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EUROPE

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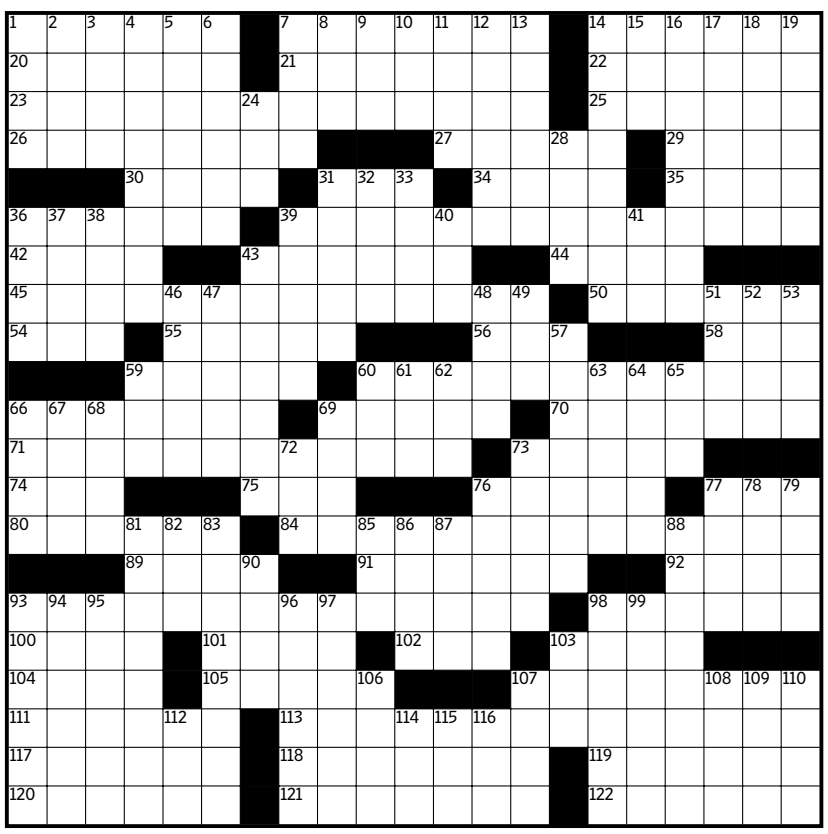

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116 Mineral suffix

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Last Week's Solution

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Donald Duck, the Jerry Lewis of Germany

By Susan Bernofsky

GERMANY, THE LAND of Goethe, Thomas Mann and Beethoven, has an unlikely pop culture hero: Donald Duck. Just as the French are obsessed with Jerry Lewis, the Germans see a richness and complexity to the Disney comic that isn't always immediately evident to people in the cartoon duck's homeland.

Comics featuring Donald are available at most German newsstands and the national weekly "Micky Maus"—which features the titular mouse, Goofy and, most prominently, Donald Duck—sells an average of 250,000 copies each week, outselling even "Superman." A lavish 8,000-page German Donald Duck collector's edition has just come out, and despite the nearly $1,900 price tag, the publisher, Egmont Horizont, says the edition of 3,333 copies is almost sold out. Last month the fan group D.O.N.A.L.D (the German acronym stands for "German Organization for Non-commercial Followers of Pure Donaldism"), hosted its 32nd annual congress at the Museum of Natural History in Stuttgart, with trivia and trinkets galore, along with lectures devoted to "nephew studies" and Duckburg's solar system.

"Donald is so popular because almost everyone can identify with him," says Christian Pfeiler, president of D.O.N.A.L.D. "He has strengths and weaknesses, he lacks polish but is also very cultured and well-read." But much of the appeal of the hapless, happy-go-lucky duck lies in the translations. Donald quotes from German literature, speaks in grammatically complex sentences and is prone to philosophical musings, while the stories often take a more political tone than their American counterparts.

Whereas in the U.S. fans of Donald Duck tend to gravitate to the animated films, duck fandom in Germany centers on the printed comics published in the kids' weekly "Micky Maus" and the monthly "Donald Duck Special," which sells mainly to adult readers.

Donald Duck didn't always find Germany so hospitable. In the years following World War II, American influence in the newly formed Federal Republic was strong, but German cultural institutions were hesitant to sanction one U.S. import: the comic book. A law banning comics was proposed, and some American comics were eventually burned by school officials worried about their effects on students' morals and ability to express themselves in complete sentences.

When the Ehapa publishing house was founded in 1951 to bring American comics to German kids, it was a risky endeavor. Ehapa's pilot project, a monthly comics magazine, bore the title "Micky Maus" to capitalize on that icon's popularity. From the beginning, though, most of the pages of "Micky Maus" were devoted to duck tales.

Donald Duck's popularity was helped along by Erika Fuchs, a free spirit in owlish glasses who was tasked with translating the stories. A Ph.D. in art history, Dr. Fuchs had never laid eyes on a comic book before the day an editor handed her a Donald Duck story, but no matter. She had a knack for breathing life into the German version of Carl Barks's duck. Her talent was so great she continued to fill speech bubbles for the denizens of Duckburg (which she renamed Entenhausen, based on the German word for "duck") until shortly before her death in 2005 at the age of 98.

Disney

Germany's favorite feathered philosopher, Donald Duck, in a translation of 'The Golden Helmet.'

Ehapa directed Dr. Fuchs to crank up the erudition level of the comics she translated, a task she took seriously. Her interpretations of the comic books often quote (and misquote) from the great classics of German literature, sometimes even inserting political subtexts into the duck tales. Dr. Fuchs both thickens and deepens Mr. Barks's often sparse dialogues, and the hilariousness of the result may explain why Donald Duck remains the most popular children's comic in Germany.

Dr. Fuchs's Donald was no ordinary comic creation. He was a bird of arts and letters, and many Germans credit him with having initiated them into the language of the literary classics. The German comics are peppered with fancy quotations. In one story Donald's nephews steal famous lines from Friedrich Schiller's play "William Tell"; Donald garbles a classic Schiller poem, "The Bell," in another. Other lines are straight out of Goethe, Hölderlin and even Wagner (whose words are put in the mouth of a singing cat). The great books later sounded like old friends when readers encountered them at school. As the German Donald points out, "Reading is educational! We learn so much from the works of our poets and thinkers."

Dr. Fuchs raised the diction level of Donald and his wealthy Uncle Scrooge (alias Dagobert Duck), who in German tend to speak in lofty tones using complex grammatical structures with a faintly archaic air, while Huey, Louie and Dewey (now called Tick, Trick and Track), sound slangier and much more youthful.

But even the "adult" ducks end up sounding more colorful than they do in English. Fuchs applied alliteration liberally, as, for example, in Donald's bored lament on the beach in "Lifeguard Daze." In the English comic, he says: "I'd do anything to break this monotony!" The übergloomy German version: "How dull, dismal and deathly sad! I'd do anything to make something happen."

Dr. Fuchs had liberal social values from an early age and a circle of Jewish friends as a young woman. Disgusted by the hypocrisy and denial she saw in Germany during and after World War II, she sometimes imported her political sensibilities to Entenhausen.

Take, for example, the classic Duck tale "The Golden Helmet," a story about the search for a lost Viking helmet that entitles its wearer to claim ownership of America. In Dr. Fuchs's rendition, Donald, his nephews and a museum curator race against a sinister figure who claims the helmet as his birthright without any proof—but each person who comes into contact with the helmet gets a "cold glitter" in his eyes, infected by the "bacteria of power," and soon declares his intention to "seize power" and exert his "claim to rule." Dr. Fuchs uses language that in German ("die Macht ergreifen"; "Herrscheranspruch") recalls standard phrases used to describe Hitler's ascent to power.

The original English says nothing about glittering eyes or power but merely notes, "As the minutes drag past, a change comes over the tired curator."

The initial response to the Donald Duck comics in Germany was mixed. German kids loved them; German parents worried that this "trash literature" would interfere with children's development. Of the 300,000 copies of the magazine Micky Maus printed in 1951, only 135,000 sold. But just six years later, the monthly journal had been replaced by a weekly, which by the late 1960s was appearing in an edition of 450,000 copies.

Not only young kids were reading it. Micky Maus became popular entertainment among a newly politicized generation who saw the comics as illustrations of the classic Marxist class struggle. A nationally distributed newsletter put out by left-leaning high school students in 1969 described Dagobert (Scrooge) as the "prototype of the monocapitalist," Donald as a member of the proletariat, and Tick, Trick and Track as "socialist youth" well on their way to becoming "proper Communists." Even Frankfurt School philosopher Max Horkheimer admitted to enjoying reading Donald Duck comics before bed.

—Writer Susan Bernofsky is at work on a critical biography of Robert Walser and a novel set in her hometown, New Orleans.

A DJ finds his groove

It's not unusual for an artist to create his best work at a mature age, when experience outweighs youthful rebellion and produces balanced compositions. It is quite unusual for that to happen to a techno DJ. Yet that is exactly what Helmut Josef Geier, alias DJ Hell (pictured at right), has just pulled off. At the age of 47, and 27 years after his first record, the DJ from Munich has just released "Teufelswerk," a double album that reviewers are celebrating as the climax of his career. Some have even gone so far as to call it one of the best dance records not just of 2009, but of all time. Mr. Geier (called simply "Hell" by his friends) does not try to hide his surprise at the media's reaction to "Teufelswerk." "I have even entered the charts, for the first time in my life!" he jokes. But while it represents the culmination of a 30-year career, "Teufelswerk" is also a journey back to Hell's roots,


Dirk Merten

an homage to the artists that most formed his understanding of music. We met DJ Hell at Munich Airport and talked to him about the tracks on "Teufelswerk" that were most influenced by personal experiences.

—Kati Krause

'The Angst'

"The album deals mostly with the 1980s ... when genres like New Wave, Neue Deutsche Welle, Acid House and Techno appeared for the first time. But I went back even further, to the 1970s. "The Angst" was greatly influenced by Kraftwerk's song "Autobahn" (1974). We always used to listen to it on the autobahn on long car journeys. Sometimes we even went driving only to listen to Kraftwerk."

'Wonderland'

"This song reflects the sensation of contemporary Ibiza, the hype and the attention the island gets during the whole summer. It's a song that could be played at a terrace party at [Ibiza night club] Space—even though it's not actually a real terrace anymore, the songs that are played there are especially designed for the terrace. As a DJ, when they book you, they ask you what your definition of terrace music would be. Well, for me, it would be 'Wonderland.'"

'Silver Machine'

"This is a cover version of a 1972 space rock song by Hawkwind. My version does not belong to any specific genre though, it's simply a new version. I think the first time I heard it was on the radio—back then that's what we did to listen to music—on [German TV presenter] Thomas Gottschalk's show. I would like to honor Thomas Gottschalk at this point because he was a very good radio DJ in the '70s."

'U Can Dance feat. Bryan Ferry'

"Bryan Ferry is definitely a connection to my childhood: His band Roxy Music was a great influence. He is one of the most interesting singers of the last century. Of course, as a boy I didn't understand his music, but I was fascinated because it was different to anything else I had heard. And 30 years later, suddenly it's possible to work together with such an artist. That was the biggest compliment, like an accolade."

Bleak 'Terminator' vs. silly 'Museum'

Warner Bros.

