

FRIDAY - SUNDAY, MAY 8 - 10, 2009

WEEKEND JOURNAL.

EUROPE

Spock to the future

Zachary Quinto's new take on the Vulcan, and other summer blockbuster reboots

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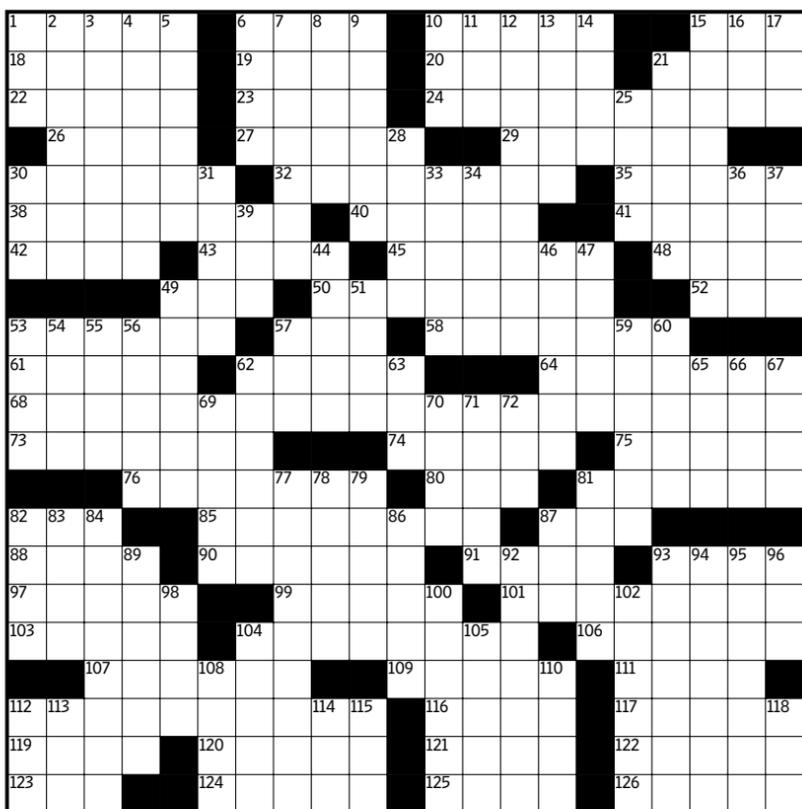
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April 24 Solution



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

WSJ.com/WeekendJournal

❖ Design

In search of luxury that's still in reach

I'VE BEEN LOOKING at sofas on the Design Within Reach Web site, but the bottle of Soly Simple Fruit and Veggie Wash (with Himalayan salt) is enticing—and only \$12. “Add to cart.”

With one mouse click, I have succumbed to the latest strategy of Design Within Reach. Known for iconic Eames lounge chairs, which start at \$2,949, and modernist classics like the Arco floor lamp, at \$2,696, the modern-furniture retailer saw steep sales drops in the third and



Steve LaBadessa for The Wall Street Journal

On Style

CHRISTINA BINKLEY

fourth quarters. So the company recently began selling a hodgepodge of much less expensive items: kitchen and bath soaps, gardening tools such as \$30 nickel-plated plant misters, and a \$200 “pro” bocce-ball set.

The strategy is an admission that the company's longtime product line—high on style and attitude with a premium price—is a tough sell these days. Now, a \$66,000 glass Artichoke lamp seems more like Design Out Of Reach.

Even CEO Ray Brunner concedes as much. “Nobody needs a \$2,000 chair,” he says. “We don't sell anything anybody needs from a Maslow point of view,” Mr. Brunner says, referring to psychologist Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of human needs, which started at “breathing” and topped out at “creativity.”

In the current economic doldrums, luxury furniture markets are suffering. Fourth-quarter sales of home furnishings in the U.S. fell 13% from the year earlier, according to the U.S. Commerce Department. What's more, says Pam Danziger, president of trend consultant Unity Marketing, consumers won't be returning to their free-spending ways anytime soon. She recently published a trend report titled “The High-End Furniture Market Is Never Going Back Like It Was Before.”

In an attempt to accommodate that new reality, Design Within Reach is banking on people being just a little self-indulgent—buying a stylish garden trowel rather than a chandelier. Its customers can surely afford it: They earn an average of \$200,000 a year.

But is a \$12 sheep's milk bath soap, shaped like a woolly ewe, just the thing for a modernist who needs a shopping fix but not a whole bookcase? It's like the concept of selling sunglasses to fans of a pricey designer or selling knick-knacks at an art exhibit: You'd prefer to buy the James Turrell light sculpture, but you settle for the \$7 postcards instead. “You like to buy a souvenir of your visit,” says consumerism consultant Paco Underhill.

It's also rather similar to the strategy that stores like Williams-Sonoma and Restoration Hardware have employed for years; fancy Italian espresso makers may have drawn us into the stores, but we exited with a tablecloth and eight napkin rings. It's just that now the audience is the minimalist customer of Design Within Reach.

Mr. Underhill's New York office sits directly above a Design Within Reach store, giving him a birds-eye

vantage point of the clientele. He applauds DWR's new strategy of selling affordable goodies. But he adds, “I think it's gotten to the point where DWR has a very devoted following, but how much more can they buy?”

Just getting people into stores can be difficult at a time when self-indulgent shopping has lost its allure, says Jim Taylor, vice-chairman of Harrison Group, a market research firm. Dr. Taylor has just completed a consumer study for American Express Publishing that suggests the wealthy no longer really enjoy shopping. What's more, their new, less-materialistic lifestyles are “a lot of fun,” he says. “Our happiness scales are up this year for the first time in years.”

In the near future, “brands that have a penchant for quality, service and craftsmanship are going to do well,” Dr. Taylor says. “Brands that offer fashion flourishes are going to have a hard time, because people are offended by their own wants.”

So, rather than Eames chairs, this month's Design Within Reach catalog features a \$78 metal café chair on its cover. When I stopped by one of the company's stores this week, a set of ceramic dishes was on display.

Before, says Mr. Brunner, “we had succumbed to the customer's willingness to get decadent.” The company's business fell off last August and September “like somebody had turned off the faucet,” Mr. Brunner says. “Probably the most frightening thing as a CEO is to look down the road and not be able to see anything clearly.”

Since then, its inventories have shrunk by nearly one-quarter, and Nasdaq-traded Design Within Reach is talking with investors about going private in coming weeks, even as it works to lure back commercial and residential customers.

Last month, this involved an offer of free shipping, announced with a white catalog cover with one bold word: “FREE.” That's quite an offer when you're talking about furniture. “Free shipping scares the hell out of me,” says Mr. Brunner, “because how do you go back to charging for it?”

Ever so slowly. This month, the company has switched to charging \$49, or 10% of the order, whichever is less, for shipping. Speaking metaphorically, Mr. Brunner suggests this addresses the new frugality of the wealthy: “I think our customers feel they need to get a black coffee instead of a double latte with three shots.”



DWR CEO Ray Brunner has added the \$98 Salt Chair (above) and the \$78 Café Chair (top left), while keeping the \$2,949 Eames Lounge Chair (top right) and the \$2,200 Albert Armchair (right).

Design Within Reach (4)

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Roll over, Rodgers and Hammerstein: Rock stars are Broadway-bound

BY ELLEN GAMERMAN

DRAMA NERDS, MEET the cool kids: A new spate of rockers is arriving on Broadway.

Theater producers are increasingly employing major rock acts to pen original songs for shows. For rock stars, the stage opens artistic and financial possibilities. For producers, rockers give musicals street cred and help the shows lure new fans.

In an effort to blur the line between rock concert and musical theater, producers are seeking grittier singers for their casts and, in one case, planning a mosh pit.

Last week, previews began for "Coraline," staged by the MCC Theater in Manhattan with music by Stephin Merritt of the band The Magnetic Fields. The punk rock trio Green Day is collaborating with director Michael Mayer to stage their 2004 rock-opera album "American Idiot" this September at Berkeley Repertory Theatre in Berkeley, Calif. Serj Tankian, lead vocalist of the rock group System of a Down, is composing songs for "Prometheus," a Greek tragedy with "Hair" director Diane Paulus. And Bob Dylan told last week's Rolling Stone that he expects to write songs with Grateful Dead lyricist Robert Hunter for a future Off-Broadway play.

One of the biggest musicals slated for next year is "Spider-Man Turn Off the Dark," with music and lyrics from U2 rockers Bono and The Edge. Bernard Telsey, the show's casting director, says Bono and The Edge attended a round of callbacks last week, and the team, which includes "Lion King" director Julie Taymor, is searching for powerful



Joan Marcus

singers who don't sound like traditional Broadway performers.

For the show, which begins previews in January, Mr. Telsey has been auditioning young musicians in garage bands, or actors whose voices have a distinct flavor. Among other cities, the show has arranged open casting calls in Seattle and Austin, known for indie music scenes. "We're asking them to sing like [Bono]—show us that range or show us that kind of quality," he says.

Zach Chase, a musician who plays bars around Syracuse, N.Y., waited next to his pink-haired girlfriend for a chance to sing at the recent open casting call for "Spider-Man." The college student came be-

cause he admires Bono and The Edge. "It's sort of raw and edgier," he says. "I thought I'd have a better shot than 'Mamma Mia!'"

Broadway, once a traditional stop for popular musicians, has met with mixed results when bringing rock into the fold. Rockers have created hits—Elton John's "Billy Elliot" is one of Broadway's highest-grossing musicals—but they've also racked up box office disappointments, such as Paul Simon's 1998 show "The Capeman," which closed two months after opening and lost \$11 million.

Recent shows that departed from the classic musical-theater format, such as the Tony-winning

"Spring Awakening," composed by the rock singer Duncan Sheik, have opened the door to more collaboration. Solo artist Tori Amos is writing music and lyrics for a musical about a princess for the National Theatre in London. Jason Sellards (also known as Jake Shears) and John Garden, of the glam pop group Scissor Sisters, are scoring "Tales of the City," based on the book by Armistead Maupin, which could hit Broadway next season.

Green Day frontman Billie Joe Armstrong and the band agreed to work with Mr. Mayer, director of "Spring Awakening," to bring songs from "American Idiot" to the stage. Mr. Mayer is fleshing out the narra-



Rebecca Greenfield for The Wall Street Journal

Clockwise from left: Director Julie Taymor and U2 rockers The Edge and Bono are collaborating on 'Spider-Man Turn Off the Dark'; Stephin Merritt of The Magnetic Fields; Bob Dylan; Serj Tankian of System of a Down.

tive with some songs from the band's coming album, "21st Century Breakdown," and he says the musical, still a work in progress, may include songs that Green Day fans have never heard. The musical does take some liberties with Green Day's songs: Some lyrics are sung as group numbers and others sung back and forth as dialogue.

The story, about three working-class suburban friends who try to redefine their lives in post-9/11 America, came together with regular input from Mr. Armstrong, Mr. Mayer says. When the director hit a snag with the brash song "Letterbomb," assuming that it would go to a powerful male rock voice, Mr. Armstrong suggested that a female character sing it in a different key. The idea worked, Mr. Mayer says. "I thought, 'Oh my God, this guy is so meant to make musicals.'"

The pairing of rock and theater comes at a tense time for both industries. Overall album sales, including CDs and digital downloads, are down 12% this year, according to Nielsen SoundScan. But live performances are a different story, with concert revenues rising in recent years due to an increase in ticket prices. Theater helps musicians reap the benefits of a concert without requiring them to perform.

Artists might make no money from a musical if it bombs, but if it's a hit they can make millions of dollars for years, reaping dividends every time the music is played, whether during a world tour, a cast album, or in a high school musical 20 years from now.

Broadway producers are trying to bring in younger crowds and sell \$120 tickets during a recession. Broadway ticket sales have largely remained flat for the past two seasons, over which period the average age of the theatergoer has stayed at 41.5 years old, according to the Broadway League, a trade association for the theater industry.

But with the right musical, fans will buy the soundtrack. The "Spring Awakening" cast recording sold 187,000 copies. By comparison, the last non-theater-related album

Punk Inc.: Green Day's complex marketing campaign

BY ETHAN SMITH

THE TITLE OF GREEN Day's eighth studio album, "21st Century Breakdown," could easily describe today's recorded music business. In an effort to generate hit sales, the band's record label, Warner Bros. Records, is rolling out an intricately structured global marketing campaign ahead of the album's May 15 release date.

Warner Bros. has enlisted partners ranging from MySpace to Independent Film Channel LLC to Comcast Corp. in a bid to shore up album sales, amid challenges ranging from online piracy to increased competition for consumers' attention. "The setup on records today has far more detail than ever before," says Tom Whalley, chairman of Warner Bros., a unit of Warner Music Group Corp.

In the past, says Mr. Whalley, promoting a big album involved two basic steps: "You took the single to radio, and you made sure albums were in stores."

