It might have been better to leave well enough alone, but this superb cast make the minor flaws of this new version seem insignificant.
—Paul Levy

Until July 18
www.donmarwarehouse.com

Gillian Anderson as Nora in 'A Doll's House.'

© Johan Persson

In search of the real Henry VIII

LONDON: To mark the 500th anniversary of the accession of Henry VIII, the British Library has mounted "Henry VIII: Man and Monarch" in its splendid St. Pancras building. Most of the exhibits come from the BL's own, unrivaled holdings; the famed "King's Library" there is, in fact, the personal collection of Henry VIII's books and manuscripts, many of them heavily annotated in his own strong and broad handwriting. Alongside the books and letters are portraits of Henry, including the famous late one by Hans Holbein the Younger, "Henry VIII and the Barber Surgeons," and of almost all the other personae in his historic drama—starting with his great-uncle, Henry VI, and his maternal grandfather, Edward IV, and culminating in the celebrated "Armada Portrait" of his daughter, Elizabeth I. There are likenesses of all six wives along the way. Henry's huge collection of maps, and his scientific instruments, are shown with tapestry, armor, plate, jewelry and sculptures, to try to give some idea of why Henry VIII still has some hold over our imagination.

From his portrait as a sweet-looking infant to the Holbein with its oversized codpiece signifying Henry's potency as much as the sword and crown do his majesty, there seem to be two Henrys. One is the golden youth who promises to unite the country; the other is the fat tyrant with piggy eyes and petulant rosebud mouth, who beheaded one wife (Anne Boleyn) a day before becoming engaged to the next one (Jane Seymour), and bumped off more men of note than any monarch before or since.

Don't miss the most beautiful objects: the stunning designs for the scarlet tents for the Field of Cloth of Gold, a meeting in 1520 between Henry and Francis I of France. *—Paul Levy*

Until Sept. 6
www.bl.uk/henry

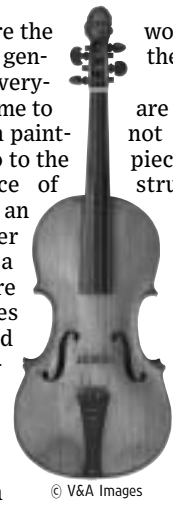
Beyond kitsch: The Baroque era as an ethos

LONDON: What is Baroque? Originally it was a word taken from the Portuguese phrase for a bizarrely misshapen pearl, like the one in the form of a camel displayed at the beginning of the Victoria and Albert Museum's exuberantly enormous show, "Baroque 1620-1800: Style in the Age of Magnificence." Later it became the Italian word for a fanciful, far-fetched argument. Both these senses contributed to our contemporary use of the word to connote an entire approach to art and design, spanning architecture, the fine and decorative arts, and even music.

The V&A exhibits capture the opulence, magnificence and general over-the-topness of everything from St. Peter's in Rome to Louis XIV's Versailles; from paintings by Rubens and Tiepolo to the riotously kitsch altarpiece of "The Virgin of Sorrows," by an anonymous 1690 painter working in Mexico. There's a rectangular box of miniature grisly waxwork sculptures representing death and bodily corruption; a gold-and-silver-mounted Johann Joachim Kandler Dresden Meissen cup, on which the legs, neck and head of a porcelain ostrich are attached to the top and bottom of a real ostrich egg. There is amazing footage of working stage sets in a Baroque theater in the Czech Republic.

Of course some of the objects are of little distinction—this is not a show of massed masterpieces, but an exhibition constructed around an argument about how the Catholic Church as well as secular rulers extended and consolidated their autocratic powers, from the architecture of entire squares in capital cities to gem-studded reliquaries and (communion-wafer-holding) monstrances. The Baroque style was the 17th and 18th century equivalent of bread and circuses.
—Paul Levy

Until July 19
www.vam.ac.uk



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Violin with royal Stuart arms (circa 1685).

Prince Charles Tears Down Mr. Rogers's Neighborhood

By Hugh Pearman

London

In front of the Palace of Westminster, the so-called Mother of Parliaments that is the heart of the British democratic system, stands a well-tended bronze statue of broad-belted, big-booted Oliver Cromwell. He was the "Lord Protector" who ruled during the short-lived republic that followed the English Civil War and the execution of King Charles I. Cromwell might be excused a wry smile right now because another royal Charles is, some say, challenging the dearly held British principle of a constitutional monarchy. And all because of a row over architecture. Prince Charles, a vehement antimodernist, is up to his old tricks again.