Bryce Dallas Howard as Kate Connor and Christian Bale as John Connor in 'Terminator Salvation.'

Film
JOE MORGENSTERN

PRIMAL SCREAMS COME with the bleak territory of "Terminator Salvation." Any character of consequence gets to unleash one, and there's plenty to scream about. The Apocalypse, aka Judgment Day, has put an end to civilization. (The time is 2018, only nine years from now, so go out and gather those rosebuds, for goodness' sake.) The few surviving members of a ragtag Resistance seem outmatched by Skynet, a sentient network whose gigantic Terminator robots pluck people up without warning, like claws grabbing little plush toys in arcade vending machines. What's more, the spectrum has been suppressed, leaving only the grungiest hues for cinematographers to work with. Not a pretty picture, and anything but an upper, yet this fourth addition to the Terminator canon isn't entirely a downer either. It's a deafening, sometimes boring, occasionally startling and ultimately impressive war movie with a concern for what it is that makes us human. (Hint: an organ, but not the kind you would use to play Bach.)

Things are so bad on our poor planet that the emerging leader of the Resistance, John Connor, laments "This is not the future my mother warned me about": John's mom, as you may recall from Linda Hamilton's previous agitations, was not exactly Little Miss Sunshine. Ms. Hamilton makes a brief, partially virtual reappearance, while John, previously portrayed by Edward Furlong and Nick Stahl, is played this time by Christian Bale. It's a perfect choice, since Mr. Bale is the primo sufferer of our time, a performer with a subspecialty in emaciation ("Rescue Dawn," "The Machinist") and a steady-state intensity compounded of pursed lips, gimlet eyes and a doomy monotone that bespeaks an invisible chokehold.

The revelation, however, is Sam Worthington. He plays Marcus, a mysterious time-traveling stranger who may or may not be John Connor's nemesis. Marcus suffers too, frequently and loudly, and the actor is no slouch as a primal screamer, but Mr. Worthington's specialty is taking command of the camera. (Later this year he'll star in James Cameron's "Avatar.") It's fascinating to watch him dominate scene after scene with his coiled energy, compelling voice and quick intelligence. To be thoroughly human on screen, it helps to be a well-trained actor from Australia.

Time travel, along with alternate time branches, is treated with a solemnity that's become obligatory in sci-fi plots, even though, as always, it's a logical absurdity. (My favorite phrase from the production notes deals with John Connor's growing doubts "that he may not live to initiate the events that will result in his own conception.") "I'm My Own Grandpa," that deathless pop ditty from the 1940s, made strict, if quite simple, sense. "Terminator Salvation," makes elaborate pseudo-sense, but audiences will buy the film just as happily as they did the new "Star Trek," and why not; the Terminator mythology remains intact, and the production delivers on its promise of an epic showdown between all-too-human flesh and much-too-precocious machinery. (The digital effects are mostly quite dazzling—not just the depictions of towering marauders, and several visual references to the Holocaust, but a memorably scary sequence in which a little serpentine robot that's been taken captive thrashes furiously to save its nonlife.)

"Terminator Salvation" was directed by McG, otherwise known as Joseph McGinty Nichol, from a screenplay by John Brancato and Michael Ferris. Martin Laing designed the production, Shane Hurlbut photographed it and Danny Elfman composed the dreadful music. The cast includes Anton Yelchin as the teenage Kyle Reese, Bryce Dallas Howard and Helena Bonham Carter. Moon Bloodgood plays the beauteous Blair Williams, the woman warrior I'd most like to be with when civilization ends.

'Night at the Museum: Battle of the Smithsonian'

"Night at the Museum: Battle of the Smithsonian" is critic-proof; nothing I might say would have the slightest effect on its commercial fate. That leaves me free to marvel at the movie's cheerful idiocy, which seems definitive—even though the summer season has just begun—and at the efficiency with which the filmmakers have dumbed down a dumb premise of proven success. They've left nothing to chance by seeming to leave everything to chance. Compared to this chaotic sequel, the 2006 "Night at the Museum" was as tightly structured as "Law & Order."

When Amelia Earhart isn't flying the Wright brothers' biplane—Amy Adams plays her as a pert variation on the theme of Katharine Hepburn—she's imploring Rodin's newly rambunctious Thinker to sit down and think, or chortling "Great Gatsby!" as Abe Lincoln stands up, shrugs the pigeons off his shoulders and ankles his marble monument. Ivan the Terrible insists he wasn't terrible, which seems plausible in the context of a bloviating pharaoh with a Boris Karloff lisp, three cherubs doing the love theme from "Titanic," General Custer riding a motorcycle, a squirrel mistaking Steve Coogan's tiny Octavius for a nut and Al Capone spending face time with a bunch of bobble-headed Einstein dolls. Repeat offenders include Robin Williams, Owen Wilson, Ricky Gervais and of course Ben Stiller, whose Larry Daley has come up in the world since his gig as a museum guard. Have I made this sound enjoyable? Beware of idiocy's charms.

WSJ.com

Opening this week in Europe

- **Coraline** Finland, Spain
- **Duplicity** Norway
- **Hannah Montana: The Movie** Germany
- **Last Chance Harvey** Sweden, U.K.
- **Sugar** U.K.
- **Sunshine Cleaning** Belgium
- **Terminator Salvation** Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Italy, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Spain, Sweden, Turkey, U.K.
- **The Limits of Control** Finland

Source: IMDB

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Adventures in reality: Alec Baldwin on his love of documentaries

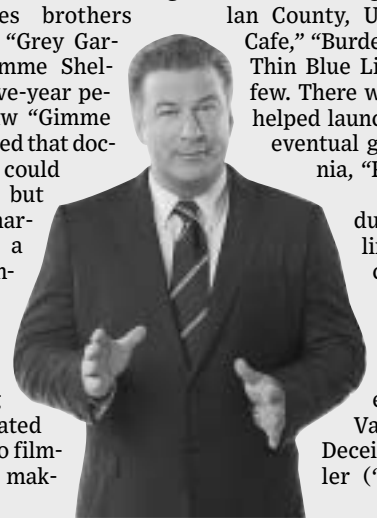
By Alec Baldwin

I SUPPOSE MY passion for news, at an early age, was a precursor of my love of documentary film.

In the home I grew up in, with my dad working as a public high school social-studies teacher, the Vietnam War seemed to play out on the television night after night like one long documentary film. Other events of the 1960s and '70s were serialized in our living room: the 1968 Democratic convention in Chicago, Nixon's eventual election and re-election, Watergate and the Paris Peace talks.

The first documentary program I recall watching was "An American Family," the 1973 PBS series that depicted the Loud family of Santa Barbara, Calif., and their eventual disintegration. The program, while disturbing and sad, was also riveting. I was 15 years old and I was hooked.

In the 1970s, lots of documentary offerings dealt with the world of rock music, such as "Woodstock," "Let It Be" and "Let the Good Times Roll." However, powerful dramatic films such as "The Sorrow and the Pity," "Hearts and Minds" and "King: A Filmed Record...Montgomery to Memphis" were also released. The legendary Maysles brothers came out with "Grey Gardens" and "Gimme Shelter" within a five-year period. Once I saw "Gimme Shelter," I realized that documentary film could not only equal, but even surpass, narrative film as a form of entertainment.



By the late 1970s and '80s, the form was becoming more sophisticated and attractive to filmmakers used to making feature films. Martin Scorsese shot "The Last Waltz." Jonathan Demme released "Stop Making Sense." Michael Apted made the great Sting-Branford Marsalis concert film "Bring on the Night."

Worthwhile documentaries started coming in a deluge: "Harlan County, USA," "The Atomic Cafe," "Burden of Dreams," "The Thin Blue Line" to name but a few. There was even a film that helped launch the career of the eventual governor of California, "Pumping Iron."

In the 1990s, I produced and hosted a limited-run TV series called "Raw Footage," where I had the opportunity to interview documentary film makers such as David Van Taylor ("Dream Deceivers") and R.J. Cutler ("The War Room"), who collaborated on the documentary "A Perfect Candidate," which profiled Virginia's U.S. Senate race between Chuck Robb and Oliver North.

Another subject of that show was Robert Drew, who, along with filmmakers such as D.A. Pennebaker, Chris Hegedus and the Maysles brothers, is responsible for much of the form as we know it today. Mr. Drew's triptych of films on JFK ("Primary," "Crisis: Behind a Presidential Commitment" and "Faces of November") are some of the earliest examples of the power of raw film, without any narration, to tell a complete and affecting story.

We may associate the 1970s with seminal documentary films, but important contributions to that form continue to be produced around the world today. Documentary films comprise a significant portion of the programming at the Hamptons International Film Festival, on whose board I serve. One of the featured documentaries in our SummerDoc series, director Louis Psihoyos's "The Cove," examines the capture and slaughtering methods used in the harvesting of dolphins around the world. Other films in the series include "William Kunstler: Disturbing the Universe," a documentary film shot by Kunstler's daughters about the controversial trial attorney who argued some of the most celebrated cases of the 1960s and '70s; and "It Might Get Loud," wherein director Davis Guggenheim considers the electric guitar from the points of view of Jack White, The Edge and Jimmy Page.

If you want to see something off the crash-bang-boom thrill ride that Hollywood promises each year, don't rule out documentaries.

Alec Baldwin stars on television's "30 Rock" and serves on the board of the Hamptons International Film Festival.

In tennis, the cool kids love clay

With the French Open under way in Paris, the once-unfashionable surface enjoys a reputation renaissance

By Leila Abboud

IN THE TENNIS world, labeling someone a "clay-court specialist" was once a backhanded compliment—code for inferior players often hailing from sunny climes in Spain and Argentina who outlasted their opponents through a mix of mind-numbing accuracy and sheer doggedness.

Not anymore. With the French Open under way in Paris, clay is enjoying something of a reputation renaissance. The undisputed king of clay, Rafael Nadal, is the best player in the world. Nine of the top-10 men in the ATP rankings learned to play primarily on clay or had extensive clay training. Increasingly, some of the game's best coaches and tennis officials—even in the normally clay-allergic U.S.—see mastering the dusty red stuff as crucial to achieving all-around greatness.

"You can't just bang your way to victory in today's tennis anymore," says Patrick McEnroe, former doubles champion and current manager of elite player development at the U.S. Tennis Association. "You need to know how to build a point, use different spins and angles, to mix offense and defense. Those skills are exactly what playing on clay teaches you."

Jose Higueras, the Spanish coach who helped Michael Chang and Jim Courier win the French Open, puts it this way: "Clay teaches you how to suffer."

Roger Federer, who usually eschews having a coach, enlisted Mr. Higueras last year in large part to help him try to capture the French, the only Grand Slam that eludes him. Andy Murray, the 22-year-old Scotsman who has won four titles this year and is ranked No. 3 in the world, recruited another formidable Spaniard, former player Alex Corretja, to help adapt his game to clay.

It's a far cry from the '80s and '90s, when not winning the French Open was almost a badge of honor for the tour's best players. Former No. 1's Jimmy Connors and John McEnroe (who is Patrick's brother), never managed to win in Paris, nor did Boris Becker or Stefan Edberg. Pete Sampras never won the French Open either, despite racking up 14 Grand Slam titles—more than any other player in history.