Today, for a high-priority release like Green Day's album, a



Berkeley Repertory Theatre

label like Warner Bros. may line up dozens of corporate partners around the world to help get the word out.

"It's like three-dimensional chess," says Peter Standish, senior vice president of marketing at Warner Bros. and its sister label, Reprise, which is Green Day's home. Mr. Standish adds that the label vets every potential partnership with the band and its manager, Pat Magnarella. Warner Bros. declined to make the band available for comment. Mr. Magnarella could not be reached.

Adding pressure, the unlikely

success of the band's last album—a miniature rock opera centered on themes of alienation and anomie—vaulted them into the sales stratosphere, with 13 million copies sold world-wide.

"When 'American Idiot' came out, Green Day was looked at as a really powerful three-piece punk trio that had had some big hits," says Reprise President Diarmuid Quinn. "'American Idiot' made them an important rock band."

Like its predecessor, "21st Century Breakdown" is more ambitious in scope and structure than the average pop or punk album. Its 17 songs are organized into three "acts" (sample title: "Charlatans and Saints"). Recurring characters like "Little Gloria" are depicted in long, multi-section songs that push the usual bounds of pop songwriting.

The campaign for "21st Century Breakdown" kicked off April 6, during the NCAA championship basketball game. Warner executives arranged for CBS Sports to play 90 seconds of the first single from the album, "Know Your Enemy," during a montage

that led into the game, intercutting basketball footage with the song's video.

Because Green Day is at least as big internationally as in the U.S., Warner Bros. is pushing the new disc as hard abroad as it is domestically. The label released "Know Your Enemy" to radio stations in numerous markets around the world at the same hour on the same day—April 16, at 5 a.m. ET. The song went on sale on iTunes Stores around the world the same day, to avoid either slighting a given territory or giving potential buyers unnecessary cause to look for the song in unauthorized places like BitTorrent sites.

Despite their efforts, label executives admit they have no idea what to expect when it comes to sales. Total album sales declined almost 36% between 2004, when "American Idiot" came out, and 2008, according to Nielsen SoundScan; they are off a further 12% this year. "My expectation is that it's going to do well," says Mr. Whalley. "Whatever 'well' means these days."



Redferns/Getty Images



Getty Images

released by "Spring Awakening" composer Mr. Sheik, "White Limousine," in 2006, sold 18,000 copies, according to Nielsen SoundScan.

William Morris agent Derek Zasky says more rockers and theater producers are trying to team up. "Musicians are more receptive to hearing these out-of-the-box ideas in areas they've never explored in the past in their careers," he says, adding that producers are coming to the agency with names of singers they'd love to work with.

The idea for a "Coraline" musical came from Mr. Merritt, who wrote a song for the audiobook. The creepy children's tale by Neil Gaiman, also recently released as a 3-D animated film, follows a girl who slips into an alternate universe ruled by a diabolical "Other Mother" who looks like the child's real mom.

"Coraline" director Leigh Silverman praises Mr. Merritt's original score as "dissonant and atonal and impossible to dance to." That fits the cockeyed sensibility of a musical about children that features no kids. The leading role of the 9-year-old girl will be played by 55-year-old actress Jayne Houdyshell.

Mr. Merritt didn't want the songs he wrote for the musical to be sung with microphones (he calls traditional Broadway musicals "a little loud"). The actors who sing his lyrics will not be amplified and will be accompanied for the most part by only a piano, toy piano and prepared piano (where objects like playing cards and rubber bands are stuck in between the strings to distort the sound). "Songwriters who are over 25 run out of things that they want to do in three chords with uncomplicated love songs, and they quickly turn to musical theater so they can have meaningful lyrics that people will actually be listening to," says Mr. Merritt.

In developing "Prometheus," Ms. Paulus says she and book writer-lyricist Steven Sater had Mr. Tankian in mind as the "dream artist" for the project. Set in ancient Greece, it tells the myth of Prometheus, who was tied to a rock as punishment for stealing fire from Zeus and giving it

to mortals. Mr. Sater says he wanted to pair the play, which includes some contemporary context, with music that had force and rage.

System of a Down's Mr. Tankian is new to the theater world. "I've got to say, I'm not a fan of musicals at all," he says. But the chance to work on a show with a political theme—Mr. Tankian is active in human-rights causes—drew his interest. When the team presented the show at a workshop in front of producers, he was anxious about giving up control and putting his music in the performers' hands: "I was more nervous than any show I've ever played," he says.

To promote the musical, Mr. Tankian plans to release songs digitally once a month for at least 10 months leading up to the opening. Ms. Paulus will bring the show to small clubs, watching for reactions. The musical will have its premiere in the 2010-11 season at the American Repertory Theater in Cambridge, Mass., where Ms. Paulus is artistic director. Instead of using a traditional musical theater pit orchestra, she says, a rock band will be integrated into the staging. She also expects to clear out seats so more than 100 audience members can turn the space into a mosh pit.

There are culture clashes at times. Ms. Paulus, accustomed to composers who write out their songs, asked Mr. Tankian how he transcribed music for the band. His answer: He didn't. They learned it by ear. "It was a funny moment," she says.

There are other challenges. Mr. Sheik, now at work on a new musical, "Whisper House," says it was difficult to cast "Spring Awakening" because most singers trying out were over-exuberant belters, not people who sounded natural singing rock. "I just prefer the singers to sound like Björk or Fiona Apple, not Ethel Merman," he says.

Ken Davenport, a New York theater producer, says rock talent doesn't necessarily translate to the stage. "The story they have to tell has to extend over two hours and 45 minutes, not two minutes and 45 seconds. That's the challenge," he says. However, Mr. Davenport says he's excited rockers are helping Broadway make "a claim for mainstream pop culture again."

Mr. Mayer, who will share credit as book writer with Mr. Armstrong on "American Idiot," says collaboration with rockers can be thrilling. The 48-year-old director recently spent a night out with the band, eating at a steakhouse, drinking wine, then hanging out until 3 a.m. as the musicians mixed their new album. Mr. Mayer woke up a few hours later for an early rehearsal with a terrific hangover. "It was one of the great nights of my life," he says.

Rising 'Tide'

Luciana Souza's new album mixes Brazilian rhythms and poetry

Luciana Souza is known for setting to music the works of famous poets, like Pablo Neruda, and for songs that feature the rhythms of her native Brazil. On her new album, "Tide," the singer says, she tried to bring the strands of her work together. "My goal was to make a short concise record that would integrate poetry with the Brazilian flavor and my own songwriting," says Ms. Souza.

—Christopher John Farley



Gabriel Rinaldi

'Love—Poem 65'

Some 20 years ago, one of Ms. Souza's friends gave her a collection of E.E. Cummings's work. She was taken with his "evocative" poetry. On this track, she marries Cummings's verse—such as "for love beginning

means return"—to a jazzy, dreamlike melody. "I can't say what he says the way he says it," Ms. Souza says of Cummings. "So I go to him, and I borrow, and I can be [him] for a second."

'Fire and Wood'

Ms. Souza moved from Brazil to America when she was 18. This gently pulsating pop song is a look back at the party scene in her homeland. "After having lived my life half in Brazil and half here, I miss Brazil, but it's not the Brazil that's there now, it's the Brazil I left," she says.

'Amulet'

In 2008, Ms. Souza performed at a Paul Simon retrospective in New York. Backstage, Mr. Simon played this song for her. "It was so beautiful—I cried," she says. She said she wanted to record it, but he told her that it didn't have lyrics. She decided it didn't need any. In this version, accompanied by acoustic guitar, she croons a gentle haunting melody, without words.

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BY BRIGID GRAUMAN

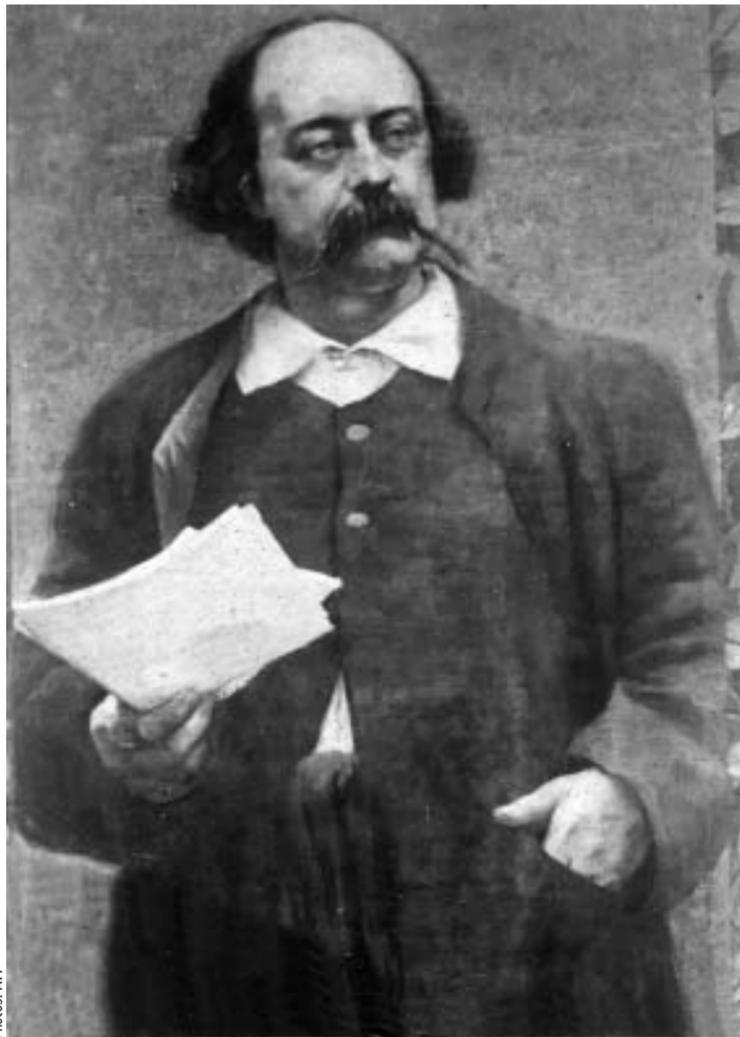
Special to *The Wall Street Journal*
GUSTAVE FLAUBERT IS meeting modern technology.

Madame Bovary's 19th-century story of yearning, frustration, adultery and death in the provincial town of Rouen in Normandy is one of French literature's finest works. Many claim it to be the world's first "modern" novel. The nihilistic, anti-bourgeois Flaubert spent four-and-a-half years writing it, sweating over every word, every sentence, every paragraph. Now literary enthusiasts and experts around the world can dissect and discuss the complete manuscript of the novel on the Web.

Flaubert's obsession with style is legendary, down to his technique of bellowing his sentences out loud to make sure they worked musically, like poetry. His identification with the bored, highly strung, aspirational Emma Bovary is also widely documented. What is less well known is that he kept every one of the novel's many drafts, going so far as to say that he wanted to be buried with them.

Thankfully, they weren't. Instead, Flaubert's favorite niece, Caroline, donated the manuscript to the Municipal Library of Rouen, where Flaubert wrote the book in a house by the Seine. Although neither the Library nor Rouen University with its Gustave Flaubert Centre had any funds, they decided seven years ago to transfer every word of Flaubert's various drafts to the Internet.

Now online (www.bovary.fr), the result is a fascinating look at the author's writing process, revealing all of Flaubert's deletions, corrections and marginalia. It's also one of the Web's most exciting examples of a collaborative literary undertaking. Working over two and a half years, a team of 130 unpaid enthusiasts from 13 countries deciphered every word in Flaubert's sometimes savagely scratched-out handwriting. Since its launch in April, the site has been so swamped by visitors that its counting device crashed.



Photos: AFP



Clockwise from far left: Gustave Flaubert; a page from the original manuscript of 'Madame Bovary'; an illustration of the novel's heroine.

The site's sophisticated navigation system allows visitors to explore Flaubert's 4,500-page manuscript using various entry points, via keywords, metaphors, maps and so on. "It's the first time such a volume of pages has been put online," says project instigator Yvan Leclerc. The work could not have been undertaken, he adds, without a thesis by one of his students that involved reordering the helter-skelter pages.

The acquisition of a high-definition camera, funded by the Ministry of Culture in Paris, was the project's major investment. "Until then,"

says retired French teacher Danielle Girard, who coordinated the transcription work, "only researchers could see the manuscript, and they had to wear white gloves to turn the pages." After the Library had digitized the pages, programmer Jean-Eudes Trouslard set to work—passionate about the links between literature and the Internet, he had created a project for a site about philosopher Roland Barthes.

Most of the transcribers were teachers and students, but they also included a doctor, a social worker, an oil prospector and Mr. Girard's

own cleaning lady. Flaubert was obsessed with concision, the repetition of sounds, the elimination of transitions and direct speech, and the effectiveness of his sexual innuendo. He hated his natural ability to think in comparisons. He said that metaphors attacked him like fleas, and cut three-quarters of them out of his final draft.