The row has now escalated, with an English Baron—Lord Rogers of Riverside, better known as the architect Richard Rogers—calling for an official tribunal to examine the role of Prince Charles in state affairs. Mr. Rogers is incandescent with rage, and no wonder. It has emerged that the prince personally wrote to the Qatari prime minister (himself of royal blood) to ensure that a £6 billion ($9.85 billion) Rogers-designed housing development in the upmarket London enclave of Chelsea was withdrawn by its developer.

That developer, Qatari Diar, happens to be a company owned by the Qatari royal family. Prince has therefore spoken unto prince, ignoring the usual planning-approval process, the British government—everybody. Charles's letter—the substance of which has been leaked, though not the actual text—decried the Rogers design. The neoclassical style of another architect, Quinlan Terry, was much more preferable, Prince Charles said. Last week Qatari Diar duly dropped Mr. Rogers like a hot potato, just as the architect's design for the former Chelsea Barracks site was being recommended for approval by both local planners and the various national architecture and conservation agencies.

> Has the heir to the British throne abused his birthright?

And the Qataris didn't just ditch Mr. Rogers. They abandoned the whole plan and announced they were going back to the drawing board with the help of The Prince's Foundation for the Built Environment—which, despite its grand name, is effectively a fee-earning urbanism and architectural practice devoted to promulgating Charles's views in real-life projects. It could be argued that Charles has usurped one architectural firm in order to hand a fat commission to another—his own. Whether Mr. Terry will be involved is unclear.

All of this means that the prince is sailing closer to the wind than he has done in years. The British system of constitutional monarchy, following the Restoration of 1660 after the republican interlude, is that the king or queen is head of state but effectively powerless. He or she rules by the consent of the people and Parliament. Heirs to the throne—indeed, all members of the royal family—are bound by the same rule. And this is what has brought Mr. Rogers out fighting.

In a no-holds-barred interview in the Guardian newspaper on June 16, Mr. Rogers said: "The prince always goes round the back to wield his influence, using phone calls or, in the case of the Chelsea Barracks, a private letter. It is an abuse of power because he is not willing to debate. He has made his representations two and a half years late and anyone else would have been shown the door. We should examine some of the ethics of this situation. Someone who is unelected, will not debate but will use the power bestowed by his birthright must be questioned."

If Mr. Rogers was just another disappointed architect, this might be seen only as sour grapes. But he is both world-famous—winner of every architecture award going, including America's Pritzker Prize—and a political animal. He was an adviser to Tony Blair's Labour government, is still an adviser to the mayor of London and is an active member of the House of Lords, the upper chamber of Britain's Parliament. He knows the ropes and I suspect he knows he has support.

Above: Rogers Stirk Harbour & Partners; Below: Quinlan & Francis Terry, LLP

At above, Richard Rogers's housing-development design at Chelsea Barracks; below, Quinlan Terry's neoclassical proposal—the preference of letter-writing royalty.

Tellingly, Mr. Rogers remarks in the interview that "the Qataris never sorted out the difference between royalty and government." It appears that they may have thought the British prince was like a Middle Eastern prince, a real wielder of executive power. Certainly no British-based development company would have attached so much importance to a petulant letter from Charles in the way that Qatari Diar did—especially not when it was on the verge of winning official planning permission, as was the case with the Rogers design.

Charles is known to be frustrated by his role—"He is actually an unemployed individual, which says something about the state of the royal family," Mr. Rogers woundingly but accurately said. But this does not stop Charles from dashing off what are called "black spider letters," after his scrawling handwriting, to prime ministers and ministers on all manner of topics. They are usually politely ignored. As a consequence, the presumed influence of Charles is rather greater overseas than it is at home, where—although his views on architecture attract strong conservative support—he is generally regarded as a well-meaning buffoon.

At times, Charles has suggested that he speaks for the common people. Given his immense wealth and privileged position, this is a hard point to argue. "The idea that he is a man of the people fascinates me," said Mr. Rogers. "He's a man of the rich people, that's for sure."