Behind the clay renaissance are wide-ranging changes in tennis in the past 20 years. Players are stronger, faster and bigger than ever. Changes in racket technology, especially a new generation of synthetic strings, allow today's players to put more spin and power on the ball and take huge swings without putting the ball out.

At the same time, the differences among the grass, clay, and hard courts featured at the main Grand Slam tournaments have narrowed. At Wimbledon, which has been played on grass since its inception in 1877, the organizers tweaked the composition of the grass in 2001 to make it more durable. As a result, the notoriously quick surface became much slower. Wimbledon is no longer a serve-and-volleyer's paradise—Rafael Nadal won there last year by slugging it out from the baseline. Meanwhile, the clay courts at the French Open, historically the slowest surface, have actually gotten faster in recent years.

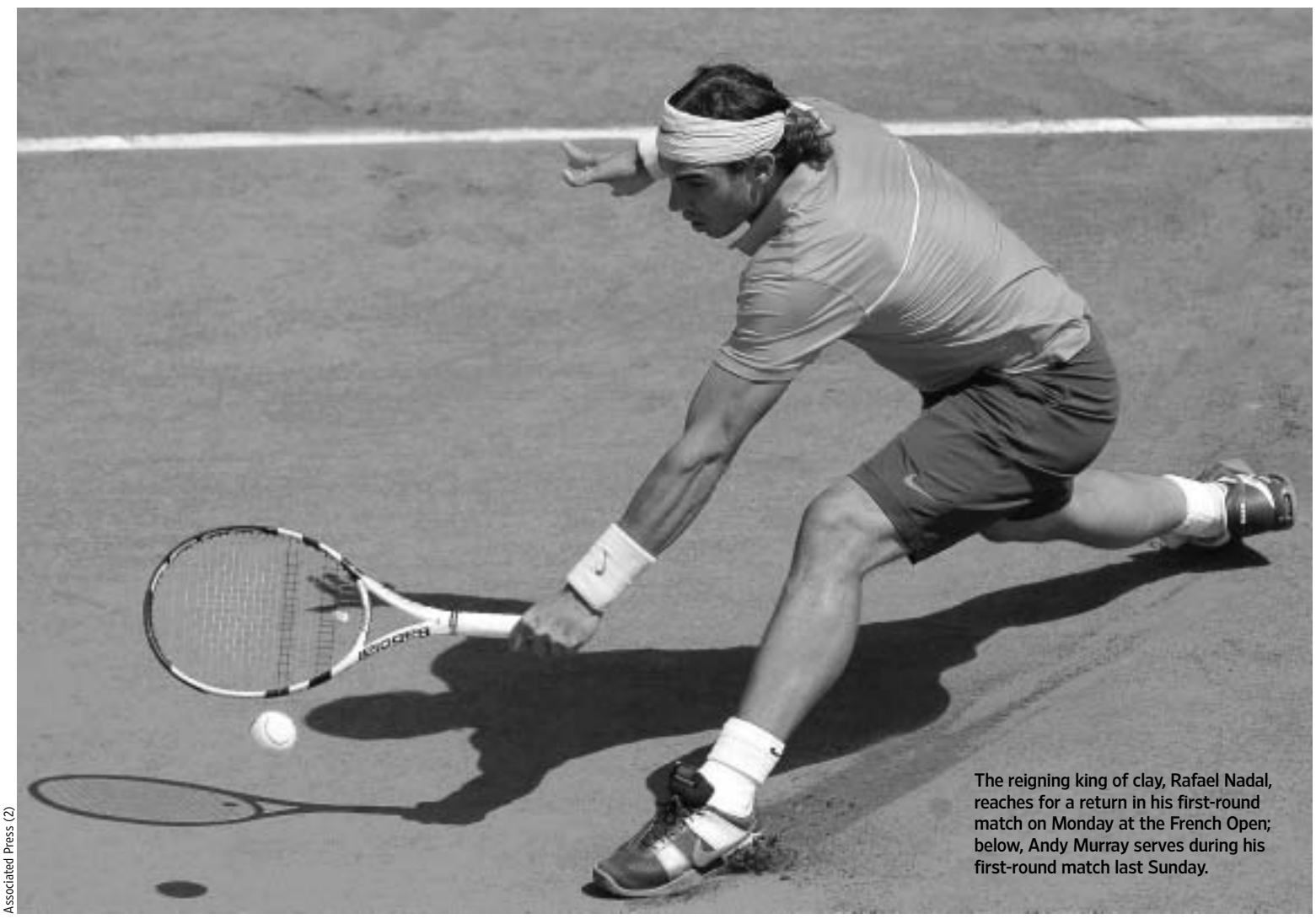
These changes can be seen in the average speed of the serves at the various Grand Slams, according to an analysis by Rod Cross of Sydney University. Typically on clay courts, players elect to use a lot of topspin when serving, which reduces their serve speed. In 2001, the average first-serve speed on the clay of the French Open was 162 kilometers per hour, compared with 178 kph on the hard courts of the U.S. Open and 181 kph on the grass of Wimbledon. By last year, the serve speeds had evened out: 188 kph at the French, 183 kph at the U.S. Open and 191 kph at Wimbledon.

The result of all these changes is that one style has come to dominate modern tennis—playing from the baseline. Few players serve and volley like Mr. Sampras and John McEnroe used to because it has become too easy to get passed or lobbed. "There are no specialists anymore," said Emilio Sanchez, who won the French Open twice in doubles and now runs tennis academies in Barcelona and Naples, Fla. "Basically everybody is playing the same type of tennis."

Mr. Higueras, who was recently hired by Patrick McEnroe to revamp the coaching corps in the USTA's elite-player development program, believes players who grew up playing on clay have an advantage in today's tennis. "Playing on clay is like playing chess," he said. "You have more time to be creative and more choices to make on what shots to hit." Clay is the best surface to allow young players to learn, he said.

Mr. Higueras and Mr. McEnroe are on a mission to get promising young American players to train on clay. The USTA is shipping some coaches and players as young as 12 years old to Spain to learn the art of clay. "We want to build more clay courts and add clay tournaments to the calendar, but that will take some time," said Mr. Higueras.

In the meantime, the top tennis players in the world are sliding and skidding all over the red clay of Paris. It is likely to be a dramatic tournament: Just two weeks ago, Mr. Federer beat Mr. Nadal in the final of the Madrid Open, handing the Spaniard only his fifth loss on clay since 2005.



Associated Press (2)

The reigning king of clay, Rafael Nadal, reaches for a return in his first-round match on Monday at the French Open; below, Andy Murray serves during his first-round match last Sunday.

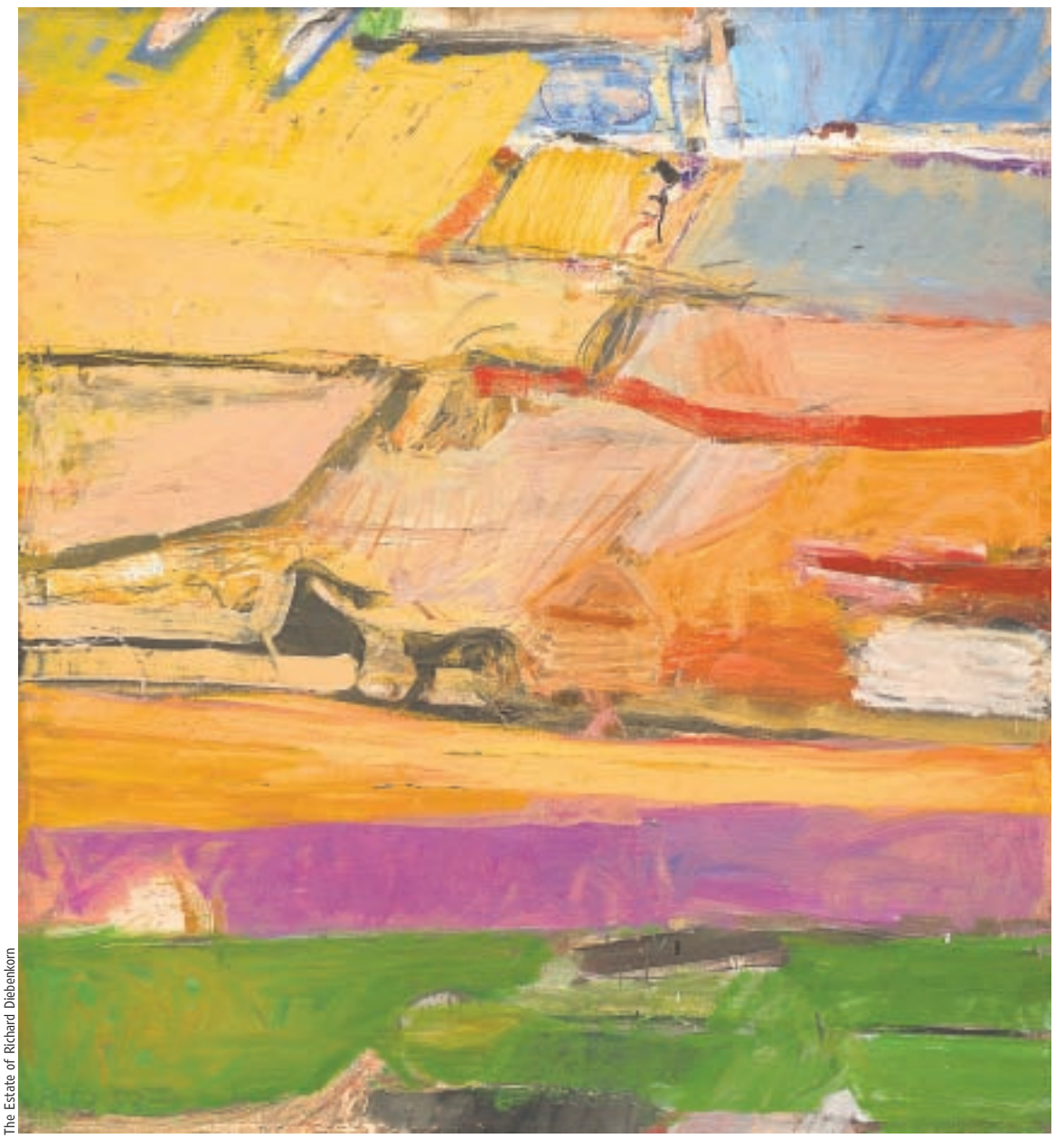
Arbitrage

The price of a Nintendo DSI

City	Local currency	€
New York	$170	€121
Tokyo	¥18,900	€142
Frankfurt	€149	€149
Rome	€150	€150
London	£140	€159
Paris	€164	€164
Brussels	€165	€165

Note: Prices, including taxes, as provided by retailers in each city, averaged and converted into euros.

Changing the art in the White House



The Estate of Richard Diebenkorn

The Obamas add modern, abstract works to the presidential collection

BY AMY CHOZICK AND KELLY CROW

BARACK OBAMA is taking on health care, financial regulation, torture and environmental policy. He's also revamping the White House art collection.

The Obamas are sending ripples through the art world as they put the call out to museums, galleries and private collectors that they'd like to borrow modern art by African-American, Asian, Hispanic and female artists for the White House. In a sharp departure from the 19th-century still lifes, pastorals and portraits that dominate the White House's public rooms, they are choosing bold, abstract art works.