"You get used to Flaubert's handwriting after a while," says teacher Nicole Sibires, who transcribed more pages than anyone else, "and the screen is very useful because you can look up close or from an-

other angle. It's very gratifying work because it's like being in Flaubert's thought process."

When the transcriptions were finished, a team of experts read through the work several times to correct errors. "It's a work in progress," says Mr. Girard. "I still fix mistakes, little things like commas and accents."

Flaubert started writing "Madame Bovary" in 1851 at the age of 29 and finally finished it in April 1856, working an average of four to five days on what would turn out as a single printed page. He would get up at 9 a.m., work until lunch at 1 p.m., have a siesta until 4 p.m. and work again until 3 in the morning. He scribbled notes and ideas on the back of pages and in the margins to the left of each page. As he came to the end of the novel, writing became more and more difficult, with Emma's suicide a particularly challenging hurdle.

In January 1857, Flaubert and his publishers were taken to court for "outrage to public morals and religion." Unlike D. H. Lawrence's "Lady Chatterley's Lover" half a century later, where the scandal was the depiction of a love affair between different social classes, with Bovary it was the language, descriptions and situations, the juxtaposition of religious and erotic imagery. "He used much cruder words than in traditional novels," says Mr. Leclerc.

Thanks in part to connections in high places, they were acquitted and the novel was published in two volumes, selling like the proverbial hotcakes in a *succès de scandale*. "I'm sick of La Bovary," Flaubert wrote to a friend. "They bore me with that book. Everything I have done since doesn't exist."

That's not quite true. Rouen's university and library are at it again, planning to transcribe the manuscript to Flaubert's last unfinished novel, "Bouvard et Pécuchet," about two retired clerks who set out to record world culture in a work that heralded Samuel Beckett. By this time, Flaubert's handwriting was more nervous, full of abbreviations, and the team of transcribers will include only the best from the Bovary book. "It's very modern, an anti-novel," says Mr. Leclerc. "It has no plot, no tension, just the ambition to write a work of fiction about man's relationship to knowledge. It's my favorite Flaubert."

Mount Olympus for kids: Fantasy series hits new peak

BY JEFFREY A. TRACHTENBERG

IT PAYS TO KNOW your audience. Former middle-school teacher Rick Riordan is one of the hottest writers on the planet today for the eight-to-12 set, thanks to his understanding that kids are often passionate about Greek mythology.

At the prompting of one of his children as well as his students, Mr. Riordan transformed a bedtime story about the Greek gods and a 12-year-old boy with attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder, and dyslexia—traits shared by Mr. Riordan's oldest son, Haley, now 14—into a series that has sold more than five million copies in the U.S. It debuted in 2005 with "The Lightning Thief."

Now, even as press runs shrink, Mr. Riordan's publisher, Walt Disney's Disney-Hyperion Books, is printing 1.2 million copies of "The Last Olympian," the fifth and final title in Mr. Riordan's "Percy Jackson & the Olympians" series. The book went on sale this week.

Mr. Riordan, who taught sixth, seventh and eighth grade for 15 years, is known to adult mystery fans as the author of the well-received Tres Navarre mystery novels. He also wrote the "The Maze of Bones," the first in the "The 39 Clues" action adventure series now being published by Scholastic.

Mr. Riordan's first book in the Olympians series, "The Lightning Thief," had a modest first printing of 35,000 copies.

Twentieth Century Fox is shooting a movie version of "The Lightning Thief," which it has titled "Percy Jackson." The film, directed by Chris Columbus and starring Uma Thurman as Medusa and Pierce Brosnan as Chiron, is expected to be released next February. Logan Lerman plays Percy.

Mr. Riordan, who lives in San Antonio, says that parents tend to forget that there is a stage kids go through when they find the Greek gods immensely appealing. "It's a phase, like the dinosaur phase,



Mark C. Greenberg for The Wall Street Journal

Author Rick Riordan

when they really speak to us," he says.

In "The Lightning Thief," 12-year-old Percy Jackson, a failure at the many private schools that have kicked him out, discovers that he is a half-blood—the offspring of a mortal and the Greek god Poseidon. He also learns that Mount Olympus is now accessed

by a special elevator at the Empire State Building. The book aims to hook readers with sly satire—for example, the entrance to Hades is in Los Angeles.

Whether Mr. Riordan will attract the parents and grandparents who helped fuel the sales of such writers as J.K. Rowling and Stephenie Meyer is unclear.

Although "The Last Olympian" will end the Percy Jackson saga, the concept will continue. Mr. Riordan has already finished a new book that features some of the characters met early in the series at Camp Half-Blood—a camp on Long Island that can't be seen by mortals where the offspring of humans and the Gods can live without fear. "The hard part of walking away wouldn't have been the business decision, it would have been saying goodbye to these characters forever," he says. "You live with them for years, see them grow, they become like children. You don't want to say goodbye."

Gael García Bernal and Diego Luna of 'Rudo y Cursi.'



Getty Images

Mexican football movie shoots for global success

BY JEFF PEARLMAN

WHILE RELAXING IN their suite on the 19th floor of the Loews Regency Hotel in midtown Manhattan recently, Diego Luna and Gael García Bernal, stars of the new film "Rudo y Cursi" ("Tough and Corny"), tried to explain a relationship that's helped them emerge as two of the standard-bearers of Mexican cinema.

"Let's say I am Kobe," said Mr. Luna, 29 years old. "Or no—let's say that we are Michael Jordan and Scottie Pippen of the Chicago Bulls. I'm the Scottie Pippen, and my friend Gael is ..."

"Michael Jordan?" injected the 30-year-old Mr. García Bernal, smiling widely. "I am Michael Jordan? Really? I like that very much. Thank you."

The two actors laughed aloud, tickled by the ludicrousness of the comparison. Smallish men, neither need worry about being confused for Mr. Jordan or Mr. Pippen. But with the release of "Rudo y Cursi," Mr. Luna and Mr. García Bernal are hoping to take hold of something even more elusive than duel stardom in the National Basketball Association: building on a successful cinematic partnership that started in 2001 with the release of "Y tu mamá también."

The story of two quirky soccer-absorbed brothers who are plucked from their impoverished lives working on a banana plantation to play professional futbol (only to find that dreams rarely live up to the hype), "Rudo y Cursi" represents, in many ways, the flowering of recent Mexican cinema, and how it has managed to push its way into the global mainstream.

Eight years ago, when Mr. Luna and Mr. García Bernal first teamed up to star in the Oscar-nominated

"Y tu mamá también," expectations of international grandeur were low. "To be honest, I was very happy talking up that movie because it was a chance to travel and experience the world," said Mr. Luna, who might be most recognizable to audiences from his recent role as Jack Lira, Sean Penn's unstable love interest in "Milk." "I really didn't know what to expect."

Then the seemingly out-of-nowhere film scored the brothers Carlos and Alfonso Cuarón an Oscar nomination for best original screenplay. "You hope for the best," said Mr. García Bernal. "But to say we anticipated that type of reaction ... no. We did not."

Now, thanks to an impressive run of Mexican films, the outlook has changed. In Mexico, the period since the early 1990s has been unofficially labeled the Era of the Nuevo Cine Mexicano (New Mexican Cinema); it includes "Like Water for Chocolate" in 1992, "Cronos" in 1993 and "Amores perros" in 2000.

For "Rudo y Cursi," the lead actors were reunited with the Cuaróns, who wrote and directed the film. This time, however, Messrs. Luna and García Bernal play diametrically opposite roles.

Mr. Luna's Beto is a selfish, pig-headed gambling addict who leaves his wife and son behind for the promise of soccer stardom. Tato, Mr. García Bernal's character, is the simpleton—a vocally challenged accordion hack who desperately yearns to turn his on-field success into musical stardom.

The characters clash throughout the film, but in real life, Messrs. Luna and García Bernal are close friends and business partners. In 2005, they teamed up with producer Pablo Cruz to form Canana, a production company. It has released three films (with a fourth, "Voy a explotar," currently in postproduction) and financed the Ambulante documentary film festival that travels around Mexico.

"We work as a team," said Mr. García Bernal. "The trust we have with one another is very real, and very valuable. Our goal isn't to make a great Mexican movie, although that would certainly be nice for both of us."

"No," Mr. García Bernal added. "Our goal is to make a great movie—period."



Sony Pictures Classics

A scene from 'Rudo y Cursi.'

From classics to comics

The Tony winner Liev Schreiber on his villainous role in the new 'X-Men' film

In "X-Men Origins: Wolverine," the fourth installment in Fox's Marvel Comics-based franchise, Liev Schreiber packed on pounds of muscle and some serious mutton-chops to play Victor Creed, aka Sabretooth, the nemesis (and brother) of Hugh Jackman's titular mutant. (See review, page W10.) Known primarily for his dramatic work ("Defiance"), the 41-year-old actor was pleasantly surprised by the similarities between the huge action film and his background in classical theater. "The story is so epic and the characters are so mythical—it reminds me a lot of Shakespeare," he says. "You're free to do really broad characterizations." Mr. Schreiber spoke about key aspects of the movie.

—Michelle Kung



Twentieth Century Fox

The Action before 'Action!'

To prepare for his role as Sabretooth, Mr. Schreiber trained for three months prior to principal photography, following a strict regimen of weightlifting, mixed martial arts, and eating a high-protein diet. "Initially, I was just doing it for the physique of the character because I was reading how everyone wanted him to be big," he says. "Then of course, once I got to the set and started shooting the film, I realized I would not have survived the shoot had I not been training. It was easily the most physical shoot of my career."

The Jackman Factor

Mr. Schreiber cites Mr. Jackman—whom he befriended while shooting the 2001 romantic comedy "Kate & Leopold"—as the primary reason he chose to do the film. "I was attracted to the sibling rivalry between my character and Hugh's," says the actor. "The way I saw it, these guys were two sides of the same coin and Victor was the embodiment of Logan's darker side, which he's constantly at battle with. It's a metaphor for that battle we're always fighting within ourselves against our darker nature."

Fight Club

Mr. Schreiber says that unlike Mr. Jackman, he only had one scene that needed to be performed in front of a green screen—a fight on top of a cooling tower. "It wasn't that bad," he says. "I have experience working in front of green screens because I did 'Sphere' and a bunch of other films that required them, so I'm used to it." Because of the heavy number of effects shots required, it was the only scene that he was completely surprised by when seeing the final cut of the film.

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By Lauren A.E. Schuker and Peter Sanders

THE NEW "STAR TREK" movie, opening this week, boldly goes where no "Trek" film has gone before: back to the beginning. It's set in the decades before the start of the TV series, returning to the young adulthood of space adventurers James T. Kirk and Spock and their first voyage on the Starship Enterprise.

Some of Hollywood's biggest franchises, including "X-Men" and "Terminator," are taking a similar back-to-the-future approach this summer. To refresh familiar film sagas and grab new audiences, studios are increasingly offering up stories that trace the early years of popular characters and tell epics from their beginnings.

J.J. Abrams, the 42-year-old director behind the new "Star Trek," says his movie "was not made for fans" of the original TV series, which ran from 1966-1969. Mr. Abrams, who created the TV series "Lost" and directed the big-screen hit "Mission: Impossible III," says his film "was made for future fans of the franchise and for people who just want to go on a great thrill ride."

The team behind the roughly \$130-\$150 million Paramount movie wanted to give "Star Trek" a new twist while avoiding the mistakes of other prequels, whose storylines can seem predictable as they head toward conclusions that previous movies have already foretold. "We didn't want to fall into the trap of the first three 'Star Wars' movies, and just make a straight-up reboot, where you know how it ends," says Roberto Orci, who wrote the film with Alex Kurtzman.

Through a plot device involving time travel, "Star Trek" wipes clean the history of

the franchise to create an alternative universe which re-imagines the early life of Kirk (played by Chris Pine, pictured above right) and his time at Starfleet Academy, where he encounters Spock (Zachary Quinto of TV's "Heroes," above left), and later sets off on the Enterprise. By going back in time, the film effectively changes the course of "Trek" history, so anything can happen (see Joe Morgenstern's review on page W10).

Hollywood executives say they are turning toward familiar fare, such as the recent box-office hit sequel "Fast & Furious," because that's what moviegoers seek in today's volatile times. Audiences, however, can tire of sequels. (The new "Star Trek," which doesn't have a number in its title, is the 11th movie in the series). Prequels and reboots, which have been around for years, allow filmmakers to re-imagine old material and start fresh—while retaining old fans.