And this, in the end, is what the whole brouhaha comes down to: money and the power it brings. Qatari Diar, for instance, is not just intending to build a large housing development in Chelsea. It is also the major funder of what will be Europe's tallest skyscraper close to London's financial center. The "Shard" tower, by Mr. Rogers's former partner Renzo Piano—with whom Mr. Rogers designed Paris's Pompidou Center in the 1970s—will be the most prominent building in London by far. Its impact on the skyline will be colossal. In contrast, the visual impact of Mr. Rogers's Chelsea plan will be zero on the skyline and negligible in its neighborhood. So why isn't Charles writing letters to the Qataris about the Shard? Easy. The Shard is planned for an office quarter of a poor borough next to a commuter railway station. Chelsea, by contrast, is a rich residential district inhabited by some very conservative people with good contacts. (It also happens to be where the left-leaning Mr. Rogers lives.)

Will the architect get his way and persuade Parliament to re-examine the role of Prince Charles? I think it unlikely that anything will emerge publicly. But, just as Charles can write letters to the government, so the government can write letters to Charles. And it is not impossible that a sterner missive than usual may be drafted soon. Nobody will mention Cromwell. But his statue is there at the Palace of Westminster: a poignant warning to all uppity royals named Charles.

Mr. Pearman is architecture critic of the Sunday Times in London, and editor of the Journal of the Royal Institute of British Architects.

Muslim Voices, Western Ears

By Melik Kaylan

There's no doubt that the 10-day Muslim Voices festival staged around New York City that ended on Sunday featured some highly superior expressions of Muslim culture past and present—or, one should say, expressions of culture from Islamic countries, because the organizers did not intend the festival to provide a coherent impression of what constitutes Muslim culture. Indeed, they explicitly intended the reverse. Americans have a monolithic, negative and superficial view of Islam that the festival was meant to correct, the organizers repeatedly said and wrote.

As a result, theirs was a scattershot approach, offering what the program called "kaleidoscopic richness" from 20 countries and presenting everything from calligraphy to music, movies, video, theater, film, interviews and the like produced by more than 100 artists and performers. The festival took three years to produce, cost $2.5 million and was a collaborative effort of three main organizers: the Asia Society, Brooklyn Academy of Music and New York University's Center for Dialogues, a post-9/11 think tank dedicated to fostering understanding between Islam and the West.

In the opening two-day conference, the organizers laid out their agenda with the recurrent mantras that such occasions produce. Diversity: good. Clash of Civilizations: bad. And it's usually the U.S. that gets tainted with responsibility for the "bad" side.

The seemingly unexceptionable nature of the festival's premise—to enhance mutual understanding between cultures—had its own problems. For one thing, such painstakingly well-meaning projects often produce achingly dull results. The festival offered several such examples, among them the Youssou N'Dour documentary "I Bring What I Love," a portrait of the Senegalese performer as he made his Grammy-winning album "Egypt" that proved dismayingly inchoate and overworshipful.

Richard Termine

Fayez Kazak and Amal Omran in "Richard III: An Arab Tragedy."

The festival did bring to audiences several examples of true cultural artistry for which the organizers should be warmly congratulated. Only, one doubted that many Muslims attended events like these in their home countries. How typical of broader Islamic culture were such events and how much should they alter American impressions of prevailing cultural standards in Islam? In the area of theater, for example, BAM featured "Richard III: An Arab Tragedy," an outstanding cultural achievement by any standards—but how many in the Muslim world would be affected by it?

The "Richard" project was originally commissioned by the Royal Shakespeare Company and is the creation of renowned Kuwaiti dramatist Sulayman Al-Bassam. In Arabic with English subtitles, it's a startlingly original retooling—at times kitsch and macabre; at others, farcical—of the Richard III story around a Saddam-like figure. In the program, Mr. Al-Bassam points out that Iraq under Saddam was a Republic, whereas this story is set in a kingdom not unlike one of the Gulf states. It came as a surprise to me to learn that the play had been publicly performed in Kuwait and Syria, altering my view of what was possible in such countries. But did it alter the views of many citizens or their rulers in those countries? And what about Yemen or Somalia, where no one would see it? How many Muslims world-wide go to the theater as opposed to fundamentalist mosques?

Unquestionably, Islam produced great culture—and if Americans don't know that, they should. But how many Muslims are exposed to this art form today, and therefore why should it change anyone's "monolithic" view of contemporary Islamic culture?