Their choices also, inevitably, have political implications, and could serve as a savvy tool to drive the ongoing message of a more inclusive administration. The Clintons received political praise after they selected Simmie Knox, an African-American artist from Alabama, to paint their official portraits. The Bush administration garnered approval for acquiring "The Builders," a painting by African-American artist Jacob Lawrence, but also some criticism for the picture, which depicts black men doing menial labor.

Two weeks ago the first family installed seven works on loan from the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden in Washington in the White House's private residence, including "Sky Light" and "Watusi (Hard Edge)," a pair of blue and yellow abstracts by lesser-known African-American abstract artist Alma Thomas, acclaimed for her post-war paintings of geometric shapes in cheery colors.

The National Gallery of Art has loaned the family at least five works this year, including "Numerals, 0 through 9," a lead relief sculpture by Jasper Johns, "Berkeley No. 52," a splashy large-scale painting by Richard Diebenkorn, and a blood-red Edward Ruscha canvas featuring the words, "I think maybe I'll...," fitting for a president known for lengthy bouts of contemplation. The Jasper Johns sculpture was installed in the residence on Inauguration Day, along with modern works by Robert Rauschenberg and Louise Nevelson, also on loan from the National Gallery.

Collectors say the art picks by the Obamas will likely affect the artists' market values—or at least raise their profiles. After George W. Bush displayed El Paso, Texas-born artist Tom Lea's "Rio Grande," a photorealistic view of a cactus set against gray clouds, in the Oval Office, the price of the artist's paintings shot up roughly 300%, says Adair Margo, owner of an El Paso gallery that sells Mr. Lea's work. (Mr. Lea passed away in 2001, which also boosted the value of his work.)

The Obamas' interest in modern art began before they moved to Washington. The couple's Hyde Park home featured modern art and black-and-white photographs, according to several Chicago friends. On one of their first dates, Mr. Obama took Michelle Robinson to the Art Institute of Chicago.

A White House spokeswoman says the Obamas enjoy all types of art but want to "round out the permanent collection" and "give new voices" to modern American artists of all races and backgrounds.

The changes in White House art come as the Obama administration seeks to boost arts funding. Mr. Obama included $50 million in his economic stimulus package for the National Endowment for the Arts and last Monday Mrs. Obama delivered remarks at the reopening of the American wing of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York.

The Obamas began their art hunt shortly after the November election, says White House curator William Allman. Michael Smith, a Los Angeles-based decorator hired by the Obamas to redo their private quarters, worked with Mr. Allman, White House social secretary Desirée Rogers and others on the Obama transition team to determine which works would make the Obamas feel at home in Washington.

Mr. Smith and Mrs. Obama made a wish list of about 40 artists and asked for potential loans in a letter to the Hirshhorn, according to Kerry Brougher, the museum's deputy director and chief curator. Mr. Brougher says Mr. Smith insisted any loans be plucked from the museum's storage collection and not pulled off gallery walls.

"The White House's permanent collection is a wonderful record of America's 18th- and 19th-century classical artistic strengths," Mr. Smith says. "The pieces of art selected for loan act as a bridge between this historic legacy and the diverse voices of artists from the 20th and 21st century."

Two weeks ago the Obamas decided to borrow "Nice," a 1954 abstract by Russian-born painter Nicolas de Staël containing red, black and moss-green rectangles; a couple of boxy paintings from German-born Josef Albers's famed "Homage to the Square" series in shades of gold, red and lavender; and "Dancer Putting on Stocking" and "The Bow," two table-top bronzes by Edgar Degas. The museum also sent over New York artist Glenn Ligon's "Black Like Me," a stenciled work about the segregated South, among others that the Obamas are still considering, according to a White House spokeswoman.

The president can hang whatever he wants in the residence and offices, including the Oval Office, but art placed in public rooms, such as the Green Room, must first be approved by the White House curator and the Committee for the Preservation of the White House, an advisory board on which the first lady serves as honorary chair.

Any works intended for the White House permanent collection go through strict and often lengthy vetting before the White House either accepts them as gifts or, on occasion, purchases them using private donations, says Mr. Allman, who has served as chief curator, a permanent White House position, since 2002 and worked in the curator's office since 1976.

Potential additions to the permanent collection must be at least 25 years old, and the White House does not typically accept pieces by living artists for its collection, because inclusion could impact an artist's market value. As a result, there aren't many modern art choices in the collection, Mr. Allman says.

"We're not a gallery," Mr. Allman says. "We're not a museum. People come to the White House once in their lifetime and have a certain perception of what they're going to see."

Currently, the roughly 450-piece permanent collection includes five works by black artists: the Clinton

portraits by Mr. Knox; "The Builders" by Lawrence; "Sand Dunes at Sunset, Atlantic City" by Henry Ossawa Tanner, which hangs in the Green Room and was purchased at Hillary Clinton's urging in 1995; and "The Farm Landing," a tranquil landscape painted in 1892 by Rhode Island artist Edward Bannister, purchased with donations in 2006.

The White House may also temporarily cull works from museums, galleries and collectors to display in either the private residence or public rooms. Presidents must return loans at the end of their final term.

Many of the same deep-pocketed collectors who helped Mr. Obama fund his presidential campaign are now offering works. E.T. Williams, a New York collector of African-American art who has sat on museum boards including the Museum of Modern Art in New York, is among the would-be donors.

Earlier this month, Mr. Williams, a retired banker and real estate investor, strolled through his Manhattan apartment and stopped in front of the jewel of his collection, a smoky-hued portrait of a man in a fedora by Lois Mailou Jones. The painting is appraised at $150,000 but he says he would happily donate it to the White House permanent collection. He also says the Obamas can "borrow anything they like" from his collection, which includes works by Romare Bearden and Hale Woodruff.

Mr. Williams says that although a loan or donation to the White House could boost his collection's profile, his offer is motivated by a desire to support the president. A White House spokeswoman says that any potential donations to the permanent collection must go through the curator's office.

African-American collectors, in particular, snapped to attention when word spread that Mr. Obama might want to borrow art, says Bridgette McCullough Alexander, a Chicago art advisor who went to high school with the first lady. She says some of her collector clients have expressed interest in loaning works to the White House.

"For collectors, it was as if a call went out that the Obamas needed to fill their fridge. The grocery list of artists just rolled out," she says.

The White House has long been a revolving door of artistic preferences. Dolley Madison famously saved Gilbert Stuart's portrait of George Washington during the War of 1812. Jacqueline Kennedy was credited with elevating the profile of White House art when she pulled out of storage eight Cézanne paintings from the permanent collection.

Subsequent administrations have tried to fill gaps in the permanent collection of American art. Hillary Clinton successfully urged the Committee for the Preservation of the White House to accept Georgia O'Keeffe's 1930 abstract, "Mountain at Bear Lake, Taos." Critics said it didn't fit the 19th-century elegance of the Green Room.

Laura Bush convinced the preservation committee to accept an Andrew Wyeth painting donated by the artist , in a rare exception to the prohibition on works by living artists. "Thank God they did accept it because then he died and they'd never be able to afford it," says art historian William Kloss, who has served on the preservation committee since 1990.

Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York/ADAGP, Paris; White House Historical Association/White House Collection

Two works of art borrowed by the Obamas: Richard Diebenkorn's abstract 'Berkeley No. 52' (facing page) and Nicolas de Staël's 'Nice' (above); the Oval Office art collection already includes Frederic Remington's 'The Bronco Buster' (above left).

In 2007, the White House Acquisition Trust, a nonprofit which funds art acquisitions approved by the preservation committee, paid $2.5 million for Jacob Lawrence's rust-colored collage of workers at a building site, four times its high estimate and far surpassing the artist's $968,000 auction record at the time, says Eric Widing, head of Christie's American paintings department. The purchase may have given the Lawrence market a boost. The next spring, a collector paid Christie's $881,000 for a different Lawrence, the third highest price ever paid for one of his works.

The 1995 acquisition of Henry Ossawa Tanner's Atlantic City beach scene had the reverse effect. The White House purchased the work from the artist's grandniece for $100,000, significantly below the $1 million asking price of similar Tanners. The modest price of the highly publicized purchase sent the price of Tanners plummeting, several gallery owners say.

Mrs. Bush hung a modern work by Helen Frankenthaler in the private residence and pushed for the acquisition of the Lawrence, while Mr. Bush lined his office with at least six Texas landscapes.

"He liked things that reminded him of Texas and said he wanted the Oval Office to look like an optimistic person works there," says Anita McBride, Mrs. Bush's former chief of staff. She says the paintings the Bushes borrowed have been returned.

Weeks into his presidency, Mr. Obama caused a stir when he removed a bronze bust of Winston Churchill, loaned by the British Embassy, from the Oval Office and replaced it with a bust of Martin Luther King Jr. by African-American sculptor Charles Alston, on loan from the Smithsonian Institution's National Portrait Gallery.

Next month, the Obamas will consider borrowing four works by African-American artist William H. Johnson including his "Booker T. Washington Legend," a colorful oil on plywood depiction of the former slave educating a group of black students, from the Smithsonian American Art Museum. The Art Institute of Chicago plans to send as many as 10 works for the first family's consideration, including pieces by African-American modernist Beauford Delaney and abstract expressionist Franz Kline.

Steve Stuart, an amateur historian who has been studying the White House for three decades, thinks the Obamas needn't be overly bound by tradition. "You shouldn't have to look at Mrs. Hoover's face over your bed for four years if you don't want to," he says.

A White House wish list

What should hang on the White House walls? Suggestions from artists, collectors and curators

'Gaea' (1966), by Lee Krasner

Agnes Gund

New York collector and president emerita of the Museum of Modern Art

Lee Krasner (1908-84)
Abstract expressionist painter married to Jackson Pollock

Kiki Smith (1954-)
New York sculptor known for her chalky sculptures of women

By adding contemporary artists, the Obamas show "that art is not so obscure or hard to understand," Ms. Gund says.

Isabel Stewart

Chicago collector, chair of the Art Institute of Chicago's leadership advisory committee

Martin Puryear (1941-)
Sculptor who began making his iconic series of wooden-ring sculptures while living in Illinois in the 1970s

Kerry James Marshall (1955-)
Chicago based painter known for his idyllic scenes of African-American suburbia

"We're in the Obamas' hometown, so to have our artists on the national scene would be wonderful," Ms. Stewart says.

Philip Brookman

Chief curator and head of research of the Corcoran Gallery of Art in Washington

Sam Gilliam (1933-)
Washington-based abstract expressionist and lyrical abstractionist

William Christenberry (1936-)
Washington-based photographer, painter and sculptor

Choosing a Gilliam or Christenberry work would send a signal that the Obamas are "incorporating contemporary ideas from the Washington art community," Mr. Brookman says.

'5 Cent Sign, Demopolis, Alabama' (1978), by William Christenberry

Fred Wilson

Bronx artist collected by MoMA and High Museum in Atlanta, known for slyly pairing historical artifacts with decorative objects

"Uncle Tom's Cabin" memorabilia in the Lincoln Bedroom

Daguerreotypes of Native American chiefs next to presidential portraits

"I think the White House landscapes can stay, but how are the works playing off each other to offer a fuller view of American history?" Mr. Wilson says.