In addition to "Star Trek," the coming months will feature "X-Men Origins: Wolverine," which stars Hugh Jackman and focuses on Wolverine's formative years; it opened a week ago. Warner Bros. is also re-launching one of Hollywood's most treasured franchises with "Terminator Salvation," which stars Christian Bale and doesn't feature the stars of the previous movies in major roles. Universal Pictures is turning to Will Ferrell to revive "Land of the Lost," a 1970s TV series about a family that goes missing in the prehistoric age, and "G.I. Joe: The Rise of Cobra" will attempt to introduce a new set of military heroes.

A hot streak at the box office in recent months has bolstered the hopes of Hollywood that these movies will help make this summer a profitable one. It will certainly be a competi-

tive season, says Jeff Blake, vice chairman at Sony Pictures Entertainment. "You have to have a picture that you can open with enough strength," says Mr. Blake.

Re-imagining a series as storied as "Star Trek" presents challenges. Rod Roddenberry, a producer who is the son of the late "Star Trek" creator Gene Roddenberry, has helped promote the franchise. But he has not aided the film, even though he says he had an opportunity to read an early draft of the script. "With any reboot, so to speak, you are going to create two opposing views," he says. "People either say you should do it a new way or stick with the original. It's a scary prospect...But J.J. is a fantastic director from what I've seen and I have no doubt he will do 'Trek' justice."

Mr. Abrams didn't shy away from change. He had his crew update much of the technology on display in the 43-year-old sci-fi series, including the communicators, which resemble modern-day cellphones. The filmmakers aimed to modernize "Star Trek" without losing the franchise's identity, says Mr. Abrams. "You have to maintain certain tenants of what makes 'Trek' 'Trek,'" he says, "so while we've seen technology advance, the silhouette of the Enterprise shouldn't change so dramatically that a fan can't recognize it."

The film makes use of over 1,000 special-effect shots, many more than were used in earlier "Trek" films. But Mr. Abrams's use of those effects may draw ire from many "Trek" fans who feel that the core of the franchise lies in its characters and vision of a cooperative future, rather than computer wizardry.

"It all started when the fans kept hearing things that made them unhappy, and then J.J. was silly enough to announce that he wasn't a

'Star Trek' fan and really preferred 'Star Wars,'" says Jonathan Lane, chief of communications for STARFLEET, an international Star Trek fan association with roughly 3,500 members. "We were worried that J.J. was taking the film in the George Lucas direction, making it all about digital effects," he says. "So we were really biting our collective fingernails at that point."

Fans didn't like how parts of the Enterprise looked in early screen shots, he adds, and many thought the bridge resembled the inside of an Apple store. And although Leonard Nimoy, who originated the role of Spock, has a key role in the movie as an older version of his character, some Trekkies were upset that actor William Shatner, the original Kirk, wasn't given a part as well.

This is hardly the first time controversies have arisen over a "Trek" film, nor is Mr. Abrams the first director to attempt to re-launch the franchise. The TV show "Enterprise" (2001-2005) was a prequel and many "Trek" episodes and some of the earlier 10 "Trek" films played around with origin stories and alternative histories.

As more footage has been released, fan reaction has become increasingly positive and enthusiastic about Mr. Abrams's vision. "When we started seeing more of the movie, we realized that the writing and acting actually didn't look all that bad—the actors seemed to do a great job reprising these roles and giving them flair," says Mr. Lane. He says that of the thousands of "Trekkies" he knows, only one is boycotting the movie.

"The truth that we've accepted," says Mr. Lane, "is if 'Star Trek' is going to continue, then we do need to find fans in the next generation."

From 'Star Trek' to 'X-Men,' studios are betting on prequels to reboot the summer blockbuster season



Night at the Museum: Battle of the Smithsonian

May 20-22

The Pitch: Following the blockbuster box-office success of 2006's holiday release of "Night at the Museum" (\$574 million world-wide), a second installment was almost a foregone conclusion. Most of the original cast is back for a second go as historical characters who come to life and hassle Ben Stiller's security guard character, this time at the Smithsonian Institution. Director Shawn Levy says that he, Mr. Stiller and the writers spent a year honing the screenplay to ensure "we'd have an even better movie if we were going to proceed with a second one." New characters, including Amelia Earhart (played by Amy Adams) and Gen. George Armstrong Custer (Bill Hader) are added to the mix; parts of the movie were filmed inside the National Air and Space Museum and at other locales around Washington.

The Prospects: Twentieth Century Fox is hoping to erase the bad memories of the studio's poor box-office performance last summer.



Ice Age: Dawn of the Dinosaurs

July 1-3

The Pitch: Fox rolls out a third installment of its "Ice Age" cartoon franchise with Manny the Mammoth and his friends, this time doing battle with dinosaurs in a secret underground world. Members of the original cast are back, including the voices of Ray Romano, Denis Leary and Queen Latifah—and British actor Simon Pegg is introduced as a one-eyed weasel who hunts dinosaurs. "When we started the first 'Ice Age,' due to our experience and budget, the whole film looked sparse," says co-director Mike Thurmeier. "But over the years, we've learned how to model fur much better and populate the world with much denser foliage and everything across the board just rises."

The Prospects: The first two "Ice Age" films grossed more than \$1 billion combined at the global box office. This installment is Fox's first 3-D feature film, which the studio hopes will be another hook to draw in young moviegoers.

10 BLOCKBUSTER HOPEFULS

The season's most-anticipated films feature Ice Age-era woolly mammoths, Depression-era bank robbers and futuristic killer robots.



Terminator Salvation

June 3-5

The Pitch: Christian Bale stars in this prequel, which traces the mythic beginnings of the series when John Connor first becomes the rebel leader who saves the day when a war breaks out between man and machine. "Terminator Salvation" executive producer Jeanne Allgood says that she and director McG carved the story of the new movie out of what director James Cameron hadn't done in "The Terminator" and "Terminator 2." "The one thing that Jim didn't do in those two movies was a future war, so that's what we did," she says.

The Prospects: The third "Terminator" film grossed a less-than-expected \$150 million at the U.S. box office. But Ms. Allgood says the fourth installment is much more like the first two blockbusters directed by Mr. Cameron.



Public Enemies

July-September

The Pitch: Set during the Depression, this Universal film follows the story of bank robber John Dillinger (played by Johnny Depp) and his pursuer, FBI agent Melvin Purvis (Christian Bale). Mr. Dillinger became "a folk hero" to the American public who had little sympathy for the banks that had sent the country into an economic depression, says Michael Mann, who directed the movie.

The Prospects: The film strives for authenticity, which should help it attract audiences interested in historical fare. Mr. Mann even shot a scene in which Mr. Dillinger escapes from a jail in Crown Point, Ind. in the real cell where the robber was once held. "When you are literally putting your hand on the bar that John Dillinger put his hand on, well, the place begins to talk to you," says Mr. Mann.

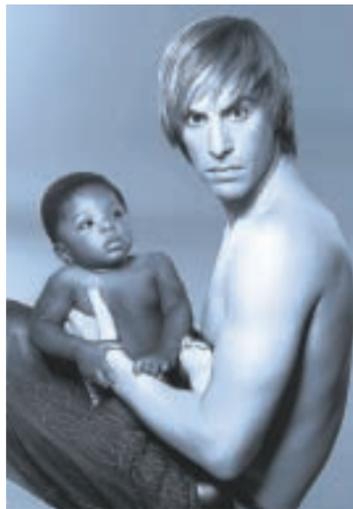


Up

June-October

The Pitch: In Pixar's latest animated offering, a grouchy old man ties thousands of balloons to his house and floats away to South America, where he embarks upon adventures with a boy who has stowed away on his porch. Director Pete Docter, who also directed 2001's "Monsters, Inc.," says that he and co-director Bob Peterson hatched the idea for the film about five years ago. Ed Asner provides the voice of the cranky lead character and Jordan Nagai, who plays the pesky stowaway, was discovered by casting executives at an open call in Los Angeles.

The Prospects: "Up" is Pixar's first movie in 3-D and it's always hard to handicap the company's movies. Do young fans want to see a film about a cranky old man? Pixar's "WALL•E" had an odd premise and limited dialogue—but it did \$535 million at the global box office last year, a certified blockbuster.



Brüno

July 8-10

The Pitch: Following the breakout success of "Borat," his comedy about a Kazakh journalist, Sacha Baron Cohen returns to the big screen with another character. "Brüno," a flamboyant gay fashionista who made earlier appearances on "Da Ali G Show," may turn out to be even more provocative than "Borat." In the film, Brüno—who claims to be from an Austrian television show—confronts unwitting Americans about subjects ranging from fashion to homosexuality.

The Prospects: After "Borat" hit theaters in 2006, it went on to earn more than \$260 million at the global box office, so Universal Pictures paid a hefty \$42.5 million to acquire the rights to the follow-up film. But since then, the studio has stayed mum, marketing "Brüno" quietly in hopes of maintaining its cult appeal rather than labeling it as a big studio movie.

Transformers: Revenge of the Fallen

June 24-26

The Pitch: Shia LaBeouf returns as Sam Witwicky in this sequel to 2007's "Transformers," the hit inspired by Hasbro toys and directed by Michael Bay. A human caught in the war between intelligent fighting robots, Mr. LaBeouf's character grows up and goes off to college in this follow-up film.

The Prospects: The first "Transformers," executive-produced by Steven Spielberg, grossed \$708 million world-wide. The sequel features new characters and settings such as the pyramids in Egypt. "Michael really felt like he wanted to grow the experience of the movie and plot a larger adventure," says producer Lorenzo di Bonaventura.



Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince

July 15-17

The Pitch: It's all about teen romance at Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry. In his sixth year, Harry begins to fall for his best friend's little sister. "It's much more focused on the politics of romance and its complications rather than on action," says director David Yates.

The Prospects: Warner Bros. delayed the film's release from last November to this summer, and some fans seem to have already turned their excitement toward the seventh installment of the franchise, "Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows: Part I," which is currently shooting and hits theaters next year. "The delay was frustrating, but we didn't have any control over it," says Mr. Yates, who is also directing "Deathly Hallows."



Taking of Pelham 1 2 3

July-September

The Pitch: Director Tony Scott recruited John Travolta as the villain and Denzel Washington as the heroic transit-authority official to update the classic 1974 New York City subway hostage drama that starred Robert Shaw and Walter Matthau in the same roles. Mr. Scott updated the story from a straight-ahead heist drama to a more complex tale that pits the two men against each other in a battle of wits and will. To heighten the tension, Messrs. Travolta and Washington never crossed paths during the filming until the time when the script called for their characters to actually meet.

The Prospects: "Taking" has two weekends at the box office all to itself before facing serious competition.



Funny People

July-September

The Pitch: Judd Apatow sits in the director's chair a third time with "Funny People," but this time with a more melancholic premise than he's had before. The Universal film tells a bittersweet tale about a stand-up comic (Adam Sandler) who learns he has a serious health condition and forges a friendship with a young performer (Seth Rogen) who becomes his confidant.

The Prospects: Mr. Apatow's last two directing projects, "The 40-Year-Old Virgin" and "Knocked Up," each took in more than \$150 million at the world-wide box office. But those films dealt with sex and unplanned pregnancy, not death. "I tried to make a drama that is funnier than my comedies," he explains. "The first movie was about sex and relationships, the next was about relationships and children, and this one is about relationships and death," says Mr. Apatow. "I'm basically out of topics."

'Star Trek' boldly enters new phase

J.J. Abrams's tale of the young Kirk and Spock brings franchise back to life; 'X-Men' looks back, too, but shouldn't have

ALL TOO OFTEN the trailer is better than the movie, but not, it turns out, in the case of "Star Trek." If you want to know why this huge production will be a huge success—and why it deserves to be—you can find the answer in the terrific trailer that's been showing for many months. It's in the first sequence, when a

Film

JOE MORGENSTERN

classic red Corvette hurtles down a dirt road, followed by a robocop in a 23rd-century hover-car. The Corvette goes over a cliff, but not before the pre-teen driver bails out, claws his way back up to level ground and, responding to the cop's demand for an ID, says, "My name is James Tiberius Kirk."

"Star Trek" goes back to the legend's roots with a boldness that brings a fatigued franchise back to life. It feels exactly right that Captain Kirk should have been a rebellious Iowa farm boy with a passion for antique cars, a gnawing sense of purpose and a penchant, as the new movie soon reveals, for barroom brawls. ("The only genius-level repeat offender in the Middle West," someone calls him.)

It also feels right that he's played by an appealing young actor, Chris Pine, who bears a more-than-passing facial resemblance to Montgomery Clift.

There is going back, and there is going back. "X-Men" went back to the roots of Wolverine's distress and, finding nothing new, became a crashing, clanking bore. (Though don't tell that to the millions of fans who went to see it.) "Star Trek," which was elegantly directed by J.J. Abrams, goes back with the express purpose of providing delight, and despite inevitable lapses it delivers the goods, starting with interstellar action at supernova intensity and a splendid Romulan villain, Captain Nero, who's played by Eric Bana.