I had similar thoughts about the extraordinary new IMAX film "Journey to Mecca" at the American Museum of Natural History. The visually magnificent movie features a dramatization of 14th-century Muslim savant Ibn Battuta's religious pilgrimage, bookended by vistas of the hajj in progress, for which the (Western) filmmakers got special permission to shoot footage in and around the holy site. The museum's 800-seat auditorium was sold out—and, indeed, the film sells out wherever it gets shown, even in the West. As a form of cultural diplomacy, "Journey to Mecca" can hardly be bettered—it comes closest to plugging some of the holes in the festival's premise: Here is the heart of Muslim culture; this is a glimpse of what all Muslims share, highbrow or low, African, Arab, Asian or European.

Yet nothing in the festival could ultimately fulfill the organizers' agenda, because they presented as examples of Muslim culture artforms that mostly Western or Westernized Muslims consume. How many Americans will believe—and why should they?—that any of this reveals the prevailing culture of the vast majority of today's practicing Muslims? That monolith, rather than the one of American preconceptions, would most benefit from exposure to the festival's finest offerings.

Mr. Kaylan writes about culture and the arts for the Journal.

time off

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Amsterdam
art
"Avant-gardes '20|'60" shows artworks from the 20th century, highlighting the 1920s and 1960s with pieces by Picasso (1881-1973), Mondrian (1872-1944), Malevich (1879-1935), Lichtenstein (1923-97) and Warhol (1928-87).
Van Gogh Museum
June 26-Aug. 23
☎ 31-2057-05200
www.vangoghmuseum.nl

Barcelona
art
"Miró-Dupin—Poetry" exhibits works by Spanish painter Joan Miró (1893-1983) exploring his friendship with the French poet Jacques Dupin (born 1927).
Fundació Joan Miró
Until Oct. 18
☎ 34-9344-3947-0
fundaciomiro-bcn.org

Berlin
design
"Henry van de Velde (1863-1957)—Book Art: From Art Nouveau to Bauhaus" displays book covers and illustrations by the Belgian artist.
Bröhan Museum
Until Sept. 20
☎ 49-30-3269-0600
www.broehan-museum.de

photography
"Helmut Newton: Sumo" presents 394 photographs by the German-Australian photographer Helmut Newton (1920-2004) and his assistants.
Museum für Fotografie
Until Jan. 31
☎ 49-30-3186-4825
www.smb.museum

Brussels
art
"Calle Sophie" is a collection of works by the French artist Sophie Calle (born 1953), including photography, text and video.
Centre for Fine Arts
Until Sept. 13
☎ 32-2-5078-444
www.bozar.be

Dresden
art
"Carl Gustav Carus: Nature and Idea" showcases paintings by the German scientist, artist and philosopher Carl Gustav Carus (1789-1869) alongside letters, medical instruments, writings and 50 works by his contemporaries.
Residenzschloss
Dresden/Semperbau am Zwinger
June 26-Sept. 20
☎ 49-351-4914-2000
www.skd.museum

Dublin
art
"Goya: The Portrayed Conscience" exhibits 80 etchings by the Spanish artist Francisco de Goya (1746-1828), published in 1799 under the title "Caprichos" and quickly withdrawn from circulation.
Instituto Cervantes Dublín
Until July 25
☎ 353-1631-1500
www.dublin.cervantes.es

Edinburgh
art
"Raphael to Renoir: Master Drawings from the Collection of Jean Bonna" shows 120 European drawings from 500 years of art history.
National Gallery Complex—
Royal Scottish Academy Building
Until Sept. 6
☎ 44-1316-2462-00
www.nationalgalleries.org

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Frankfurt
art
"Sarah Morris: Gemini Dressage" presents films, film stills and paintings by American artist Sarah Morris (born 1967), including her latest film "Beijing."
MMK Museum fur Moderne Kunst
Until Aug. 30
☎ 49-69-2123-0447
www.mmk-frankfurt.de

Liège
photography
"Presidents of the USA" includes depictions of the 44 presidents of the U.S., from George Washington to Barack Obama.
MAMAC
Until July 5
☎ 32-43-4304-03
www.presidentusa.be