'Light Depth' (1969), by Sam Gilliam

Henry Thaggert

Washington collector, member of Corcoran's acquisitions council

"American Gothic" by Gordon Parks (1912-2006), photographer known for his photo series for Life magazine

"That photo has the power to stop busy White House staffers in their tracks," Mr. Thaggert says.

Joy Simmons

Los Angeles radiologist and former trustee of the Santa Monica Museum of Art

Kehinde Wiley (1977-)
New York artist known for painting urban African-American men in Old Master-style poses

"Wiley should paint the family portrait, Ms. Simmons says. "That would be beyond fly."

Toni Morrison

Author, collector of African-American art

Faith Ringgold (1930-)
New York artist known for her late 1960s murals of African-American life painted onto quilts

"Her work would look really nice in the White House," Ms. Morrison says.

Photos from left to right: Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, DC; © 2009 Pollock-Krasner Foundation / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York; © Sam Gilliam

See an interactive graphic on White House art through the years at WSJ.com/Lifestyle

New museums for Belgian icons

By Brigid Grauman
Special to The Wall Street Journal

René Magritte, the sardonic Surrealist painter, and Hergé, the sensitive cartoonist who invented Tintin, had little in common save a wacky sense of humor and a typically Belgian sense of self-derision. But next week the two iconic Belgian artists will share the spotlight in their home country, where on June 2 two new museums will open celebrating their lives and work.

Brussels's new Magritte Museum, located in an elegant 19th-century building that is part of the complex of the city's Fine Arts Museums, is the first museum of its kind devoted to Belgium's most famous modern artist. It is also the most complete collection of Magritte's work, with some 250 pieces covering his entire production from early work in advertising through his loud, upbeat wartime paintings to the sculptures of later years.

Previously, the Fine Arts Museums' Magritte holdings were displayed in a single room of the museum's modern art section. The new museum, with clouds projected onto five of its windows and surreal, nocturnal interior spaces lit by star-shaped lamps, evokes an appropriately dream-like, Magrittean mood.

The museum tour begins on the top floor by looking at the artist's early years and winds down to his most mature works on the first floor. Displayed chronologically in the various rooms—which progress in color from dimly lit dark-coffee to sea-green and Magritte-blue—are such masterpieces as two versions of his "Empire of Lights," "The Return" and the Poe-inspired "The Domain of Arnheim." There is also a fine selection of vivid paintings from his controversial 1947-48 Vache period, despised at the time but now loved by young artists.

As well as letters, posters, tracts and photographs there are films of Magritte and his friends fooling around with a Prussian helmet and tuba. "They were in their sixties when they made these home movies," says project manager Virginie Devillez, "which is amazing. They were like kids."

The main problem for interior designer Winston Spriet was that the new museum would be housed in a building with too many windows and too little wall space. He resorted to a double-skin, with extra walls separating the exhibition rooms from the façade and concealing technical infrastructure. There are now no windows inside the exhibition walls, but the crepuscular light suits Magritte. Mr. Spriet was inspired by Magritte's home, which he visited when he was preparing an exhibition with the artist's widow. "The bottom half of the rooms were those of a typical middle-class Belgian home," he says, "but above on the walls were all these paintings lit by small lamps. It was pure Magritte. That was exactly the atmosphere I wanted to recreate."

Charly Herscovici, who heads the Magritte Foundation, was closely involved in setting up the museum, encouraging many private collectors among his acquaintances to lend works.

Unlike the state-run Magritte Museum, the Hergé Museum, in Louvain-la-Neuve, a university town 20 minutes south of Brussels, is an entirely private initiative. The spectacular concrete-and-glass building with a huge colored image of Tintin on the façade is reached by a long wooden gangway. Once inside, the visitor moves between the various exhibition rooms on steel footbridges like those of ships, with views overlooking the surrounding woods.

Tintin, Hergé's most famous creation, has sold 230 million books around the world and been translated into 80 languages. The Chinese have just discovered him, and Steven Spielberg and Peter Jackson are in the process of turning his "Secret of the Unicorn" into a film. And yet the paradox of Hergé, like Magritte, is that his international appeal is based on a typically Belgian personality. Neither Hergé (1907-1983) nor Magritte (1898-1967) traveled much, yet their intellectual curiosity and openness to the world was that of a small country's citizen.

The museum is curated by Laurent de Froberville, who used to run the Château de Cheverny in the Loire, Hergé's inspiration for Captain Haddock's Moulinsart château. The exhibition is organized chronologically within its airy, atrium-like space. Five rooms, arranged like boxes stood on end, cover everything from Hergé's passion for cats and the Scout movement to his elegant advertising work of the 1930s and the various characters he invented. There is also a science room showing Professor Calculus's inventions and an ethnography room displaying copies of such artifacts as the Mayan fetish statue and Egyptian mummy he used in his books.

The museum is the brainchild of the artist's second wife, Fanny Rodwell, younger than Hergé (whose real name was Georges Remi) by 27 years. Ms. Rodwell put up the whole of the €17-€20 million budget. The building was designed by French architect Christian de Portzamparc.

Hergé had always been a compulsive collector of everything he did, keeping all his drawings, sketches on napkins, correspondence and press clippings. Ms. Rodwell and her current husband Nick Rodwell own most of Hergé's output, as well as his art collection, which is being taken out of storage to the delight of the comic strip artist's many fans.

Ms. Rodwell also asked Dutch cartoonist Joost Swarte, whose distinctive, Tintin-inspired works can be seen often in The New Yorker magazine, to design the museum's interior. It was Mr. Swarte who coined the term "clear line" ("Klare lijn" in Dutch) to describe Hergé's unfussy drawing style.

"When I was young," Mr. Swarte says, "I learnt everything about the cultures of the world in Tintin. But Hergé was also an inspiring storyteller. He framed his drawings like cinema, with a cliff-hanger at the end of the page."

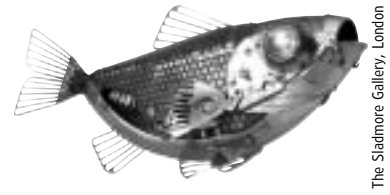
Belga (2)

Above and left, the new Magritte Museum in Brussels; below left, Magritte's 'La magie noire' (1945).

© Charly Herscovici, SABAM-ADAGP, 2009

@Atelier de Portzamparc 2009/Belga

The entrance to the new Hergé Museum in Louvain-la-Neuve in Belgium, dedicated to the cartoon artist and creator of Tintin.



The Sladmore Gallery, London

'Fish 2' (2008-09) by Edouard Martinet, priced at £7,500.

London fairs offer diversity

London's art and antique fairs will offer plenty of diversity this June, ranging from an 18th-century French courtesan's golden bed decorated with Cupid, God of Love, for around £1 million (Pelham Galleries) to a giant, 20th-century pop art German chair for £18,500 (Peter Petrou).

The Olympia International Art & Antiques Fair will feature some 220 galleries under the vast glass canopy of the Olympia exhibition center from June 5-14. In the Great Room at Grosvenor House, some 90 dealers will exhibit from June 11-17. Both fairs will show paintings, furniture, sculpture, drawings, silver, jewelry and other collectible objects from ancient times to the 21st century. Meanwhile, the specialized International Ceramics Fair at Piccadilly's Park Lane Hotel from June 11-14 will offer items from the classic to the contemporary.

Collecting
MARGARET STUDER

For the first time this year, Grosvenor will have a poster gallery dealing in movie classics. Among the posters at The Reel Poster Gallery will be Sergei Eisenstein's 1925 silent movie "Battleship Potemkin," priced at a six-figure sum.

Olympia will have a special section with several galleries devoted to photography this year, following Grosvenor's introduction of a photography gallery last year in Hamiltons of London. A star offering this year at Hamiltons will be Helmut Newton's "In my garage, Monte Carlo" (1986), priced at $350,000.

Modern British painting will be well to the fore this year. The Fine Art Society will bring to Grosvenor "Blue and White" (1971) by popular mid-20th century British abstract painter William Scott, priced in the region of £250,000.

Contemporary sculpture will also play a role at Grosvenor in some tantalizing animal sculptures made from scrap by French artist Edouard Martinet. At the Sladmore Gallery, his "Praying Mantis" with wings made from the rear lights of a Peugeot 404 is priced at £8,250; and a fish with eyes made from flashlights at £7,500.

Mr. Petrou's giant 1979 shoeseat is placed in the hotel foyer at Grosvenor House to entice people to visit the fair. Pelham's courtesan's bed, meanwhile, can be found at Olympia. It was made for the celebrated dancer-courtesan Marie-Madeleine Guimard, whose many lovers included the wealthiest members of the French court.

Offerings at the Ceramics Fair will include such diverse pieces as a rare Meissen jug with hunting scene from circa 1740 (€55,000) at Germany's Elfriede Langeloh to "Winding Hearts Flower Vase" (2008), a stoneware vase by Kate Malone inspired by 17th-century embroidery (price: £7,000) at London's Adrian Sassoon.

An old friend from Alsace


Dylan Cross for The Wall Street Journal

Tastings
DOROTHY J. GAITER AND JOHN BRECHER

WE WERE DINING at a little restaurant with an anemic wine list and we had to search for our secret, emergency wine. Whew! Sure enough, there it was. We ordered it, we relaxed and the dinner was saved. As we talked about this later, we realized we should probably let everyone in on this secret. So here it is:

When you are at a restaurant with a limited list or at a store without much of a selection, look for Pinot Blanc from Alsace. You'll be surprised how often it shows up. We're not really sure why, since Alsatian Pinot Blanc is hardly one of the world's most popular wines, but we see it more than we'd expect and, to us, it's like finding an old friend.

We're partial to Alsatian wines in general, though we have raised some alarms over the past few years about a rising level of sweetness in Pinot Gris and Gewürztraminer. We have a special soft spot for Pinot Blanc because, to us, it just seems so very relaxed and easy—and inexpensive to boot. While there are many different producers, a handful of big players are widely distributed. Trimbach has been a standby for us for decades, for instance, while our all-time favorite is Schlumberger.

Under the rules of Alsace, a wine called Pinot Blanc can actually be made from any blend of Pinot Blanc and a grape called Auxerrois, which is Pinot Blanc's traditional blending partner in Alsace. As a result, some wines labeled Pinot Blanc are 100% varietal Pinot Blanc, while Schlumberger, for instance, is 30% Pinot Blanc and 70% Auxerrois.

Despite our long, happy relationship with Alsatian Pinot Blanc, we realized we had never conducted a broad, blind tasting of every one we could find. Pinot Blanc, as a grape—and it's grown all over the world, with various names—can be fairly bland. Are the Alsatians really as reliable as we think? We picked up every one we could find on store shelves and tasted them blind to find out. Some of the wines cost less than $10 and some cost more than $30, with the average about $17.

We took one sip of the very first wine of the tasting and smiled. "It's like falling off a log, isn't it?" Dottie said. The wine had such ease and grace that it seemed effortlessly pleasing. All of the tastes were balanced and no element of the wine was crying out for attention. But it also had significant character—white pepper, melon and outstanding acidity. It turned out to be our old favorite, Schlumberger "Les Princes Abbés" 2006, which is a world-class bargain for about $15 and our best of tasting. We are happy to say that the entire tasting was a joy. While some labels were fairly obscure, such as Huber & Bléger and Jean Ginglinger, the old standbys did well, too.