Each one of the now-iconic members of the U.S.S. Enterprise's crew gets rising-star treatment. That includes, of course, a young Scotty, played with irresistible verve by Simon Pegg; an extremely young Ensign Chekov (Anton Yeltsin) and an extremely alluring Uhura (Zoë Saldana), along with Karl Urban as "Bones" McCoy (artfully prefiguring the late DeForest Kelley), John Cho as Sulu and Bruce Greenwood in the smallish but significant role of Pike, the Enterprise's first captain. Yet the main source of delight involves the evolution of First Officer Spock, and the tangled roots of his fraught relationship with Jim Kirk.

The young Spock is played by Zachary Quinto, who fulfills the potential of canny casting and adroit writing. Far from remaining confined by the steely Vulcan logic that came to dominate Spock's personality, the script, by Roberto Orci and Alex Kurtzman, revels in Spock's all-too-human foibles—the grief he harbors for the human mother he lost (she's played by Wivona Ryder, while Ben Cross plays his Vulcan father), the anger that



Paramount Pictures

fuels his sometimes violent rivalry with Kirk, the passion he feels for Uhura (who says ever so sexy, as he's taking his leave of her, "I'll be monitoring your frequency.")

That evolution doesn't stop at Spock's youth. In the best of the production's bold strokes, Leonard Nimoy closes the circle by giving a lovely, layered performance in the role he said he'd never play again. Thanks to the intricate manipulation of time (which I found barely fathomable) the elder Spock, yclept Spock Prime, does not merely come on board, but serves the movie as its heart and soul.

In a marketing move that's shrewd and amusing in equal parts, the opening of "Star Trek" will be followed by the DVD re-release of "Galaxy Quest," an inspired "Star Trek" parody. The plot of the 1999 feature film turns on a cosmic joke. A desperate band of Thermians, the last survivors of a distant planet, come to Earth seeking help from the washed-up actors of a worn-out TV series called "Galaxy Quest." They've been watching the series from its inception, and have mistaken the tacky episodes for historical texts.

From the perspective of pop culture, though, it's not a mistake at all. For generations of Earthlings, and not just the Trekkies among us, all those endless iterations of "Star Trek"—tacky or taut, stylish or silly—have become personal history.



Warner Bros.



Twentieth Century Fox

That's why it's so stirring to see old Spock on the same big screen as the ardent kids who grew up to be his peers. We've traveled light-years in their company.

'X-Men Origins: Wolverine'

Although most of "X-Men Origins: Wolverine," is grindingly unpleasant, one passage is particularly so. That's when some not-nice people working for a Defense Department version of Dr. Frankenstein drill holes into the skull of the endlessly suffering hero, Logan, who is played by Hugh Jackman.

It's part of a procedure that will suffuse Logan's skeleton with

Above, Captain Kirk and members of his crew on the bridge of the Starship Enterprise in 'Star Trek'; left, Hugh Jackman in 'X-Men Origins: Wolverine'; below, Matthew McConaughey and Jennifer Garner in 'Ghosts of Girlfriends Past.'

adamantium, a matchlessly hard fantasy alloy, and turn him into the indestructible warrior subsequently known as Wolverine. The movie drills itself into our skulls, which are all too vulnerable to such an assault, though I must say my brain glazed over and my heart turned adamantine while the stupidities of this action thriller played themselves out.

As its title suggests, the fourth installment of the X-Men franchise explores the events that made Wolverine the tortured mutant he became, as well as the genesis of the mutant team that gave the Marvel Comics series its name. The first part of the exploration is fast, febrile and Forrest-Gumpish, what with Logan and his fang-flashing brother Victor, aka Sabretooth (Liev Schreiber) fighting for their country—America, not Transylvania—through a century of savage conflicts from the Civil War through Vietnam.

Once that's out of the way, though, Logan and Victor fall to fighting one another—the one with steel claws, the other with fingernails that might have left Howard Hughes feeling well-groomed—in a series of confrontations that keep coming down to cutlery; think of knives vs. sharpeners and you'll have some sense of the film's emotional resonance.

Any X-Men movie must deal with anger management. Logan is conflicted to the core, and can't always control, let alone comprehend, the behavior that announces itself with the knucklesome eruption of his blades. (What's also hard to comprehend is the shoddiness of the computer-generated effects.) Victor, on the other lethal hand, is pure malevolence, and Mr. Schreiber, with Shakespeare

all too clearly in mind, won't let us forget it. But the direction, by Gavin Hood (he did "Tsotsi" and "Rendition") from a script by David Benioff and Skip Woods, is a case study in mismanagement: of anger, rage, demonic howls that grow into howlers, Olympian camera angles and, above all else, the mismanagement of an unusually personable star.

Hugh Jackman makes what he can of what he's got. Every now and then there's a glimpse of his native charm, and a reasonable facsimile of human feeling is exchanged between Logan and the tragic heroine Kayla Silverfox (Lynn Collins, who once played Ophelia on stage to Liev Schreiber's Hamlet). Danny Huston does right—i.e., intriguingly wrong—by the malevolent Dr. Frankenstein figure, Stryker. Fans of the franchise will take pleasure in the mutant turnout—lots of them are in attendance, though they don't have much to do—and it goes without saying, though I'll say it to be fair, that the action is elaborate, and reasonably effective in its chilly way.

Still, how much can anyone care about two stupendously testy siblings slicing and dicing each other in repetitive battles with no decisive outcome? "Wolverine" may have been made for teenage boys, but they get bored too, don't they? Or don't they?

'Ghosts of Girlfriends Past'

Another question. Does anyone love to watch Matthew McConaughey act? As in "I can't wait to see that movie because Matthew McConaughey is in it"? He enjoys himself, which is a step in the right direction, and he keeps getting work, which is admirable in this or any other economy. If his pleasure seems unearned, it's at least appropriate to the character he plays in "Ghosts of Girlfriends Past," a bizarre conflation of chick flick and "A Christmas Carol."

Connor Mead, a photographer and an insufferable womanizer, gets his comeuppance when the ghost of his playboy grandfather—Michael Douglas, doing a grisly riff on Damon Runyon—forces him to confront his misogynist past, his heartless present and . . . you get the idea. Jennifer Garner brings a sweet simplicity to the role of Connor's childhood sweetheart, though who knows what she's doing in junk like this. And only the filmmakers know, if anyone does, why a movie set in Newport, R.I., during the Christmas season is full of people with deep tans.

WSJ.com

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The sky's no longer the limit

By J.S. MARCUS
Special to *The Wall Street Journal*
Rotterdam

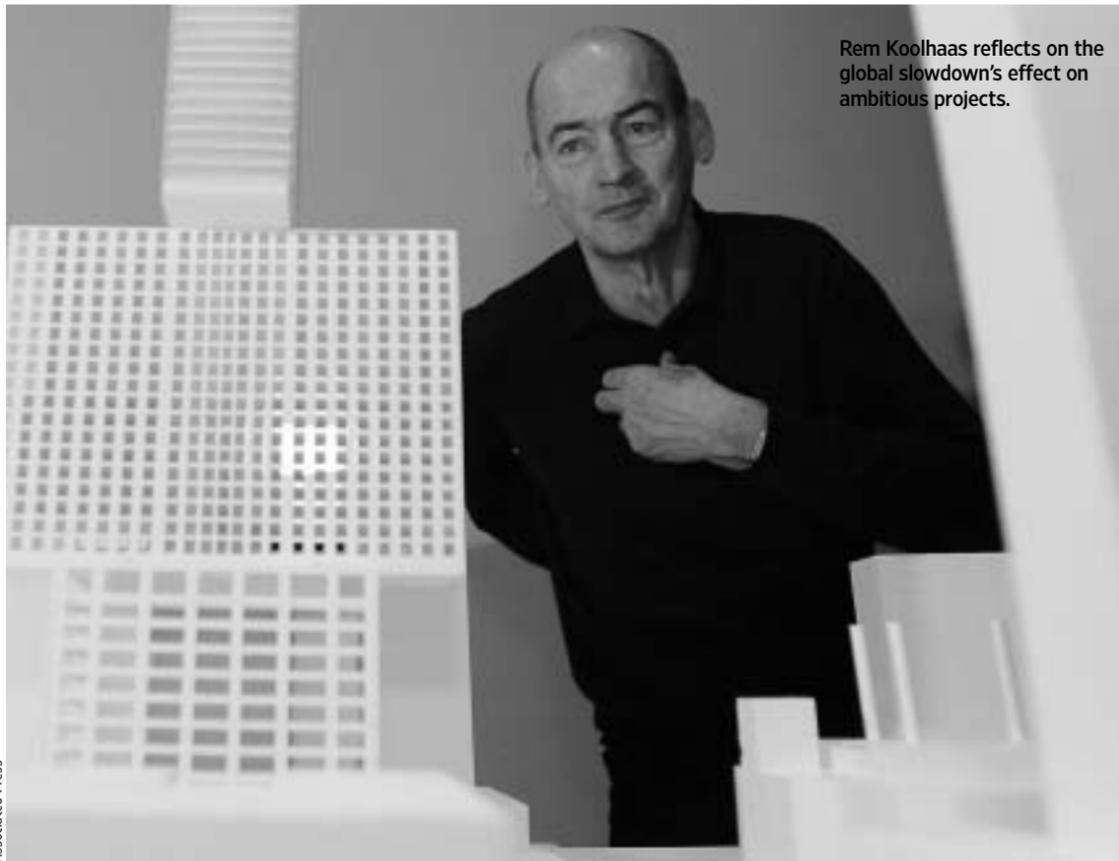
REM KOOLHAAS'S massive, doughnut-shaped CCTV building in Beijing survived unscathed in February when a fire engulfed a nearby tower belonging to the same complex. But the event signaled the ending of an architectural era.

"I don't even know about the word 'downturn,'" said Mr. Koolhaas in his office in Rotterdam recently, reflecting on the global economic slowdown that has stopped the architecture world dead in its tracks. "It seems simply the end to a period."

All around the world, major architectural projects are under threat. In November, construction stopped on the Russia Tower, a 600-meter-high Moscow building designed by the London firm Norman Foster & Partners. Meanwhile, another Norman Foster Moscow project, called Crystal Island, featuring a 450-meter-high, funnel-shaped skyscraper, has also been put on hold.

A few weeks after the Beijing fire, Harvard University, which has seen the value of its endowment shrink dramatically over the past year, announced that it was slowing down construction of its new billion-dollar science campus, meant to be a showpiece of sustainable architecture.

Mr. Koolhaas's firm, the Office for Metropolitan Architecture, is moving forward with its planned projects, including a theater complex in Taipei, a library in Qatar and new buildings in Mr. Koolhaas's native Holland. But the firm, with offices in Rotterdam, Beijing and New York, has been forced to cut back its staff from a high point of 270 employees in summer 2008 to 220. While OMA has not seen any projects actually canceled, Mr. Koolhaas said, "There are a number of things on hold."



Rem Koolhaas reflects on the global slowdown's effect on ambitious projects.

Associated Press

The CCTV skyscraper marked the climax to a world-wide boom in iconic architectural projects that commenced in 1997, with the opening of Frank Gehry's shimmering Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao. One of several innovative buildings designed by Western architects for the Beijing Olympics in 2008, Mr. Koolhaas's headquarters for China Central Television quickly became a signature of the Beijing skyline. Now, with a global recession threatening future architectural projects of all kinds, the building seems like a souvenir of days gone by, even though it has yet to be occupied.

"A reappraisal is going on in the architecture world," said Cecil Bal-

mond, the London-based engineer who has worked closely with Mr. Koolhaas for over two decades. "In a time of plenty, there is a bravado and a push to make more and more sensational [architectural] statements." In the current climate, he noted, "a very spectacular iconic project might now get the pause button."

On Feb. 9, the Beijing sky was lit up by a smaller adjacent tower in the CCTV complex, as its flames dwarfed everything around it. Mr. Koolhaas was in Milan that night when he got the news. "I took the plane right away and I was there the next day," he said.

According to CCTV, the fire was

caused by an unauthorized fireworks display, believed to have been organized on the site to celebrate the end of the Lunar New Year holiday. Images of the blaze were quickly distributed by Beijing citizens, who captured the fire on their cellphones and camcorders. Those initial images of the blaze suggested that the tower might be nearly destroyed. However, said Mr. Koolhaas, "they are simply rebuilding it as it was, because there was no structural damage." As a result of the fire, one firefighter died and several others were reportedly injured.

OMA said the complex's main building—Mr. Koolhaas's gravity-defying, doughnut-shaped structure—

wasn't damaged. According to Bas Legendijk, an OMA spokesman, the building, which was originally scheduled to open this month, may be occupied beginning in late 2009.