London
design
"Beyond Bloomsbury—Design of the Omega Workshops 1913-19" highlights the Omega Workshops, an experimental design collective founded in 1913.
The Courtauld Gallery
Until Sept. 20
☎ 44-20-7848-2526
www.courtauld.ac.uk

festival
"Greenwich+Docklands International Festival 2009" is a free, outdoor water-themed arts festival with international artists, including "Water Music," a celebration of the music of Baroque composer Handel.
Greenwich+Docklands Festivals
June 25-28
☎ 44-20-8305-1818
www.festival.org

theater
"Hamlet" is a production of William Shakespeare's tragedy directed by Michael Grandage and starring Jude Law, Ron Cook and Peter Eyre.
Wyndham's Theatre
Until Aug. 22
☎ 44-844-4825-120
www.donmarwestend.com

Munich
art
"Frederic, Lord Leighton (1830-96) Painter and Sculptor in Victorian Times" showcases works by English painter and sculptor Frederic Leighton.
Villa Stuck
Until Sept. 13
☎ 49-89-4555-510
www.villastuck.de

Nice
history
"Treasures of Buddhism in the Land of Genghis Khan" presents a collection of Buddhist art, saved from the destruction of the temples of Mongolia in 1928.
Musée des Arts Asiatiques
Until Nov. 15
☎ 33-4-9229-3700
www.arts-asiatiques.com

© Just Loomis

Florian Kleinefenn

Clockwise from left: 'High voltage painting' (1965), by Martial Raysse, in Amsterdam; 'Skaters' (1998), by Just Loomis, in Berlin; a Breguet watch (1800), in Paris; detail from 'Where and when? Lourdes' (2005-08), by Sophie Calle, in Brussels.

Paris
watchmaking
"Breguet and the Louvre" is a retrospective of the works of the Swiss watchmaker Abraham-Louis Breguet (1747-1823).
Musée du Louvre
June 25-Sept. 7
☎ 33-1-4020-5050
www.louvre.fr

architecture
"The Italy of the Architects, from Layout to Invention" presents studies of Italian monuments in the 19th century.
Musée d'Orsay
Until July 19
☎ 33-1-4049-4814
www.musee-orsay.fr

Prague
archaeology
"Terracotta Army" showcases 180 copies of an army of 6,000 original terracotta soldiers unearthed in 1974 near Xian, China, from the tomb of the first emperor of China, Qin Shi.
Lucerna Palace
Until Dec. 13
☎ 420-224-2254-40
www.lucpra.com

Ravenna
festival
"Ravenna Festival 2009" presents music and performing arts by artists and ensembles from around the world, including Diamanda Galas, Laura Pausini and the musical "Mamma Mia!"
Fondazione Ravenna
Manifestazioni
Until July 18
☎ 39-544-2492-11
www.ravennafestival.org

Rotterdam
art
"From Dürer to Kiefer—Five Centuries of Graphic Arts" shows engravings, watercolors, pencil drawings, screen prints, photography and etchings by masters ranging from Rembrandt (1606-69) to Picasso (1881-1973) and Gerhard Richter (born 1932).
Kunsthal
Until Sept. 13
☎ 31-10-4400-301
www.kunsthal.nl

Vaduz
art
"Christian Boltanski: The Possible Life" is a retrospective of the work of French photographer, sculptor and painter Christian Boltanski (born 1944).
Kunstmuseum Liechtenstein
Until Sept. 6
☎ 423-2350-300
www.kunstmuseum.li

Verona
opera
"Arena di Verona Festival 2009" is an annual opera festival presenting "Carmen," "Aida," "Turandot," "The Barber of Seville" and "Tosca," featuring a special performance by Plácido Domingo.
Fondazione Arena di Verona
June 19-Aug. 30
☎ 39-045-8005-151
www.arena.it

Vienna
art
"GLOBAL:LAB—Art as a Message—Asia and Europe 1500-1700" examines the parallel developments of European and Asian art across two centuries.
MAK
Until Sept. 27
☎ 43-1-7113-60
www.mak.at

Zurich
art festival
"Zürcher Festspiele 2009" stages opera, classical concerts, dance, drama and art at various venues in the city, including Mozart's "Così fan tutte" and a celebration of Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy.
Zürcher Festspiele
Until July 12
☎ 41-44-2699-090
www.zuercher-festspiele.ch

design
"Robots: From Motion to Emotion?" presents 200 exhibits on robots, ranging from historical automata to robots in the household, in industry, in medicine and the military to toy robots.
Museum für Gestaltung Zürich
June 24-Oct. 4
☎ 41-43-4466-767
www.museum-gestaltung.ch

Source: ArtBase Global Arts News Service, WSJE research.