By the way, some U.S. wineries make good Pinot Blanc, too, and not just in California. Lieb Cellars on New York's Long Island makes a good one, for instance. Our longtime U.S. favorite is Chalone, which we collected for years and still enjoy. We recently had a bottle of the 2005 ($16.99) and it was simply terrific—very, very ripe, with explosive fruit, nice edges, plenty of oak and great balancing acidity. "This is just heaven," Dottie said.

The Alsatian Pinot Blanc index

In a broad blind tasting of Pinot Blanc from Alsace, these were our favorites. These are food wines. Because they are full-bodied and peppery, they go well with a wide variety of food, including spicy dishes. Schlumberger is our all-time favorite white with Indian food.

VINEYARD	PRICE	RATING	COMMENTS
Domaines Schlumberger 'Les Princes Abbés' 2006	$14.95	Very Good/ Delicious	**Best of tasting.** This is so very easy—perfectly balanced fruit and acidity with some weight, but not too much. Melons and spices and a delivery as smooth as a cool stream.
Pierre Sparr Reserve 2007	$10.25*	Good/ Very Good	**Best value.** Nicely focused and interesting, with white pepper, lemon, grapefruit and presence. A lot of wine for the money. We did not like the 2006 as much.
Huber & Bléger 2007	$14.99	Very Good	Ripe, rich and sophisticated, with white peaches and what John called "a martini-like focus and clarity."
Albert Mann 2007	$15.98	Good/ Very Good	Lip-smacking, grapefruit-orange-tangerine tastes. Clean, fresh and refreshing, with some mouthfeel, especially in the finish.
Jean Ginglinger 'Cuvée George' 2007	$14.99	Good/ Very Good	A weighty, peppery white—so very Alsatian that we immediately planned to cook pork chops with sauerkraut.

Note: Wines are rated on a scale that ranges: Yech, OK, Good, Very Good, Delicious and Delicious! These are the prices we paid at stores in California and New York. *We paid $7.99 for Sparr, but this price appears to be more representative. Prices vary widely.

All About Tastings

It's time for our semiannual reminder of who we are and what this column is all about. Both of us are longtime hard-news journalists. John was page-one editor of this newspaper from 1992 to 2000. Dottie was news editor in charge of urban affairs. We have been married for 30 years and have two daughters in college. We began writing "Tastings" in 1998 and became full-time wine writers in 2000. We are the authors of four books on wine. Our assistant, Melanie Grayce West, helps us in many ways.

We approach wine the same way we did for a quarter-century before we ever wrote about it: as passionate consumers. We do not accept free wine, free meals or free trips and only attend events that are open to the public, for which we buy tickets like everyone else. We do not meet privately with winemakers when they visit New York. We buy our wines from retail shelves, both in person and online, from stores all over the country. The Wall Street Journal pays retail prices for the wine. We taste wines blind unless we specifically note otherwise.

Because we shop so widely and have been shopping widely now for more than 35 years, we can assure you that every wine shop is different. Two stores across the street from each other could have utterly different inventories. That's why, in our tastings, we look for general trends so we can offer general advice. For instance, having tasted hundreds of American Merlots over the years, we can tell you that they are less of a risk today than they were a few years ago; that Alsatian Pinot Blanc is very little risk at all; and that inexpensive Australian Shiraz continues to be a big risk. In other words, what we're trying to do is very simple yet very broad: Give you an idea what section of the wine store is likely to offer good value, at any price, and which is not.

In any event, just because we like a wine doesn't mean you will. Trust your own tastes. And find a good wine merchant whom you trust. That is a key step in any wine journey.

❖ Top Picks

© Private Collection

'A Girl in a Red Cloak (Mary Constable),' from 1809, by John Constable.

Constable also got up close and personal

London: All art lovers know John Constable (1776-1837) as a painter of landscapes so original that art historians think of him as a precursor, with Turner, of Impressionism. We're far less familiar with his pictures of people, so the National Portrait Gallery's small exhibition, "Constable Portraits: The Painter & His Circle" is a delightful corrective.

Constable was a private person, with a small circle of friends, no good at what co-curator Martin Gayford, author of the biography "Constable in Love," calls the "schmoozing" necessary to make a living by "painting aristocrats, politicians, generals and duchesses." Nonetheless, when he found his subjects congenial, Constable showed tremendous skill and talent. From a good-humored pencil "Self-Portrait" of 1806, where he gives himself an exaggeratedly aquiline nose, to an affectionate circa 1815 portrait of his elderly, red-cheeked businessman father, "Golding Constable (1739-1816)," Constable shows himself capable of the same combination of precision and freedom for which we value so highly his landscape pictures.

The small group of mature portraits such as that of "Mrs. James Pulham Snr" and "Mrs. Tuder" (both circa 1818), go even further in this pleasing amalgamation of perfectly modeled plump faces, with gorgeously highlighted caps, bonnets, feathers and lace, representing what the catalog calls members of "the pious, respectable and prosperous bourgeoisie," while calling attention to, in Mrs. Pulham's case, "her slightly ridiculous best clothes."

Constable's greatness is that he could do this in a perfectly sympathetic way, so that the sitter and her husband became his avid collectors. The humanity and individuality of these portraits make one wonder, as Lucian Freud pointed out in 2003, why Constable is not normally mentioned as being one of the great English portrait painters. *—Paul Levy*

Until June 14
www.npg.org.uk

'Untitled (Globe),' from 2008, by Charles Avery.

No man is an island, but art can create one

Rotterdam: Since 2004, the Scottish artist Charles Avery has been working on one of contemporary art's most ambitious projects: the invention and documentation of an entire island. Using every conceivable format and discipline, from sketching and painting to taxonomy and taxidermy, Mr. Avery has produced a catalogue of objects worthy of their own museum, and he is still hard at work producing more. Highlights of Mr. Avery's work on the project to date—including drawings, paintings, maps, canned goods and furniture—are exhibited in "The Islanders: An Introduction," at the Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen.

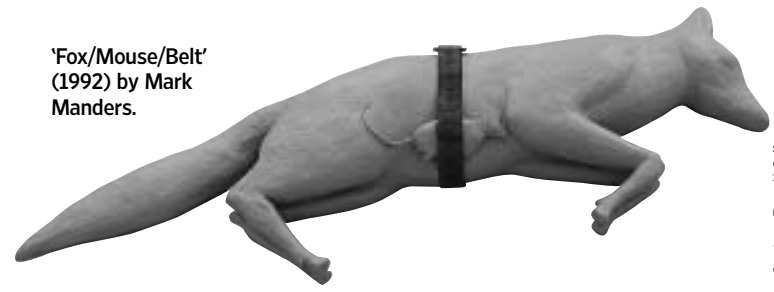
Mr. Avery is an especially good draftsman. His island—a fantastical place, with a main town called Onomatopoeia, and filled with animal-like creatures that could have rambled over from the set of a Star Wars movie—is brought to life largely through drawings. In his written descriptions of the island, Mr. Avery can tend toward the twee, threatening to turn the whole project into a graphic novel for young adults. But in fully rendered drawings, like "Mob Scene," which shows island inhabitants as scrawny demons, he has created haunting works of art that double as installation artifacts.

Mr. Avery, now based in London, grew up on the Isle of Mull in the Inner Hebrides. His island childhood obviously informs many aspects of the project, and his most arresting images are the stuff of childhood nightmares. A ridable—an all-too-real looking island beast, with the feet of a bird, the body of a llama and the head of a dog—has a kind of Darwin-defying logic. And the Duculi—a canine creature made up of two separate, headless animals, connected at the neck and locked in struggle—is a biological variation on the idea of perpetual motion.

Mr. Avery describes the Duculi as the least-worshipped of the island's gods, attempting to provide a dose of humor as well as an unforgettable image. But his words don't do his art justice. If you can ignore the accompanying texts, Mr. Avery's images may accrue in your own imagination, convincing you that you have visited somewhere of, but not exactly on, this earth of ours.

—J.S. Marcus

Until June 7
www.boijmans.nl



'Fox/Mouse/Belt' (1992) by Mark Manders.

Courtesy Zeno X Gallery

Mark Manders's strange material world

Zurich: "The Absence of Mark Manders," at the Kunsthaus Zurich, shows around a dozen of Dutch artist Mark Manders's (born 1968) curiously surrealistic and often excruciatingly contorted sculptures. The works are made from plywood, clay, bones, iron, stacks of newspapers, used pencils and clothes pins.

One of the more exotic installations, "Nocturnal Garden Scene" (2005), shows a black cat that is cut in two. Two black bottles, connected with a cord, frame the dead animal, which lies on black sand. The ghastly scene triggers associations of a mysterious animal sacrifice as well as of a cruel and senseless modern-day killing.

The black wood construction "Writing Machine" (2004), shows a large, imaginary apparatus consisting of a smoke stack and two large boxes connected through a bellows. Nothing suggests that this machine can write or that it will ever function, move or make a noise like the machines of Swiss artist Jean Tinguely (1925-91). But the depressing, silent presence of the machine creates a peculiar unease that questions our preconceived idea of writing as a spontaneous and creative act.

Likewise, "Finished Sentence," an installation that Mr. Manders dates 1998-2006, suggests that writing or speaking is more technical and machine-like than we believe; the iron sculpture looks like an intricate sewage system.

"Inhabited for a Survey (First Floor Plan from Self-Portrait as a Building)," from 1986, shows a two-dimensional abstract ground floor made from pens and clothes pins and is open to changes in the future. This work in flux undermines the notion that sculptures express fixed, monumental truths. Mr. Manders reminds us that ideas and concepts, even if they are materialized, are changing constantly.

—Goran Mijuk

Until June 14
www.kunsthaus.ch

'Rostock, at the Beach' (2008) by Jörg Koopmann.

© Jörg Koopmann

A photojournalist says a lot with a little

Munich: Jörg Koopmann's photography exhibition at the Stadtmuseum is so small that, on a recent visit, not even the museum's staff were sure where to find it. That could only be in the photographer's interest: Mr. Koopmann is a master of the art of understatement—and he likes to create confusion.

An accomplished photojournalist and travel photographer, Mr. Koopmann's life and career are intrinsically linked to the city of Munich, where he studied and has had most of exhibitions. About a third of the pictures exhibited in "Born in Brennen* 2001-2009," his current exhibition, were taken at the Bavarian Open music festival in Munich. But this is about as consistent as it gets.

The show benefits from an apparent lack of focus, both in the pictures themselves and in the purpose of the exhibition. The title is derived from a spelling mistake in a song Patti Smith dedicated to the German Guantánamo prisoner Murat Kurnaz. Some of the pictures, in black and white, depict rock concerts; the rest show what look like accidental snapshots from the sidelines of political events, often shot at a very wide angle, with no clear indication of where to look. This is what makes Mr. Koopmann's work so interesting: He doesn't tell you what to think. It seems he doesn't try to tell you anything—and that's how he manages to say so much.