Mr. Koolhaas said that the "inter-connectivity" of the building's rounded form was meant to foster "an intimacy between all the parties" at CCTV. He also believes that the building, visible for miles, has had an impact on Chinese society. "It introduced a level of daring that had not been shown in China," he said. "I am very convinced that it had a positive effect on Chinese culture in general. It pushed the edge of possibility."

Now 64, Mr. Koolhaas, who won the Pritzker Prize in 2000, was known during the first few decades of his working life for his writing and his unrealized projects as well as his finished buildings. Starting in late 2003, in what has proven to be a high point of his career, he finished three remarkable and very different buildings in three completely different urban settings, in 18 months: the Seattle Public Library; the Casa da Música concert hall in Porto, Portugal; and the Dutch Embassy in Berlin.

Mr. Koolhaas is sanguine about what the future holds for OMA. He has seen periods of tightening in the past: His firm shrunk down to a few dozen employees in the 1990s after a controversial commission for a public museum in Karlsruhe, Germany, was canceled by the city parliament at the last minute.

For now, he said, coming projects such as the Taipei Performing Arts Center and buildings in Rome and Copenhagen—scheduled to start reaching completion in about two years—haven't been affected by the recession.

"Architecture is in such a permanent state of flux and turmoil that we have no stability anyway," he said. "That is why we are very good at improvisation."

Test of time: Watch auctions to measure the market

A NUMBER OF AUCTIONS this month will show how well the market for collectible watches can keep on ticking in troubled times.

Antiquorum kicks off the Geneva auctions this weekend (May 9 and 10) followed by Sothe-

Collecting

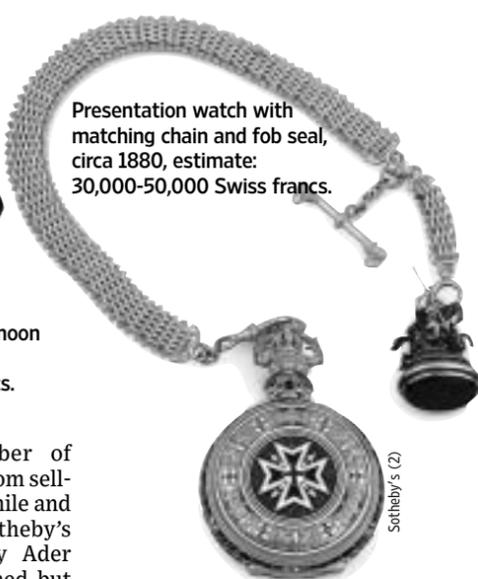
MARGARET STUDER

by's on May 10 and Christie's on May 11. Watch specialist Aurel Bacs of Christie's says the auction house is hoping to balance the "demanding expectations of buyers and sellers" in the current economic climate by holding a smaller auction: around 300 lots compared to around 400 to 500 at Christie's sales from 2005 to 2008.

Sotheby's 169-lot Sunday sale features a number of elaborate historical timepieces, including a flamboyant gold, enamel and diamond watch with matching chain and fob seal from circa 1880 (estimate: 30,000-50,000 Swiss francs).



A Patek Philippe watch with moon phases, circa 1981; estimate: 320,000-400,000 Swiss francs.



Presentation watch with matching chain and fob seal, circa 1880, estimate: 30,000-50,000 Swiss francs.



A Patek Philippe aviator watch from 1936; estimate: 300,000-500,000 Swiss francs.

There are also a number of post-2000 wristwatches from sellers who wear them for a while and then want a change. Sotheby's watch specialist Geoffroy Ader says these previously owned but relatively new watches are "just like the car market" in that buyers might pick them up for half their price in the shops.

Patek Philippe watches usually take the top spots at these auctions. "Patek Philippe produces watches with such a wide variety

of complications," says Mr. Ader. "And, when buyers spend a million, they want to know where the watch came from. Patek Philippe has a great archive."

Most of the star watch estimates at this weekend's Antiquorum sale are Patek Philippe, led by

a gold, split-seconds chronograph watch with luminous dial produced in 1928 (estimate: 800,000-1.2 million Swiss francs). Among Christie's Patek Philippe offerings will be an oversized aviator's wristwatch with numerous functions from 1936 (estimate:

300,000-500,000 Swiss francs); and what Christie's describes as "a collector's dream come true" in a pink gold, very rare 1960s version of the first perpetual calendar wristwatch introduced to the market in 1950 (estimate: 1 million-1.5 million Swiss francs). Sotheby's has a Patek Philippe rare perpetual calendar wristwatch with moon phases from circa 1981 (estimate: 320,000-400,000 Swiss francs).

In London on May 19, Bonhams will hold one of its regular watch sales. The last sale on March 11 was 97% sold by lot. "We had standing room only," says Bonhams watch specialist Paul Maudsley. At that sale, items were estimated at £300-£2,500. Mr. Maudsley has high hopes for a similar result at the coming sale. "We have a lot more European buyers because of the pound's weakness," he says.

Mr. Maudsley, however, has his sights on Bonhams sale of higher-priced fine watches in London on June 10. They include a Rolex stainless steel British Royal Navy military issue divers watch from 1975 (estimate: £30,000-£50,000).

White belts and shoes are back

ONE THING I THOUGHT I knew for sure, after the sartorial disaster that was the 1970s, was that white shoes and white belts—a combo sometimes known as the “full Cleveland”—were gone forever. (The “half Cleveland” was just the belt or the shoes.) But now they’re back, worn not by dweebs and disco re-enactors, but by the hippest young players on the PGA Tour: Camilo Villegas, Adam Scott, Sergio Garcia, Anthony Kim and Geoff Ogilvy.

For a baby boomer like myself, this is a disturbing development. When I took up the game in the

hideous clothes lived on, but only among the uninformed. By the 1990s, the style leaders were Fred Couples, with his classic Ashworth business slacks and piqué cotton shirts, and Greg Norman, with his straw hat, costly fabrics and elegant dashes of color. The norm at everyday courses was khaki Dockers and roomy polo shirts in subdued palettes. Those were clothes I felt comfortable in, and still do. As for those who stubbornly insisted that golf fashion lacked dignity, I merely had to point to Nascar, where the drivers appear to have been dressed by middle-schoolers given an unlimited supply of stickers.

But this was all before the return of the white belt. It began in the early 2000s when the Swede Jesper Parnevik allowed himself to be attired by J. Lindeberg. Wearing skinny pants with piping, wild colors and a little cap with an upturned bill, Mr. Parnevik was the Tour’s class clown. But he did create an image for himself, his nanny married Tiger Woods and soon the other Euros on Tour were following suit.

Ian Poulter at the 2004 British Open wore bright Union Jack trousers and soon added spiky hair sometimes dyed red. Paul Casey and Adam Scott shamelessly started showing up at U.S. tournaments in white belts, white shoes and peacock colors. But instead of attracting ridicule they become heartthrobs. These days most non-U.S. players under age 35, and a growing



Sporting some retro styles on the golf course: Camilo Villegas (above) and Paul Casey (right).



Photos: Getty Images

Golf Journal

JOHN PAUL NEWPORT

1980s, I did so with the understanding I would never be expected to wear white belts, plaid pants, canary-yellow sweaters, polyester Sansabelt slacks or any other flammable items of clothing. My assumption was that the 1980 movie “Caddyshack” had successfully parodied such attire into permanent oblivion. The cool guy in the film, played by Chevy Chase, wore classy Ben Hogan-esque outfits, while the buffoons, played by Rodney Dangerfield and Ted Knight, wore the white patent-leather belts and loud pants. By the late 1980s, even Johnny Miller had mostly abandoned the white-belt look.

It’s true that golf’s reputation for

number of Americans, wear the full Cleveland at least some of the time, often supplemented by giant belt buckles. And the trend is trickling out to the public courses.

How is this possible? “Fashion comes full circle,” explained Marty Hackel, the fashion director for Golf Digest magazines. “This is absolutely the reason you should never throw out anything.”

Well, when it comes to white belts, maybe so that your kids can wear them. I don’t detect much interest in the trend among the plus-50 set, if only because of girth. “If your waist is over 38 inches, the only time you should wear a white belt is if there’s a holster and gun attached and people are calling you ‘Sir,’” Mr. Hackel said. This applies to young and old alike, he said, all the more so when a white belt is worn with dark pants, which rivets attention on the waist.

Phil Mickelson’s newfound partiality to white belts has done a lot to focus attention on the trend, although the accompanying outfit he wore in the Thursday round at the Masters—a black shirt and black slacks—probably didn’t do much to advance the cause.

“Poor Phil doesn’t really wear clothes well; he’s just built a certain way,” said Patricia Hannigan, whose Golf Girl’s Diary blog has been following golf fashion and lifestyle issues for 2½ years. “But it’s not about weight. Miguel Angel Jimenez of Spain has a rather unattractive body build, but he looks good in his clothes.” The key, Ms. Hannigan said, is creating an identifiable personal style and wearing what you wear with confidence.

European men have a leg up in this regard. Ms. Hannigan took up golf while living in France and said that even the guys at public golf courses in France took pride in what they were wearing. “In the U.S., for whatever reason, a lot of men were brought up to think it’s not acceptable to exhibit too much style. This may be changing some, in urban areas, with the metrosexual, ‘Queer Eye for the Straight Guy’ sensibility, but for most suburban white men of a certain age it’s just not happen-

ing.” That would be me.

But you can’t just blame the Europeans. Generational tides are also at work. I’ve always imagined that the outrageous plaid pants and bright sweaters worn around golf clubs in the 1960s and 1970s were partly a reaction to the gray-flannel-suit restrictions of the 1950s—or to the gray flannel suits those guys themselves had to wear every day to the office. People drank a lot more back

then and the golf club was one of the few places where repressed workers could wear silly clothes and maybe act up. My generation, which caught the tail end of the ‘60s antiestablishment vibe, naturally fled in horror from this style of self-adornment (as well as from the embarrassing bell-bottom, lavender-prom-tuxedo excesses of our own misspent youths) to adopt a clothing style that was as humdrum, sedate and antistylish as the era in which we lived.

Shockingly, the next generation has not been inspired to emulate us. “People my age are kind of poking fun, or having fun, with what they wear on the golf course,” said Stephanie Wei, 26, who played golf for Yale and now, after stints as a financial analyst and paralegal in Manhattan, blogs about the game. “If the new golf styles signify anything, it’s that we’re the up and coming generation and the sport has moved forward, it’s more open, it’s less traditional, it’s not just an uptight gentleman’s game anymore.”

Ms. Wei believes that a lot of young players on both the men’s and women’s professional tours are consciously attempting to “brand” themselves by their fashion choices. “That’s not a bad thing, even if it’s calculated, because it’s fun and makes golf more appealing to a wider and younger audience. Even the guys I know are paying attention now to what the players are wearing,” she said.

Given the money available to pros for clothing and other endorsement deals, personal branding makes sense. But it’s also part of the generational Zeitgeist. As Ms. Wei pointed out, almost everyone she knows has a MySpace or Facebook page and many also blog. “The blogs that get noticed are the ones with an attitude or an out-there tone,” she said. In other words, the blogs that aren’t afraid to wear white belts and white shoes.

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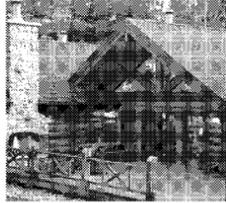
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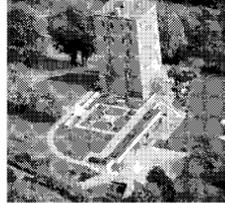
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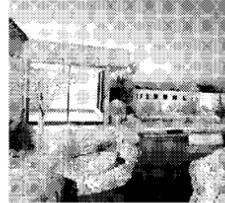
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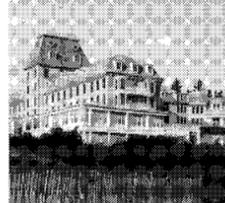
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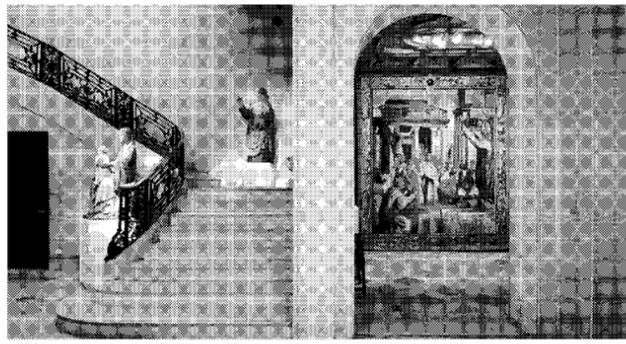
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'The Virgin and Child with St. John the Baptist as a Child' (circa 1511-1515), by Raffaellino del Garbo.

Italian Renaissance brilliance shines in two Paris shows

PARIS: In a happy coincidence, two separate exhibits focused on early Italian painting cover more than three centuries of art history, documenting the gradual transition from medieval iconography to the blossoming of the Renaissance.

"From Siena to Florence: Italian Primitives—The Altenburg Collection," at the Musée Jacquemart André, is a surprisingly large show of 13th- to 15th-century paintings, almost all from the Lindenau Museum in Altenburg, near Dresden.

The earliest works here are not far from the "Greek manner" of their Byzantine predecessors: small panels and larger altarpieces depicting stylized figures of Madonnas and saints against gold backgrounds. Starting with the school of Siena and such artists as Deodato di Orlando and Guido di Graziano, the exhibit progresses through the Quattrocento and on to Florence, as idealized faces become more realistic, static drapery flows into graceful folds and flat gilded surfaces give way to distant landscapes in works by Lorenzo Monaco, Liberale da Verona and Fra Angelico. It's a beautiful show, on until June 21.

"Filippo and Filippino Lippi: The Renaissance in Prato," which runs until Aug. 2 at the Musée du Luxembourg, takes up where the "Primitives" show ends. Always in the shadow of neighboring Florence, the city of Prato nonetheless enjoyed its own moment of artistic glory in the 15th and 16th centuries, spurred by the resident Lippis, father and son, and their contemporaries, including Fra Diamante, Ghirlandajo and Botticelli.

Florentine by birth, the Carmelite monk and renowned rogue Fra Filippo Lippi was the chaplain of the Saint Marguerite convent in Prato in 1456, when he seduced the aspiring young nun Lucrezia Buti, and their son Filippino was born the following year. Legend has it that Lucrezia was the model for the delicate Saint Marguerite portrayed in "The Madonna of the Sacred Belt," one of three splendid large panels here attributed to Filippo in collaboration with Fra Diamante.

As in the Italian Primitives show, the paintings here are all done in egg tempera on wood. Unlike oils, which gradually came to dominate during the Renaissance, tempera does not alter or fade with time—a quality evident in the astonishingly brilliant colors of these 400- and 500-year-old works.

—Judy Fayard

www.musee-jacquemart-andre.com
www.museeduluxembourg.fr



Above, crown by Stephen Jones for Comme Des Garçons; below left, a hat with arrow by Mr. Jones for Christian Dior Haute Couture; below right, a hat by Nasir Mazhar for Gareth Pugh.



Topper pick: At V&A, a heady look at hats

LONDON: I'm not sure what I expected from an exhibition called "Hats: An Anthology by Stephen Jones," at the Victoria & Albert Museum.

Would it perhaps be something with a little intellectual content? An engagement with concepts, maybe, such as why do people cover their heads? Is it for ritual reasons? Social conventions? Physical necessity? This mad extravaganza by one of Britain's best-known milliners has scarcely an idea in its sublimely pretty little head. However, it has got plenty of hats—300 of them, ranging in age from one made about 600 B.C. to one made practically yesterday.

One of the most stimulating aspects of the imperfectly installed (the labeling is difficult to follow) show is the central display of gloriously messy milliners' ateliers. A lot of craft goes into fashioning a head-covering, and despite the contemporary

use of plastics and rubber, the materials used are mostly traditional: glue, buckram, feathers, fur, straw, felt, silk flowers and ribbons. Newsreel footage shows us the recent past of hats, while vitrines are filled with examples—from a particularly fetching "example of the Fascist cap that Mussolini is so fond of wearing" to occupational emblems, such as the ones sported by airline stewardesses. Period bonnets go head-to-head with a showcase of Cecil Beaton's "My Fair Lady" numbers, and Darth Vader's helmet sits next to a Samurai's headgear.

Although it is only acknowledged, and implicitly at that, in the graphic style of the booklet that accompanies the show, I cannot be alone in feeling the spirit of Dr. Seuss lovingly hovering over the entire display.

—Paul Levy

Until May 31
www.vam.ac.uk

At British Museum, Kew's gardeners conjure up India

LONDON: Founded in 1759, the Royal Botanic Gardens in Kew, in southwest London, started out as an aristocratic showpiece. But the gardens gradually expanded into one of the world's great centers of botanical knowledge, turning England's imperial byways into conduits for field research. As part of its 250th anniversary celebrations, Kew has joined forces with Britain's other great 18th-century institution, the British Museum, and installed a special Indian garden in the museum's forecourt. Designed by Kew horticulturalists Steve Ruddy and Richard Wilford, "India Landscape" transforms 440 square meters of lawn into a concise overview of the Indian subcontinent's three main habitats: the Himalayan Mountains, the temperate woodlands of the Himalayan foothills and the humid subtropical lowlands.

The Himalayas are conjured up with a vertical rock garden, surrounded by pine trees and cranes-bill. The temperate zone includes a Himalayan walnut tree and a blue poppy, one of the world's truly blue flowers. The subtropical regions come to life thanks to a lotus filled pond, and a mature banyan tree. The winding path, in the shadow of the British Museum's neoclassical façade, has a dense but spacious quality, and the gardeners have somehow managed to create a sense of north-



The India Landscape at the British Museum.

south travel as we make our way from barren rocks to the spidery lushness of the banyan.

India has special significance to Kew. The gardens' famed 19th-century director Joseph Hooker (1817-1911) made a journey to India, where he catalogued the subcontinent's plant life in a major work, "Flora Indica," which is still a standard reference book on the subject. Hooker helped shape modern English garden tastes with many of the plants he brought back, and perhaps the greatest surprise of "India Landscape" is to find a typically English rhododendron bush in its native Indian habitat.

—J.S. Marcus

Until Sept. 28

www.britishmuseum.org

Michael Frayn's cutting comedy

LONDON: If irony is your thing, you can Google up a brisk critical debate over whether Michael Frayn's play "Alphabetical Order," now revived at Hampstead Theatre (where it had its première in 1975), has become dated. It is, after all, set in a provincial newspaper cuttings library, an institution now so obsolete that its purpose had to be explained to some younger members of the press night audience. In this Internet age, it's hard to remember that, once upon a time, facts were not displayed on screens, but gleaned from yellowing newsprint, stuffed in folders kept in filing cabinets.

Despite having constructed so strong a character in Lucy, the disorganized librarian, that he has practically created a new stereotype, Mr. Frayn triumphs in pitting her against her aggressively organized new assistant, Lesley. This produces the kind of comedy that is killingly funny, yet raises timeless issues—and even prompts philosophical arguments.

The production is helped by a terrific cast, especially Imogen Stubbs as the loveable Lucy, whose job is classifying documents but whose chaotic personal-

ity is in revolt against every form of taxonomy; and her complete opposite, Chloe Newsome's Lesley, who has an alienating, near-violent passion for order.

Mr. Frayn's characters are, mostly, amazingly personable, showing (like "The Front Page" and other classics of the genre) that old-fashioned newspapers made for good drama. Director Christopher Luscombe gets fine performances from all seven of his actors, and Janet Bird's sets progress wonderfully from messy, to pin-neat, to irretrievably disordered.

Parallels between the 1970s and today proliferate—particularly the economic recession that then threatened the newspaper industry much as today's does. Moreover and more elegantly, Mr. Frayn's dialogue cleverly, and slyly, puts flesh on abstract, ancient questions, such as how the mind arrives at the categories into which we separate facts; how we come to know these bits of knowledge; and whether the speculations of say, religion, have the same status as those of science?

He even has one of his characters speak some (dramatically plausible) lines that hide some apt quotations from Wittgenstein's "Tractatus." Even if you don't recognize them—or initially understand the function of a newspaper library—by the end of the play you're caught up in the plot, loving the maddening Lucy, and anxiously hoping that newspapers will not disappear into a permanent electronic haze of flickering screens.

—Paul Levy

Until May 16

www.hampsteadtheatre.com



Imogen Stubbs and Jonathan Guy Lewis in 'Alphabetical Order.'

The Candy Man Can

By Steve Almond

Knowing my penchant for all things sugary, a friend recently gave me a wonderful gift: a framed candy-bar wrapper dating back to the Great Depression. The odd name of the bar, "Chicken Dinner," was accented by the label art: a steaming chicken. Sad to say, Chicken Dinner did not include any actual chicken parts. It was mostly nuts and chocolate. But why would a confectioner name a chocolate bar after a Sunday meal?

This is a profound question in itself, of course, but it also highlights an odd fact: At times of economic turmoil, the palate craves the cheap luxury of sweets. Indeed, while most manufacturers are struggling, companies such as Hershey's and Nestle are reporting increased sales. Apparently there is nothing more soothing to the financially insecure than a candy bar, however oddly named. To understand why requires a look back at our past.

For most of human history, sweets have been the purview of the rich. This is especially true of chocolate. Both in the Old World and the New, chocolate was consumed exclusively by the aristocracy, and in liquid form. The technology required to render chocolate into a solid came along only in the mid-19th century. But it took World War I for the chocolate bar to emerge as a distinct culinary product. American companies began mass-producing bars as single-serving rations for the soldiers. When the "dough boys" returned to the States, they stoked the domestic demand for candy bars. Ironically, it was the onset of the Depression that actually ushered in the golden age of candy bars. What had been, just a century earlier, the ultimate luxury foodstuff, became manna for the masses.

Which brings us back to the Chicken Dinner. The manufacturer of this bar, the Sperry Candy Co. of Milwaukee, settled on this name in an effort to suggest the wholesome attributes of its product. It wasn't selling a treat; it was selling a meal. To this end, Sperry would later introduce bars called Chicken Spanish, Denver Sandwich and Club Sandwich.

In this sense, candy bars might be regarded as America's first fast food: cheap, self-contained and filling—at least in the short-term. Candy makers quickly seized on our national penchant for nutritional self-delusion, and the production of nickel bars kicked into high gear. According to the late Ray Broekel, the author of "The Great American Candy Bar Book," more than 30,000 distinct brands were introduced during the Depression.

Most major cities had confectioners cranking out bars, and big cities such as Chicago and Boston boasted dozens. No doubt the strangest bar to be introduced dur-

ing the boom was the infamous Vegetable Sandwich, produced during the health craze of the 1920s. Billed as "a delicious candy made with vegetables," the bar consisted of dehydrated celery, peas and carrots covered in chocolate. While it's true that the Vegetable Sandwich probably lived up to its marketing tag—"will not constipate"—it never quite caught on with the public.

Still, what people wanted then was a dessert that they could convince themselves was healthy. The same holds true today. Consolidation by industrial giants such as Hershey's and Mars has long since driven most regional bars out of existence, and a much smaller number of national brands has emerged. But brands like Snicker's

continue to be marketed as "satisfying" (read: filling and nutritious) snacks. Nor is it any surprise that retail candy sales have been strong during the current recession. Candy bars remain an incredibly affordable luxury, products that simultaneously deliver a sugar

high and a nostalgic buzz, by reminding consumers of the innocent pleasures of childhood.

But the broader lesson of the candy-bar boom is that American eaters, faced with a broken economy, still turn to quick caloric fixes. One need look no further than the modern fast-food industry, which is thriving in much the same way as Depression-era confectioners. While most companies are reporting staggering losses, McDonald's saw a 5.4% sales spike in January, largely due to its Dollar Menu: It now features a host of items, ranging from the McDouble cheeseburger to the McChicken sandwich. In fact, virtually every fast-food purveyor has shifted emphasis in the past few months, rolling out super-cheap options designed to appeal to cash-strapped consumers.

The atmosphere of economic insecurity has been a boon to fast food in one other crucial manner. Eating healthfully often costs a premium. Consider the price of organic produce. What hungry American in this economy is going to choose an organic Fuji apple when the same outlay will buy a Triple-Layer Nachos and a Cinnamon Twist at Taco Bell?

Fast-food companies, like confectioners, tend to target populations—kids and teenagers in particular—who are not known for their attention to nutritional fine print. But grown-ups with less cash in their wallets are also susceptible. If the chocolate-bar boom that coincided with our last financial crisis is any indication, fast-food profits will continue to rise, at the expense of our health. In hard times, it turns out, Americans remain more or less kids in a candy shop.

Mr. Almond is the author of the books "Candyfreak" and "(Not That You Asked)".



Cobis

A Tea Ceremony for Today

New York

The tea ceremony is said to be the essence of Japanese aesthetics—architecture, ceramics, flower arranging, incense, calligraphy, painting, gardening—packaged in a formalized ritual that dates back to the 16th century. That's when the illustrious tea master Sen no Rikyu perfected *cha-do*, or the "way of tea." It's a ceremony—and, some would say, a state of mind—that has changed very little in nearly half a millennium.

The first devotees were feudal lords striking business deals.

Fast-forward 15 generations to a young man in a formal kimono kneeling on the floor of a newly constructed tea room at the Koichi Yanagi Oriental Fine Arts Gallery on Manhattan's Upper East Side. Sen So-oku, 33 years old, is the heir to the Mushakoji school of tea, one of the trio of competing schools founded by Sen no Rikyu's three great-grandsons. One day he will succeed his father as grand tea master. For now, he's spending a year in the U.S. as a representative of the Japanese Ministry of Culture and teaching art at Columbia University.