The pictures depict banal, everyday scenes, but at second glance prove difficult to interpret: a parasol in camouflage pattern leaning against a wall; a man posing next to a war memorial, cigarette hanging from his lips; a woman sitting on the floor after a rock concert. They are about politics, power, terrorism and contradictions—and at the same time, they look as if any passer-by could have taken them. Mr. Koopmann's great skill is evident in the fact that they are so fascinating to look at. *—Kati Krause*

Until July 5
www.stadtmuseum-online.de

Working Time Is Relative

By Laura Vanderkam

Summer is here again. It heralds the return of barbecues, white pants, barbecue-stained white pants and, for many workers, that perk known as Summer Fridays: half-days that allow everyone to start the weekend early.

Heaven knows we need the time off—or think we do. Over the past two decades of rapid technological deployment and globalization, it has become an article of faith among the professional set that we work sweatshop hours. Sociologist Juliet Schor started the rumor with her 1993 book, "The Overworked American," which featured horror stories of people checking their watches to know what day it was.

> Americans are not quite as busy as they think they are.

Then God created Blackberrys and things got worse. In late 2005, Fortune's Jody Miller claimed that "the 60-hour weeks once thought to be the path to glory are now practically considered part-time." In late 2006, the Harvard Business Review followed up with an article on "the dangerous allure of the 70-hour workweek," calling jobs that required such labor the new standard for professionals. The authors featured one "Sudhir," a financial analyst who claimed to work 90-hour weeks during summertime, his "light" season. He's got nothing on a young man I met at a party recently who told me he was working 190 hours a week to launch his new company.

It was a curious declaration; I would certainly invest in a start-up that had invented a way to augment the 168 hours that a week actually contains. The young man turned out to be kidding. But he felt overworked, and so he indulged in some workweek inflation. Research shows that this is a common affliction among anyone claiming to work more than 50 hours a week. Indeed, almost no one claiming to work 70, 80 or 190 hour weeks is actually doing so. This doesn't make Summer Fridays any less sweet. But it does raise the question of why our perceptions of work are so different from the reality.

Sociologists have been studying how Americans spend their time for decades. One camp favors a simple approach: if you want to know how many hours someone works, sleeps or vacuums, you ask him. Another camp sees a flaw in this method: People lie. We may not do so maliciously, but it's tough to remember our exact workweek or average time spent dishwashing, and in the absence of concrete memories, we're prone to lie in ways that don't disappear into the randomness of thousands of answers. They actually skew results.

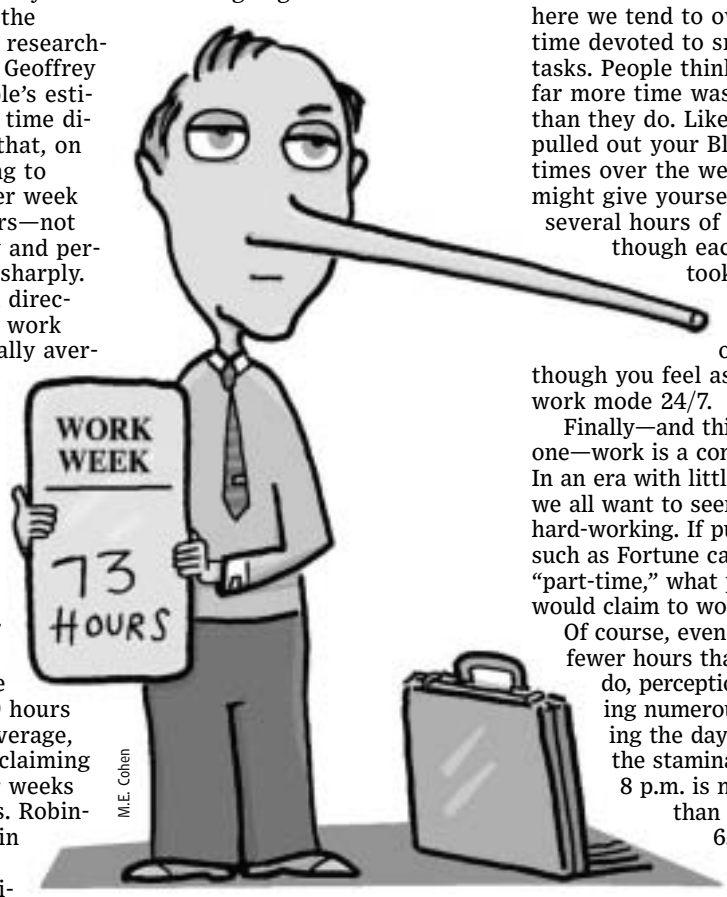
That's the theory behind the American Time Use Survey, conducted annually by the Bureau of Labor Statistics. The ATUS, like a handful of previous academic surveys, is a "time diary" study. For these studies, researchers either walk respondents through the previous day, asking them what they did next and reminding them of the realities of time and physics, or in some cases giving them a diary to record the next day or week.

Time-diary studies are laborious, but in general they are more accurate. Aggregated, they paint a different picture of life than the quick-response surveys featured in the bulk of America's press releases. For instance, the National Sleep Foundation claims that Americans sleep 6.7 hours (weekdays) to 7.1 hours (weekends) per night. The ATUS puts the average at 8.6 hours. The first number suggests rampant sleep deprivation. The latter? Happy campers.

The numbers are equally striking with work. Back in the 1990s, using 1985 data, researchers John Robinson and Geoffrey Godbey compared people's estimated workweeks with time diary hours. They found that, on average, people claiming to work 40 to 44 hours per week were working 36.2 hours—not far off. But then reality and perception diverged more sharply. You can guess in which direction. Those claiming to work 60-64 hour weeks actually averaged 44.2 hours. Those claiming 65-74 hour workweeks logged 52.8 hours, and those claiming 75-plus hour workweeks worked, on average, 54.9 hours. I contacted Prof. Robinson recently to ask for an update. His 2006-07 comparisons were tighter, but still, people claiming to work 60-69 hours per week clocked, on average, 52.6 hours, with those claiming 70-, 80-hour or greater weeks logging 58.8. As Messrs. Robinson and Godbey wrote in their 1997 book "Time for Life," "only rare individuals put in more than a 55-60 hour workweek."

I thought I was one of them. So I kept a time diary. Alas, even during a week that left me feeling wrecked, an honest accounting of my hours didn't top 50.

There are many reasons for such discrepancies. The first is the gray definition of much white-collar labor. If you're watching "Talladega Nights" on a flight to a conference, are you working? Is reading the Taste page of the Wall Street Journal in your office work? Anyone claiming an 80-hour workweek is definitely putting both in the "yes" category—though this mode of calculation is going to result in more generous estimates than an observer might tally.



The second reason is that people discount exceptions that don't fit the mental pictures they create of themselves. If you work four 14-hour days, then quit after 8 hours on Fridays, you'd think a "usual" day was 14 hours, meaning that you work 70-hour weeks. But you don't. You work 64—maybe. You probably work less than 14 hours on holidays such as Memorial Day. Plus, odds are good that your 14-hour days feature some late arrivals, lunch breaks or phone calls to your spouse. Pretty soon we're back below 60. You might have worked on weekends. But here we tend to overestimate time devoted to small, repetitive tasks. People think they spend far more time washing dishes than they do. Likewise, if you pulled out your Blackberry 10 times over the weekend, you might give yourself credit for several hours of work, even though each incidence took five minutes. Total time? Less than one hour, even though you feel as if you're in work mode 24/7.

Finally—and this is the big one—work is a competitive sport. In an era with little job security, we all want to seem busy and hard-working. If publications such as Fortune call 60 hours "part-time," what professional would claim to work less?

Of course, even if we work fewer hours than we think we do, perceptions matter. Taking numerous breaks during the day so you have the stamina to stay until 8 p.m. is more draining than going home at 6. Even if your Blackberry isn't buzzing at 10 p.m., the fact that it might is a source of stress. So maybe we can all take a little time to relax this summer, and enjoy our Summer Fridays instead of complaining to our friends about how overworked we are.

Ms. Vanderkam is writing a book, "168 Hours," to be published by Portfolio in 2010.

de gustibus / *By Bret Stephens*

Saying Goodbye to Ground Zero

In just a few weeks, The Wall Street Journal, for more than 20 years headquartered at 200 Liberty Street in lower Manhattan, packs its bags and decamps for new offices in midtown. For me, there will be much to miss about the old location: the small, nearly hidden, oval lawn surrounded by almond trees, right across the street; the fancy yachts and sleek racing sailboats that dock at nearby North Cove in summertime; the spectacular sunsets that bring out the sparkle of the languid Hudson River and manage to make Jersey City look almost beckoning.

All that, however, is to the west of our building. To the east is the 16-acre pit of Ground Zero. It's a sight I won't miss at all.

For nearly five years, I have looked into that pit most every working day, both from the street level and from our offices about 150 feet above it. Five years ago, after the site had been cleared of debris but before most of the reconstruction work had begun, Ground Zero still meant just two things: outrage and defiance.

Back then, too, my memories were still fresh of what had been there before 9/11, when I'd first gone to work for the Journal in the 1990s before moving overseas: not just the Twin Towers but the gym I belonged to on the top floor of the Marriott hotel; and the Krispy Kreme donut shop that was my preferred post-workout/pre-work destination; and the little shoe repair place in the Trade Center's mall; and the DHL counter in the lobby of the South Tower, from which I had overnighted my Master's thesis to London just in time to meet the deadline.

> Happy to be moving uptown.

Back then, in other words, my emotional connection to Ground Zero was a combination of nostalgia and sadness. Also, expectation: I liked Daniel Libeskind's original design for the new World Trade Center site, with its five new towers all sharing a shard-like look that gave the whole a sense of common origin and purpose, and I looked forward to seeing them built with a sense of urgency. This was a national project, after all, a gigantic rebuke to terrorists in the form of steel and glass and one that did not require the assent of the United Nations Security Council or the pliancy of the proverbial Arab street. If my grandfathers' generation could build the Empire State Building in 14 months flat, how much longer could it possibly take, using modern methods, to build at least one of Mr. Libeskind's towers?

Today, by contrast, my emotional connection to Ground Zero mainly involves disillusion. Disillusion with the new smorgasbord design that replaced Mr. Libeskind's, the various elements of which are testaments to the egotism of their several rock-star architects. Disillusion with the endless bickering between developer Larry Silverstein, the city and state of New York, the Port Authority, and the rest of the "stakeholders," real or self-styled, with their never-ending Demands That Must Be Met. Disillusion with the fact that today, three years after the cornerstone of the 1,776 foot Freedom Tower was laid (for a second time!), only a few steel beams rise above street level to a height of about 100 feet. Disillusion that the name "Freedom Tower" has now been dropped. Disillusion that in 2007 two firefighters, Joseph Graffagnino and Robert Beddia, died in the damaged Deutsche Bank building adjacent to Ground Zero because the Environmental Protection Agency, or whoever, wouldn't countenance the thought of simply demolishing it with a few well-placed charges of dynamite. Disillusion that it will cost more to deconstruct that squalid tower one floor at a time than it did to build it. Disillusion upon disillusion, compounded into a sense of disgust.

Yes, I know: Rebuilding the site, as various responsible officials endlessly repeat, is a "three-dimensional jigsaw puzzle." What do they suppose the Apollo missions were? It took eight years for the U.S. to go from John F. Kennedy's 1961 man-on-the-moon speech to an actual man on the moon, a distance of about 240,000 miles. At Ground Zero, it has taken about as long to move just one corner of the site from 70 feet below ground to 100 feet above. The whole endeavor is fast turning into the American version of Barcelona's Sagrada Familia, under construction since the 1880s.