Mr. Sen wants to bring the tea ceremony into the 21st century. The first clue comes as I remove my shoes and step into the tea room that has been designed to his personal specifications. It's a what's-wrong-with-this-picture moment. The floor is covered with the usual straw mats, the kettle is warming on a brazier in the middle of the room, and the traditional tea-ceremony implements are laid out in the proper order near Mr. Sen. But wait—what's that open trench that runs along one side of the room?

Call it a tea bleacher. Mr. Sen gestures to us to take our seats—but not in the cramp-inducing, sit-on-your-knees posture that can make the tea ceremony a torturous experience for modern-day participants. Rather, the tea master invites us to sit on the floor and lower our legs into the trench. It's similar to the hole-in-the-floor seating arrangements at many Japanese restaurants outside Japan.

"This type of architectural structure serves two audiences," Mr. Sen says through an interpreter. "One is the new generation that is not necessarily used to sitting on their knees. The other is for people who have already had a long relationship with tea but are getting older [and] having trouble sitting on their knees." He has also designed a ceremony that can be performed in a room with a table and chairs.

Mr. Sen defends his approach, which traditionalists would call heretical. "Change is always a part of this cultural form," he says. The tea ceremony "changes along with the way life is carried out now." When the tea ceremony was invented, he notes, everyone wore kimonos and was used to living in tatami rooms. Today that's not the case. Four hundred years ago, there was "a very small difference between the concept of carrying out tea and everyday life." Today, he says, "The point is to be able to regain that

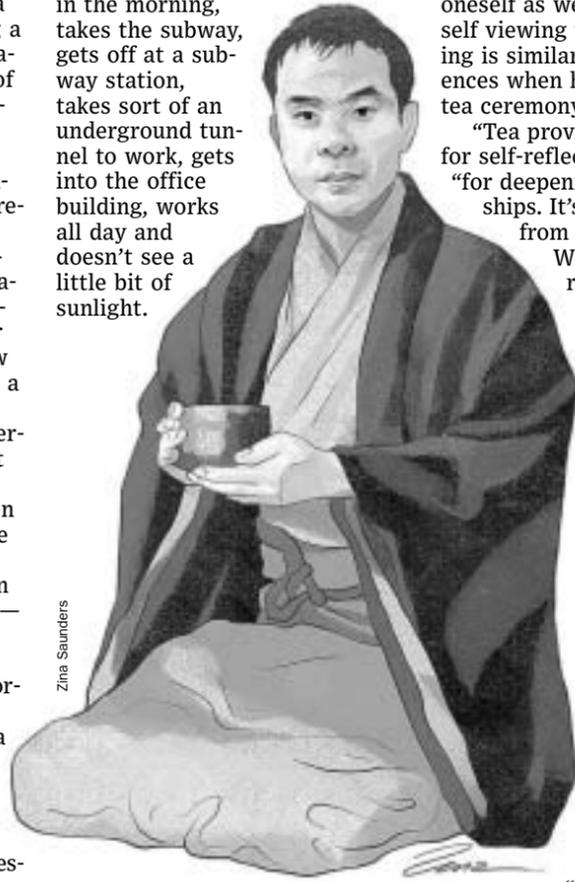
short distance between life and the tea room."

At the same time, Mr. Sen stresses that "there are certain essential elements . . . of Japanese culture that can only be found in tea." He mentions "seasonality." Traditional Japanese culture, he says, "considers the focus on seasons—understanding the differences between the seasons—to be very important. So,

for example, in Japan there is the concept of *hanami*, which is the viewing of the cherry blossoms. Or, for example, in autumn there's the concept of looking out at the moon. Of course, the moon is

out all the time, but that's a specific celebration."

He tells the story of one of his students, an office worker in her 30s. "She works in Tokyo, a very cosmopolitan place. . . . In her day-to-day life, she gets up in the morning, takes the subway, gets off at a subway station, takes sort of an underground tunnel to work, gets into the office building, works all day and doesn't see a little bit of sunlight."



Zina Saunders

And then, at the end of the day, she goes back and does the exact same thing" in reverse. For her, the tea ceremony "is really an opportunity to feel the seasonality of Japan."

Mr. Sen has woven several seasonal themes into today's tea ceremony. The flower motif on the incense burner is plum, a symbol of spring. The portrait on the scroll in the alcove is of Sen no Rikyu, the founder of the tea ceremony, the anniversary of whose death occurred a few days earlier.

Then there's the bowl in which Mr. Sen whisks the tea for me to drink. It was made in Kyoto in the 17th century, and Mr. Sen says he selected the bowl for me "because I wanted you to feel the historical lineage between it and the tea that we are experiencing today." It is a rustic, handmade *Raku-ware* bowl. *Raku-ware* was the first pottery "that was created specifically for the art and culture of tea," he says. "Before that, ceramics from

China, as well as the Korean peninsula, were utilized."

The glaze on the bowl "has a very thick surface, but it also has a soft tactile sense," he explains. "As the hot tea permeates the thickness of the tea bowl, it's almost like the tea bowl will take on a sort of bodily temperature. So it's as if the tea bowl and the person drinking it will become one." That effect is further heightened by the bowl's color, he says, which is black. Before electricity, the tea room was much darker. And when someone drank from a *Raku-ware* bowl, it was as if the "existence of the tea bowl would be removed entirely, and the only thing there was the person drinking the tea, becoming one with the tea itself."

The tea ceremony is closely connected with Zen Buddhism, and Mr. Sen has trained as a monk in a temple in Kyoto. When he meditates, he says, "there is an opportunity for self-reflection, almost as if one sees oneself as well as an objective self viewing the self." This feeling is similar to what he experiences when he is performing the tea ceremony, he says.

"Tea provides an opportunity for self-reflection," Mr. Sen says, "for deepening human relationships. It's also an escape from the everyday."

Which brings us to the readers of *The Wall Street Journal*. "You have a readership of important business people," he says, "who are very busy, who spend a lot of time at work." The first devotees of the tea ceremony were *daimyo*, or feudal lords, he says, who used the tea room to strike business deals and plot political moves. The modern-day analogue for business people is golf, he says.

But why not the tea ceremony? Tea is actually a "very simple pleasure," he says. Yes, it has a philosophical background, but at essence it is an "opportunity for people to experience good company, good food, good drink and good conversation." This, the master says, is the "charm of tea."

Ms. Kirkpatrick is a deputy editor of the *Journal's* editorial page.

Pepper . . . and Salt

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL



"Sorry — I've never heard of a morning-after diet pill."

time off



© RMW/Martine Beck-Coppola

Left, 'Self-Portrait' (1790) by Archibald Skirving, in London; above, coronation crown of Louis XV by Augustin Duflot, in Versailles.

Amsterdam

art

"Laugh...and Forget! Songs by Jewish Artists" shows Dutch Jewish sheet music from 1890 to 1960.

Joods Historisch Museum

Until June 21

☎ 31-20-5310-310

www.jhm.nl

Baden-Baden

art

"The Emperors' Artists—From Dürer to Titian, from Rubens to Velázquez" exhibits 70 masterworks from 1500 to 1750.

Museum Frieder Burda

Until June 14

☎ 49-7221-3989-80

www.museum-frieder-burda.de

Barcelona

music

"Festival Guitarra—Barcelona Guitar Festival 2009" presents alternative rock, jazz, world music and classical music by David Byrne, Jackson Browne, Wilco, Julian Lage and others.

The Project

Until June 18

☎ 34-9348-1704-0

www.theproject.es

Berlin

art

"Zeiträume—Miletus in the Roman Empire and Late Antiquity" is a selection of artifacts from the Asia Minor metropolis of Miletus.

Pergamonmuseum

Until Jan. 10, 2010

☎ 49-30-2090-5577

www.smb.museum/smb

Brussels

art

"KunstenFESTIVALdesArts 2009" presents performing and visual arts projects from 18 countries, performed by 315 international artists in 22 venues and open spaces in Brussels.

KunstenFESTIVALdesArts

Until May 24

☎ 32-2-2190-707

www.kfda.be/2009

art

"Alfred Stevens" is a retrospective devoted to the Belgian artist (1828-1906).

Museum of Ancient and Modern Art

Until Aug. 23

☎ 32-2-5083-211

www.fine-arts-museum.be

Cologne

art

"Maria Lassnig: The mirror of possibilities" exhibits the work of Austrian artist Maria Lassnig (born 1919), including drawings and watercolors from 1947 to the present day.

Museum Ludwig

Until June 14

☎ 49-221-2212-6165

www.museum-ludwig.de

Copenhagen

design

"IT Factory between the lines—Identity programme by Jacob Jensen Design" shows the graphic identity program developed by Jacob Jensen Design developed for the software company IT Factory before it went bankrupt in 2008.

Det Danske Kunstinstitut

Until June 14

☎ 45-3318-5656



© Scottish National Portrait Gallery

www.kunstinstitutet.dk

Dublin

art

"Harry Clarke's Illustrations for Hans Christian Andersen's Fairy Tales" showcases 10 watercolors by Irish artist Harry Clarke (1889-1931).

National Gallery of Ireland

May 16-Aug. 23

☎ 35-31-6615-133

www.nationalgallery.ie

Geneva

art

"Giacometti, Balthus, Skira—The Labyrinth Years (1944-1946)" presents art and documents of "Labyrinth," a publication published at the end of World War II.

Musée Rath

Until July 5

☎ 41-22-4183-340

www.ville-ge.ch/mah

Ghent

design

"Connections" exhibits 100 different types of textiles exploring the "connection" between materials such as fabric, embroidery, lace and trimming, and

the "connection" to people such as artists, collectors and donors.

Design Museum Ghent

Until June 1

☎ 32-9-2679-999

design.museum.gent.be

London

art

"The Intimate Portrait: drawings, miniatures and pastels from Ramsay to Lawrence" shows examples of a type of portraiture that flourished in Britain between the 1730s and 1830s.

The British Museum

Until May 31

☎ 44-20-7323-8000

www.britishmuseum.org

Linz

art

"Ahoi Herbert! Bayer and Modernism" presents works by the Austrian Bauhaus artist Herbert Bayer (1900-1985) from the Lentos collection.

Lentos Kunstmuseum

May 8-Aug. 2

☎ 43-732-7070-3600

www.lentos.at

Lyon

fashion

"Franck Sorbier: Couture of Body and Soul" displays unique dresses and stage costumes in a retrospective of work by French fashion couturier Franck Sorbier (born 1961).

Musée des Tissus et des Arts

Décoratifs de Lyon

Until Sept. 20

☎ 33-4-7838-4200

www.musee-des-tissus.com

Paris

art

"Italian Models: Hébert and the



© Basel, Kunstmuseum

'Still Life with Oysters' (1940) by Henri Matisse, in Geneva.

Peasants of Latium" features paintings by Ernest Hébert (1817-1908) on his favorite subjects: scenes of Italian peasant life overlaid with a melancholic realism.

Musée d'Orsay

Until July 19

☎ 33-1-4049-4814

www.musee-orsay.fr/en/home

Prague

music

"Prague Spring International Music Festival 2009" includes performances by Anne-Sophie Mutter, Thomas Hampson, Susan Graham and Shlomo Mintz.

Prague Spring International Music

Festival

May 12-June 3

☎ 420-2573-1254-7

www.festival.cz

Rotterdam

photography

"All is Vanity—Daguerreotypes in Dutch Collections" is a large collection of some of the earliest documented photographs in The Netherlands.

Nederlands Fotomuseum

Until May 31

☎ 31-10-2030-405

www.nederlandsfotomuseum.nl

Stockholm

photography

"Reality Revisited Photography from the Moderna Museet Collection" shows classic black-and-white photography from the 1970s.

Moderna Museet

May 9-Sept. 20

☎ 46-8-5195-5200

www.modernamuseet.se

Versailles

fashion

"Court Pomp and Royal Ceremonies" traces the evolution of the court costume in Europe between 1650 and 1800.

Château de Versailles

Until June 28

☎ 33-1-3083-7800

www.chateauversailles.fr

Vienna

art

"Made in Japan" exhibits works from the Japanese collection of the Kunsthistorische Museum, including a collection of Japanese puppets from the World Fair in 1873.

Kunsthistorisches Museum

Until Sept. 28

☎ 43-1-5252-4402-5

www.khm.at

Zurich

art

"Luo Ping (1733-1799)—Eccentric visions" shows masterpieces by the Chinese Buddhist painter Luo Ping.

Museum Rietberg-Werner Abegg

Gallery

Until July 12

☎ 41-44-2063-131

www.stadt-zuerich.ch

Source: ArtBase Global Arts News Service, WSJE research.