At least Gaudi's cathedral is majestic in its incompleteness. And at least its incompleteness hints at some higher purposes, perhaps, or suggests that tracing patterns of a divine will takes time. At Ground Zero, there is a pit. With broad slabs of concrete and some rust-colored steel. Testifying to a society in which everyone gets their say and nothing gets done. To a system run by craven politicians and crass developers and an army of lawyers for whom gridlock is profit.

A day after 9/11, my colleague Dan Henninger wrote an account of the attacks titled "I Saw It All. Then I Saw Nothing." Today, I still see nothing. Which means, maybe, that I've seen it all.

Mr. Stephens writes the Journal's weekly Global View column. Write to bstephens@wsj.com.

time off

Amsterdam

festival

"Holland Festival 2009" presents performing arts, including dance by Mikhail Baryshnikov and Ana Laguna, and the performance art of "Church of Fear" by Christoph Schlingensief.

Stichting Holland Festival
June 4-28
☎ 31-20-7882-100
www.hollandfestival.nl

photography

"World Press Photo 2009" shows winners of the annual World Press Photo Exhibition, including pictures by Anthony Suau (U.S.), Chen Qinggang (China), Mashid Mohadjerin (Belgium) and Lissette Lemus (El Salvador).

Oude Kerk
Until June 28
☎ 31-20-6766-096
www.worldpressphoto.org

Barcelona

art

"Matisse 1917-1941" showcases works by Henri Matisse (1869-1954), created between 1917 and 1941.

Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza
June 9-Sept. 20
☎ 34-91-3690-151
www.museothyssen.org

Brussels

art & antiques

"Brussels Oriental Art Fair 2009" exhibits Asian and Oriental art in galleries around the Sablon area.

The Sablon
June 3-7
☎ 32-2-3444-171
www.boafair.be

fashion

"The New Look of Expo 58—Fashion of the 50s" presents evening gowns, wedding dresses, cocktail dresses, ladies' suits, coats and accessories.

Musée du Costume et de la Dentelle
Until Dec. 29
☎ 32-2-2134-450
www.brucity.be

Cologne

art

"A Slap in the Face of Public Taste—Cubo-Futurism and the Rise of Modernism in Russia" presents works by 23 Russian artists, illustrating Russia's relationship with Italy and France after the Futurist Manifesto.

Museum Ludwig
May 26-Jan. 3
☎ 49-221-2212-6165
www.museum-ludwig.de

Copenhagen

art

"To Gods, Spirits and Ancestors—Art from Africa in HRH The Prince's private collection" showcases about 200 masks and sculptures from Prince Henrik's African art collection.

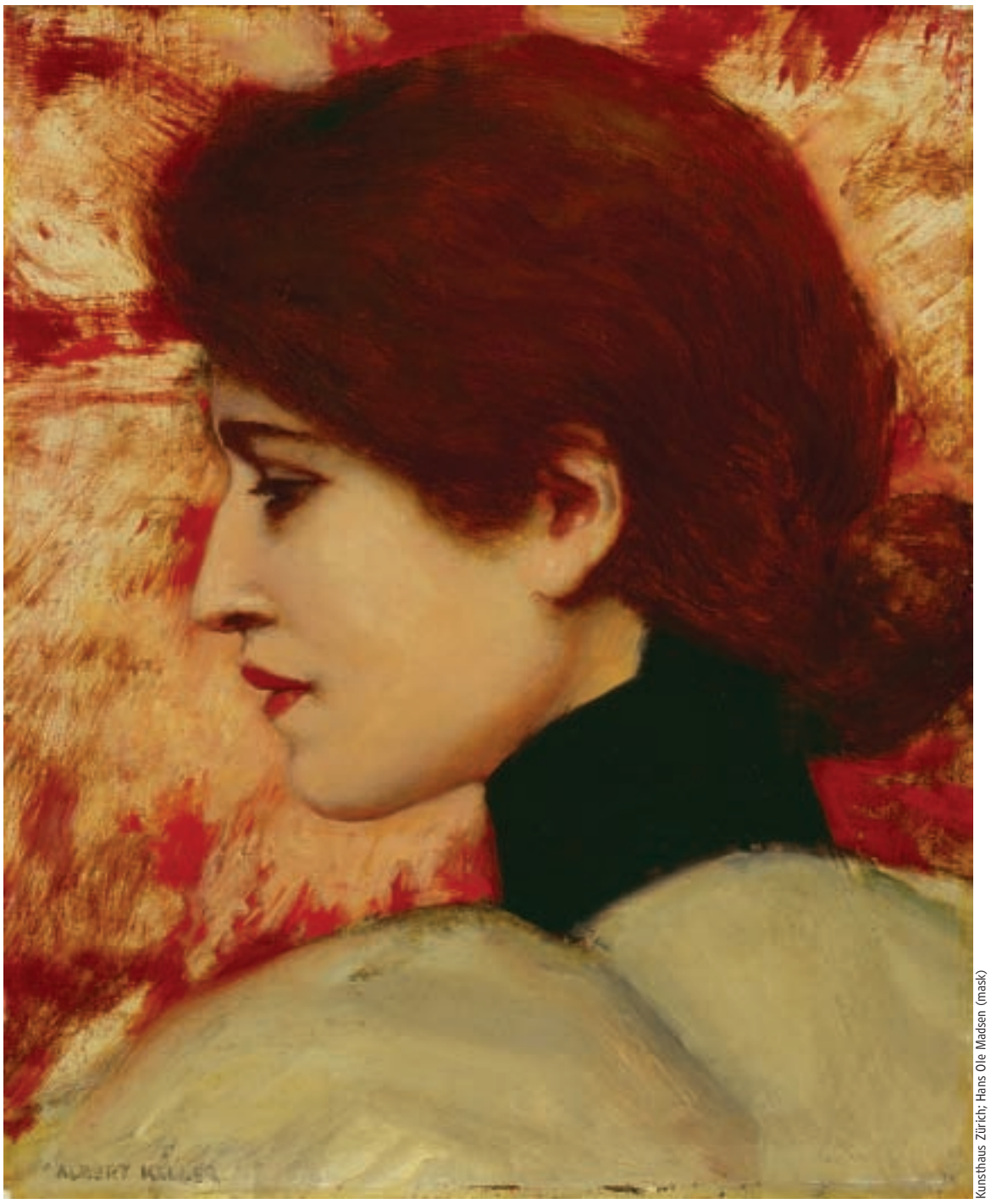
Gammel Holtegaard
Until July 26
☎ 45-4580-0878
www.holtegaard.org

Frankfurt

art

"The Making of Art" explores the relationship between artist, collector, gallery owner, curator, and critic.

Schirn Kunsthalle
May 29-Aug. 30
☎ 49-69-2998-820
www.schirn-kunsthalle.de



Kunsthaus Zürich; Hans Ole Madsen (mask)

Albert von Keller's 'The Anonymous Medium "Lily disgeistes"' (1895), in Zurich; top right, a Songye mask from the Democratic Republic of Congo, on show in Copenhagen.

Groningen

art

"Cuba—Art and History from 1868 to the Present" looks at 140 years of Cuban art.

Groninger Museum
Until Sept. 20
☎ 31-50-3666-555
www.groningermuseum.nl

Hamburg

art

"Dance of Colours: Nijinsky's Eye and Abstraction" exhibits 100 paintings, drawings and gouaches by Russian dancer and choreographer Vaslaw Nijinsky (1889-1950).

Hamburger Kunsthalle
Until Aug. 16
☎ 49-40-4281-3120-0
www.hamburger-kunsthalle.de

Mnam Collection, RMN

'Personal Cuts' (1982), by Sanja Ivekovic, in Paris.

Leipzig

music

"Bachfest 2009 'Bach-Mendelssohn-Reger'" presents the music of Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750) performed by internationally acclaimed musicians such as Matthias Goerne, Sir Andre Previn, Miklós Perényi, Nigel Kennedy and Ullrich Böhme throughout the city.

Bachfest Leipzig
June 11-21
☎ 49-341-9137-300
www.bach-leipzig.de

art

"Karicartoon 2009" showcases works by 12 popular German cartoonists, humorously analyzing current events.

Stadtgeschichtliches Museum
May 27-July 19
☎ 49-341-9651-30
www.stadtgeschichtliches-museum-leipzig.de

London

art

"Garden and Cosmos: The Royal Paintings of Jodhpur" exhibits paintings from the royal courts in India between the 17th and 19th centuries.

British Museum
May 28-Aug. 23
☎ 44-20-7323-8000
www.britishmuseum.org

photography

"Capturing the Moment: Photographs by Reg Wilson" features the work of the British performance photographer Reg Wilson (born 1937) with images of Maria Callas, Laurence Olivier, Margot Fonteyn, Rudolf Nureyev, The Beatles and others.

Victoria & Albert Museum
Until Jan. 10
☎ 44-20-7942-2000
www.vam.ac.uk

Madrid

photography

"Dorothea Lange: Decisive Years" shows about 140 small-scale images of the Great Depression captured by American photographer Dorothea Lange (1895-1965).

Museo Colecciones ICO
June 4-July 26
☎ 34-913-2328-72
www.ico.es

Paris

photography

"Agustí Centelles" presents pictures by Catalan photojournalist Agustí Centelles (1909-85), taken between 1936 and 1939, depicting the Spanish Civil War and his internment in France.

Jeu de Paume (Hotel de Sully)
June 9-Sept. 13
☎ 33-1-4274-4775
www.jeudepaume.org

art

"elles@centrepompidou" displays works by female artists, including Sonia Delaunay (1885-1979), Frida Kahlo (1907-54), Dorothea Tanning (born 1910) and Joan Mitchell (1926-92).

Centre Pompidou
May 27-May 24, 2010
☎ 33-1-4478-1233
www.centrepompidou.fr

photography

"The Louvre during the War-Photographs 1938-1947" shows 56 French and German photographs taken between 1938 and 1947, illustrating events at the Louvre museum during World War II.

Musée du Louvre
Until Aug. 31
☎ 33-1-4020-5050
www.louvre.fr

Strasbourg

music

"Strasbourg Music Festival 2009" is a classical music festival featuring soloists and orchestras from around the world.

Société des Amis de la Musique
June 6-26
☎ 33-3-8832-4310
www.festival-strasbourg.com

Vienna

art

"Ferdinand Georg Waldmüller" offers a retrospective of works by Austrian Biedermeier painter Ferdinand Georg Waldmüller (1793-1865).

Belvedere—Unteres Belvedere
June 9-Oct. 11
☎ 43-1-7955-70
www.belvedere.at

art

"Cy Twombly: Sensations of the Moment" exhibits sculpture, painting, drawing, graphic works and photographs by American artist Cy Twombly (born 1928).

Mumok
June 4-Oct. 11
☎ 43-1-5250-0
www.mumok.at

Zurich

art

"Albert von Keller: Salons, Seances, Secession" displays paintings by the Swiss-German artist Albert von Keller (1844-1920), co-founder of the Munich Secession.

Kunsthaus Zürich
Until Oct. 4
☎ 41-44-253-8484
www.kunsthaus.ch

Source: ArtBase Global Arts News Service, WSJE research.